



# ICON (powered by Canvas) Groups & Discussions

## Today's Session:

1. ICON Groups and Discussions - Overview
2. Online Help – How to Find and Use It
3. Exercises - Demo and Hands-On
4. Individual Work Time

## Getting Ready:

1. Go to <https://icon.uiowa.edu/>
2. Click on the Canvas Home tab. If you have a notification banner at the top of your page, click to Accept. Go to your assigned training course.

## Follow up:

If you would like further training with ICON or any other instructional technology, the SITA program is available to help answer your questions. Contact them at [SITA@uiowa.edu](mailto:SITA@uiowa.edu) or by phone at (319) 335-5627

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## Groups

Every group created in Canvas receives its own group space. This group homepage acts like a smaller version of your course and can be used as a collaborative tool where students can work together on group projects and assignments. Instructors are not added as members to groups, but are able to access each group homepage in their course and interact with group content and assignments.

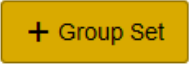
Reasons to create Groups in your Canvas course site include:

1. Create student groups for group assignments and in-class work, both graded and ungraded.
2. Facilitate semester-long projects so that students can communicate and iterate on documents together.
3. Facilitate student-run study groups.

There are several ways to create and use groups within Canvas. You can choose to allow students to create their own (study) groups or you may create the groups for your course. Groups can be self-sign up, manually enrolled or auto-enrolled by Canvas. Once groups have been established, you can also create (graded or ungraded) group assignments.




## EXERCISE ONE — Creating a Group Set

1. Click **People** in the left hand Course Navigation panel.
2. Click the **Add Group Set** button. 
3. Type **Discussion Groups** in the name for groups field.

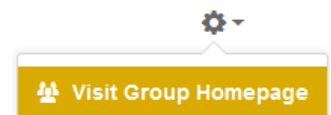
**Note:** You can allow [self sign-ups](#) by selecting the **Allow self sign-up** checkbox.  
You can [manually create the groups](#) by clicking on the **I'll create groups manually** radio button.

4. Under **Group Structure**, click **Split students into [number] equal groups**.
5. Type **2** in the **[number]** box.
6. Click the **Save** button.

**Note:** To see the students assigned to the two groups, click the triangle left to the Group name.

To change a student's group membership, use the  icon to the left of the student's name to click and drag the student from one group to another.

7. To visit a group's home page, click on the new **Discussion Groups** tab.
8. To the right of **Discussion Group 1**, click **Settings, Visit Group Homepage**.



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## Discussions

contribute to discussion topics. Discussions can be created as an assignment for grading purposes, or simply serve as a forum for course conversations.

Reasons to include a Discussion Forum in your Canvas course site include:

- 1) Help students start thinking about an upcoming Assignment or class discussion.
  - 2) Follow-up on a conversation or questions that began in a face-to-face classroom.
  - 3) Test student comprehension of important points made in class.
  - 4) Debate contradictory ideas.
  - 5) Brainstorm different approaches to a class problem.
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## EXERCISE ONE — Finding the Discussions Index Page

1. **Click Discussions** in the left hand Course Navigation panel.

The Course Navigation menu can be customized. If “Discussions” is an active link, students can access this menu option. If it is faded, students will have to access discussions through another method, either Modules or Assignments.

The Discussion Index page allows you to view all the discussions within a course. As an instructor, you can add discussions and modify discussion settings. Please note at this time you cannot reorder discussions; by default they are ordered by most recent activity

The Discussions Index Page is organized into three main areas: Discussions, Pinned Discussions, and Closed for Comments Discussions.

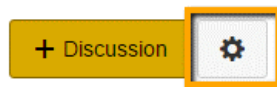
Pinned discussions are discussions that you want your students to see at the top of their page. Pinned discussions can be arranged in any order. Students will only see this section heading if there are discussions within this section. You can pin a discussion using the Settings icon, or you can pin a discussion by dragging it to the Pinned Discussions area. Within Pinned Discussions, you can manually reorder discussions. Drag and drop the discussions in the order you prefer.

