

Sakai LMS Forums Tool Guide

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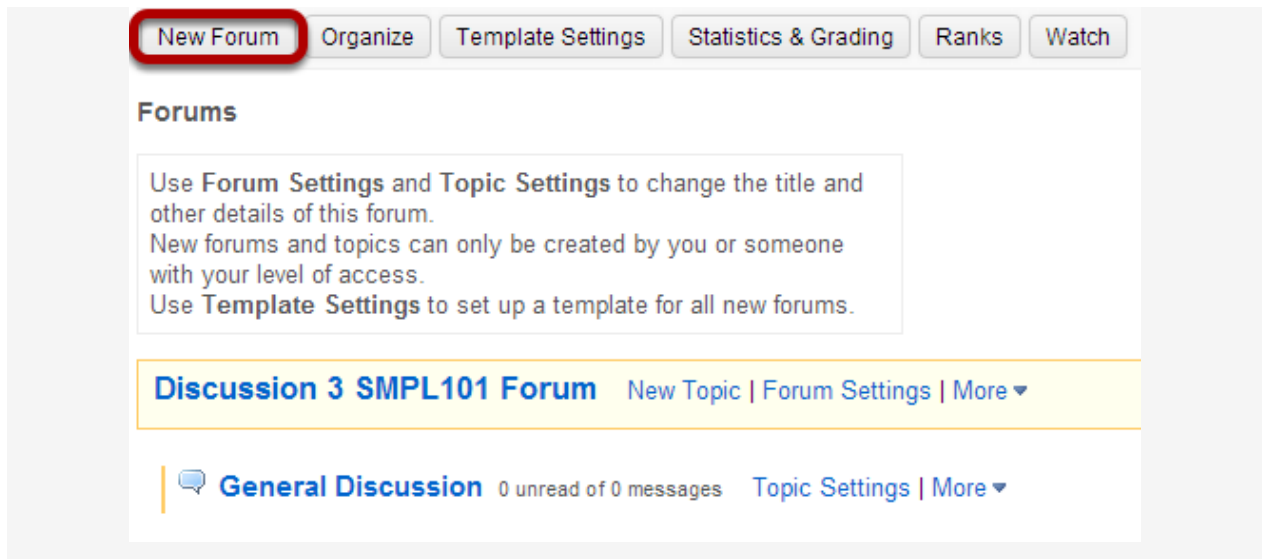
The **Forum** tool is organized by **Forums**, **Topics**, and **Conversations**.

- A **Forum** is a mandatory category or grouping for topics. There may be more than one Forum in the course or project site.
- **Topics** are required within Forums in order for site participants to be able to post, read, and reply to messages.
- **Conversations** are messages or threads of discussion posted within a Topic.

Access the Forums

Select the **Forums** tool from the Tool Menu.

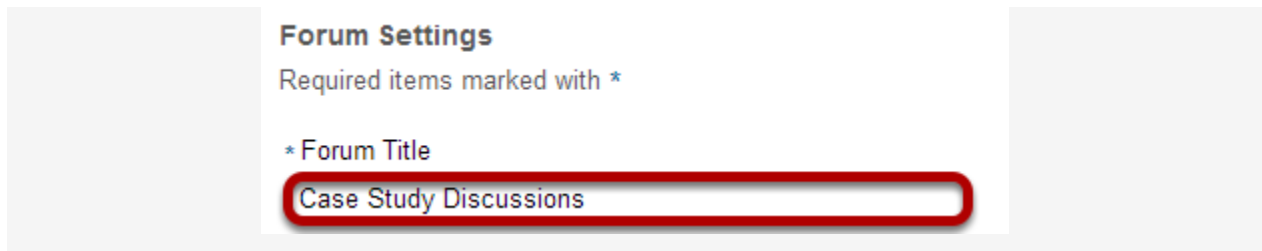
Click New Forum.



By default, new sites are populated with a single forum titled after the name of the site, and containing one topic for General Discussion. The default forum and topic may be edited for posting messages, add more topics to the existing forum, or add a new forum.

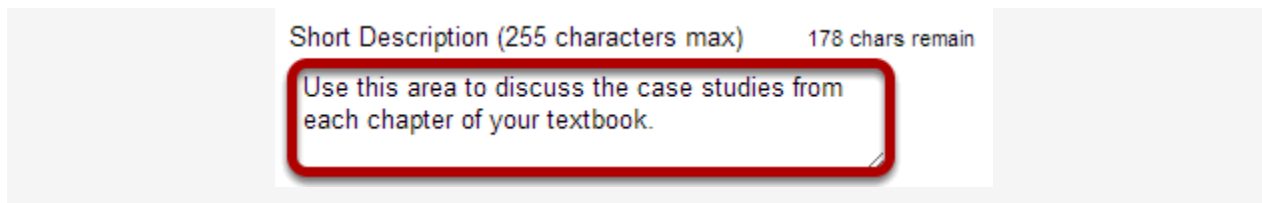
Click the **New Forum** button to add a new forum.

Title the Forum



Forum titles are required. Name the forum a title to easily identify the types of topics expected within it. Remember that users post messages within topics, not forums. Forums are a grouping or classification of topics.

