

How to Use the Discussion Feature in WebCT

The Discussion Area is a place where you can post public messages that everyone in your class can read. It may also be referred to as a bulletin board or a forum. It provides an easy method to follow a specific discussion via threaded technology. This means that the original message is grouped together with all of its subsequent responses. The ability to compile and printout these related messages is also beneficial to both the student and instructor.

Most instructors will use this area to post announcements and communicate common information. Students may also use this tool to discuss general issues, and both students and instructors may respond.

Your instructor may create individual forums in order to direct discussions on specific topics; therefore, enhancing the classroom materials and learning activities. You may or may not be required to participate in these discussions, that is up to your instructor to decide.

Accessing the Discussion feature may vary from one online classroom to another. Some may have a link on the navigation bar; others may have an icon on the homepage that indicates it is a link to your discussion area. Still others may have a communication icon that leads you to multiple methods of sending messages within the online environment. This area will contain a link to your Discussion tool. The icons and the verbiage may vary, but most will be an obvious avenue to this area for dialogue. Usually the icon will appear slightly different if there are new posting you have not yet

read. In this instance, there are small green marks around the icon.

Click on the icon and you will see a screen showing your various discussion topics. Click on a specific topic to view the related messages.

To post a new message, click on the Compose Message button. There is a subject line, and it is helpful to those using the discussion board if you make this as descriptive as possible. Your actual message should be brief and to the point, listing the most important information in the first line or two. When you have completed composing your correspondence, simply click on the Post button and your message will be available for all class members to read.

After reading a message you may decide to post a response. Note that you can reply privately if you prefer, but others will not have the benefit of reading your point of view. Click on the reply button and type the desired information in the message box provided. When you have completed your correspondence, click the Post button.

Notice how each new posting has its own subject line with the date and time it was posted and information about who created it. Responses to a new posting are listed (or threaded) underneath, as replies to these postings. This technology allows all of the messages related to a single topic to be organized in an orderly manner. Please pay attention to what message you are replying to, or if you are creating a new posting. This will help keep your discussion area organized for the benefit of all participants.