

# Discussion Boards/Forums

How to use and get the best out of  
Blackboard 9.1, Service Pack 8

Learning Services • Learning Technology Development

Edge Hill University

## Introduction

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Discussion Boards or Forums have been used in Education since the very early days of Virtual Learning Environments and are still the most popular tool used to allow students to converse asynchronously (not all at the same time).

This guide will take you through how to use and get the best out of the discussion tool if your tutor has enabled it in your course.

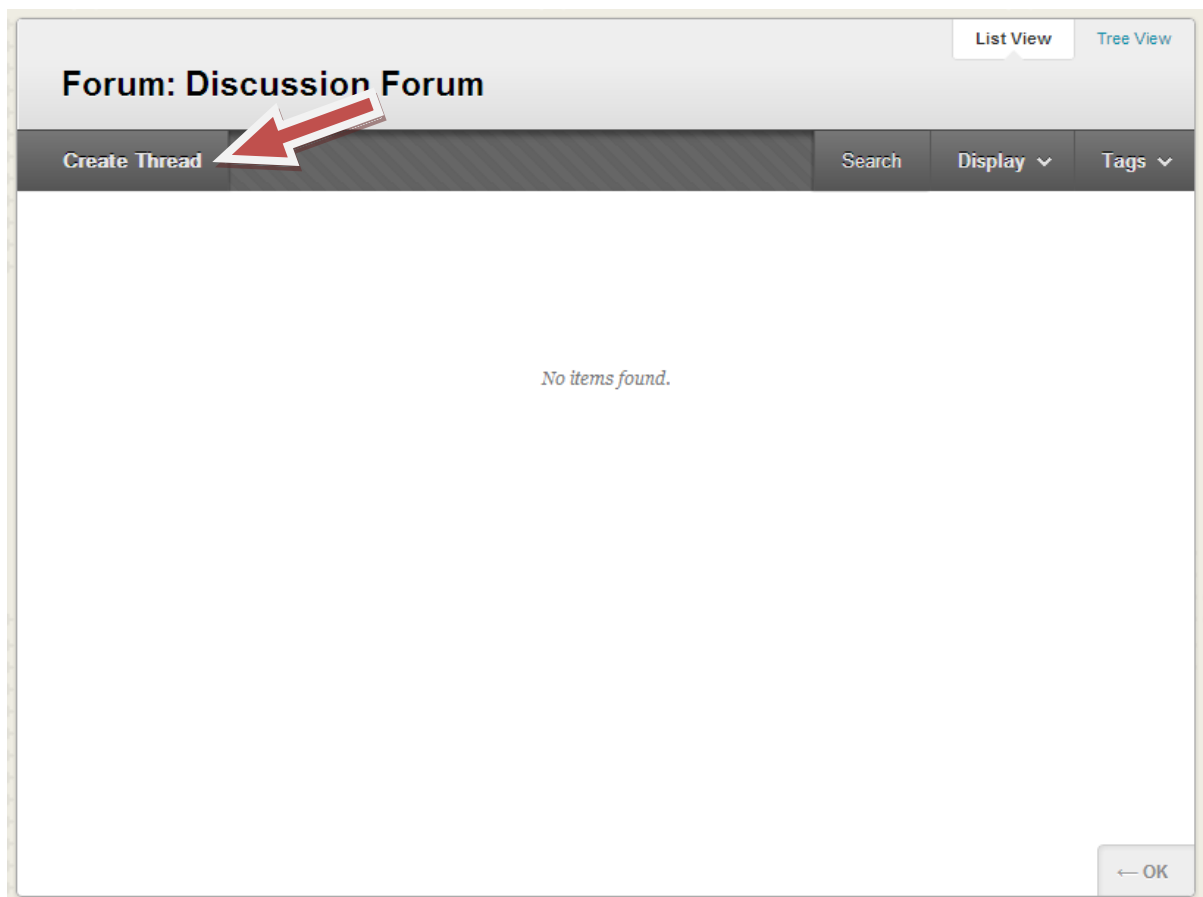
## How to...