Closed Discussions are set to a view only mode, either manually or through availability date settings. These are discussions that are only available in a read-only state. Closed for comments discussions are also ordered by most recent activity. Students will always see this section heading, even if there are no discussions within this section.

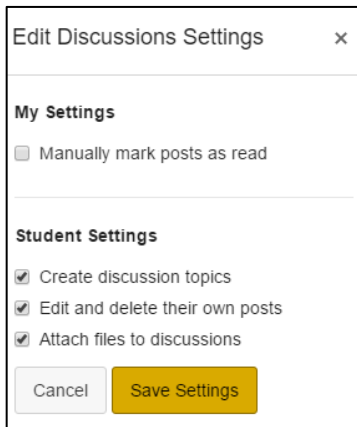
2. Go on to **Exercise Two** below.



## EXERCISE TWO — Setting the Discussions Options



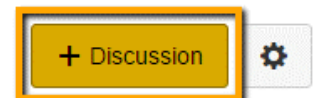
1. In the Discussion Index Page, **click Settings**.
2. These are the course settings that affect the behavior of Discussion Forums in your course:



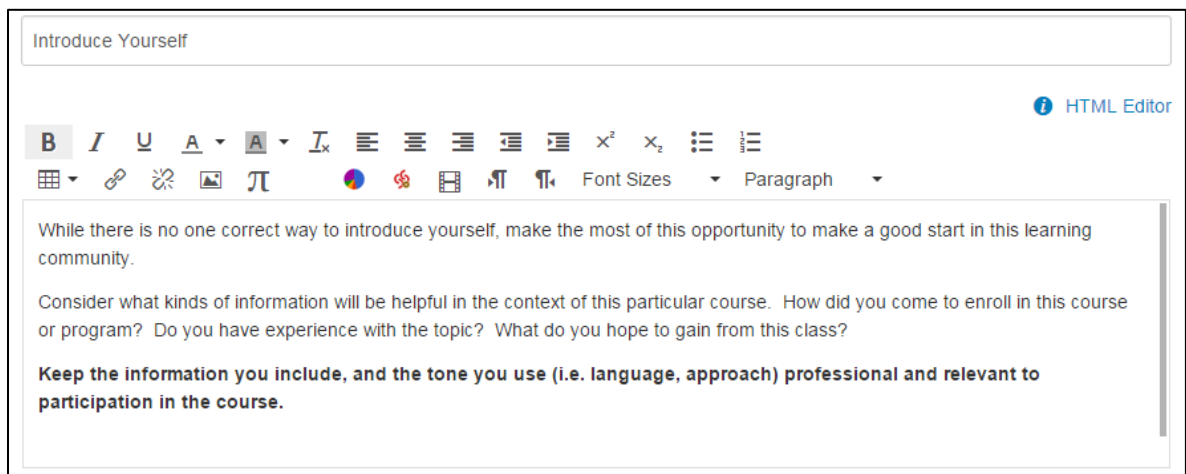
3. Allow students to attach files to discussion posts by clicking the **Let students attach files to Discussion** checkbox.
4. Allow students to create new discussion topics by clicking the **Let students create Discussion Topics** checkbox.
5. Allow students to edit or delete their own discussion posts by clicking the **Let students edit or delete their own discussion posts** checkbox.
6. **Click “Save Settings.”**
7. Go on to **Exercise Three** below.



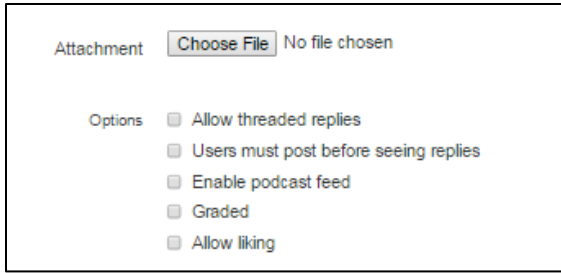
## EXERCISE THREE — Adding a Discussion Forum



1. On the Discussions Index Page, click the “Add a Discussion” button.
2. Enter “Introduce Yourself” in the “Topic Title” field.
3. Enter a description in the Rich Text Editor field. You can also add links to files, images, or other content in this space.



