



Creating Forums and Topics in Discussions – D2L Tutorial

This tutorial is designed for faculty who have previous experience using D2L. For further information, please contact elearning@camosun.ca for assistance.

Scenario

This tutorial will cover the steps involved when you wish to create forums and topics in the Discussion tool in D2L. The Discussion tool allows for asynchronous discussions of topics, and sharing of information, between students and groups of students. But first, you need to know the difference between Forums, Topics, and Threads/Replies.

- A **Forum** is a container for Topics.
- A **Topic** contains the discussion itself.
- A **Thread** contains an individual student's post to the Topic, along with others' replies to that post (a conversation, if you will...)

So, a Topic contains multiple Threads, and a Forum contains (often) multiple Topics. You could, for example, have a Forum called "Module 1 Discussions", and within that Forum, have a series of Topics called "Week 1 Discussion", "Week 2 Discussion", "Module 1 Group Discussions", etc.

Steps to Creating a Forum

1. Go to the **Discussions** tool in your course.
2. Click on **New**, and select **New Forum**. Note that you need to create a Forum before you can create a Topic, even if there is only going to be one Topic in that Forum.

The screenshot shows the D2L Discussions tool interface. At the top, there are navigation links: "Training Course 03", "Course Home", "My Tools", and "Edit Course". The main heading is "Discussions", with sub-links for "Discussions List", "Subscriptions", "Group and Section Restrictions", and "Statistics". There are "Settings" and "Help" icons in the top right. A "New" button is highlighted with a red box, and a red arrow points to the "New Forum" option in the dropdown menu. Below the menu, there is a "New Topic" option. The main content area shows a table with columns for "Topic", "Threads", "Posts", and "Last Post". The first row shows a topic titled "Why are you here?" with 0 threads and 0 posts. Below the table, there is a description of the topic: "This Topic is called 'Why are you here?'. Post 1-2 paragraphs explaining why you are taking this course and about what your learning expectations are (i.e., what are the top three things you hope to learn from this course)."



3. Give your Forum a **Title**. You can also give your forum a **Description** if you like. This description will appear under the Forum's title in the main Discussion area.

The screenshot shows the 'New Forum Details' form. The 'Title' field is highlighted with a red box and an arrow pointing to it. The 'Description' field is also highlighted with a red box and an arrow pointing to it. The 'Options' section is visible below the description field.

4. The **Options** you select for the Forum will apply to any Topics within it. These options include:
- Allow anonymous posts** (this means students can choose to post anonymously)
 - A moderator must approve individual posts before they display in the forum** (this means that YOU need to approve posts before students can see them)
 - Users must start a thread before they can read and reply to other threads in each topic** (this means that a student has to post to a topic BEFORE they can see other student's posts)
 - Display forum description in topics** (this will repeat the forum description under the title of all the topics within it)

The screenshot shows the 'Options' section of the forum configuration. The 'Options' section is highlighted with a red box. The 'Availability' section is visible below the options.



5. **Availability/Visibility** controls whether or not (and when) students can see the Forum.

The screenshot shows the 'Availability' settings panel. At the top, there is a dropdown menu labeled 'Hide forum visibility options'. Below this, the 'Visibility' section contains three radio button options: 'Forum is always visible' (which is selected), 'Hide this forum', and 'Forum is visible for a specific date range'. Under the 'Forum is visible for a specific date range' option, there are two sub-sections: 'Has Start Date' and 'Has End Date'. Each sub-section includes a date input field (9-14-2018 and 9-21-2018 respectively), a time input field (3:22 PM and 10:22 PM respectively), and a 'Now' button. Below the date and time inputs, the text 'Canada - Vancouver' is displayed. At the bottom of the 'Availability' section, there is a checkbox for 'Display in Calendar'. Below the 'Availability' section, the 'Locking Options' section is partially visible, starting with a dropdown menu labeled 'Hide locking options'.

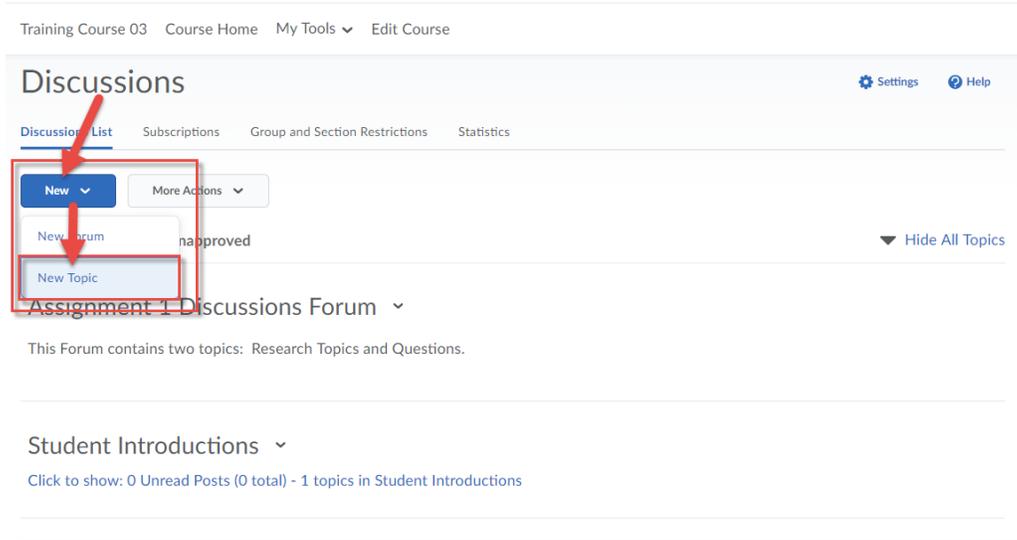
6. **Locking Options** allow students to SEE the Forum, but control whether or not (and when) they can POST to it. Click **Save and Close** when you are done.