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When you first visit a discussion forum, your tutor may, or may not have created a thread to get you started on the discussion.

If you wish to start a new 'thread' (as it is known) then follow these instructions.

In the top left hand corner click on '**Create Thread**'.



You will be presented with the following page:

## Create Thread

*\* Indicates a required field.*

Cancel Save Draft **Submit**

### 1. Message

*\* Subject*

Message

Paragraph Arial 3 (12pt)

Rich text editor toolbar with icons for bold, italic, underline, strikethrough, bulleted list, numbered list, indent, outdent, link, unlink, image, video, audio, table, and other formatting options.

Path: p Words: 0

### 2. Attachments

Attach File

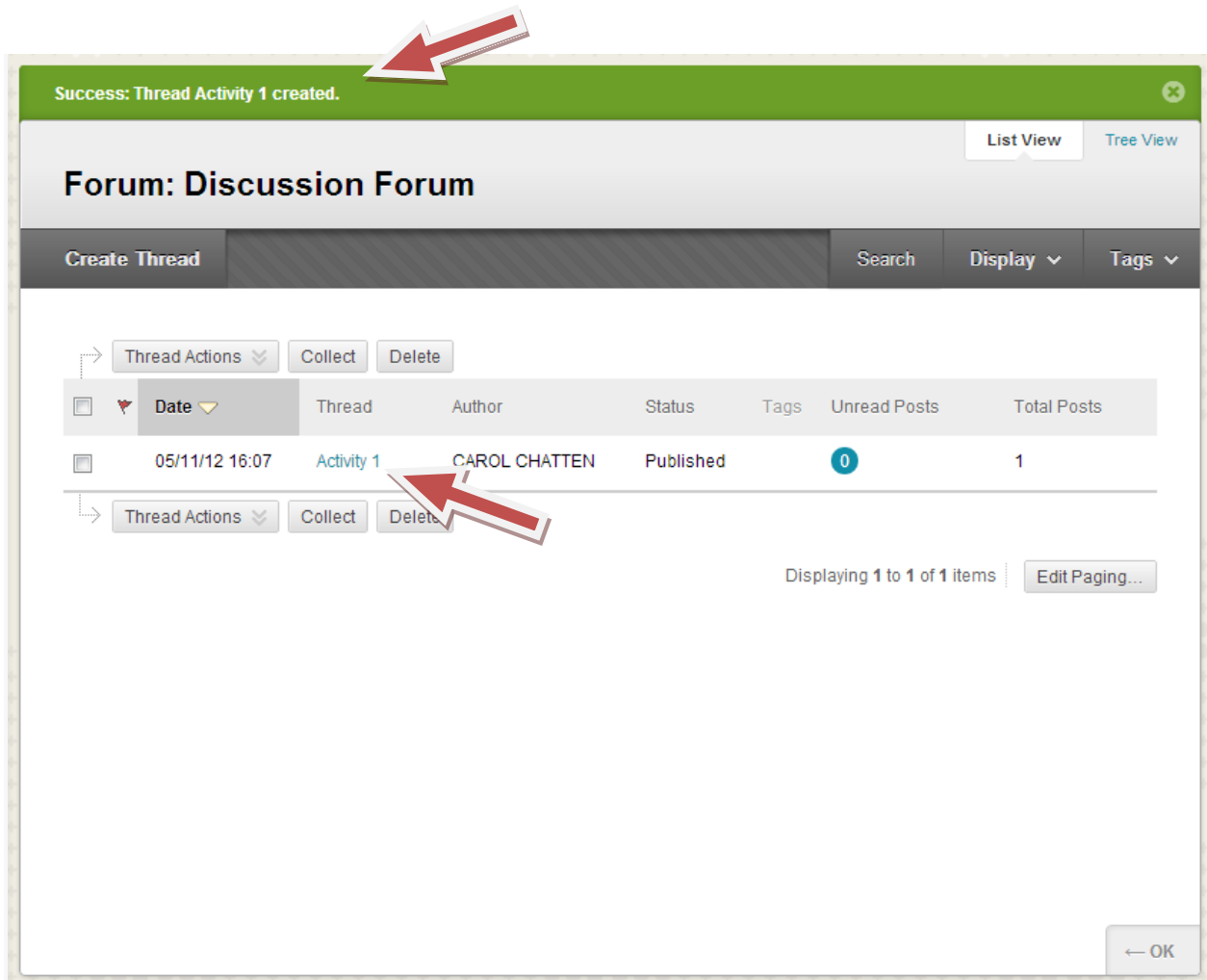
Browse My Computer Browse Course

### 3. Submit

Cancel Save Draft **Submit**

1. Give the thread a name (**Subject**).
2. You can then choose to enter a **Message** (your response to the activity that was set).
3. Click '**Submit**'.

You should now see a green tab across the top of the page saying the thread has been successfully created.



The screenshot shows a forum interface with a green success message at the top: "Success: Thread Activity 1 created." Below this is the forum title "Forum: Discussion Forum" and navigation options "List View" and "Tree View". A dark bar contains "Create Thread", "Search", "Display", and "Tags". A table lists threads with columns for Date, Thread, Author, Status, Tags, Unread Posts, and Total Posts. The first row shows a thread titled "Activity 1" by "CAROL CHATTEN" with a status of "Published", 0 unread posts, and 1 total post. A red arrow points to the "Activity 1" title. Below the table are "Thread Actions", "Collect", and "Delete" buttons, and a pagination bar showing "Displaying 1 to 1 of 1 items" and an "Edit Paging..." button. An "OK" button is in the bottom right corner.

Date	Thread	Author	Status	Tags	Unread Posts	Total Posts
05/11/12 16:07	<a href="#">Activity 1</a>	CAROL CHATTEN	Published		0	1

