

Competencies

After reading this document, you will be able to:

- ◆ Create, edit, delete, respond, and attach files (when appropriate) to asynchronous communication tools
- ◆ Grade discussion posts

Discussions Overview

The *Discussions* tool allows you, your students, and your teaching assistants to send, read, and search for messages. You can also create *topics*, which center discussion around particular subjects. Topics can be public or private, and graded or not. Everyone in your course can access public topics, while private topics are available only to selected students and teaching assistants. By default, *Discussions* contains one public topic: *Default Topic*. Topics can be organized inside of categories. Topics include threaded discussions boards, blogs, and journals.

The ability to create and manage discussion topics and categories is available on the Build or Teach Tabs. However, grading only occurs when on the Teach Tab. Students can review or grade each other's posts using peer review and a rating scale set by the instructor. The Discussions located on Student View Tab is under the Student Demo identity. Any messages posted while you are on the Student View Tab will show the author as Student Demo.

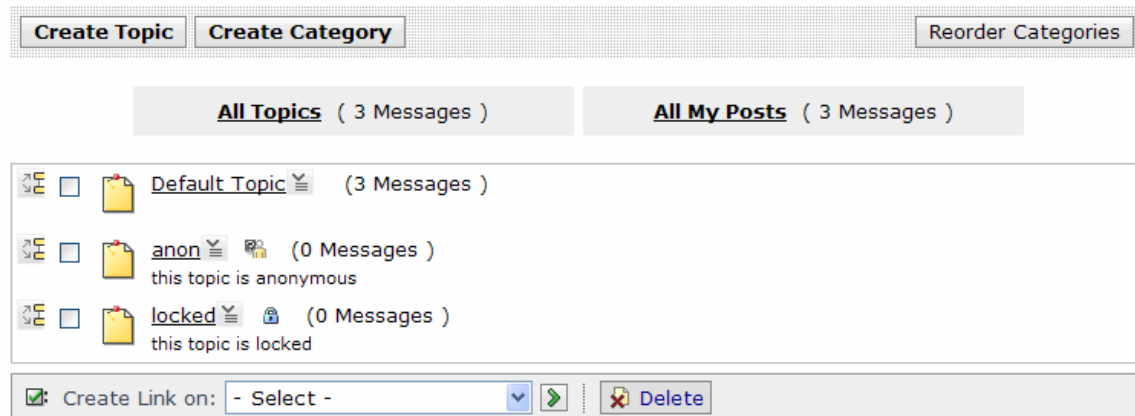


Figure 1: Discussions (Teach Tab view)

Reading and Posting Messages

You can use the *Discussions* tool to compose and post messages to a course discussion. You also may read messages posted by other discussion participants and post replies to them if you so desire.

Composing and Posting a Message

This feature of the *Discussions* tool enables users to weigh in on a topic of discussion. Users may take as much time as needed to compose and review a message before posting it. In addition, users can choose to attach files to their postings.

To compose and post a message

In the *Discussions* table, click on a Topic name to enter it.

- 2 Click **Create message**. The Create Message window opens.