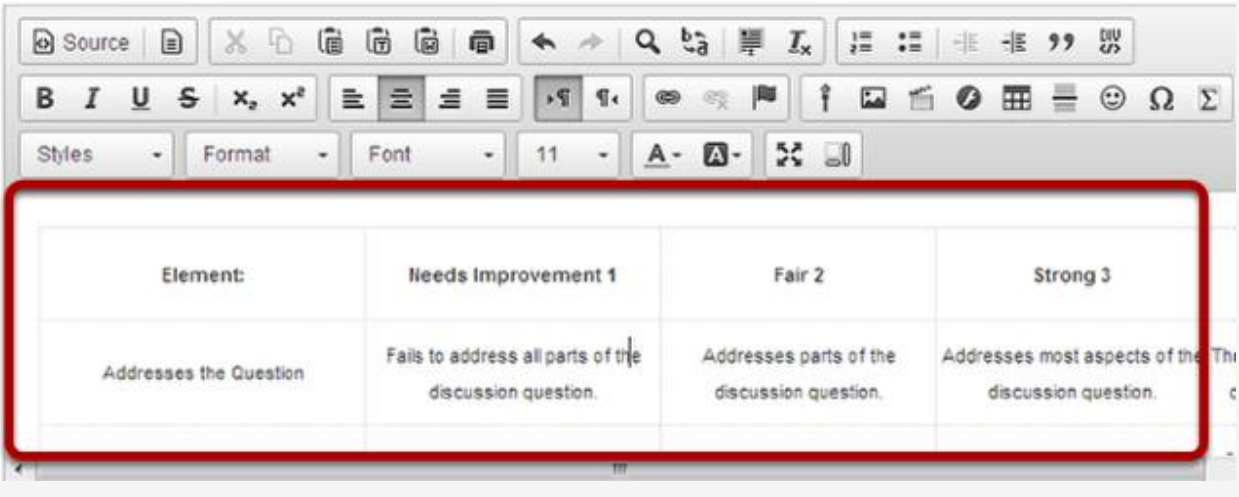
Enter a short description



If desired, enter a description into the text box provided. The **Short Description** field only allows a maximum of 255 characters and does not allow formatting of text. This information is displayed to the user when they view the Forum tool.

Enter a detailed description.

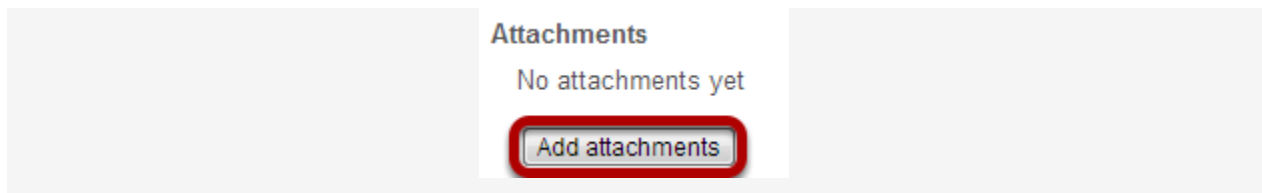
Description



Element:	Needs Improvement 1	Fair 2	Strong 3
Addresses the Question	Fails to address all parts of the discussion question.	Addresses parts of the discussion question.	Addresses most aspects of the discussion question.

To provide more detailed instructions about the items in this forum, use the **Description** area to enter the information. This area includes the [Rich Text Editor](#) and allows for more advanced formatting options.

Add attachments

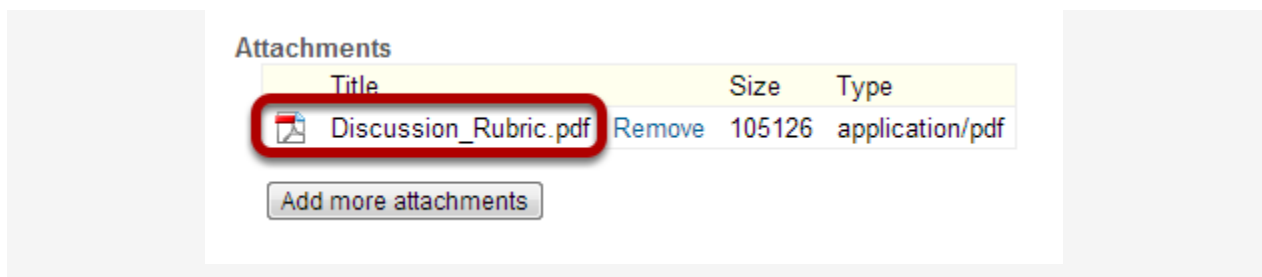


Attachments
No attachments yet


[Add attachments](#)

Additionally, file attachments to the forum. Click the **Add attachments** button to browse for and select a file.

View attachments



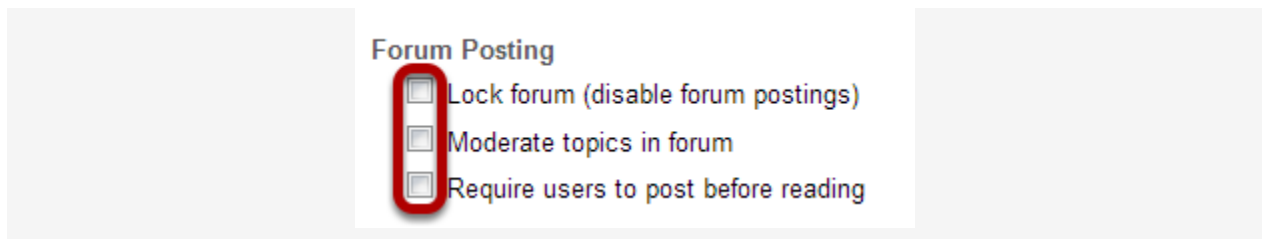
Attachments

Title	Size	Type
 Discussion_Rubric.pdf Remove	105126	application/pdf

[Add more attachments](#)

After a file is attached, the file name, file size, and file format will be displayed.

Select forum posting options.



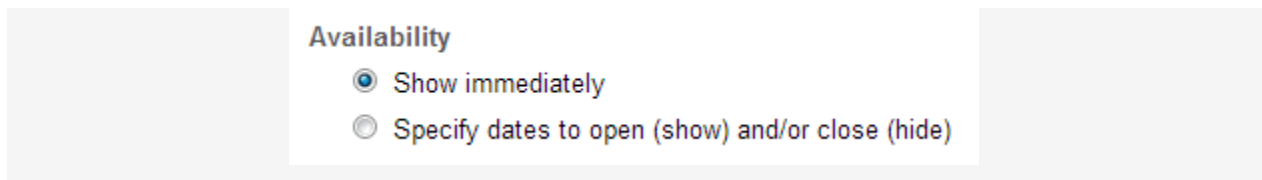
Forum Posting

- Lock forum (disable forum postings)
- Moderate topics in forum
- Require users to post before reading

There are several forum posting options from which to choose. Remember, any settings selected here will apply to all of the topics within this forum by default. (However, these may be overridden the settings on an individual topic if desired.)

- **Lock forum:** This option locks the forum so users can no longer post messages. However, they can continue to read existing messages.
- **Moderate topics in forum:** This option means all messages posted within topics in this forum, must be approved by the instructor before other students can see them.
- **Require users to post before reading:** Selecting this option requires users to post their own response first, before they can view other messages posted previously. This is a good option to select if the Instructor wishes students to respond to a discussion prompt before seeing other student responses.

Select availability.



