

Discussion forums offer great opportunities for building community beyond the classroom. They allow students to reflect publicly about what they are learning and to negotiate shared understanding.

There are five types of forums in Moodle. This guide will focus on the **Standard forum for general use** format. To learn about other forum types and how they work, see the [comprehensive forum guide](#).

Create a Forum

1. With editing turned on, click on **Add an activity or resource....** and select **Moodlerooms forum** (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Select Moodlerooms Forum

2. Enter a brief **name** for the forum (Figure 2). This title will determine the width of the forum's column in the gradebook—provide due dates and other details in the description area, not in the name.

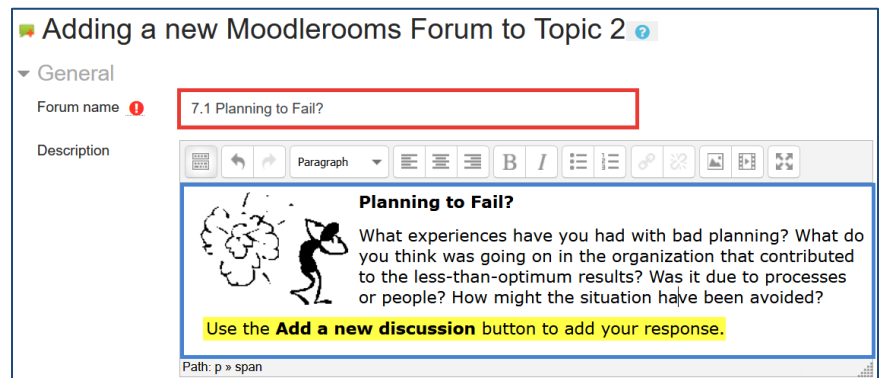


Figure 2: Add Title and Forum Prompt

3. Enter a discussion prompt in the **Description** area (Figure 2), including **instructions for students** describing how to participate in the forum, such as "Use the **Add a new discussion** button to add your response." Embed a link to a video or file resource, if appropriate. Be specific and clear about what you are asking students to discuss, reiterate expectations for posting (e.g., one original post and replies to two students, citation requirements, etc.), and due dates, if any.

4. Check the **Display description on course page** box (Figure 3) to have the prompt shown on the course main page. (Keep in mind that students will have to scroll past it to access other materials in your course. If you display the prompt, consider turning the display off when the forum is completed.) The **Display recent posts on course page** option will highlight the six most recent posts.

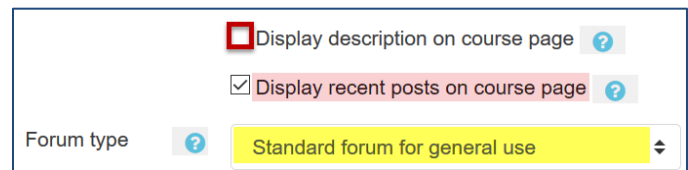


Figure 3: Display Options & Forum Types

5. The **Standard forum for general use** forum type (Figure 3) is the most generally used.

Key Forum Options

While there are many possibilities in setting up a forum, this guide will highlight just a few options that you need to consider—it's safe to leave the other default settings as they are.

Note: Forums do not have date settings for availability as assignments do; they are visible and available, or hidden.

Attachments. If you want students to be able to attach files to their posts, indicate the number of files they may upload with each post (Figure 4).

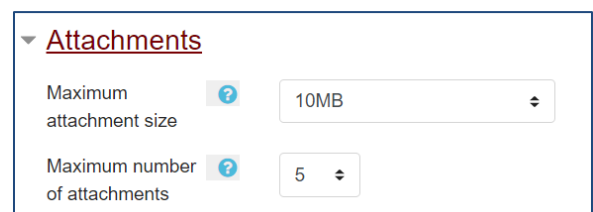


Figure 4: Attachments

Forum Quick Guide

Grade. To give one overall grade for a student's participation in a forum, choose "Manual" as the **Grade Type** (Figure 5). To attach points directly to each post in the discussion itself, choose "Rating." (See **Grading Forums**, next page.)

In the **Grade** option area, choose **Point** to assign a score or **None** if the forum will be ungraded.