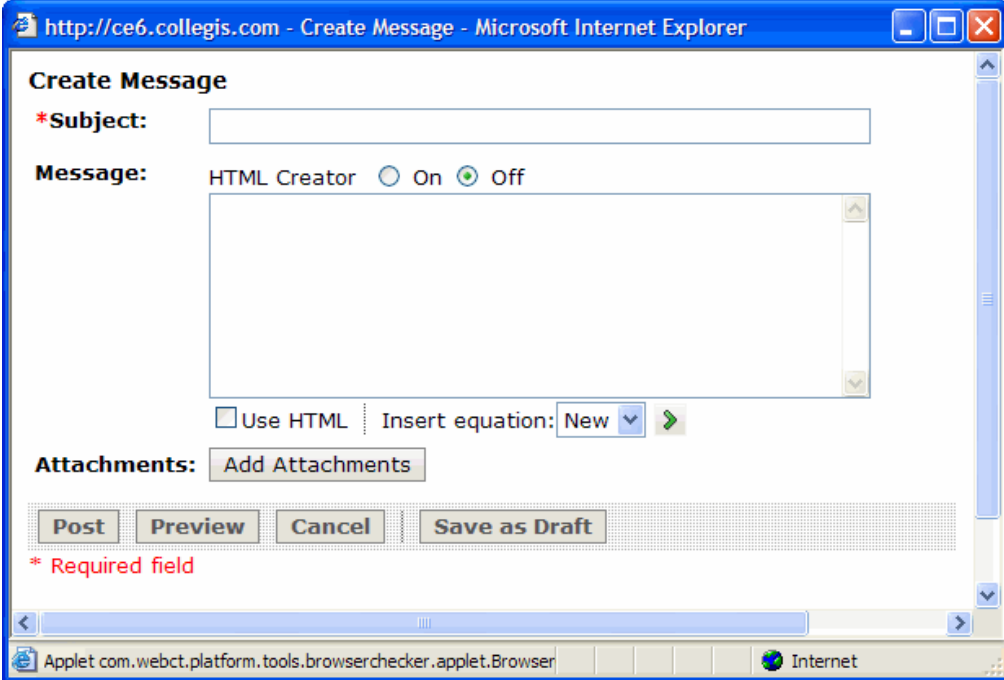


Figure 2: Create Message window

- 3 Complete the *Subject* field, and then type your message in the designated text box. Blank subjects are not allowed.
- 4 If you want to attach a file:
 - a Click **Add Attachment**. The *Get Files* window displays.
 - b Choose the location of the file:
 - **My Files**: storage on CE 6.0 server for files associate with your user name
 - **Class Files**: storage on CE 6.0 server for files associate with the particular course and section number
 - **My Computer**: access to your computer or disk in order upload files to the CE 6.0 server
 - c Select the file.
 - d Click **OK**. You can remove the attachment by clicking the icon to the right of the filename.



Note While in the *Create Message* window, you can click **Preview** to view your message as it will appear in the discussion. To return to the *Create Message* screen, click **Edit**. To post your message from the Preview window, click **Post**. To print your message from the Preview window, click **Print**.

Click **Post**.



Tip While in the *Create Message* window, you may cancel your entry at any time by clicking **Cancel**. The window closes, and your work is lost.

Reading, Replying to, and Quoting Posted Messages

After reading a posted message, discussion participants have the option of posting a message in direct reply. The reply may include a quote from the existing message as well.

To read a message

- 1 From the *Discussions* table, click the topic that contains the messages that you want to read. The *Messages* screen appears.
- 2 Click the hyperlinked subject of the message that you want to read. A window opens, displaying the message.
- 3 If the message includes a file attachment, you'll see a link to the file under attachments. For security reasons, it is recommended that you download the attachment to your own computer before you view it.
- 4 To download the file attachment to CE 6.0's File Manager:

Click the paper clip icon. The *Attachments* window opens.

Select the file you want to download, and click **Save to Folder**.

Select *My Files* or *Class Files* for the location, click **OK**.

- d Follow the instructions for downloading from your browser.
- e When the download is complete, click **Close** to return to the message window.

To download the file attachment to your computer:

Click the paper clip icon. The *Attachments* window opens.

Right-click on the hyperlink file name.

Choose **Save Target As**.

- d Follow the instructions for downloading from your browser.
- e When the download is complete, click **Close** to return to the message window.

- 5 When you have finished reading the message, click **Close this window** to close the popup window.

To reply to a message

- 1 Open the message to which you want to respond.
- 2 Click **Reply** in the message window.



Tip You also have the option of clicking **Forward** to send a private message to the author's CE 6.0 *Mail* account (assuming that this tool has been added to the course).

3 Enter your message in the designated text box. Blank subjects are not allowed.

4 If you want to attach a file:

a Click **Add Attachment**. The *Get Files* window displays.

b Choose the location of the file:

- **My Files**: storage on CE 6.0 server for files associate with your user name
- **Class Files**: storage on CE 6.0 server for files associate with the particular course and section number
- **My Computer**: access to your computer or disk in order upload files to the CE 6.0 server



Note While in the *Reply to Message* window, you can click **Preview** to view your message as it will appear in the discussion. To return to the *Reply to Message* screen, click **Edit**. To post your message from the Preview window, click **Post**. To print your message from the Preview window, click **Print**.