Availability

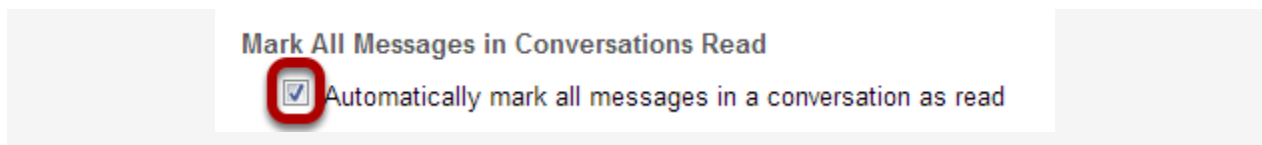
Show immediately

Specify dates to open (show) and/or close (hide)

The default option is to **Show Immediately**, or choose to **Specify dates to open (show) and/or close (hide)**.

Tip: Setting open and close dates at the forum level can be tricky because individual topics may also have specified dates. However, the forum must be visible in order for the topics within the forum to be available to students. Typically, instructors set open/close dates at the topic level only.

Select Read Options

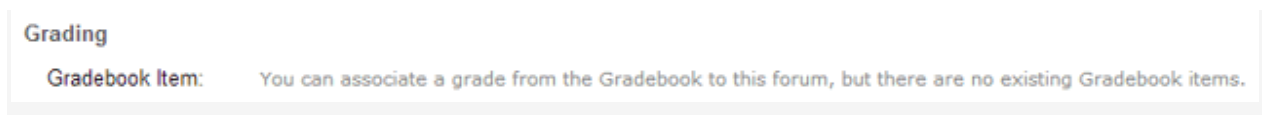


Mark All Messages in Conversations Read

Automatically mark all messages in a conversation as read

The default option is to unchecked, allowing the user mark each post as read after reading. Selecting this option will mark all messages within a conversation, or thread, as read.

Specify Gradebook item



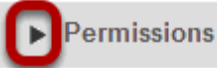
Grading

Gradebook Item: You can associate a grade from the Gradebook to this forum, but there are no existing Gradebook items.

When grading forum posts, select a specific [Gradebook](#) item for the grades to be included in the Gradebook calculations.

Tip: Similar to open/close dates, associating with the Gradebook at the forum level is not always ideal because individual topics may also be graded. Faculty may prefer to grade discussions at the topic level.

Permissions



In most cases, the default forum permissions are appropriate. 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.

Modifying Permissions

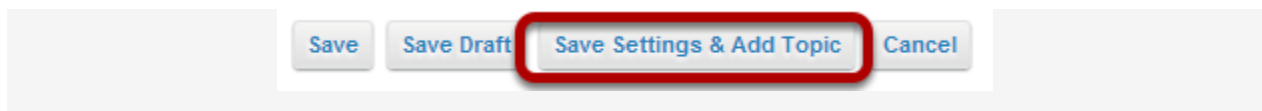
A screenshot of the forum permissions configuration interface. It shows a table with columns for "Role" and "Permission Level". The roles listed are Instructor (Owner), Student (Contributor), StudentTestRole (None), Teaching Assistant (Contributor), Group A (Custom), and Group B (None). Each role has a "Customize" button. The "Teaching Assistant" role's "Customize" button is highlighted with a red box. The "Group A" role's "Customize" button is also highlighted, and it is expanded to show a list of permissions: "New Forum", "New Topic", "New Conversation", "Reply", "Post to", "Change Settings", "Read", "Mark as Read", "Moderate Messages", "Edit Messages", and "Delete Messages". The "Edit Messages" and "Delete Messages" sections have radio button options for "None", "Own", and "All". The "New Conversation" and "Reply" options are checked. The "Read" and "Mark as Read" options are also checked. The "New Forum", "New Topic", "Post to", "Moderate Messages", "Edit Messages", and "Delete Messages" options are unchecked.

Forum permissions may be customized for different user roles, or for groups within the class. Select the drop-down menu next to each role/group to choose one of the pre-configured options (i.e. Author, Contributor, None, Non-editing Author, Owner, Reviewer),

Click the **Customize** button to the right to further expand the options and for more granular custom permissions.

Note: Group role permissions display once they are created.

Save and add topic.



Once completed, scroll to the bottom of the page and select the **Save Settings & Add Topic** button.

Note: All forums need at least one topic to be active

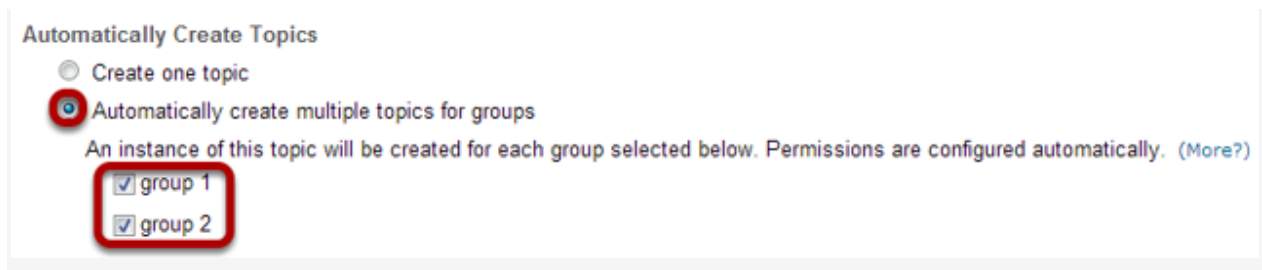
Topic Settings.

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.

An additional option within a Topic settings is **Automatically create topics for groups**

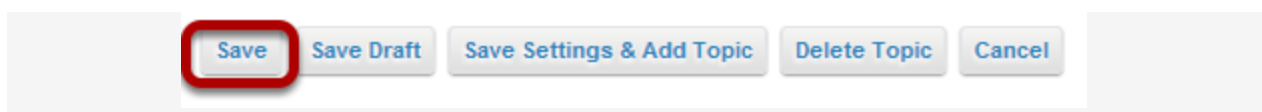
Tip: To keep all of the same settings that selected on the forum level, just specify a title and (optionally) a description for the new topic.

Automatically create topics for groups



To create multiple, private group topic areas, select the radio button for **Automatically create topics for groups** and then check the box next to each group for which a topic should be created. The Student role will automatically be set to the permission level of "None". Each group will be set to "Contributor" in their group's topic and "None" in other automatically created topics.

