Chapter No.2
"Instructional Material"
In this package, you will find:
A Biography of the authors of the book
A preview chapter from the book, Chapter NO.2 "Instructional Material"
A synopsis of the book’s content
Information on where to buy this book

About the Authors

William Rice is a software training professional who lives, works, and plays in New York city. He is the author of books on Moodle, Magento, and software training. His indoor hobbies include writing books and spending way too much time reading Slashdot (www.slashdot.org). His outdoor hobbies include orienteering, rock climbing, and practicing archery within site of JFK Airport. William is fascinated by the relationship between technology and society—how we create our tools, and how our tools in turn shape us. He is married to an incredible woman who encourages his writing pursuits, and has two amazing sons.

For More Information:
Susan Smith Nash has been involved in the design, development, and administration of online courses and programs since the early 1990s. Her current research interests include the use of learning objects, mobile learning, leadership in e-learning organizations, and energy and sustainability technology transfer. Her articles and columns have appeared in magazines and refereed journals. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Oklahoma in 1996, and in addition to e-learning, Nash has also been involved in international economic development training, interdisciplinary studies, international energy education (renewables and non-renewables), and sustainable business and career training. Her book, Leadership and the E-Learning Organization, was co-authored with George Henderson, and published by Charles Thomas and Sons. Her most recent books include Klub Dobrih Dejanj (Good Deeds Society/Sodobnost: Ljubljana,Slovenia) and E-Learner Survival Guide (Texture Press: NY). Her edublog, E-Learning Queen (www.elearningqueen.com) has received numerous awards and recognitions.

I'd like to thank my son, Michael Nash, for his invaluable assistance, and my parents, Earl and Mona Smith, who have been guiding lights. Finally, I'd like to thank Turhan Baykan, for his vision and commitment to open courseware.

For More Information:
Moodle 1.9 Teaching Techniques

Congratulations on your decision to use Moodle as your course management system! If you're new to Moodle, you'll be delighted with its ease of use and the flexibility. You'll also appreciate how easily you can reuse your course content and the instructional materials.

After you've used this book to help create and launch your first course, you'll see just how motivated students are when they take a well-designed course in Moodle. They'll be excited because they'll feel connected to each other as they share their own perspectives and ideas from the text.

You'll inspire confidence with your approach to e-learning because it will be easy for students to navigate the course and to take charge of their own educational progress. Your course design will help them develop an "I can do it!" attitude, and they'll feel self confident after going through different ways to learn the material, practice, share, interact, review, and demonstrate their competence. A well-designed course in Moodle creates solid learners, and it also gives you a great advantage as an online instructor.

What This Book Covers

Chapter 1, Developing an Effective Online Course, covers Moodle's advantages, core philosophy (the power of many, we learn from each other), and foundational learning theories. It explains the learning object "Lego™" idea of course construction, and why saving and reusing content can be useful. The chapter discusses how people learn in an online course (social learning, emulatory learning, schemata, communities of practice, experiential, and so on), and explores creating conditions of learning. The chapter closes with an overview of the course-building components in Moodle.

Chapter 2, Instructional Material, focuses on selecting and organizing instructional material for your course, using Moodle's strengths (interaction/collaboration), and developing a forum-based approach to course development and instruction. It covers recommended forum titles and functions, and provides step-by-step guidance for creating forums, enrolling students, guiding and motivating students, and creating a learning environment.

Chapter 3, Collaborative Activities, tells you reasons for interaction and collaboration in an online course and explains types of collaboration (discussions, shared files, chat, test preparation, and online study groups). It covers step-by-step instructions for using chat, using chat to review papers, and discusses using chat for foreign language practice. You learn how to save chat transcripts, and receive tips for successful chat, and for customizing your chat (with HTML).
Chapter 4, *Assessment*, provides keys to successful assessment, and discusses taking the fear out of assessment, reviews, and quizzes. It explores distributed practice provides step-by-step instructions for creating and managing quizzes, and explains creating quizzes to function as learning tools. The chapter discusses keys for creating an effective quiz for review and final assessment, and proctored exams.

Chapter 5, *Lesson Solutions*, shows you how to plan the lessons (content and sequencing), create conditions for learning, and employ scaffolding. You are given guidance on building confidence, and providing feedback, and you will explore the need for sequential activities, grading, flow control, and lesson formatting. You will also learn how to create flashcards.

