

Student Tip Sheet For Discussion Forums in Blackboard

Discussion forums are widely used at Algonquin to support student learning, and foster learning communities within courses and programs. This handout focuses on participating in a forum and ways to use forums as efficiency tools (e.g., sharing files, forming groups, signing up for activities).

N.B. You will get the most out of the guide if you have a Blackboard Discussion Forum open as you follow the instructions.

Where forums are located

A discussion forum is created within a Discussion Board which can be created in two places in Blackboard: in the Communication area where the whole or part of the class can participate and in the Group area where only the members of that group can contribute to the discussion.

Although only the teacher can add a forum, students can request that forums be set up for a variety of reasons (e.g., to study together before a test, or to collaborate in putting a project together).

* One mouse click is all you need when working in Blackboard. In fact, double-clicking may slow down Blackboard's performance (with the exception of when you are adding an attachment).

1. Steps for creating a thread:

A *thread* is: a) the initial post and the entire series of replies to that post within a forum b) a sub-topic of a forum that may be pre-set by the teacher to keep the forum organized and focused **or** c) a sub-topic initiated by a participant as the discussion unfolds (forum options set by the instructor will determine whether students can add their own subtopics).

- 1) Open the forum by clicking on the forum name.
- 2) Click on *Thread* in the upper left corner.
- 3) Add the subject and message for the posting.
- 4) Once your posting is complete, click on *Submit* in the lower right corner.

If you want to keep this posting private until you have finished it, click on save. For example, you might be planning to attach a file but it is not yet finished, so you can create the message that will accompany the attachment and return to it to add the attachment and submit the post later on.

2. Steps for adding an attachment

- 1) Once you have added the subject and message of a posting, click on *Attach a file*.
- 2) Click on *Browse* and go to the location of the file you want to attach.
- 3) Double-click on the file name (you will now see the file name in the browse window).
- 4) Scroll down and click *Submit* if you are ready to publish the post **or** click *Save* if you are not ready to publish it (only you can see a saved message/attachment).

3. Steps for opening and saving an attachment

- 1) Open the message that has the attachment.

You can see the blue underlined link to the attachment in the body of the message.

- 2) Right click on file name, and then left click on *Save target as*. Save the file to your computer or N: drive.

4. Steps for replying to a message

- 1) Open a thread by clicking on its name.
- 2) Click on *Reply* (located to the right of the Subject).
- 3) Add your message and an attachment if required.

Click on *Submit* if you are ready to publish it or on *Save* if it is a work in progress to which you will return to later. Remember that, since it is an unpublished draft, only you can see it.

5. Opening a Saved (draft) thread

- 1) By default, Blackboard shows the *Published(submitted)* messages. To view your draft thread(s), change the *Display* option located in the upper left of the window to *Show All*, then click on *Go*. Note: You will see *(draft)* next to your posting.
- 2) You can now open the message and edit it and either post it or save it again. Remember that only you can see this draft message so if it is important for your colleagues to know that you are working on the posting, you may wish to send them an email to this effect.

6. Opening a Saved (draft) reply to a thread

- 1) Open the thread where you have a saved a draft reply.
- 2) You will see *(draft)* next to your posting.
- 3) You can now open the message and edit it and either post it or save it again.

Once again, remember that only you can see this draft message. If it is important for your colleagues to know that you are working on the posting, you may wish to inform them of this by email.