Save.



If this completes the topic/s to be added to this forum, click on the **Save** button at the bottom of the screen to save your topic settings.

To add additional topics to this forum, click on the **Save Settings & Add Topic** button to add another topic.

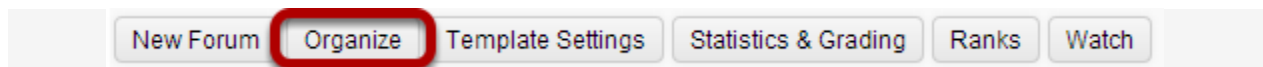
How do I organize forums and topics?

Forums may be rearranged to change the order in which discussions are listed.

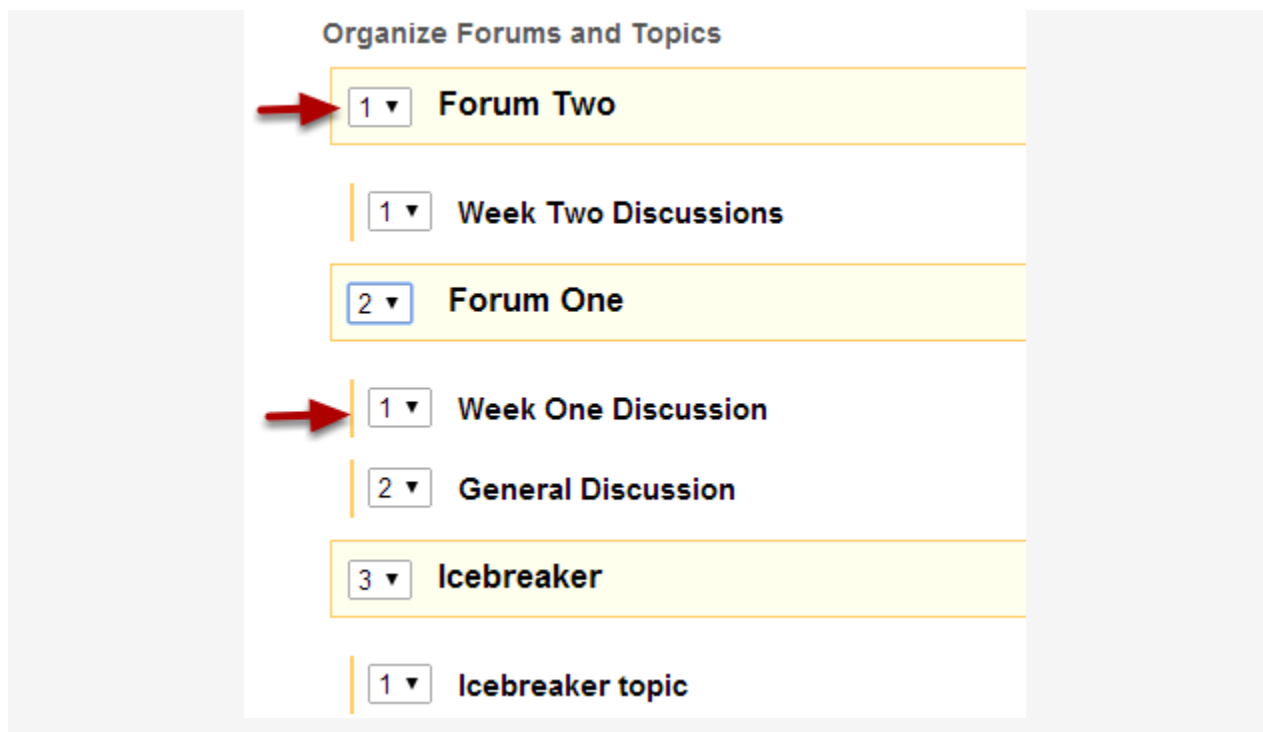
Go to Forums

Select the **Forums** tool from the Tool Menu of your site.

Select the Organize button

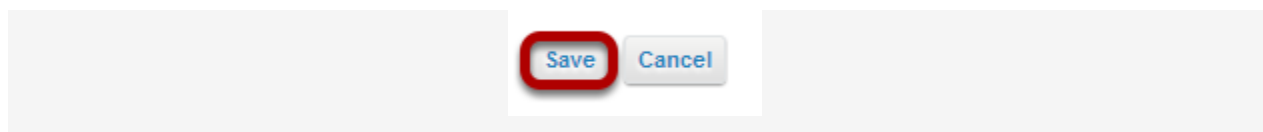


Select the appropriate number next to the Forum or Topic



The numeric pull down menu allows for reordering the Forum, Topic or both. Select the appropriate number for the order the content should appear.

Click Save



After you placed the forums and topics in the desired order, click **Save**.

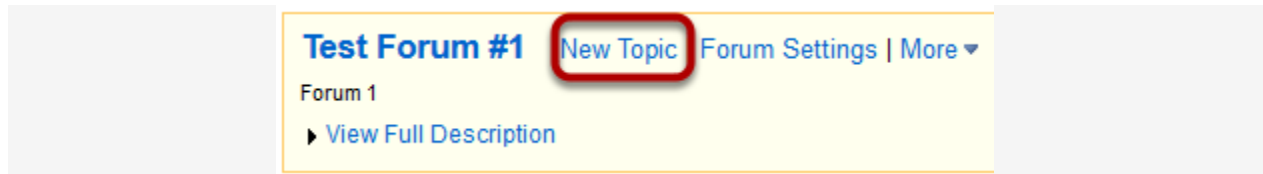
How do I add a new topic?

A **Forum** must contain a **Topic** for users to create a post. (See also [How do I create Forums and Topics?](#))

Go to Forums.

Select the **Forums** tool from Tool Menu in your site.

Select New Topic.

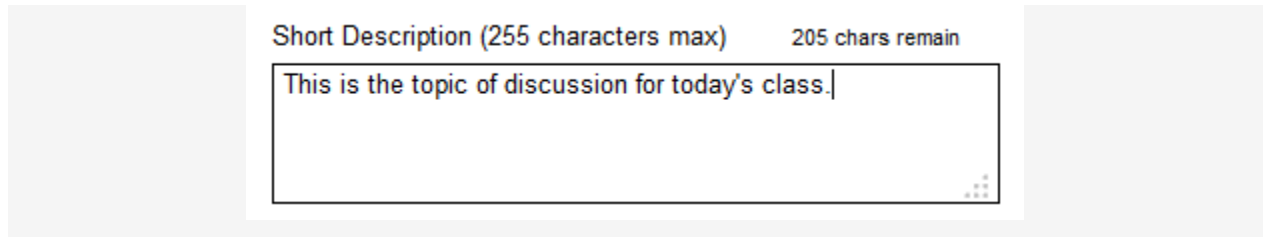


Create a topic title.