4. Select from the options for this discussion forum.



There are two types of Discussion Forums in Canvas: focused or threaded discussion.

**Use a Focused Discussion for single posts and related comments.** One discussion leader typically posts a message and multiple learners comment on it. **This makes the discussion forum more mobile friendly than the Threaded Discussion Forums.**

**Use a Threaded Discussion for multiple posts and related comments.** One or more discussion leaders post a message and multiple learners comment on it with the freedom to create any number of related discussion topics and comments (**infinite layers of nesting**). This makes the discussion forum less mobile friendly than the Threaded Discussion Forums.

5. Set Availability From and Until dates, if desired.
6. **Click Save or Save and Publish.**

**NOTE:** Your new forum will not appear to students on the main Discussions page until you have published the forum

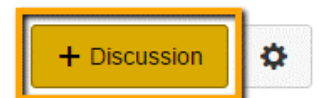
7. Go on to **Exercise Four** below.



## EXERCISE FOUR — Adding a Graded Discussion Forum

Discussion forums can be used as an assessment tool by selecting to make the discussion “Graded.” When a discussion forum is selected to be used in grading, it will automatically be added to the Gradebook and Assignment list for the course.

**NOTE:** Graded items can have a value of zero points.



1. On the Discussions Index Page, **click the “Add a Discussion” button.**
2. **Enter “Why have online discussions?” in the “Topic Title” field.**
3. Enter a description in the Rich Text Editor field. You can also add links to files, images, or other content in this space.



4. Select the option “**Graded**” for this discussion forum.  
Setting a discussion forum as Graded opens additional options for the discussion settings.
  5. **Set Grading Details** for this discussion forum.
    - Points Possible - For this exercise, **set 10 Points Possible**.
  6. **Click Save and Publish**.  
**NOTE:** Your new forum will not appear to students on the main Discussions page until you have published the forum
  7. Go on to **Exercise Five** below.
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## EXERCISE FIVE — Adding a Discussion Message

You can post a message to help get your students started or to respond to something students are discussing. For this exercise we will use the Canvas Test Student function to leave a message for grading.

1. In Course Navigation, **click the Settings** link.
  2. **Click Student View** (top right).
  3. **Click Discussions**.
  4. Click into the graded discussion forum.
  5. Click the Reply field.
  6. Type your message in the HTML Editor window.
  7. Click **Post Reply**. Your message will appear in the forum with the Test Student name and the date stamp visible.
  8. Click **Leave Student View** (bottom right).
  9. Go on to **Exercise Six** below.
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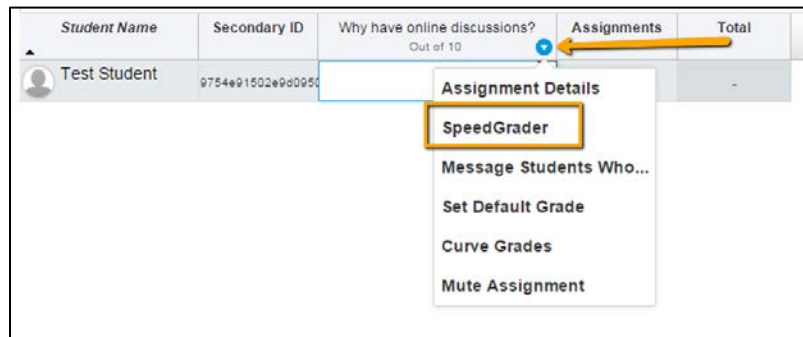


## EXERCISE SIX — Grading a Discussion Message

1. In Course Navigation, **click the Grades** link.



2. Hover over the name of the discussion forum and click the arrow that appears in the bottom right corner of the column heading cell.
3. Click the SpeedGrader link.



SpeedGrader opens the assignment for the first student listed in the student list, arranged alphabetically by last name. For Discussion forums, SpeedGrader pulls all a student's comments into one view, or you can see the whole discussion.

