Sakai Forums

The Forums tool allows instructors or site leaders to create an unlimited number of discussion forums, and is integrated closely with other tools such as Resources and Gradebook.

- Hierarchy Organization
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Hierarchy Organization

The Forums tool is structured with Forums at the top level, then Topics, then conversations at the lower level.

- A Forum is the highest level and a mandatory category or grouping for topics.
- Topics, which are created within and under forums, are where participants can post conversations.
- A Conversation is the thread of messages in which participants post their contributions and replies.

Example -

(Forum) - Homework Discussions

  (Topic) - Week 1 Homework
  (Conversation) - Student 1’s message
  (Conversation) - Student 2’s reply

  (Topic) - Week 2 Homework
  (Conversation) - Student 1’s message

(Forum) - Team Discussions

  (Topic) - Team 1
  (Conversation) - Student 1’s message

  (Topic) - Team 2 (Conversation) - Student 2’s message

Create a Forum

To create a Forum or Topic, click on New Forum or New Topic in the top menu. Note: You must add a topic under the new forum for students to see the forum.

Create a new Conversation by clicking on “Start a New Conversation” within a Topic.

Settings

Topic settings are identical to forum settings except these settings apply to a single topic, not all of the topics in the forum. Topics must be created within Forums in order for site participants to be able to post, read, and reply to messages.

Additional options within Topic settings are Anonymous posts and Automatically create topics for groups.

Tip: To keep all of the same settings that were selected on the forum level, just specify a title and (optionally) a description for the new topic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Permission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forum</td>
<td>Top level category, most general.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By default can only be created by Instructors. This can be modified in settings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Contain Conversations, more specific.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td>Course Participant messages and replies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both students and instructors can participate in Conversations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Permissions
Permissions for a forum or topic can be set when creating one or can be updated from Settings.

If you want to change the default permissions for a topic, select the role and change the permission level, or check or uncheck the permission as needed in the existing role.

By default, instructors are forum Owners, and all other site participants are Contributors. The forum owner may add and delete topics, modify permissions, edit the forum and topic descriptions, etc. Contributors may only read, post and reply to messages.

To modify the default permissions, click Customize to expand the permission settings.

Grading
Forums can be graded at the Forum or Topic levels. In either case, you need to create the gradebook item and then associate it with the forum or topic you are creating.

Group Forums or Topics
Forum or Topic permissions can be customized to allow groups to access their own private discussion.

Create a group in Site Info>Manage Groups (or use an existing group), then create or select a Forum or Topic for that group and open the Forum or Topic Settings menu. Change the intended group’s permissions to “Contributor” to make it accessible to only the members of that group, and change the Student role to “None,” to make it inaccessible to all other students in the course.