A screenshot of a form for creating a topic title. The form has a label '* Topic Title' and a text input field containing 'Topic #1'.

Topic titles are required for every topic.

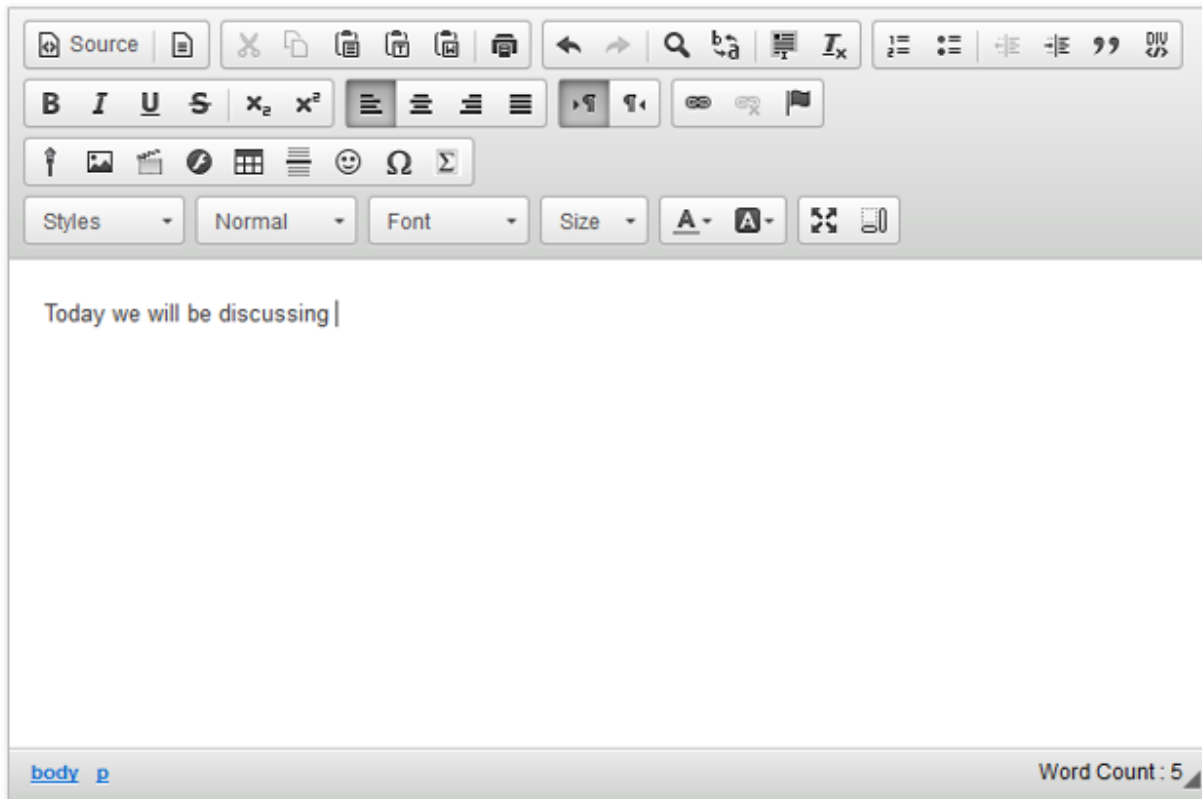
Create a short description.

A screenshot of a form for creating a short description. The form has a label 'Short Description (255 characters max)' and a character count '205 chars remain'. The text input field contains 'This is the topic of discussion for today's class.'.

Be aware that this short description only allows a maximum of 255 characters.

Create a detailed description.

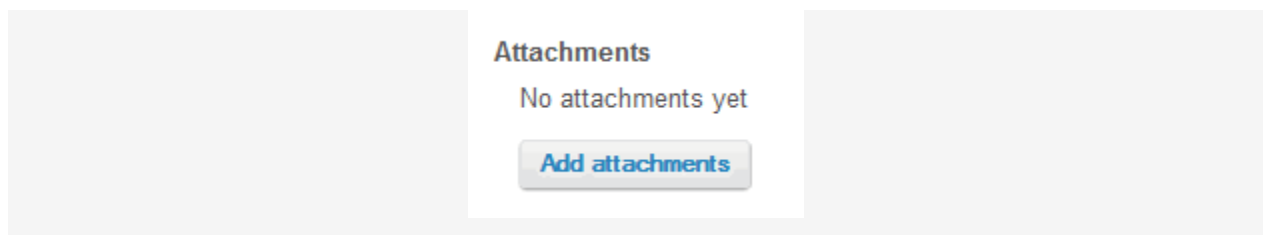
Description



The screenshot shows a rich text editor interface. At the top, there is a toolbar with various icons for editing text, including undo, redo, search, and alignment. Below the toolbar, there are buttons for bold (B), italic (I), underline (U), strikethrough (ABC), subscript (x₂), and superscript (x²). There are also buttons for bulleted list, numbered list, indent, and outdent. Below these are buttons for link, unlink, and insert. The main editing area contains the text "Today we will be discussing |". At the bottom left, there is a status bar showing "body p" and at the bottom right, "Word Count : 5".

This description box allows the use of [Rich Text Editor](#).

Add attachments.



The screenshot shows an "Attachments" section. It has the heading "Attachments" and the text "No attachments yet". Below this text is a button labeled "Add attachments".

If desired, there is an option to upload attachments.

Create personalized settings.

Topic Posting

- Lock Topic (Disable topic postings)
- Moderate Topic
- Require users to post before reading

Availability

- Show immediately
- Specify dates to open (show) and/or close (hide)

Mark All Messages in Conversations Read

- Automatically mark all messages in a conversation as read

Grading

Gradebook Item: You can associate a grade from the Gradebook to this topic, but there are no existing Gradebook items.

This section allows for the personalization of topic settings in terms of visibility, availability, and grading.

Select from topic posting options.