To respond to a thread that has already been created, **click on its title** i.e. 'Activity 1'.

## Thread Detail

Search Alignments Refresh

Activity 1 **1** **4**

Total Posts: 1 Unread Posts: 0

Message Actions Collect **2**

Select All None

<input type="checkbox"/>	Activity 1	CAROL CHATTEN	05/11/12 16:16
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Select All None

Message Actions Collect

**3** **5**

< Activity 1 > Reply Quote Edit Set Flag Delete

Author: CAROL CHATTEN Total views: 6 (Your views: 6)  
 Posted Date: Monday, 5 November 2012 16:07:42 o'clock GMT  
 Edited Date: Monday, 5 November 2012 16:16:17 o'clock GMT

I think that....


< Activity 1 > Reply Quote Edit Set Flag Delete

← OK

**1** Clicking this button allows you to reply to the top level message (the first message posted).

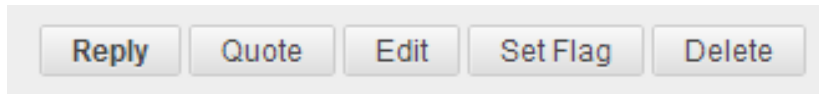
**2** Clicking this button allows you to see all the messages (that you have selected using the select all/none options) on one page.

**3** Using these buttons (< >) you can navigate between messages one at a time in order.

**4**  These buttons allow you to change the view of the page. The first one swaps the message box up or down on the page. The second one minimises the message thread box. The third box maximises or minimises the page.

5

Various combinations of these buttons appear **depending on the settings set by the tutor.**



- **Reply** allows you to reply to the message currently selected/opened in the top/bottom window (depending on your settings).
- **Quote** allows you to quote the message that you are currently reading in your reply.
- **Edit** allows you to edit your message (you cannot edit others' messages).
- **Set Flag** creates a marker on the open message so you can return to it quickly in the future.
- **Delete** allows you to delete your message (you may not be allowed to delete your message if you have replies).

If your tutor has not enabled you to be able to delete a message, you can still request for it to be removed if you would like to change it or if you posted in the wrong place. Contact your tutor and they can do this for you.