Note: Selecting **Point** will automatically create an item in the gradebook for this forum.

Ratings. Important: For "Rating" enabled forums, you must open this option area and indicate how you want Moodle to calculate scores in the **Aggregate type** field. Most instructors use **Sum of ratings** to calculate forum scores (Figure 6).

Note: The total sum will not exceed the total points possible.

For forums set up for "Manual" scoring, make sure this option is set to "No rating."

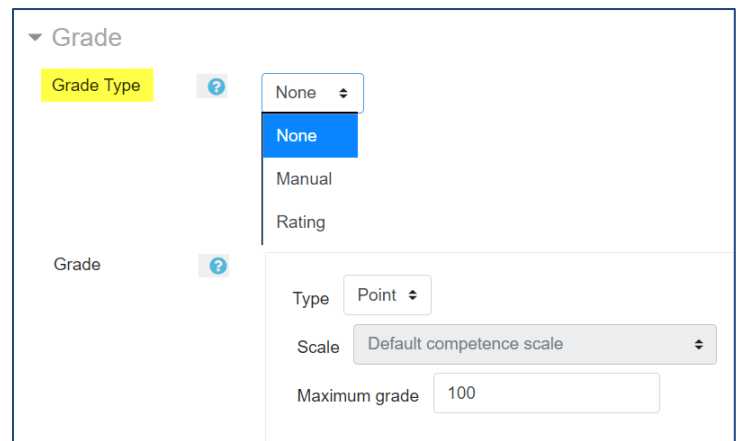
Set dates in the **Restrict ratings to items with dates in this range** field if you want to limit the posts that you evaluate in a forum set for "Rating." Students will still be able to post after the closing date, but late posts will not be accompanied by a scoring menu.

Common module settings. These settings control availability (visibility) of the forum and group access (Figure 7). In the **Group mode** field, select **Separate** or **Visible** groups to limit access to the discussion to groups of students rather than having it open to the entire class.

- **Separate groups** – Posts will only be visible to the members of each group (and to the instructor). Students will not be able to see posts made by other groups.
- **Visible groups** – All posts will be visible to all students, but only members of a group will be able to reply to the posts of their fellow group members.
Caution: The visible group setting can be confusing to students who expect to be able to reply in all forums.

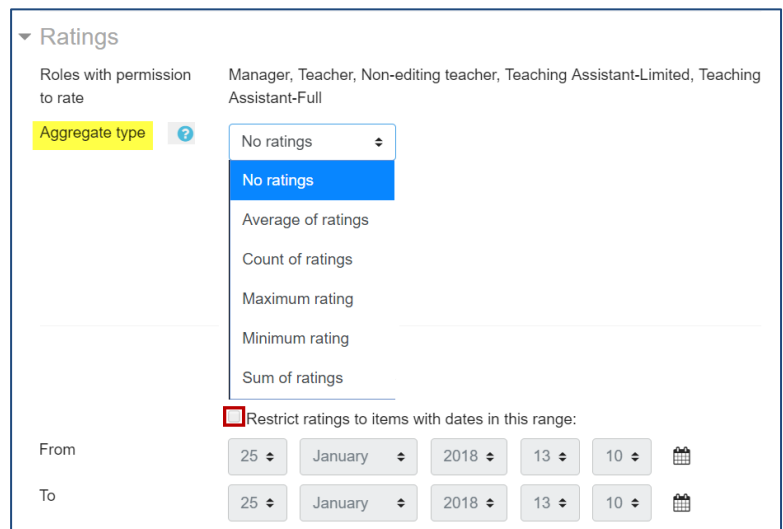
Group Forum Tips

- You only need to create one forum for groups to work in—you don't need to create a separate forum for each group.



