

For Students: Using Blackboard Discussion Boards

The Discussion Boards on Blackboard are organized into **forums**. Forums are defined by the instructor and constitute the major topics of discussion. Within forums, messages are organized into **threads**. Threads consist of an initial message along with all replies to that message as well as responses to the replies. When your instructor defines a forum, he or she also decides whether or not to allow attachments, anonymous postings, and whether to allow students to create new threads within the forum. Because of this, you may find that some forums in some courses allow options that are not available in other forums or other courses.

Accessing the Discussion Board

To use the **Discussion Board**, click the **Communication** button on the left side of the screen and then select **Discussion Board**. A list of the defined forums will be displayed. When you select a forum, you will see a list of the current messages in that forum organized by threads as shown below. Messages in a thread will appear indented below the original message. To collapse all the messages in one thread--so that you only see the original message title in the thread, click on the small box with a minus (-) sign. To expand the messages in a thread, click on the small box with a plus (+) sign.

Reading Messages

To read a message, select it from the list. You can then move to other messages in the same thread by selecting the **Previous Message** or **Next Message** button, or by directly selecting a message from the **Current Thread Detail**. To move back from viewing a message to the list of threads, select the **OK** button from the bottom of the display. To return to the list of forums, select the **OK** button again.

Replying to Messages

To reply to a message within a thread, select the **Reply** button located at the lower right corner of the message. We recommend using the default of **Smart Text** for the format of your message. This will make URLs you enter clickable, but will not alter other formatting of your message.

Some forums may allow you to attach a file from your computer to your message by clicking a **Browse** button and selecting a file. If the **Browse** button is not there, this means that attachments are not allowed in this forum.

Once you are satisfied with your message, you may submit it directly by choosing the **Submit** button, or preview it with the **Preview** button. Preview allows you to see how your message will appear on the board. To post your message after previewing it, press the **Submit** button. To go back and edit it, choose the **Back** button. You may also press **Cancel** to return to the list of threaded messages without posting your message.

Some discussion forums will allow you to create new threads to start a new topic of discussion. From the thread list, a **Start New Thread** button will appear at the lower right if this is an option. Press this button to create a new message that will appear as a new thread in the discussion.