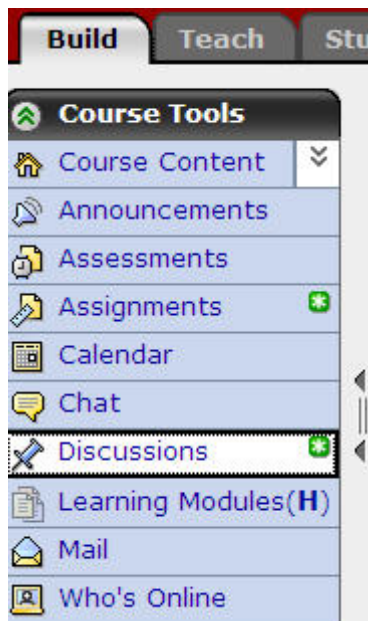


Creating Discussion Topics

Discussion boards are a great way for students to discuss course materials. Discussion boards provide areas for groups to work together and spaces for students to get to know one another. The Discussion tool is an asynchronous tool, which means participants do not need to be online at the same time to communicate. Students can compose and post their messages at any hour or from any place with an Internet connection. The Discussion tool is one of the most widely used tools in Vista.

In Vista 4.0, you can decide if you want the discussion topic graded. If you do, Vista will create a column in the *Grade Book* for you, and you will be able to look at all student postings to determine grades.

To create a discussion topic, select **Discussions** under *Course Tools* on either the *Build* or *Teach* tabs.



Creating a Topic

To create a topic, click **Create Topic**. Decide which kind of topic you would like to create: threaded topic, blog topic, or journal topic.

Create Discussion Topic

What type of discussion topic would you like to create?

 **Threaded topic.**

Create a threaded topic for a more traditional online discussion. Users post and reply to messages. Replies that are associated with the same post are grouped together, creating message threads that can be expanded and collapsed.

 **Blog topic.**

Create a collaborative blog (weblog) space by allowing participants to post a chronological series of entries on a particular topic. Participants can then add comments to any blog entry.

 **Journal topic.**

Create a journal topic to give Students a place for their own writing. The journals can be kept private between the Student and the Section Instructor or shared with the class.

Next

Cancel

To create a Discussion Topic, you will need to decide the following:

- Title, Description, and Item Visibility
- Category
- Grading
- Peer Review
- Topic Behavior

Title, Description, and Item Visibility

Create Threaded Topic

*Title:

Description:

Use HTML

Item Visibility: Show Item

Hide Item

- Choose a title for the threaded topic. The title should be descriptive but short. You should also include a word, like "Discussion," so students will know what type of component they are working in.
- You can also include a description, which can be a lead question or an explanation about the topic. A description helps students know what they are going to be talking about within the topic. You can also include page numbers or any references.
- Select whether to show or hide the topic to students. This will allow you to create your threads but not release it until you are ready. If you hide the topic, select the **Show Item** radio button when you want to allow students to view it.

Category

Category: Topics can be organized into categories.

Select Category:



Categories help keep topics organized for both you and your students. You may want the students to post in groups, in which you can create a category for each group, or you can create the category based on a particular subject and add all group topics under it.

Note: The Category function only appears when you create a new topic.

- To add a topic to an existing category, select the category name.
- To create a new category, select **New Category** and enter a name and description.

The Category option allows you to group your topics together within the discussion area, which makes it easier for you and your students to find topics. If topics are not put into a specific category, they will be filed under "Uncategorized." Alternatively, if you do not have any categories for your topics, the "Uncategorized" section will not show up.

Grading

You can also grade discussion topic entries. To do this, decide how you want your grading set up.

Select grading options:

Grading

Topic is not gradable

Allow the topic to be graded

Numeric grade: Out of

Alphanumeric grade

Grade by Grading Form:

A column is automatically created for this topic in Grade Book

Grade Book column title:

Release grade to Students in *My Grades*

- **Topic is not gradable** - you will not have an option to give a grade through the tool.
- **Graded** - you have the option to give a numeric (include how much it is worth) or alphanumeric grade or use a grading form. Remember, if you use alphanumeric, this grade will not be able to be included within a calculation. The grading form will be considered a numeric column and

- will be set up ahead of time so you and students are aware of what is expected within the thread.
- You can create a different *Grade Book* column title than the title of the thread. This will allow you to shorten the name of the entry to fit within the *Grade Book* column.
 - The last option under *Grading* is to decide if you want to release the grade to students. This column will not be visible until there is a grade in it even if you release it when you create it. If you do not release it when you create it, you will have to manually enter the *Grade Book* and release it when you are ready.

Goals

You can associate a goal with topics so students will know what is expected of them.

Goals

Associate goals with this discussion topic.

Select Goals

Note: Goals are created under the Build Tab.

Peer Review

Another option when creating threaded topics is to decide if you want students to peer review each others' posts. Choose this if you want students to learn how to develop or sustain a discussion topic.

Peer Review (Expand this area to see more options.)

- Do not enable peer review in this topic
- Allow Students to review messages using a simple rating scale
Create Scale
- Allow Students to review messages using a grading form
Select Grading Form

If you do not want students to use peer review, select the first radio button, **Do not enable peer review in this topic**.


If you decide you want students to peer review their classmates' threaded entries and replies, select from the following Peer Review Options:

- Allow students to use a rating scale and include comments when reviewing a topic. The simple rating scale includes: needs improvement, below average, average, above average, and excellent. This can be changed if you want to specify another scale.
- Allow students to peer review using a grading form. You must design a grading form representative of what and how you want students to review posts. The grading form must be created before selecting this option.

Topic Behavior Options

The last option is to decide how students are going to interact.

Select the following Topic Behavior Options:

 **Topic Behavior Options** (Expand this area to see more options.)

Student Posting Rules

- Students can post messages and reply to messages
- Students can post messages but cannot reply to messages
- Students can reply to messages but cannot post messages
- Students can edit their messages after posting them

Lock this topic for Students (Section Instructors can post in a locked topic)

Author Identification

- Authors are identified by user names
- Authors are anonymous to Students

- **Student Posting Rules** - choose how students post and reply to messages. You can allow students to post and reply, just post new messages but not reply, or just reply but not post messages. You can

also decide if they can edit their own messages. If students are allowed to edit, you may lose a great learning experience of what the student posts first before going back and changing it.

- You can also lock topics, which means that it will be read-only. This is a way to keep students from posting in the topic too early or too late. You can unlock the discussion when you are ready to grade it.
- **Author Identification** - select this radio button if students are identified or anonymous when posting entries. Be careful with anonymity — students are already somewhat anonymous even if their names are displayed.

Once you click **Save** you will have a threaded topic under the Discussions tool that you can release to students.