Chapter 6, *Wiki Solutions*, discusses using a wiki to achieve learning objectives. You will explore the use of a wiki while comparing a wiki to other Moodle components. You will receive step-by-step instructions for creating and managing wikis, and will review wiki etiquette, as well as the wiki process.

Chapter 7, *Glossary Solutions*, covers schema building, and provides learning theory support for glossary activities. You will learn how to create collaborative memory aids to glossary entries, as well as step-by-step instructions for creating and managing glossary entries.

Chapter 8, *The Choice Activity*, tells the use of the Choice activity, and provides step-by-step instructions for creating and managing this very flexible capability of Moodle. The chapter ties that activity to learning styles and self-regulation.

Chapter 9, *Course Solutions*, focuses on building the course design document and discusses how to plan your course. It provides a rationale for the use of a course plan and gives strategies for overcoming course anxiety. You will receive step-by-step instructions for creating and managing the entire course and an online calendar.

Chapter 10, *Workshop Solution*, gives a workshop overview and basics, and covers listing learning objectives. You will learn how to develop a learning strategy, and will receive step-by-step instructions for creating and managing workshops, peer-assessments, and peer collaboration.

For More Information:  
Chapter 11, *Portfolio/Gallery Solution*, explores the benefits of workshops and galleries and discusses the way they are ideal for developing a portfolio or capstone project. This is a project-based assessment approach, and you will learn the best uses of project-based assessment. This chapter incorporates learning objectives, collaboration and cooperation, and provides examples of portfolios and galleries. It discusses using the portfolio approach to encourage creativity. You will be guided through a sample assignment called "My Hometown" that involves a creative writing e-portfolio. This project includes instructions to students, and explores the idea of developing collective conversation, in which you emphasize creating a supportive environment for intellectual risk taking. The chapter provides tips for a successful experience, and gives a final view of the workshop experience and collaborative learning.
Deciding what you'll put in your course can be one of the most rewarding aspects of course development. Because Moodle has so many options, you'll enjoy flexibility and also ease of use. With Moodle, you'll be able to incorporate a wide range of instructional materials and applications, all of which can help you expand the ways in which you can engage your students and encourage them to interact with each other. You'll be able to include videos, audio files, presentations, and animations in addition to documents and graphics.

Another benefit of using Moodle is the simplicity of a forum-based structure that allows you to keep your ultimate goals in mind and to clearly match the materials with your outcomes. Once you’ve selected your instructional materials, Moodle makes it very easy for you to get started and create a structure that flows nicely from topic to topic, and facilitates the teaching and the learning process.

This chapter offers you solutions for selecting and organizing your course materials so that you're always focused on learning objectives, course outcomes, dynamic student engagement, and strong student performance. The first section in this chapter focuses on the best ways to select and organize your course material. The later sections focus on developing and managing a framework for your materials by employing forums.

Selecting and organizing the material
If you're like most instructors, you love your subject and the idea of sharing information gives you great satisfaction. However, you have probably noticed that it's easy to overload your students, or to give them materials in a way that tends to confuse them. How can you avoid overloading and confusing your students?

For More Information:
One of the most effective ways to do so is to make sure that you base your selections of instructional materials on course outcomes and on the learning objectives for each unit. Keep in mind what you’d like your students to be able to do after they complete the course. What is the basic, enduring knowledge they will take with them after the course is over? What kind of fundamental change do you want to occur in terms of the student's abilities? What kind of new skills will they be able to perform?

Once you answer these questions, you will have a list of learning outcomes. Keep them in mind as you select the instructional material you wish to use in your course.

It is often convenient to develop a map or a diagram that connects your learning outcomes with the course materials and the assessments you will use. Consider what you want your students to learn, and how you'd like them to perform. Also, you shape the sequence you will build and how you'll present the materials.

**Using forums to present your material**

We'll start with an approach that is very easy to implement, which is ideal if you're just getting started and need a solution that would be good for all kinds of e-learning, including mobile learning and guided independent study.

Basically, we'll use the Forum tool to organize all the instructional content. In Moodle, the Forum is the key tool and you'll use it often. Later, as you feel more comfortable, you can add more tools (Book, Chat, Assignment, Choice, and so on). For now, however, we will focus on getting you operational as quickly and easily as possible.