## Replying to a message

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Replying to a message is similar to starting a thread

1. You will need to enter a **Subject** (it will automatically start with **RE:** like in an email).
2. You can then enter your **reply/message**.
3. You can also at this stage attach any files that you think are useful or supplement your **reply/message**.
4. You can then choose to **Submit** your message, **Cancel** the message, or **Save as Draft**. If you save as draft it will not be visible to other users until you **Submit** it fully.

## Reply to Post

\* Indicates a required field.

Cancel Save Draft **Submit**

### 1. Message

\* Subject:  [View Original Post](#)

Message

Paragraph Arial 3 (12pt)

Path: p Words:0

### 2. Attachments

Attach File

### 3. Submit

Cancel Save Draft **Submit**

Your reply will then appear in the 'branch' of the conversation.

Message Actions Collect

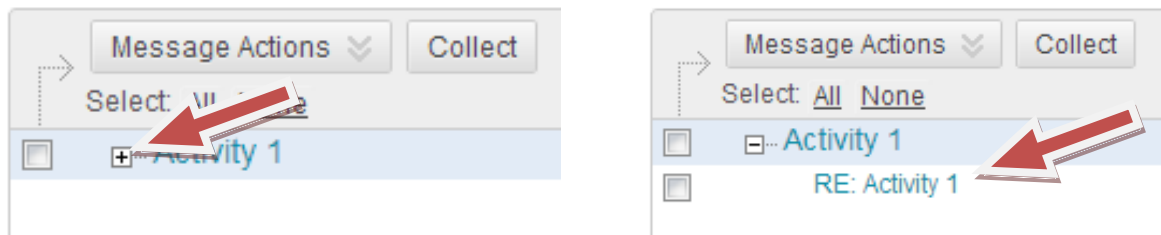
Select: [All](#) [None](#)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Activity 1	CAROL CHATTEN	05/11/12 16:16
<input type="checkbox"/>	RE: Activity 1	CAROL CHATTEN	06/11/12 09:45

Select: [All](#) [None](#)

Message Actions Collect

If you cannot see your reply (or others' replies), ensure you have fully 'expanded' the thread. Click on the **+** to expand.

