



Creating Discussion Topics

Creating Topics allows you to create a forum where users can post messages to exchange ideas, record thoughts, and ask questions on a particular subject. When you create topics, you can add them to a category, or leave them uncategorized.

Topic Types

Discussion topics can be created in a threaded topic, a blog topic or a journal topic based on the desired use and functionality of the 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.

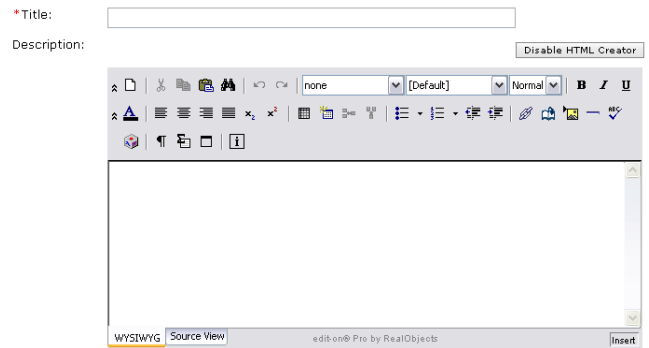
Topic Creation

Topic Title and Description

1. From the *Discussions* screen, do the following:
 - o To create a new topic:
 - a. Click Create Topic.

b. Select the topic type and click Next.

- o To edit an existing topic, click its ActionLinks menu and click Edit Properties.



2. Enter a title.

You will be required to include a title. This title should be descriptive, but short. It is recommended that you include "Discussion:" before the title so that students will know what type of component they are entering.

3. Enter a description:

You can also include a description, which can be a lead question or an explanation about the topic. This helps the students know what they are going to be talking about within the topic. You can also include page numbers or other references.

- o To enter a description in Plain Text format, enter it in the *Description* text box. The description will appear exactly as you have typed it.
 - o To enter a description in HTML format, you can use the HTML Creator or hand code the HTML:
 - a. To use the HTML Creator, click Enable HTML Creator.
 - b. To hand code the HTML:
 - a. Select *Use HTML*.
 - b. In the *Description* text box, enter the HTML code.
4. Next to *Item Visibility*, select whether to show or hide the item for Students.
5. Under *Category*, if you want to add the topic to a category, do one of the following from the *Select Category* drop-down list:

This functionality only appears if you are creating a new topic. To add the topic to an existing category, select the category.

- o To create a category:

- a. Select *Create New Category*.
- b. Enter a name and description.

Grading

Under *Grading*, select whether you want Students to receive a grade based on their participation in the topic:

- o If you do not want the topic to be gradable, select *Topic is not gradable*.
- o If you want the topic to be gradable, under *Allow the topic to be graded*:

Select a grading scheme:

You can only change your original grading selection from alphanumeric to numeric, from numeric to alphanumeric, and from one grading form to a different grading form.

- To assign a numeric grade, select *Numeric grade* and, in the *Out of* text box enter the maximum grade that can be attained.
- To assign a letter grade, select *Alphanumeric grade*.
- To grade the topic using a grading form:

Removing a grading form:

If you are editing the topic and you remove or replace a grading form, all results are deleted from the topic's Grade Book column.

1. If you need to remove a grading form that is currently selected, click the Remove icon next to its title.
2. Select *Grade by grading form* and then click Select Grading Form.
3. Select the grading form. To see the content of the grading form, click its title.
4. Click Select.

If you want the Grade Book column for this topic to have a name other than the topic title, enter the name in the *Grade Book column title* text box.

If you want Students to see their grades for this topic, select *Release grade to Students in My Grades*.

Goals

Under *Goals*, if you want to associate a goal with this topic:

1. Click Select Goals.
2. Select the items and click Add Selected.

Peer Review

Next to *Peer Review*, click the Expand/Collapse icon to set peer review preferences:

- If you do not want to allow peer review, select *Do not enable Peer Review in this topic*.
- If you want to use peer review:
 - Select the type of peer review:
 - If you want to allow peer review using a simple scale:
 - i. Select *Allow Students to review messages using a simple rating scale* and then click Create Scale.
 - ii. Set up the rating scale:
 - To include instructions, enter them in the text box.
 - To allow users to include a comment with the rating, select *Allow users to justify their review*.
 - To add a star rating, click Add Rating and enter the label in the text box.
 - To remove a star rating, click Remove Rating.
 - To change the label of a rating, click its Edit icon.
 - iii. Click Save.
 - If you want to allow peer review using a grading form:

- i. Select *Allow Students to review messages using a grading form* and then click *Select Grading Form*.
 - ii. Select the grading form. To see the content of the grading form, click its title.
 - iii. Click *Select*.
- a. Under *Peer review visibility*, select one of the following:
 - *Students see reviews of their own messages only*.
 - *Students see reviews of all messages*. If you want these reviews to display only after Students have submitted their own review, also select *Make other reviews visible only after submitting a review*.
- b. To prevent reviewers' names from displaying to Students, select *Make reviews anonymous*. Section Instructors can always see reviewers' names.

Topic Behavior Options

Next to *Topic Behavior Options*, click the Expand/Collapse icon to set *Student Posting Rules* for the topic (These options do not apply to journal topics.):

- If you want to allow Students to contribute to a topic:
 - Select one of the following:
 - *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*.
- To allow Students to edit their messages, select *Students can edit their messages after posting them*.
- If you want to allow Students to read messages but prevent them from contributing to a topic, select *Lock this topic for Students*. Section Instructors and Teaching Assistants can post messages to a locked topic.
- If you want to make a topic available to a group of students or on specific dates only, apply selective release criteria to the topic.

Author Identification

Under *Author Identification*, specify whether Students' names should display with their messages:

- For user names to display, select *Authors are identified by user names*.
- For postings to remain anonymous, select *Authors are anonymous to Students*. Author names display to Instructors and Teaching Assistants.

If you are creating a journal topic, under *Journal Privacy*, specify whether Students' journals are public or private. If a journal is private, only the Student and Section Instructor can access the journal.

Under *Artifact Creation for Portfolios*, you can allow Students to save their discussion messages for use in their portfolios.

Click Save.

Making the Discussion Topics Available to Students

There are several locations within eCampus Vista where you may make the discussion available to students. You can make the component available:

- **on the homepage or in a folder on the homepage** – If the topic is general to the entire course, you might want to make it available on the homepage, giving participants quick access to view the discussion.
- **in a Learning Module** – Placing the discussion in the Learning Module is great if the topic is specific to a particular content area in the course. Placing it in the Learning Module along side the other components of content for this particular Learning Module is a great way to keep content components together.
- **in the Action Menu of a Learning Module** – The action menu is a part of the Learning Module. You would place a topic here if it is specific to a certain component in the learning module or if it is general to the course, like the topics on the homepage.

Showing or Hiding Topics

You can make items such as chat rooms, learning modules, web links, media library collection, or file visible to Students by showing the item in your course. Alternatively, if you do not want an item to be visible yet, you can hide it temporarily.

1. To show an item:
 - a. Locate the item and click it's Action Menu icon.
 - b. Click Show item.

2. To hide an item:
 - a. Locate the items and click its Action Menu icon.
 - b. Click Hide Item.