Using the Forum tool to structure your course and to organize your content is conceptually very elegant. Students simply move from forum to forum, and they access the material they need. Any comments they have, writing assignments, or discussion items can be completed in the appropriate thread.

When you use the Forum tool, you will use the Moodle text editor to create messages. Keep in mind that your messages can contain text, graphics, audio, video, presentations, and more, which allows you flexibility and ease of use.

As you plan your course, it's always good to have a certain number of forums dedicated to student success and support. This is where you can post welcome messages, timelines and course calendars, lists of assignments, syllabus, links to useful resources, and a place for students to ask questions and share their experiences.

A key student success forum is one that clearly states what you hope to achieve in the course. By listing course outcomes in a separate forum, you'll shape the students' approach to the course content, and they will have a better idea of how to organize the information they will encounter.

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**For More Information:**

After you've developed your "student success and support" forums, you start creating a separate forum for each unit, which begins to identify the learning objectives, and the resources you'll put in each one to create a learning environment. It is often a good idea to create a separate forum for each graded assessment. Having a separate forum for each assessment will make your job easier if you have changes to make, or if you want to replace it with an assignment tool.

In fact, by populating your course with a series of separate forums, you are creating a flexible template that can be easily modified by replacing a forum with another, or with a different type of tool (Choice, Assignment, Chat, Database, Book, Journal, or more).

It is often helpful to create a course map wherein you draw all the elements you'll have in your course. List the course outcomes, and then map each one to the instructional material, activities, and assessments that go with each one. This will help you as you start building your forums.

Here is an example of how you can put together a course in which you organize the content around forums:

- Forum 1: Welcome and Course Overview and Objectives
- Forum 2: Meet Your Instructor
- Forum 3: Introduce Yourself
- Forum 4: Questions for the Instructor
- Forum 5: Syllabus and Timeline
- Forum 6: Unit 1: Unit Learning Objectives, Instructional Materials, and Discussion Questions
- Forum 7: Unit 1: Review for Quiz
- Forum 8: Unit 1: Quiz
- Forum 9: Unit 1: Instructional Materials and Discussion Questions

As you can see, the structure is very straightforward and avoids the complexity of multiple tools. Keep in mind that more complex tools can always be added later to replace a forum structure.

**Creating a separate group for each student**

Start by selecting the activity tool, Forum, and opening a page that requires you to indicate the settings for the forum you wish to add.

Remember that each group will consist of only a single student. So, in this process, when we discuss groups, we're really talking about individuals.

The following steps illustrate how to create a separate forum for each group in your course:

1. From the Add an activity… drop-down list, select Forum, as shown in the following screenshot:

For More Information:
2. Enter a **Forum name** and **Forum type** for the forum. In the following example, I'm using a **single simple discussion** to create a single-topic forum, where all the postings will be displayed on the same page. This makes the history of the student-teacher discussion very easy to see. This type of forum is most useful for short, focused discussions.

For More Information:
3. By selecting Yes, forever for Force everyone to be subscribed? as shown in the following screenshot, you ensure that all students are subscribed automatically, even students that enroll at a later time.

4. The key setting here is Group mode. When we select Separate groups, we create a separate forum for each group in the class. In the next section, we will create a group for each student. The result is a separate forum for each student, available only to that student and the teacher, where they can hold private conversation.

5. Save the forum settings and continue.

Enrolling students

If you have not already enrolled students in the course, you should do so before creating the groups. If the students are already enrolled, move to Create a Group for Each Student in the next section.
The following steps illustrate how to manually enroll students in your course:

1. Open the course into which you want to enroll the students. Then, from the Administration drop-down box, select Assign roles as shown in the following screenshot:

2. On the Assign roles page select Student, as shown in the following screenshot:

For More Information:
3. Ensure the **Role to assign** drop-down list is set to **Student**. Then from the list of potential users on the right, select one user. Click the left-facing arrow to enrol that user in your course (refer to the following screenshot):

![Assign roles](image)

4. Repeat this for each student. If you want to remove a student from the course, select the student from the list on the left, and click the right-facing arrow.