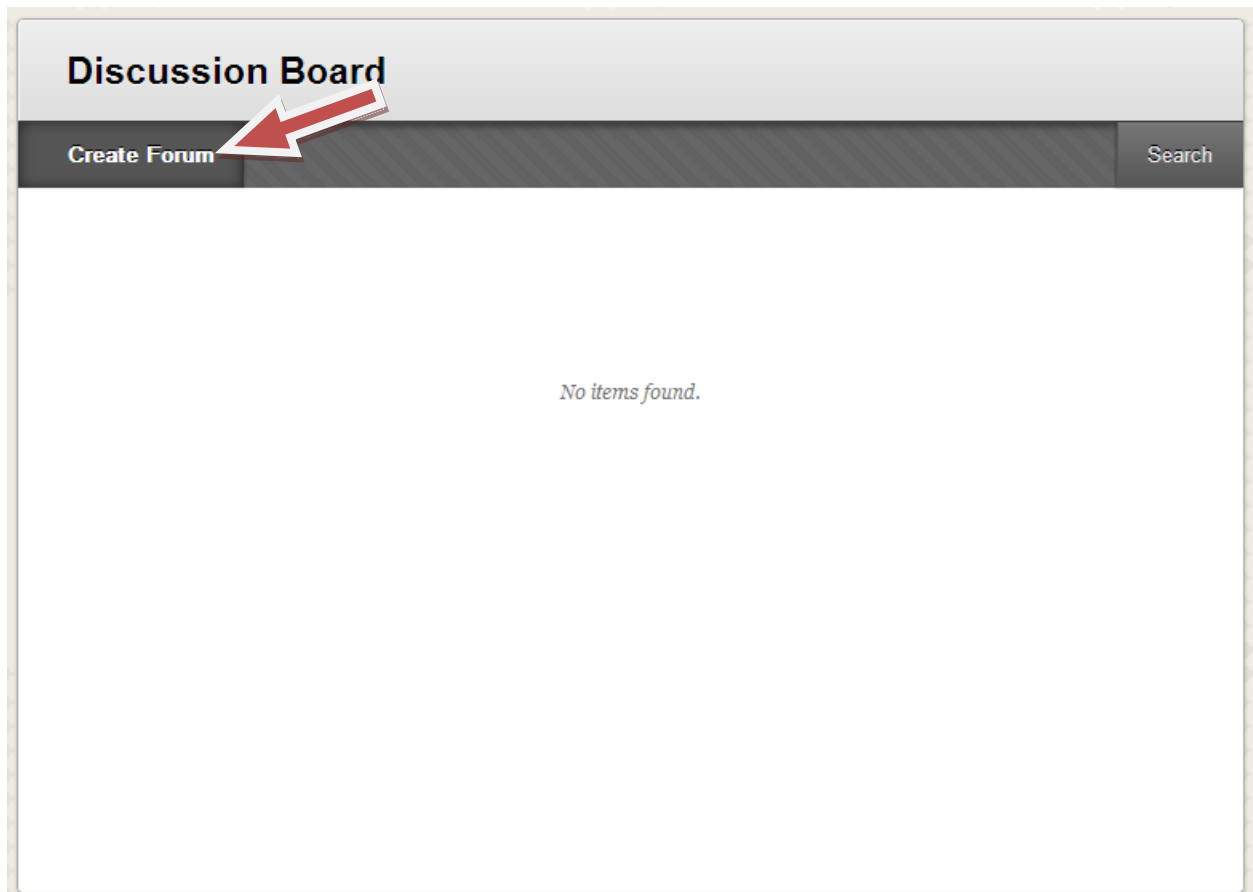


## Create a Forum

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In some cases, especially where groups and group tools are being used (group discussion forums) you may be expected to start off a Forum. The following steps tell you how to get started.

If your tutor has allowed it and if the tutor hasn't started a forum, you will need to start one. Click on '**Create Forum**' to begin.





The following page will appear:

**Create Forum**

*Forums are made up of individual discussion threads that can be organised around a particular subject. Create Forums to organise discussions. [More Help](#)*

*\* Indicates a required field.*

Cancel Submit

**1. Forum Information**

\* Name

Description

**T T T** Arial **Tt** 3 (12pt) **T** ABC

Path: p Words: 0

**2. Submit**

*Click Submit to proceed. Click Cancel to quit.*

Cancel Submit

Enter a **Name** for the Forum; this may be the name of the activity or something generic like 'Activity 1'.

There is then space for a description.

**NB – THIS IS NOT WHERE YOU POST YOUR REPLY!**

In the **Description** box you may wish to add the instructions from the activity that has been set, or summarise what will be discussed within the forum.

Click '**Submit**' when you are ready.

## Discussion Board

Create Forum Search ↑↓


Forum	Total Posts	Unread Posts	Total Participants
<a href="#">New forum</a> This forum will discuss...	0	0	0

Displaying 1 to 1 of 1 items Show All Edit Paging...

Your new forum has been created. **Click on to the forum name to enter it** and create a new thread (as per instructions earlier in this guide).

**Last note, if you believe that you should be able to see a discussion forum somewhere in your module or course, but can't find it, ask you tutor where they have put it in the course; it may be that it's still hidden or in a specific location.**

## Other Sources of Help and support for Students

- **The  'Help' function within Learning Edge**  
Click the 'Help' link near the 'My Places' link at the top of the Learning Edge page to access 'Blackboard Help for Students'.
- **Learning Services Helpdesk**  
Contact the Learning Services Helpdesk if you need further assistance or have any further queries.

**Visit a helpdesk in person:** at the Learning Resource Centre (LRC) and the Learning innovation Centre (LINC) - Ormskirk, Learning Resource Centre (LRC) - Woodlands or the Learning & Information Resource Centre (LIRC) – Aintree.

**Telephone:** 01695 584286

**Email:** [lsdesk@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:lsdesk@edgehill.ac.uk)

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If you require this information in an alternative format, please contact Learning Technology Development, on 01695 650754 or email [ltsupport@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:ltsupport@edgehill.ac.uk)