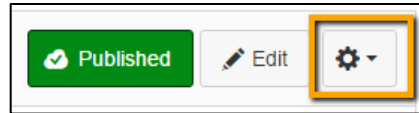
4. **Enter a score** into the Grade field.
5. **Enter feedback** in the Comment field. Note that you may also attach a file, a media comment, or use the speech recognition tools to provide your student feedback to these assignments.
6. **Click Submit Comment.**
7. Note that the icon in front of Test Student has changed from an orange dot (ungraded) to a green checkmark.
8. **Click the Gradebook** link (upper left) to see updated grades.



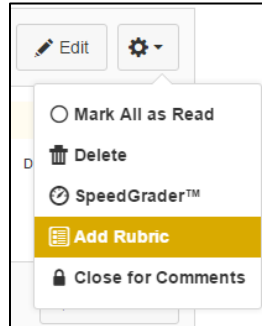
## EXERCISE SEVEN — Adding a Rubric to a Discussion Forum

A Rubric is a tool for communicating expectations of quality to students. Rubrics are typically comprised of rows and columns. Rows are used to define the various criteria being used to assess an assignment. Columns are used to define levels of performance for each criterion.

1. In Course Navigation, **click the Discussions** link.
2. **Click into the graded discussion forum.**



3. Click the **Settings** button (top right).
4. Click **Add Rubric**.



5. Click in the title field and enter “**Discussion Rubric.**”
6. Change the total number of points to **10**
7. Hover over the Criteria description and click the pencil.

Criteria	Ratings	Pts	
Description of criterion <a href="#">view longer description</a>	Full Marks 10 pts	No Marks 0 pts	10 pts

Total Points: 10

I'll write free-form comments when assessing students  
 Use this rubric for assignment grading  
 Hide score total for assessment results

Cancel Create Rubric

8. Enter a requirement for this row, such as “Contribution to the discussion.”
9. Click **OK**.
10. To add additional levels of performance, hover over the Full Marks cell and click the Plus.
11. To add descriptions to the rating levels, hover over the cell and click the pencil.





Criteria	Ratings	Pts
Contribution to the discussion <small>view longer description</small>	Full Marks 10 pts	No Marks 0 pts
	10	pts

Total Points: 10

I'll write free-form comments when assessing students

Use this rubric for assignment grading

Hide score total for assessment results

Cancel Create Rubric

12. To add additional requirements to this rubric, click the “Add Criterion” button.

13. To have the rubric score automatically transfer to the assignment grade entry, click “**Use this rubric for assignment grading.**”

I'll write free-form comments when assessing students

Use this rubric for assignment grading

14. When finished with the rubric, click “Create Rubric.”

Now, when you enter SpeedGrader, you can click “View Rubric” and click the rating within the rubric to assign a score to students. You can also enter a different score in the points field than is assigned in the rubric, if desired.

For more information on Rubrics, visit <https://community.canvaslms.com/community/answers>.



## Using Discussion Settings to Create Specifically Purposed Forums

**Scenario 1: You want students to brainstorm study questions for the midterm, but only for a limited time period.**

- You can limit the time the topics in the forum are available.
  - To create the forum now but hide it from participants until a later time, use the **Available from** options.
- To allow students to view topics but not post new messages (that is, to make the discussion forum “read



only”), move the forum to the **Closed for Comments** area of the Discussion Index page. You can also specify a time the forum automatically closes by using the **Available until** date.

**NOTE:** Setting a due date does not close a discussion.

**Scenario 2: You want students to contribute to a discussion forum without being influenced by other students’ answers.**

- You can restrict students’ access to a discussion forum until they have contributed a response.
  - To create this restriction, use the **Users must post before seeing replies** option.

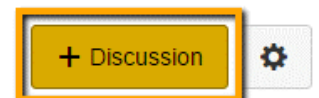
**Scenario 3: You want to ensure that students can only participate in a discussion if they have done the reading.**

- To restrict participation in the topic to members of a group or to students who have completed a specified online task, deliver your discussion forums through the Modules tool. See the Online Help Section: *How do I add requirements to a Module?* (<https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2862>)



## EXERCISE 8 — Creating a Group Discussion Forum

Groups within Canvas courses can participate in discussion forums in a space that is separated from the entire course. These group discussions can be graded or ungraded activities in the class.