5. To exit this page, select the course name from the navigation breadcrumbs at the top of the page. This will put you back into your course's home page, and then you can continue with creating a group for each student.

### Creating a group for each student

After all of your students are enrolled, go into the course and create a group for each student.

The following steps illustrate how to create groups and assign students to them:

1. From the **Administration** block select **Groups**, as shown in the following screenshot:

![Administration](image)

For More Information:

2. From the **Current role** drop-down list as shown in the following screenshot, select **Student**. This ensures that you are seeing only users who are enrolled as students in this course. Then, in the field above the **Add new group** button, enter the name of the first group. Name the group after the student for whom you created it. In this example, I created a group for **Moodle Student1** called **Student1**, and I am about to create a group for **Moodle Student2** called **Student2**.

![Screenshot of Moodle with roles and groups](image)

3. After creating all of the groups, add one student to each group. In the following example, you can see that the group **Student1** is selected, and **Moodle Student1** is a member of that group.

![Screenshot of Moodle with roles and groups](image)

For More Information:
Instructional Material

To assign a student to a group:

- Select the group. In the preceding example, you can see the user is about to select the group **Student2**.
- Select the student to add to the group.
- Click the **Add selected to group** button.
- Repeat as needed.

4. To exit this page, select the course name from the navigation breadcrumbs at the top of the page. This will put you back into your course's home page.

The student's private forum will look like any other Moodle forum. However, only the student and teacher will have access to it.

**Guiding and motivating students**

The best online courses create learning communities in which all learners have a sense that they are part of a friendly, supportive group. They eagerly post in the forums, and they respond to each other quickly in a positive and productive way. They share their thoughts, impressions, and one starts to feel as though people are really getting to know each other. Learning is fun, even exhilarating. Some students can't wait to log on and participate.

**Creating the learning environment**

There are a few tried and tested ways to optimize the interactive forum experience. Here is a brief list:

- Provide timely feedback and make sure that you maintain a positive and productive tone
- Be sure to provide positive, encouraging suggestions
- Post questions that are engaging and which tie to learning objectives
- Encourage individuals to connect the course material to personal experience, and then post about it
- Make participation in the forums a part of the students' grades
- Model positive forum behavior by showing open-mindedness

For More Information:

Asking permission and setting a policy

Some activities in Moodle are almost always individual. When students complete these activities, they have a reasonable expectation that their work will not be shared with the class. For example, when a student answers a quiz question, he/she reasonably expects that what he/she wrote will not be shared with the entire class. Other activities do not carry this expectation of privacy. For example, when a student posts to a forum, he/she expects that posting to be read by the rest of the class.

Students feel good when they see their work acknowledged. They also feel confident when they know what is expected. We can use the forum to answer students' questions, but there are other ways to use the forums to acknowledge work and to help the students develop an "I can do it" attitude.

One good way is to build a forum that includes samples of successful student work. The students can see how other students—often students in the past—approached their work. They can get a good idea of how to get started, and they can feel less intimidated by fear of the unknown.

Let's create a forum named "sample work". Before posting work from a student in the sample work forum, consider if the student can reasonably expect that work to be private. If so, ask the student's permission before posting it. In any case, be sure to remove identifying names and labels. That is, remove anything from the work that would indicate which student created it. This might make the student more comfortable with having the work posted in the sample work forum.

For More Information:
If you expect to use a sample work forum in a class, you should clearly indicate that in the course syllabus and introduction. The idea that they have guidelines and live documents as instructional material and models can be a big relief to students. However, if any student is uncomfortable with having his/her work posted (even if it has been anonymized), please be sure to let them know you respect their wishes. The forum should be a friendly and supportive place.

**Type of forum**

In Moodle, you can create several types of forums. Each type can be used in a different way to get the best out of it. The types of forums are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of forum</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A single simple discussion</td>
<td>The entire forum appears on one page. The first posting, at the top of the page, is the topic for the forum. This topic is usually created by the teacher. The students then post replies under this topic. A single-topic forum is most useful for short, highly-focused discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard forum for general use</td>
<td>In a standard forum, anyone can start a new topic. Teachers and students can create new topics and reply to existing postings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each person posts one discussion</td>
<td>Each student can create one and only one new topic. Everyone can reply to every topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q and A forum</td>
<td>This is like a single-topic forum, in that the teacher creates the topic for the forum. Students then reply to that topic. However, a student cannot see anyone else’s reply until he/she has posted a reply. The topic is usually a question posed by the teacher, and the students’ replies are usually answers to that question.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of these forum types can be used to create a different kind of sample work forum. The subsections coming up cover the use of each forum type.