Click **Post**.

Navigating the Discussions Tool

The *Discussions* tool on the Build and Teach Tabs includes headings listing the following information:

- ◆ the current discussion topics
- ◆ the number of unread messages in each topic
- ◆ the total number of messages in each topic
- ◆ the status of the topic (*conditional*, *locked*, or *anonymous*)

Your location: **Discussions**

Create Topic **Create Category** **Reorder Categories**

All Topics (7 Messages) **All My Posts** (6 Messages)

Graded Topics ▾
Unit Discussions

Unit 1 Discussions ▾ (4 Messages)
Respond to questions 1 and 3 in the text. Then respond to at least 3 classmate. See rubric for grade criteria.

Uncategorized Topics

Default Topic ▾ (3 Messages)

anon ▾ (0 Messages)
this topic is anonymous

locked ▾ (0 Messages)
this topic is locked

Create Link on: - Select -

Figure 3: Discussions with categories and topics (Build Tab view)

From the *Discussions table* view, you can perform a variety of functions related to navigating and managing *Discussions*. These include:

- ◆ View all your posts
- ◆ Create topics and categories
- ◆ Reorder categories
- ◆ Manage topics including deleting, moving, copying, hiding, setting release criteria, and creating links to topics (Build Tab only)

Manage Categories

Categories are main headings in the Discussions that enable to group like topics under them. Categories will be listed in the order you create them starting with the most recently created category.

To create categories

- 1 From the *Discussions* table, click **Create Category**. The *Create Category* screen displays.

Create Category

*Title:

Description: HTML Creator On Off


Use HTML

* Required field

Figure 4: Create Categories screen (Build Tab view)

- 2 Enter a title for the category in the **Title** field.
- 3 Enter a description, if needed, in the **Description** field.
- 4 Click **Save**. The *Discussions* table displays with your changes.

To reorder categories

- 1 From the *Discussions* table, click **Reorder Categories**. The *Reorder Discussion Categories* screen displays.
- 2 Select the **topic** to move by clicking the checkbox to the left of the title.
- 3 Click the **Move Selected Items Above** icon  to the left of the position where you want to the topic to move. Screen refreshes with changes made. Repeat as needed.
- 4 Click **OK**.

Manage Topics

Topics available are threaded topics, blogs, and journals.


- ◆ Threaded topics: 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 topics: 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. Comments can be identified by user or anonymous.
- ◆ Journal topics: 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.

Peer Review is another feature of all three topic types. It enables students to rate the posts of classmates based on a rating scale or grading form (rubric) as defined by the instructor.


To create Threaded Topics

- 1 From the *Discussions* table, click **Create Topic**. The *Create Discussion Topic-What type of discussion topic would you like to create?* screen displays.


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.

Figure 5: Type of Discussion Topic screen (Build Tab view)

- 2 Select **Threaded topic**
- 3 Click **Next**. The Create Discussion Topic screen displays.

Create Threaded Topic

***Title:**

Description:

Use HTML

Item Visibility: Show Item
 Hide Item

Category: Topics can be organized into categories.
Select Category:

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*

Goals

Associate goals with this discussion topic.

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

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

* Required field

Figure 6: Create Threaded Topics screen (Build Tab view)

- 4 Enter a title for the topic in the **Title** field.
- 5 Enter a description, if needed, in the **Description** field.
- 6 Choose setting for **Item Visibility**. The default is *Show Item*.
- 7 Under *Topic Gradability*, select **Topic is gradable** if appropriate. The title will be copied into the *Grade Book column* title field. You can make changes if needed. Select grade method. Enter a value if numeric.
- 8 Under *Peer Review*, select appropriate choice.

- **Do not enable peer review in this topic:** default setting.
 - **Allow students to rate message using a simple rating scale:** will need to create rating scale.
 - **Allow students to review message using a grading form:** will need to choose a grading form already created.
- 9 Under *Topic Behavior Options*, select each choice as needed.
- **Student Posting Rules:** determines whether students can post and reply to messages or only post or only reply.
 - **Locked:** messages cannot be added to the topic; read-only mode for students
 - **Author Identification:** author names are displayed or not displayed
- 10 Click **Save**. The *Discussions* table displays with your changes.