1. On the Discussions Index Page, **click the “Add a Discussion” button.**
2. **Enter “Group conversation area” in the “Topic Title” field.**
3. Enter a description in the Rich Text Editor field. You can also add links to files, images, or other content in this space.

If no groups have been set up in the People tab, you will be prompted to create a Group Set as soon as you check “This is a Group Discussion.”



The “**Discussion Group**” group set you created earlier should be available to you in the Group Set drop-down. Select it now.

Instructors will have links to each group’s discussion forum, however students are unable to view or participate in discussions of other students’ groups.

## FAQ

1. Where can I find further information about Canvas Discussion Forums?

[https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-4131#jive\\_content\\_id\\_Discussions](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-4131#jive_content_id_Discussions)

2. What statistics can I find for participation in discussion forums?

ITS Training Offerings  
<http://its.uiowa.edu/training/>



Summative statistics on the totals of Discussion Forum activities can be found in Canvas Course Statistics.

Individual statistics on student participation in discussion forums can be found in a user's Access Report. This is found from the People page.(<https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2864>)

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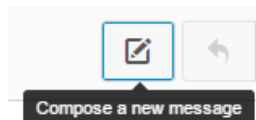
We will not cover the following content in class, but feel free to practice on your own and ask your instructor questions.

## Email

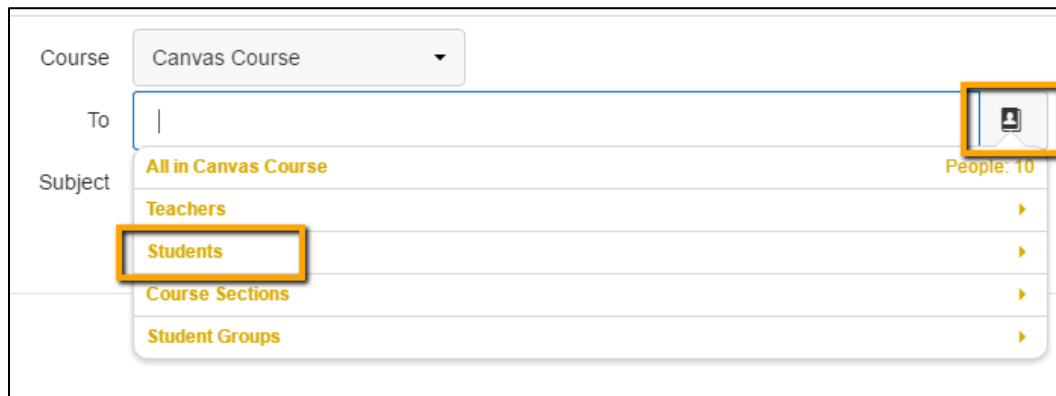
### Sending an Email to Your Entire Class

To send an email to your class using the Canvas email tool:

1. Click **Inbox** from the Global Navigation menu.



2. Click **Compose a new message**.
3. **Select the course** you wish to e-mail.
4. Click the address book icon to the right of the **To** field and select **Students**.



5. To send an e-mail to all students, **click Canvas Course Students**.

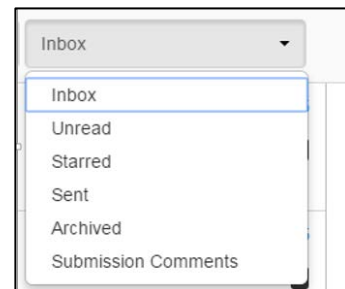


6. Enter a Title in the Subject box. Type your message in the text box. Use the buttons on the bottom left to add attachments or media to your message.
7. **Click the Send individual messages** checkbox to prevent students from seeing all recipients and replies in the message.

**Note:** If your class contains more than 100 users, the **Send individual messages** checkbox will be selected automatically, and your message will be sent as individual messages to each user.

8. Click **Send** (bottom right).

Your sent messages are available in the Sent portion of the Canvas Inbox. You may also Archive, Delete, and Star messages in your Inbox, as needed. For more information, please see <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-1293>.





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