Topic Posting

- Lock Topic (Disable topic postings)
- Moderate Topic
- Require users to post before reading

The Topic Posting option regulates where the topic is **locked** from topic postings, is **moderated** by the instructor, and/or if the user is **required to post before reading** other posts to the topic.

Select level of availability.

Availability

- Show immediately
- Specify dates to open (show) and/or close (hide)

Select if all read messages should be marked.

Mark All Messages in Conversations Read

- Automatically mark all messages in a conversation as read

Select grading options.

Grading

Gradebook Item:

You can associate a grade from the Gradebook to this topic, but there are no existing Gradebook items.

This options allows for the particular Forum topic to be linked to [Gradebook](#) (grading options will be regulated in Gradebook itself).

Moderate the permission level of roles.

Role	Permission Level
Instructor	Owner
Customize	
Student	Contributor
Customize	
StudentTestRole	Contributor
Customize	
Teaching Assistant	Contributor
Customize	

[Save](#) [Save Draft](#) [Save Settings & Add Topic](#) [Cancel](#)

This section allows the user to regulate the Permission Level of each user. These options include **Author**, **Contributor**, **None**, **Nonediting Author**, **Owner**, **Reviewer**, and **Custom**.

Customize settings.

Instructor Owner

[Customize](#)

- New Forum
- New Topic
- New Conversation
- Reply
- Post to Gradebook
- Change Settings
- Read
- Mark as Read
- Moderate Messages

Edit Messages

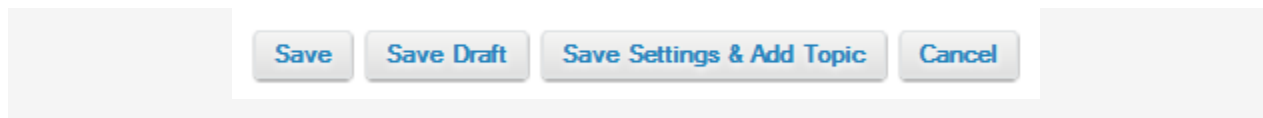
None
 Own
 All

Delete Messages

None
 Own
 All

After selecting the **Customize** drop-down arrow, there are a wealth of settings that pertain to the level of permission each role has and the settings that are available to each corresponding role. Please note that selecting a **Permission Level** (noted in the last step) will automatically check corresponding boxes. There is only a need to manually check boxes if a **Custom Permission Level** is desired.

Save the topic.



The topic can be saved in three different ways. Click **Save** to save and publish the topic. Click **Save Draft** to save the topic without publishing it for other users to view. Click **Save Settings & Add Topic** to save the topic, publish the topic, and begin a new topic with the same settings as the previous topic. There is also an option to **Cancel** the topic.

How do I post to a forum?

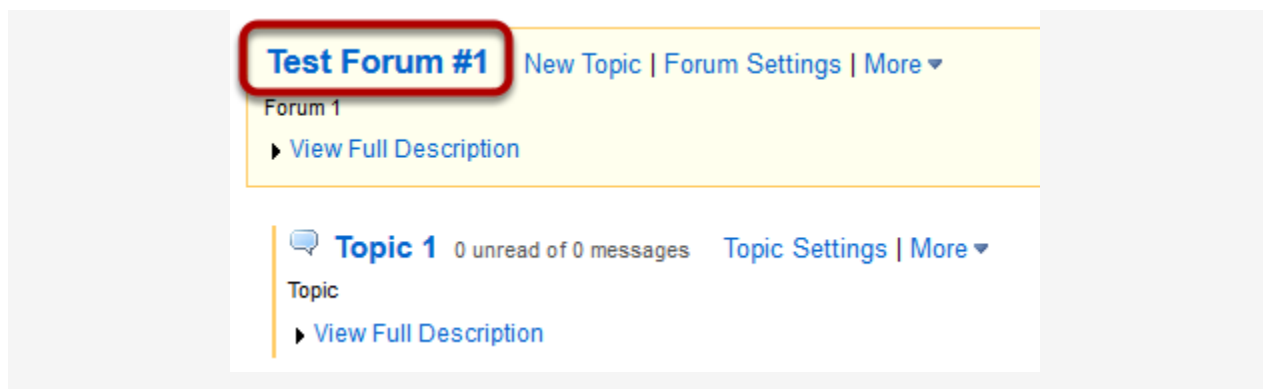
Forums are organizational units that group topics within the site. You cannot post directly to a forum, you must first enter a topic and post your message there.

In order to post to a forum topic, you will **Start a New Conversation** or thread.

Go to Forums.

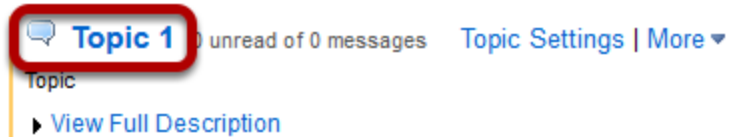
Select the **Forums** tool from Tool Menu in your site.

Choose a forum.



This is an example of a forum. The forum title will appear in bold and in a larger font than the topic titles indented beneath it. If you would like to view more information about the forum, you may click **View Full Description** to view any additional information provided by the site owner.

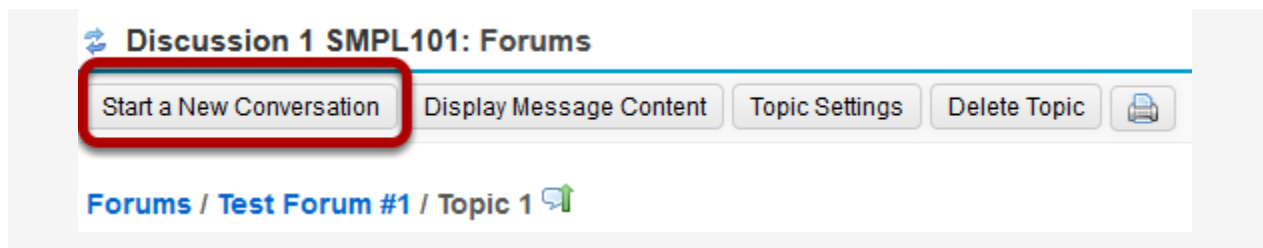
Select a topic within the forum.



This is an example of a forum topic. If you would like to view more information about the topic, you may click **View Full Description** to view any additional information provided by the site owner.

Click on the title of the topic to enter that topic.

Click Start a New Conversation.