Note **More Options** offers you the ability to place the topic in an existing or new category at creation. By default, the topic is created as uncategorized.

To create Blog Topics

- 1 From the *Discussions* table, click **Create Topic**. The *Create Discussion Topic-What type of discussion topic would you like to create?* screen displays.
- 2 Select **Blog topic**
- 3 Click **Next**. The Create Blog Topic screen displays.
- 4 Enter a title for the topic in the **Title** field.
- 5 Enter a description, if needed, in the **Description** field.
- 6 Choose setting for **Item Visibility**. The default is *Show Item*.
- 7 Under *Topic Gradability*, select **Topic is gradable** if appropriate. The title will be copied into the *Grade Book column* title field. You can make changes if needed. Select grade method. Enter a value if numeric.
- 8 Under *Peer Review*, select appropriate choice.
 - **Do not enable peer review in this topic:** default setting.
 - **Allow students to rate message using a simple rating scale:** will need to create rating scale.
 - **Allow students to review message using a grading form:** will need to choose a grading form already created.
- 9 Under *Topic Behavior Options*, select each choice as needed.
 - **Student Posting Rules:** determines whether students can post and reply to messages or only post or only reply.
 - **Locked:** messages cannot be added to the topic; read-only mode for students
 - **Author Identification:** author names are displayed or not displayed


- 10 Click **Save**. The *Discussions* table displays with your changes.

To create Journal Topics

- 1 From the *Discussions* table, click **Create Topic**. The *Create Discussion Topic-What type of discussion topic would you like to create?* screen displays.
- 2 Select **Journal topic**
- 3 Click **Next**. The Create Discussion Topic screen displays.
- 4 Enter a title for the topic in the **Title** field.
- 5 Enter a description, if needed, in the **Description** field.
- 6 Choose setting for **Item Visibility**. The default is *Show Item*.
- 7 Under *Topic Gradability*, select **Topic is gradable** if appropriate. The title will be copied into the *Grade Book column* title field. You can make changes if needed. Select grade method. Enter a value if numeric.
- 8 Under *Peer Review*, select appropriate choice.
 - **Do not enable peer review in this topic**: default setting.
 - **Allow students to rate message using a simple rating scale**: will need to create rating scale.
 - **Allow students to review message using a grading form**: will need to choose a grading form already created.
- 9 Under *Topic Behavior Options*, select each choice as needed.
 - **Student Posting Rules**: determines whether students can post and reply to messages or only post or only reply.
 - **Locked**: messages cannot be added to the topic; read-only mode for students.
 - **Author Identification**: author names are displayed or not displayed.
 - **Journal Privacy**: private or public depending on whether only authoring student and instructor will be able to read (private) or entire class can read (public).

To move or copy topics

- 1 From the *Discussions* table, select the **topic** to move by clicking the checkbox to the left of the title.

- 2 Click the **View Move Options** icon [] to the left of the position where you want to the topic to move.

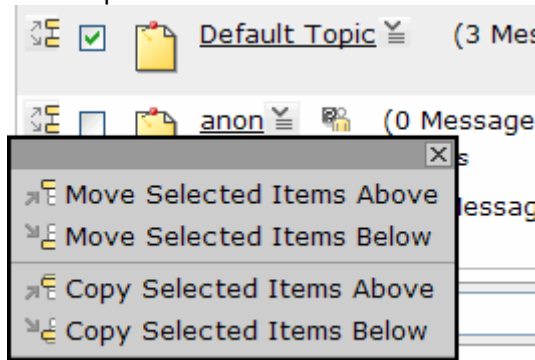


Figure 7: View Move Options icon with menu (Build Tab view)

- 3 Select the command from the menu that appears:
 - **Move Selected Items Above:** moves selected topic above the current topic
 - **Move Selected Items Below:** moves selected topic below the current topic
 - **Copy Selected Items Above:** copies selected topic above the current topic, must be to different category
 - **Copy Selected Items Below:** copies selected topic below the current topic, must be to different category



Note The move command works within the same category or across different categories. The copy command only works across categories. New messages posted in the original topic will not appear in the copied topic. Messages already posted in the topic will be copied over and marked as unread.