You select the forum type while creating the forum, on the **Editing Forum** page:

![Forum type selection](image)

For More Information:

Single simple discussion forum

The next screenshot is an example of a single-topic forum. The forum consists of one topic at the top of the page, and everything else on that page is a reply from the students. Readers can reply to the topic, but not create new ones.

This is especially useful if you want to select the best work as an example for each topic or week in your course. You can always end each topic of week with the best work as an example so that discussion can take place on it.
Standard forum

In a standard forum, the default setting allows students to create new topics and post replies to the topics. This makes it an open forum, which would be useful if you want your students to be able to post their own work or if you want to post examples or models that you could label "sample work". Following is an example of a multitopic forum. Each piece of work is a new topic.

One way to keep the sample work forum organized is to allow only the teacher to create new topics. Each topic is an example of student work, posted by the teacher. Students discuss each example by replying to the topic. To accomplish this, you'll need to disable the students' ability to create new topics.

By default, the Student role in Moodle enables students to create new topics in a standard forum. You can disable this by referring to the following steps:

1. Select the forum in which you want to disable the students' ability to create new topics.
2. Select Update this Forum.
3. Select the Roles tab, and then the Override roles subtab, as shown in the following screenshot:

For More Information:
4. Select **Student**. This brings up the **Overrides** page.

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Overrides</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Administrators can usually do anything on the site, in all courses.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course creator</td>
<td>Course creators can create new courses and teach in them.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teachers can do anything within a course, including changing the activities and grading students.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-editing teacher</td>
<td>Non-editing teachers can teach in courses and grade students, but may not enter activities.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Students generally have less privileges within a course.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest</td>
<td>Guests have minimal privileges and usually cannot enter text anywhere.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

For More Information:
For the setting **Start new discussions**, select **Prevent**.

Click the **Save changes** button.

In Moodle, permissions at a lower context override permissions at a higher context. For example, by default the role **Student** has the permission for **Start new discussions** set to **Allow**. However, you could set this to **Prevent** for a specific course because a course is a lower context than the entire site; for that course the permission **Prevent** will override the site's wide setting of **Allow**. A single activity, such as this forum, is the lowest context in Moodle. Overriding permission in a single activity will not affect anything else; it affects only that activity.

Moodle's online help has a good discussion about the differences between **Inherit**, **Allow**, **Prevent**, and **Prohibit**. It also describes how conflicts between permissions are solved by the software. If you're going to use **Override roles** elsewhere in Moodle, read this section of the help.

**Keeping discussions on track**

One of the biggest challenges in using forums for an online class is keeping discussions focused on the topic. This becomes even more difficult when you allow students to create new topics in a forum. Moodle offers two tools that you can use to help keep discussions on track—custom scales and splitting discussions.

**Use a custom scale to rate relevance**

Moodle enables you to use a scale to rate student's work. A scale offers you something other than a grade to give the student as feedback. Scales can be used to rate forum postings, assignment submissions, and glossary entries. The following screenshot shows a feedback on the relevance of a posting, given in a custom scale by a teacher:

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**For More Information:**

Chapter 2

To create and apply a custom scale, follow these steps:

Users with the roles Administrator, Course creator, and Teacher can create custom scales.

1. From the Administration block, click on Scales. This displays the Scales page.
2. On the Scales page, click on the Add a new scale button. This displays the Editing scale page.
3. On the Editing scale page:
   - Enter a Name for the scale. When you apply the scale to the forum, you will select the scale by this name.
   - In the Scale box, enter the items on your scale. Separate each item with a comma.
   - Write a Description for your scale. Students can see the description, so use this space to explain how they should interpret the scale.
4. Select the Save changes button. You are now ready to apply the scale.
5. Create or edit the forum to which you want to apply the scale. The key setting on the *Editing Forum* page is **Allow posts to be rated?**

![Screenshot of forum settings](image)

6. When you review the student postings in the forum, you can rate each posting using the scale you created, as shown in the following screenshot:

![Screenshot of forum postings](image)

7. When you finish rating the postings, click on the **Send in my ratings** button at the bottom of the page to save your ratings.