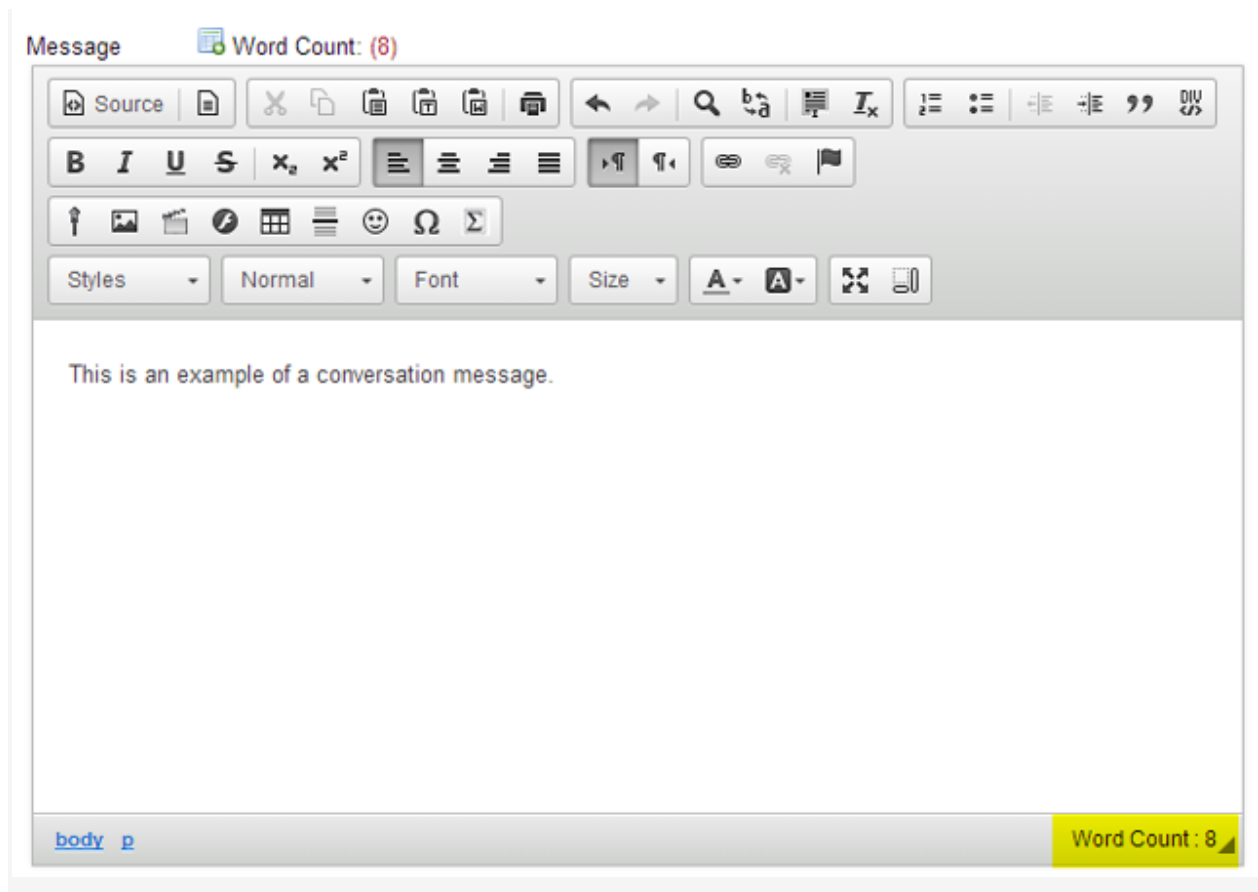


This button is located at the top of the page, below the title of the course. Starting a new conversation is the same thing as starting a new thread.

After you click the **Start a New Conversation** button, the message composition window will appear.

Enter a title.

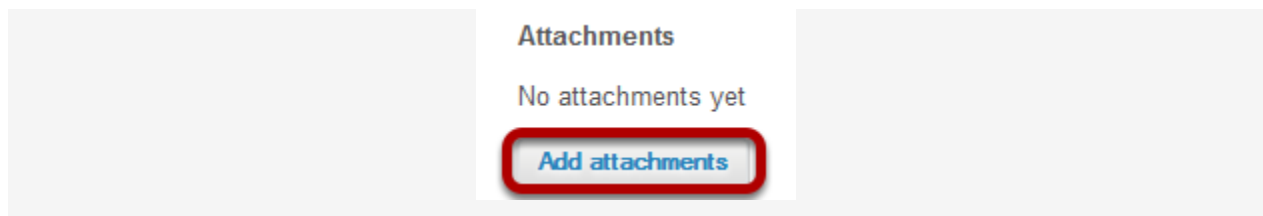
Enter a message.



This description box allows the use of [Rich Text Editor](#).

Note: The message box will keep track of word count in the lower right corner.

Add any attachments. (Optional)



If desired, there is an option to upload attachments to the conversation. Click **Add attachments** to browse for and select your file.

Click Post.



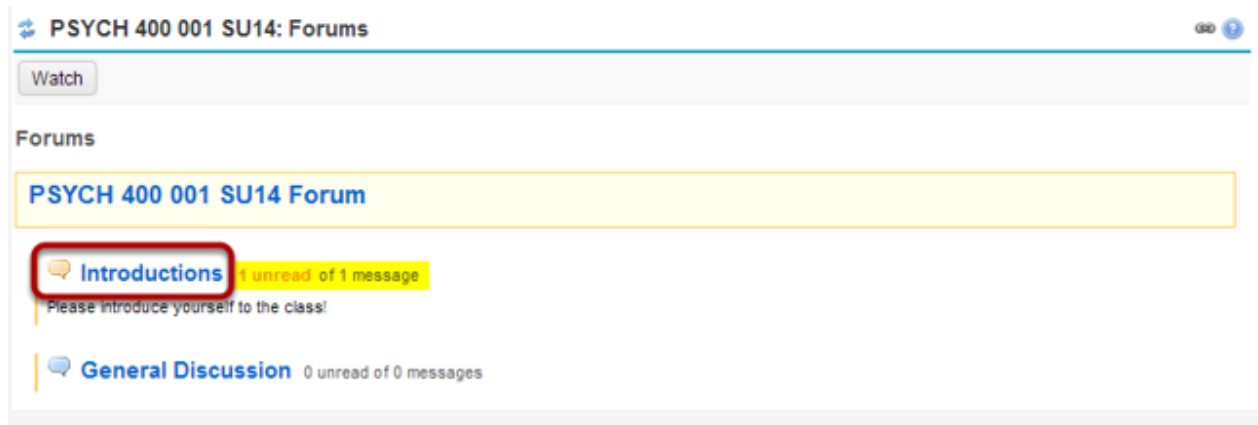
After completing the conversation, click **Post** to make the conversation viewable

How do I reply to a forum post (i.e. conversation)?