- 4 Screen refreshes with changes made. Repeat to additional topics as needed.

Hiding Topics

- 1 From the *Discussion* table, click the **Action Link Menu** icon [] to the right of the topic you wish to hide. The *Action Link Menu* displays.

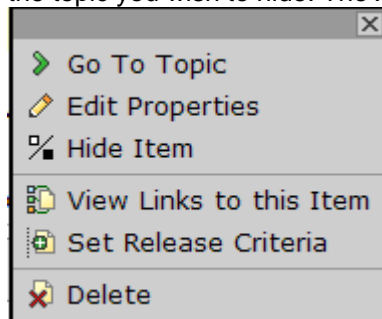



Figure 8: Action Link Menu (Build Tab view)

- 2 Click **Hide Item**. The *Discussions* table refreshes with the topic marked as “(Hidden)”.




Tip You can hide topics that you are not ready for students to see. Co-designers and teaching assistants can see hidden topics. To show the topic, repeat the steps. The menu will display **Show Item** while the topic is marked as hidden.

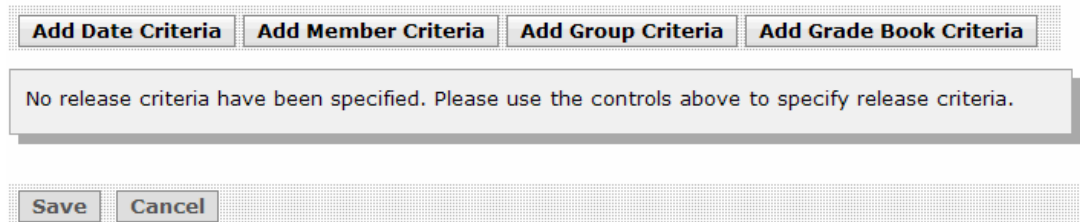
Deleting Topics

- 1 From the *Discussions* table, click the **Action Link Menu icon** [] to the right of the topic you wish to delete. The *Action Link Menu* displays.
- 2 Click **Delete**. The *Discussions* table refreshes with the topic removed.

Setting Release Criteria

- 1 From the *Discussions* table, click the **Action Link Menu icon** [] to the right of the topic you wish to change. The *Action Link Menu* displays.
- 2 Click **Set Release Criteria**. The *Set Release Criteria* screen displays.

Set Release Criteria for: Default Topic



Add Date Criteria **Add Member Criteria** **Add Group Criteria** **Add Grade Book Criteria**

No release criteria have been specified. Please use the controls above to specify release criteria.

Save **Cancel**

Figure 9: Set Release Criteria screen (Build Tab view)

- 3 Click the button of the criteria you would like to add:
 - **Add Date Criteria:** topic will start or end on a specific date and time.
 - 1 The *Add Date Criteria* window opens.
 - 2 Set start date using **Available Starting drop menus** or select **Immediately**.
 - 3 Set end date using **Available Until drop menus** or select **Unlimited**.
 - 4 Click **Save**. The *Set Release Criteria* screen redisplay with your changes.
 - **Add Member Criteria:** topic will only be viewable to certain members; equivalent to making the topic private.
 - 1 The *Add Member Criteria* window opens.
 - 2 Select the names of the students who need to view the topic.
 - 3 Click **Save**. The *Set Release Criteria* screen redisplay with your changes.
 - **Add Group Criteria:** topic will only be viewable to certain groups; groups must have been already created (see the *Discussion Groups* tip sheet).
 - 1 The *Add Group Criteria* window opens.


- 2 Select the group or groups who need to view the topic.
 - 3 Click **Save**. The *Set Release Criteria* screen redisplay with your changes.
- **Add Grade Book Criteria:** topic will only be viewable once certain conditions in the Grade Book are met; Grade Book column must have been already created.
 - 1 The *Add Grade Book Criteria window* opens.
 - 2 In the *Criteria* drop menu, select the **column title**.
 - 3 In the *Condition* drop menu, select the **condition** to use with the criteria.
 - 4 In the *Value* field, type the **value** that corresponds with the condition.
 - 5 Click **Save**. The *Set Release Criteria* screen redisplay with your changes.