The screenshot shows the 'Locking Options' settings panel. At the top, there are two sub-sections: 'Has End Date' and 'Display in Calendar'. The 'Has End Date' section includes a date input field (9-21-2018), a time input field (10:22 PM), and a 'Now' button, with 'Canada - Vancouver' displayed below. The 'Display in Calendar' section has an unchecked checkbox. Below these, the 'Locking Options' section is highlighted with a red box. It contains three radio button options: 'Unlock forum' (which is selected), 'Lock forum', and 'Unlock forum for a specific date range'. Under the 'Unlock forum for a specific date range' option, there are two sub-sections: 'Has Start Date' and 'Has End Date'. Each sub-section includes a date input field (9-14-2018 and 9-21-2018 respectively), a time input field (3:22 PM and 10:22 PM respectively), and a 'Now' button. Below the date and time inputs, the text 'Canada - Vancouver' is displayed. At the bottom of the 'Locking Options' section, there is a checkbox for 'Display in Calendar'. Below the 'Locking Options' section, there are four buttons: 'Save and Close' (highlighted with a red box), 'Save and Add Topic', 'Save', and 'Cancel'.

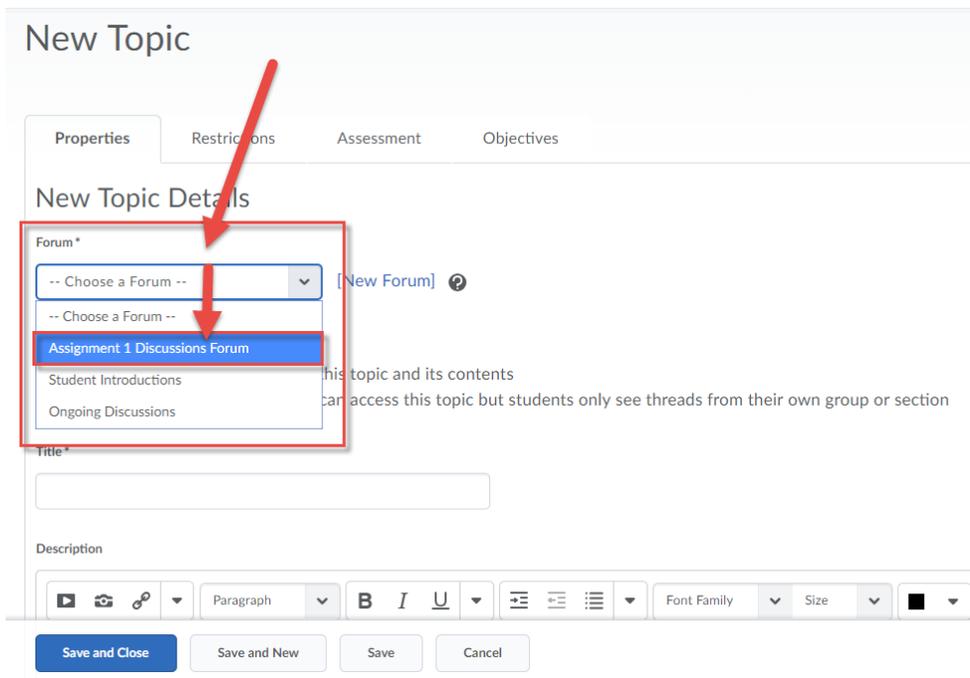


Steps to Creating a Topic

1. Go to the **Discussions** tool in your course.
2. Click on **New**, and select **New Topic**.



3. From the **Forum** drop-down menu, select the Forum you want the Topic to be part of. Note that this is mandatory – every Topic must belong to a Forum



4. Under **Topic Type**, choose:
 - a. **Open topic** (meaning that all students can see the topic and post to any and all threads posted to it).
 - b. **Group of section topic** (meaning that all students can see the topic, but they will only see threads created by other students in their group –that this means that you need to have Groups set up in D2L in order to use this Topic Type).
5. Give your Topic a **Title**, **Description** (if needed), etc. (the rest of the options are similar to those of the Forum, as described above). Click **Save and Close**.

The screenshot shows the 'New Topic Details' form. The 'Forum' dropdown is set to 'Assignment 1 Discussions Forum'. The 'Topic Type' section has two radio buttons: 'Open topic, everyone can access this topic and its contents' (selected) and 'Group or section topic, everyone can access this topic but students only see the threads created by other students in their group'. The 'Title' field contains 'Questions about Assignment 1'. The 'Description' field has a rich text editor with a toolbar. The 'Options' section at the bottom has buttons for 'Save and Close', 'Save and New', 'Save', and 'Cancel'. Red arrows point to the 'Open topic' radio button, the 'Title' field, and the 'Save and Close' button.

Things to Remember

You cannot create a Topic without putting it into a Forum - every Topic must belong to a Forum! You and your students CANNOT post to a Forum. You need a Topic in order to post threads and replies.

One Forum can contain multiple Topics. You don't need to have a separate Forum for each discussion, only separate Topics or Threads.

If you have **Locking Options** set up for a Forum or Topic, and you copy your discussion Forums and Topics from one course to another, remember to revise these settings for the next course, otherwise the original settings will control whether students can post to that Forum or Topic. So, for example, if you locked your *Week 1 Discussion* Topic on October 31, 2016, that date will copy into your new course along with all the other Discussion settings!



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