Go to Forums.

Select the **Forums** tool from Tool Menu in your site.

Choose a topic within a forum.

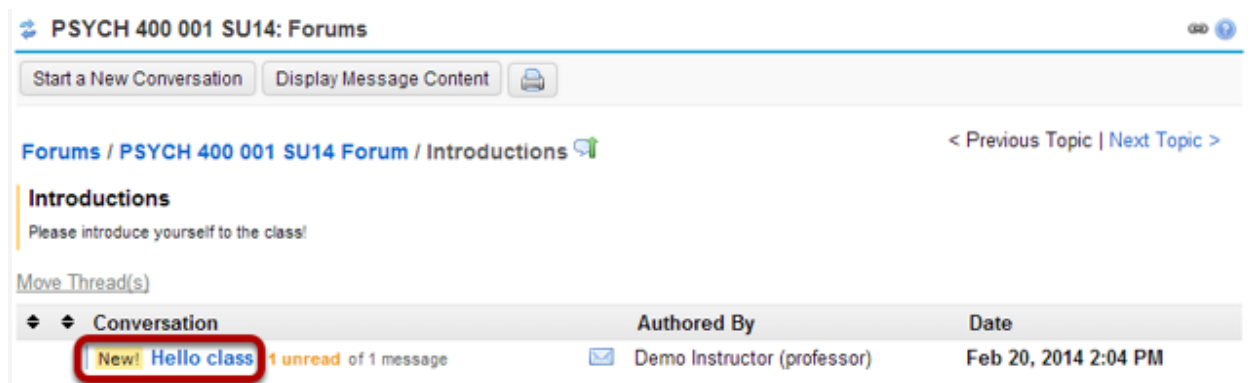


The screenshot shows the 'PSYCH 400 001 SU14: Forums' page. A 'Watch' button is visible. Under the 'Forums' section, the 'PSYCH 400 001 SU14 Forum' is highlighted. Below it, the 'Introductions' topic is selected and highlighted with a red box. It has a yellow message indicator that says '1 unread of 1 message'. Below the topic title, the text 'Please introduce yourself to the class!' is visible. The 'General Discussion' topic is also listed below it with '0 unread of 0 messages'.

Click on the title of the topic to enter the topic.

Note: The message indicator text next to the topic title will tell you how many messages have been posted within that topic, and how many of them are new or unread.

Click on the title of an existing post to view the conversation.



The screenshot shows the 'Introductions' topic page. At the top, there are buttons for 'Start a New Conversation', 'Display Message Content', and a printer icon. The breadcrumb trail is 'Forums / PSYCH 400 001 SU14 Forum / Introductions'. Below the topic title, the text 'Please introduce yourself to the class!' is visible. A 'Move Thread(s)' link is present. Below that, a table lists the conversation:

Conversation	Authored By	Date
New! Hello class 1 unread of 1 message	✉ Demo Instructor (professor)	Feb 20, 2014 2:04 PM

Click reply.

The screenshot shows a Blackboard forum interface. At the top, the page title is "PSYCH 400 001 SU14: Forums". Below the title bar, there is a navigation area with a button labeled "Reply to Initial Message" circled in red and marked with a "1". To its right is a "Mark as Read" button and a printer icon. Below this is a breadcrumb trail: "Forums / PSYCH 400 001 SU14 Forum / Introductions / Hello class". There are also navigation links: "< Previous Conversation | Next Conversation >". A "View" dropdown menu is set to "by Conversation". A button "Go to first new message" is visible. The main content area shows a post by "Demo Instructor (professor)" dated "Feb 20, 2014 2:04 PM" with "Read by: 1". The post title is "New! Hello class". A "Reply" button is circled in red and marked with a "2". The post content reads: "Welcome everyone! I will be your instructor this term. I look forward to working with you! Sincerely, Your Professor".

You have two different options for replying to the post within the Forums tool.

1. Click **Reply to Initial Message** at the top of the conversation to reply to the first message in the conversation or thread.
2. Click the **Reply** link within the message itself to reply to the item you are currently viewing. This is the option you want to use if you would like to reply to someone else's reply.

Compose your message.

Reply to Forum Conversation

PSYCH 400 001 SU14 Forum / Introductions

Please introduce yourself to the class!

Replying to: **Hello class** Demo Instructor (professor) (Feb 20, 2014 2:04 PM)

Hide message you are replying to

Welcome everyone!

I will be your instructor this term. I look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,



















Your Professor











Required items marked with *










* Reply Title





Re: Hello class

Message  Insert original text  Word Count:

Source                  

B *I* U ~~S~~ x_2 x^2          

Styles - Format - Font - Size -    

Word Count : 0

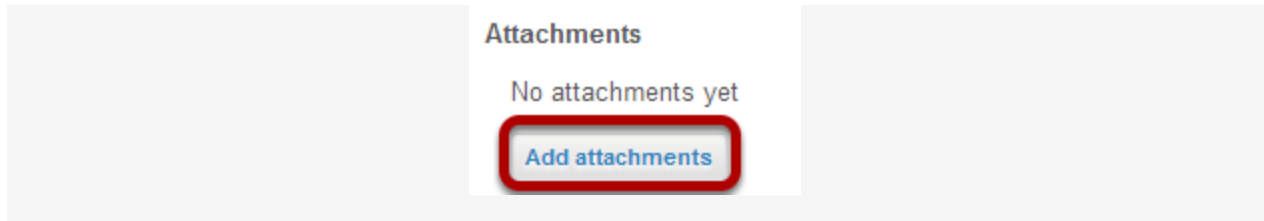
Attachments

No attachments yet

[Add attachments](#)

[Post](#)

[Cancel](#)



Click the **Add attachments** button if you would like to browse for and attach a file.

Click Post.



After you have finished your reply, click **Post** to add your message to the conversation.