

# Using Discussion Boards in WebCT

WebCT's discussion board is a multifaceted tool: you can use it to expand on classroom discussions, foster peer discussion, answer questions outside of class, or even for student replies to essay assignments.

## Managing Discussion Topics

By default, WebCT provides three public discussion topics: All (all messages from all public topics), Main (main discussion area), and Notes (messages related to a page of content in a Content Module). You can also create other topics to accommodate your discussion needs.

### **To create a new discussion topic:**

1. Log in to your course. On the course homepage, click on the link labeled Discussions.
2. In Designer Options, choose Manage Topics.
3. The Manage Topics screen appears. To add a new topic, select the Add radio button and type in the name of the topic.
4. Click Go.

You can edit the topics you create to make them private, so only certain people can access them, and anonymous, so that the author of a discussion post is unknown.

**To create a private topic**, you first add the topic and then assign it private status. Next, you assign members to it:

1. From the Discussions screen, click Manage Topics. The Manage Topics screen appears.
2. Select Add and type the topic name in the text box.
3. Click Go. The new topic appears in the Topic Settings table.
4. In the Topics Settings table, select the Private checkbox adjacent to the topic that you want to make private. Click Update.

5. Under Manage Topics, select Manage members, and then select the topic from the Select topic drop-down list.
6. Click Go. The Private Topic screen appears.
7. Click Select Members. The Member Selection screen appears.
8. Select the members:
  - a. To select each member individually, select their Status check box.
  - b. To select all members, click All.
9. Click Update. The Private Topic screen appears with a table containing the members.
10. Click Done.

## Composing Discussion Messages with Attachments

Composing a message for a discussion board is very similar to sending an email. When you click on the Compose Message link, WebCT opens a Compose Discussion Message window. In the window, you can select which topic to send the message to, give the message a subject, and compose the main body of the message. In addition, you can attach files to discussion messages in much the same way as you attach a file to an email.

### **To attach files to discussion messages:**

1. In the bottom right hand corner of the **Compose Discussion Message** window, click on the Browse button.
2. A Choose file dialog box will open. Locate your file, select it, and click Open.
3. Click the Attach File button. There may be a slight delay as WebCT attaches the file to your message. **Note:** Some files, particularly image files, may take several minutes to attach.
4. To remove an unwanted attachment, select the file's checkbox and click the Delete Attachments button.
5. When you have finished composing your message and attaching files, click the Post button.

## Viewing Discussion Message Attachments

You may attach files of any type to your messages; however, WebCT will only directly display image files (.jpeg, .jpg, and .gif) and HTML files. Other file types, such as PDFs and Microsoft Word documents, will have to be downloaded before they can be viewed.

### **To download an attachment for viewing (PC users only):**

1. Click on the See Attached paperclip next to the message to which the file is attached.
2. The Attachments window for the message opens. On the right hand side of the screen, the following message will appear: Unknown format. Can not display file: <filename>. Ignore this.
3. On the left hand side of the screen, make sure the radio button next to the file you want is selected.
4. Click the Download button.
5. The File Download dialog box appears. Choose Save this file to disk and click OK.
6. The Save As dialog box appears. Choose where you would like to save the document.
7. From the Save as type drop-down list, choose All Files.
8. Click Save. The file will be downloaded to your computer, where you can locate and open it using the appropriate program.

## Managing Discussion Messages

Discussion topics can swiftly become flooded with a backlog of messages. In order to prevent this from happening and keep your messages organized, you can manage the messages for all discussion topics from the Manage Messages screen.

### **To move messages from one topic to another:**

1. In the Discussions screen, click on Manage Messages.
2. The Manage Messages screen appears. In the lower half of the screen, select the checkboxes for the messages that you wish to move.
3. In the upper half of the screen, select the radio button next to Move.

4. In the drop-down list, select the topic to move the messages to.
5. Click Go.

**To delete selected messages:**

1. Select the messages in the lower half of the Manage Messages screen.
2. Select 'Delete the selected messages.'
3. Click Go.

To delete all of the messages, choose 'Delete all messages in this topic' and click Go.