**Split discussions**

Users with the role Administrator, Course creator, or Teacher can split a discussion. When you split a discussion at a post, the selected post and the ones below become a new topic.

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For More Information:

Note that you cannot take a few posts from the middle of a topic and split them into a new discussion. Splitting takes every post that is nested below the selected one and puts it into a new topic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before the split</th>
<th>After the split</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic 1</td>
<td>New Topic 1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply 1-1</td>
<td>Reply 1-2-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply 1-2</td>
<td>Reply 1-2-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply 1-2-1</td>
<td>Reply 1-2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply 1-2-2</td>
<td>Topic 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply 1-2-3</td>
<td>Reply 1-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply 1-3</td>
<td>Reply 1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply 1-4</td>
<td>Reply 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply 1-4-1</td>
<td>Reply 1-4-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply 1-4-2</td>
<td>Reply 1-4-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Will splitting change the meaning**

Splitting a thread can rescue a conversation that has gotten off topic. However, it can also change the meaning of the conversation in ways that you don't expect or want.

Note that in the preceding example, after the split, the new topic is moved to the top of the forum. Will that change the meaning of your forum? Let's look at an example. Following is the screenshot showing the first topic in a forum on the October Revolution of Russian history. In this topic, students discuss whether the revolution was a coup or a popular uprising:

For More Information:

The teacher made the first posting and several students have posted replies. Some of these replies, as shown in the following screenshot, favor the theory that the revolution was a coup, while others favor the theory of revolution being a popular uprising:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coup or Uprising?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>by William Rico - Sunday, 4 March 2007, 07:24 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a popular uprising, the social order is change and the masses who were excluded from events take action, while the elites watch helplessly. In a coup, the masses are just a pawn for one ruler who replaces another. Your assignment is to discuss the evidence for and against each side.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the Russian October Revolution a coup d'etat by Lenin, or a popular uprising?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| My vote: popular uprising |
| by Moodle Student1 - Sunday, 4 March 2007, 07:29 PM |
| I think the October Revolution was a popular uprising, because it had the support of the masses. Russia was under Bolshevik control very quickly. The conflict came not from the revolution, but afterward when some areas wanted to take the opportunity to gain more autonomy from the central government. So the revolution itself was a popular uprising all across Russia. |

| Re: My vote: popular uprising |
| by Moodle Student2 - Sunday, 4 March 2007, 07:35 PM |
| I agree. The revolution in St. Petersburg was mostly peaceful, suggesting that it wasn't unpopular. |

Note that the posting by Student2 is a reply (Re) to the posting by Student1. You might have missed that because the reply is not indented. That's because the teacher has selected **Display replies flat, with oldest first**. If the teacher had selected **Display replies in nested form**, you would see Student2's reply indented, or nested, under Student1's reply. We can tell that Student2 is replying to Student1 because the subject line indicates it is a reply to Student1 (**Re: My vote: popular uprising**).

The first two postings are pro-uprising. The last posting is pro-coup. It occurs to the teacher that it would facilitate discussion to split the forum into pro-uprising and pro-coup topics.
The teacher scrolls down to the pro-coup posting, which just happens to be the last posting in this forum, and clicks on **Split**, as shown in following screenshot:

![Screenshot showing the splitting of a pro-coup posting](image)

This will make a new topic out of the pro-coup posting:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discussion</th>
<th>Started by</th>
<th>Replies</th>
<th>Unread</th>
<th>Last post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coup</td>
<td>Moodle Student3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Moodle Student3: Sun, 4 Mar 2007, 07:41 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coup or Uprising?</td>
<td>William Rice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Moodle Student2: Sun, 4 Mar 2007, 07:35 PM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Will splitting move replies you want to keep in place**