Tip For example, if you want the topic to appear after the student has passed Quiz 1 with at least a 75%, you would select **Quiz 1** in the *Criteria* drop menu, select **Greater than or equal to** in the *Condition* drop menu, and type **75** in the *Value* field.

- 4 Click **Save**. The *Discussions* table redisplay with the topic marked as “(Conditional)”.

Creating Links to Topics

- 1 From the *Discussions* table on the Build Tab, select the **topic** to create a link to.
- 2 In the **Create Link on** drop menu, choose the page or tool that you want the link to appear on.
- 3 Click Go []. The *Discussions* screen redisplay with a confirmation of the link creation.

Managing Messages

The Messages table includes enables you to:

- ◆ Create messages
- ◆ Control message displays
- ◆ Save messages to a file
- ◆ Print messages
- ◆ Grade messages

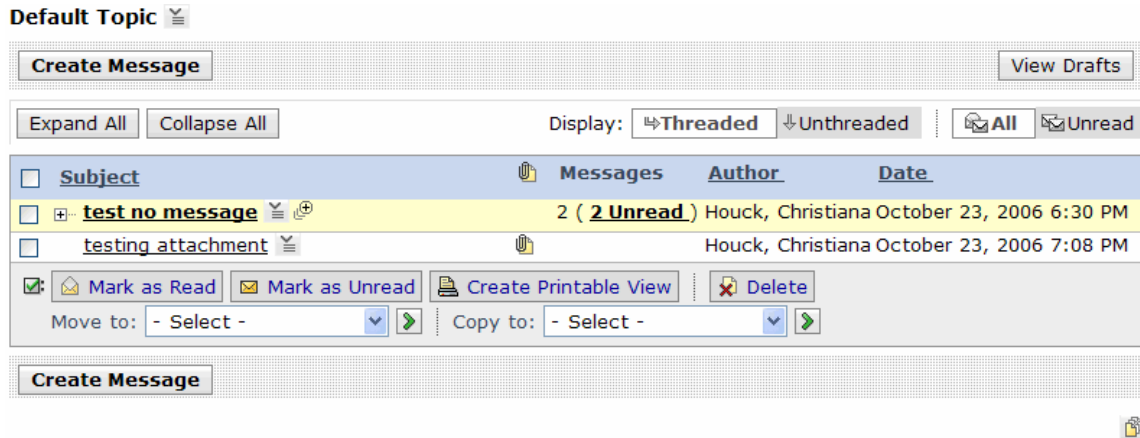


Figure 10: Messages screen (Build Tab view)

Displaying Threaded and Unthreaded Messages

You can choose to view *Discussion* messages either in order of their appearance in a discussion thread (*Threaded*) or in the order they were posted to the *Discussions* tool (*Unthreaded*).

A *Thread* is created when someone replies to a message. The subject of the first message automatically becomes the heading and a plus [+] displays to the left. When you click the plus it turns into a minus [-], both the original message and the reply are shown underneath and are indented under the heading.

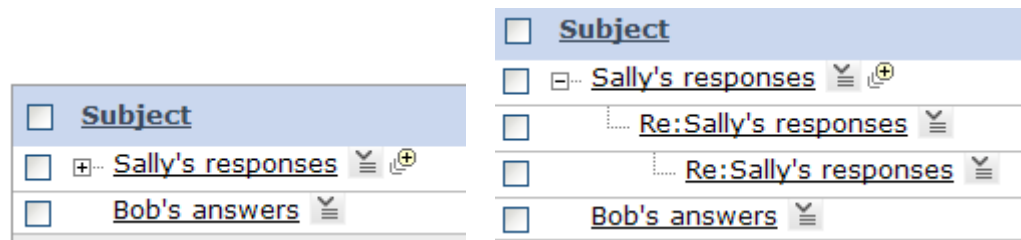


Figure 11: Threaded messages with the messages collapsed showing a plus (left) and expanded showing the minus (right).