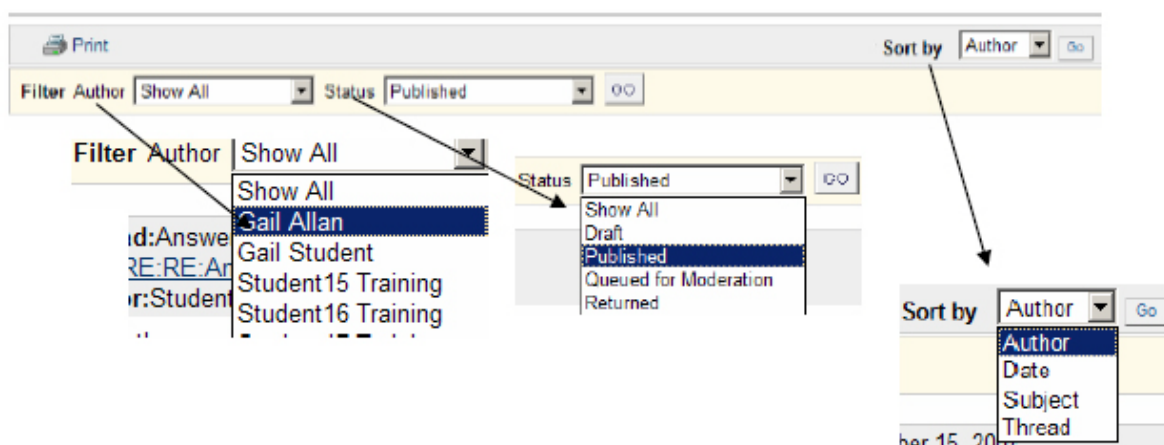
7. Collecting Posts

- 1) Select the threads you want to collect. If the list is lengthy, click on *Select All* (located at the lower left), then on *Go* to select all of the threads in that forum. You can de-select any threads that you want to exclude them from the collection.
- 2) Be patient if there are many posts to collect, especially if they have file attachments, images, etc.

8. Sorting Posts

By default posts are sorted according to author, thread and date (from most to least current). This means that all of the posts in one thread are kept together and sorted by author and date.

- Posts are sorted, once they have been collected, in one of three ways: a single thread, selected threads, or the whole forum.
- Read and unread posts appear in the collection as published so there is no way, in this view, of discerning which ones have/have not been read.
- There are **three sorting areas** in the collect view

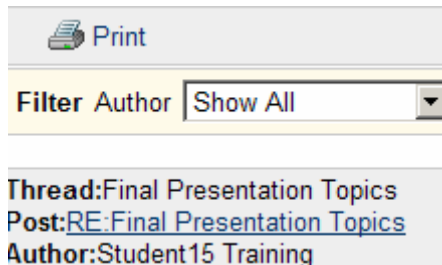


Author	Status	Sort By
<p><i>Show All</i> is the default setting which lists all of the posts in that forum.</p> <p>Individual authors can be chosen.</p> <p>Remember that by default, the posts are collected one thread at a time. Within each thread they are sorted by author and date (least to most recent).</p>	<p>In the Status frame, <i>Published</i> appears to be the default, but in fact the <i>Show All</i> in the author filter takes precedence.</p> <p>By changing the status, you can view all of the posts including the drafts, those in the moderation queue, those that have been returned, and those that are published.</p> <p>Selecting the individual status options will collect only those types of posts.</p>	<p>Sorting by author, date, and thread are self-explanatory. Sorting by <i>Subject</i> gives you an alphabetical view of the threads using the subject line.</p>
	Select <i>Go</i> to sort by status.	Select <i>Go</i> to sort by author, date or subject

9. Printing Posts

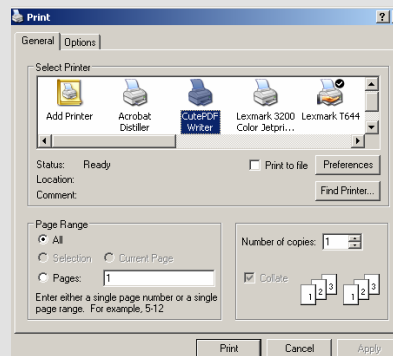
You can print an entire forum or selected threads in the collect view.

- Collect the thread(s)/forum as per the instructions in this handout.
- Click on the Print button in the upper left corner of the screen.

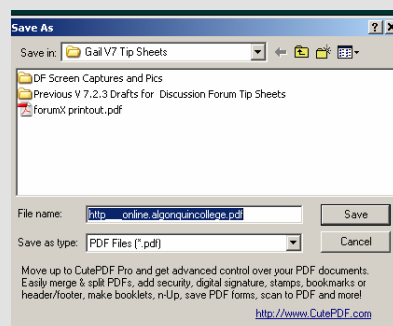


- The header and footer will show the name of the forum, numbers of pages in the file, and the date printed.

* If your computer has a pdf writer, you can create a pdf version of the forum and save it locally.



* In the Save As view, rename the file using the title of the thread or forum.



* Save the file to the folder/directory of your choice.