In this example, the teacher was lucky. Under the pro-coup posting, there were no pro-uprising replies. If there were, those replies would have come with the pro-coup posting, and the teacher would not have been able to make a topic that was completely pro-coup.
As the split function takes all of the replies nested under the split point, when a discussion has gone off course and come back on course, you should consider whether you really want to split. Consider the following example. In Reply 1-2, the conversation went off topic. For the next two replies, it remained off topic. But then, Reply 1-2-3 brought the conversation back on topic. Should you split the conversation at Reply 1-2? If you do, you’ll move Reply 1-2-3, which is on topic, out of Topic 1. When it’s taken out of Topic 1, will Reply 1-2-3 still make sense?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before the split</th>
<th>After the split</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic 1</td>
<td>Reply 1-2 (off topic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply 1-1</td>
<td>Reply 1-2-1 (off topic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply 1-2 (off topic)</td>
<td>Reply 1-2-2 (off topic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply 1-2-1 (off topic)</td>
<td>Reply 1-2-3 (back on topic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply 1-2-2 (off topic)</td>
<td>Topic 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply 1-3</td>
<td>Reply 1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply 1-4</td>
<td>Reply 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply 1-4-1</td>
<td>Reply 1-4-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply 1-4-2</td>
<td>Reply 1-4-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before splitting a forum thread, consider these two issues:

- How will rearranging the topics change the meaning of the forum?
- Will splitting move any replies that you want to keep in place?

**Monitoring student participation in a forum**

One of the most important tasks that you face when managing a forum is determining which students are participating, and which are not. Moodle gives you several ways to get this information.

**Who has posted to a forum**

Moodle's log files can tell you who has participated in an activity. We will look at how useful log files are in determining which students have posted to a forum.
In order to view the list of students who have posted to a forum, follow these steps:

1. Enter the course for which you want the report.
2. From the Administration block, select Reports.
3. Under Choose which logs to see, select the settings for the following:
   - Course: It will be set to the course you are in, but you can choose a different course.
   - Participants: Leave this set to All participants so that you see the log for all students in the course.
   - Dates: To see who has ever posted to a forum, leave this set to All days.
   - Activity: In this case, it is the forum named Using a Custom Scale.
   - Actions: In this case, it is Add a posting to the forum.
   - Display: In this case, I will display the report on screen. You can also download it as a text or Excel file.
4. Click on the Get these logs button. The students who have posted to the forum will be displayed.

What postings has a student made

In the preceding section, we started with the forum and displayed which students have contributed to it. You can also start with the student, and see what that student has posted to any forum.

For More Information:
To see the postings that a student has made to all forums in a Moodle site, follow these steps:

1. Enter the course for which you want the report.
2. From the **People** block, select **Participants**. A list of the students, teachers, and course creators for this course is displayed.
3. Select the student whose forum postings you want to see. The student’s public profile page is displayed.
4. Select the **Forum posts** tab, as shown in the following screenshot. Under this tab, you will see two subtabs: **Posts** and **Discussions**.
5. The **Posts** subtab displays all the replies the student has contributed to forums on this site. The **Discussions** subtab displays all the new topics (new discussions) the student has contributed.

6. The **Activity reports** tab displays all the activities the student has engaged in on the entire site. It has several subtabs. The **Outline report** is easier to read, and also shows you all the forums that the student is enrolled in, and has posted to.
Summary

Forums are one of Moodle's strongest features. You can use them as building blocks in which you organize the instructional material for the entire course.

So, don't be limited by the traditional notions of forums, just as a place for group discussion. You can use the forum for creating a template for future courses, and for developing a logical and easy-to-follow sequence. Finally, you can also use the forum for one-to-one discussion between a student and an instructor.

We saw how a custom scale can be used to rate the relevance of postings; you can also use custom scales to have students rate any other aspect of a forum posting. For example, suppose your class was writing a play. You could have students contribute story ideas and character sketches to a forum. Then the class could use a custom scale to vote on whether to include them in the play.

In classes that require student participation, Moodle's log files can quantify a student's participation in class discussion. Splitting a discussion can bring it back on track, when it has been taken over by an unintended subject.

Whenever you need to involve students in a discussion, a Moodle forum offers a place for students and teachers to have a productive discussion.
Where to buy this book

You can buy Moodle 1.9 Teaching Techniques from the Packt Publishing website:

Free shipping to the US, UK, Europe and selected Asian countries. For more information, please read our shipping policy.

Alternatively, you can buy the book from Amazon, BN.com, Computer Manuals and most internet book retailers.