Subject: displays the subject of the first message in the thread and the Display Complete Thread [⊕] icon. You can view the entire message thread by clicking the Display Complete Thread icon.

To view messages as Threaded or Unthreaded

- 1 From the *Discussions* table, click the topic you wish to view. The *Messages* view displays.
- 2 On the right side of the screen there is a **Threaded / Unthreaded** pairing, with one word a button and the other normal text. The word in plain text describes the current view of postings.
- 3 If you want to change the view, click **Threaded** or **Unthreaded** as appropriate. The postings redisplay as specified.

Selecting Messages for Marking as Read or Unread

From the *Messages* view, you can select specific messages and mark them as either read or unread.


To select and mark messages as read or unread

- 1 From the *Discussions* table, click the topic that contains the messages that you want to mark. The *Messages* screen appears.
- 2 Display the messages that you would like to mark.
 - to choose from all messages, click **All**.
 - to choose from all unread messages, click **Unread**.
- 3 Check the check boxes next to the appropriate messages.
- 4 Click **Mark as Read** or **Mark as Unread**. The messages redisplay, reflecting any changes you made.

Setting Number of Messages to Display (Paging Preferences)

The default number of messages displaying in a topic is 10. You can increase that number to 999.


To set paging preferences

- 1 From the *Discussions* table, enter a topic.
- 2 Click the **Paging Preferences** icon []. The *Editing Paging* window opens.
- 3 Enter a number between 1 and 999 in the **Number of records per page** field.
- 4 Click **OK**. The topic screen redisplay with a refreshed list of posts.

Moving, Copying, and Deleting Messages


You can move or copy a message from one topic to another. In addition, you can delete any messages that you wish to remove from the discussion entirely. You also have the option of deleting all the messages in a given topic.

To move a message

- 1 From the *Discussions* table, click the topic that contains the message(s) that you want to move. The *Discussion Messages* screen appears.
- 2 Select the checkbox next to the message that you wish to move and scroll down to the bottom of the *Discussion Messages* screen.
- 3 Chose the appropriate topic from the *Move to* drop-down box.
- 4 Click **Go** [].

To copy a message

From the *Discussions* table, click the topic that contains the message(s) that you want to copy. The *Discussion Messages* screen appears.

- 2 Select the checkbox next to the message that you wish to copy and scroll down to the bottom of the *Discussion Messages* screen.
- 3 Chose the appropriate topic from the *Copy to* drop-down box.
- 4 Click **Go** [].

To delete specific messages

- 1 From the *Discussions* table, click the topic that contains the message(s) that you want to delete. The *Discussion Messages* screen appears.
- 2 Select the message(s) to delete. Scroll down to the bottom of the *Discussion Messages* screen.
- 3 Click **Delete**.

To delete all messages from a topic

- 1 From the *Discussions* table, click the topic that contains the message(s) that you want to delete. The *Discussion Messages* screen appears.
- 2 Select the checkbox next to the *Subject* link. All messages displayed will be selected.
- 3 Click **Delete**.

Grading Messages

With CE 6.0, discussion posts can be graded inside the Discussions tool on the Teach Tab. This function is not accessible on the Build Tab.

- 1 Click on **Discussions** from the *Teach Tab*.
- 2 Click the **Action Link Menu** for the topic to grade.
- 3 Select **Grade Topic** from the *Action Link Menu*. The *Grade Discussion* for screen displays. The left column shows all students in the class and contains the *Grade* field for entering grades. The right column contains the *Discussion Activity Overview*. This is the side where the student posts will appear.
- 4 Click the name of the student to grade. Select **View Student Posts** from the menu that appears. The *Student Discussion Post* screen loads in the right column.



Note You can also select **View Student Posts** by clicking on the student's name in the left column. The menu enables you to **Send Mail** to or **View Performance Report** of the student.

- 5 After reading the post, you can click **Print**, **Save as File**, or **View Complete Thread**, which opens a new window.
- 6 When you are ready to assign a grade, enter a grade for that student in the **Grade** field that corresponds to the student.
- 7 Click **Save Grades** when you are finished.