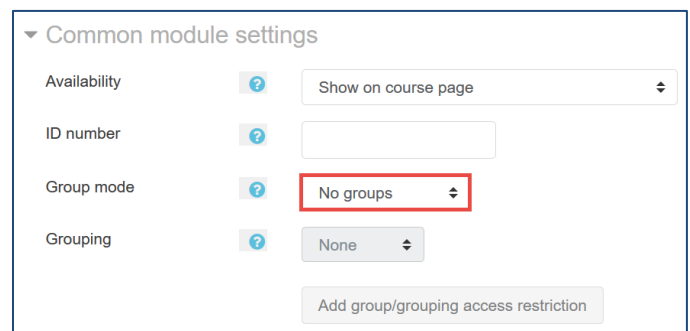
The screenshot shows the 'Grade' configuration section. The 'Grade Type' dropdown menu is open, showing options: 'None' (selected), 'Manual', and 'Rating'. Below this, the 'Grade' dropdown is set to 'Manual'. The 'Type' dropdown is set to 'Point'. The 'Scale' dropdown is set to 'Default competence scale'. The 'Maximum grade' field is set to '100'.

Figure 5: Grade Type & Grade



The screenshot shows the 'Ratings' configuration section. The 'Roles with permission to rate' field is set to 'Manager, Teacher, Non-editing teacher, Teaching Assistant-Limited, Teaching Assistant-Full'. The 'Aggregate type' dropdown menu is open, showing options: 'No ratings' (selected), 'Average of ratings', 'Count of ratings', 'Maximum rating', 'Minimum rating', and 'Sum of ratings'. The 'Restrict ratings to items with dates in this range' checkbox is checked. The 'From' and 'To' date pickers are set to '25 January 2018 13:10'.

Figure 6: Aggregate Types



The screenshot shows the 'Common module settings' section. The 'Availability' dropdown is set to 'Show on course page'. The 'ID number' field is empty. The 'Group mode' dropdown menu is open, showing options: 'No groups' (selected), 'Separate groups', and 'Visible groups'. The 'Grouping' dropdown is set to 'None'. There is a button labeled 'Add group/grouping access restriction'.

Figure 7: Common Module Settings

Forum Quick Guide

- To make a post that all groups can respond to, check the **Post a copy to all groups** box (Figure 8), otherwise students will be able to see your post, but won't be able to reply to it.
- Students not enrolled in a group won't be able to see or make any posts in a forum set for Separate or Visible groups.
- To learn more about Groups and Groupings, see the related article in the [Moodle Knowledgebase](#).

Grading in Forums

Forums Set for Rating. In "Rating" forums, each post will feature a pull-down menu in the lower left corner (Figure 9). Select the score you wish to assign from the points possible.

Special Considerations When Using Ratings

- You **must** choose an aggregation method in the **Ratings** options area (Figure 6, p. 2) in order for the scores you assign to student posts to be recorded in the gradebook.
- It's not possible to assign points in a forum to a student who does not post. Zeros must be assigned in the gradebook.

Forums Set for Manual Grading. We recommend using the [Single item option](#) in the gradebook for entering forum grades manually.

Special Consideration When Using Manual Grading

- For manual grading, leave the aggregation method in the **Ratings** options area (Figure 6, p. 2) set to the default of "No ratings."

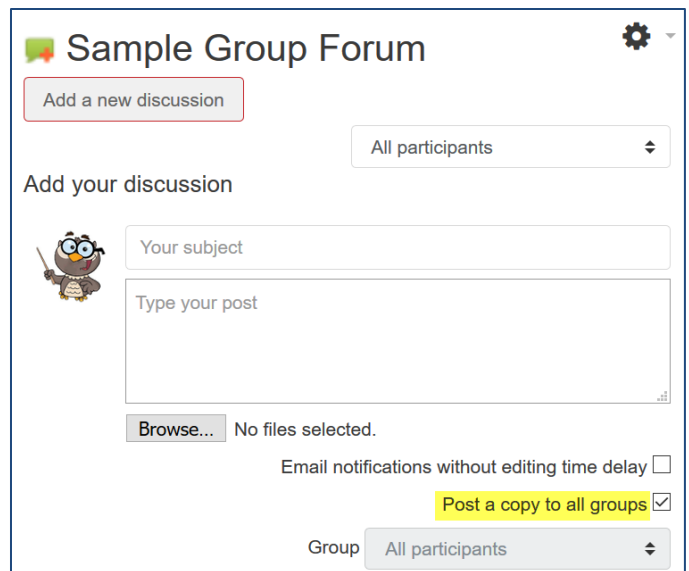


Figure 8: Post to All Groups



Figure 9: Grading Post with Ratings