

Discussion Boards: Getting Started

Guide for Instructors



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Discussion Boards at Cornell

Discussion boards, also known as message boards, online forums, and electronic bulletin boards, allow users to hold asynchronous discussions that are grouped in a “threaded” format. That is, individual posts are organized in chronological order under grouped topic headings. At Cornell, CIT has established a customized instance of the phpBB Web forum software for the convenience of instructors and students.

Getting Started

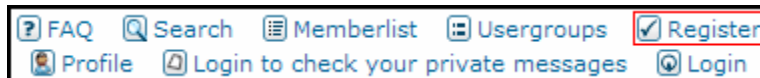
Find the Application

Open the Course Technologies Discussion Board by pointing your web browser to

<http://forums.cit.cornell.edu>

You will be asked for your Cornell NetID and password. If you have not visited the site before, you will need to register as a user:

1. At the top of the page (under the site title), CLICK **Register**



2. Fill out the form you see and CLICK **Submit**.
3. An email will be sent containing an activation link. CLICK this link (or cut and paste from the email message into your browser).
4. Return to the site and log in.

On your second and subsequent visit, you will be asked to log in again using the discussion board login you created when you registered.

Request a New Discussion Board

To create a discussion board for your course:



What you see...

...isn't always what you get! The screen images in this guide were taken using Windows XP and IE 6.0.

Depending on the operating system and browser you're using, your screen may look slightly different.

Find the IT Request form online at

<http://atcsupport.cit.cornell.edu/itrequest/>

On the first screen, enter your name and course details as requested.

Faculty Support Services for Teaching with Technology IT Resource Request Form

*This form should be used to request Instructional technology resources for academic purposes only.
denotes required fields

*Instructor's Cornell NetID @cornell.edu

*Instructor's first name

*Instructor's last name

*Course ID *e.g. biog101*

*Semester

*Year

**If you are not the instructor of record for the course, please fill in the following information...*

Your Cornell NetID @cornell.edu

Your first name

Your last name

The University expects that users of these services will in good faith post material in compliance with copyright laws. If you have questions about the use of any material, please go to copyright@cornell.edu or contact Patricia McClary, (5-5126, pam4@cornell.edu) for guidance.

CLICK **Continue** to proceed to the next step. On the second screen you have two choices that include a phpBB forum. The first choice is to select the Discussion Board option, as shown below. This is appropriate if all you need is a forum for your class.

Faculty Support Services for Teaching with Technology IT Resource Request Form

Please select a service...

***Please note that as of May 7, 2007 requests for course web sites will now be hosted on courses.cit.cornell.edu and not on instruct1.cit.cornell.edu**

Assessments & Quizzes

Audio/Video Server Account

Blackboard

Consultation

Course Web Space

Custom Training

Discussion Board

Lab: Schedule Session

Lab: Software Installation

Student Web Space

Surveys and Evaluations

Unix Shell for Research

If you would like hosting space for an entire course website (that you would create yourself), you can **SELECT Course Web Space**, and then **SELECT Forum** as an addition to that package.

Faculty Support Services for Teaching with Technology IT Resource Request Form

The screenshot shows a web form titled "Please select a service...". At the top, a red note states: "*Please note that as of May 7, 2007 requests for course web sites will now be hosted on courses.cit.cornell.edu and not on instruct1.cit.cornell.edu". Below this, there are two columns of radio button options. The first column includes: Assessments & Self Tests, Audio/Video Server Account, Blackboard, Consultation, **Course Web Space** (selected with a green dot), and Custom Training. The second column includes: Discussion Board, Lab: Schedule Session, Lab: Software Installation, Student Web Space, Surveys and Evaluations, and Unix Shell for Research. Below the radio buttons, there is a blue link: "Select the options for your web site...". Underneath that, there are two checkboxes: "Secure space" (unchecked) and "Discussion board" (checked with a green checkmark). At the bottom right, there is a "Continue >>" button. Two red arrows point to the "Course Web Space" radio button and the "Discussion board" checkbox.

This submits a request to CIT to create the board. Within a day or two, you should receive an email confirming that the forum has been created.

Once you receive the confirmation message, you may visit the forum site, log in, and look in the Course Discussions section for the appropriate academic term to find the new forum.

Join an Existing Board

To join an existing discussion board:

1. At the top of the page (under the site title), **CLICK Usergroups**
2. **SELECT** your course from the Non-member groups drop-down menu
3. **CLICK View Information**
4. Verify you have the right class by reviewing the group information
5. **CLICK Join Group**
6. **RETURN** to the **Forum Index**, you should now see the new board

Getting Help while You Work

To access simple help for many tasks, **CLICK FAQ** in the menu at the top of any page.

Posting

To create a new topic: In the View Forum and View Topic pages, **CLICK New Topic**. This will take you to the posting form, and, when you have posted, will create a new topic with your post as the first one in the topic.

To reply to a post in an existing topic: in the View Topic page, **CLICK Reply**. This will take you to the posting form, and, when you have posted, it will add your post to the topic you replied to. To reply to a specific post, you may also **CLICK the Quote** button in the upper right corner of that post.

Posting Form

When you post a new topic or post a reply, you are taken to the posting form to enter your post. The form contains the following fields:

Subject - The subject of your post. If this is a new post, the subject is required, and it will be the name of the topic. If the post is replying to another post, the subject is not required, but may be added, and will be shown at the top of the post.

Message Body - The Message body is a large text area where the body of your post is input. Plain text is the only thing allowed in this text area, but special formatting, links, smilies (emoticons), images, etc. may be added through the use of Smilies, and BBCode.

Smilies - Smilies (also called emoticons) can be added to posts. If smilies are enabled and you would like to disable them in your post, **CHECK** the box next to **Disable Smilies in this Post**.

BBCode - BBCode allows you to add special formatting to your posts. If BBCode is enabled and you would like to disable it in your post, **CHECK** the box next to **Disable BBCode in this Post**.

HTML - HTML tags have been disabled in the CIT installation of phpBB.

Signature – Signatures have been disabled in the CIT installation of phpBB.

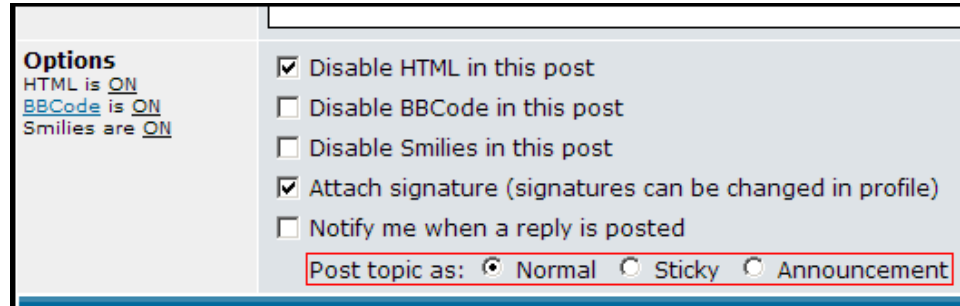
Reply Notification - When you post, you may be interested in knowing when that topic is replied to. If so, you may **CHECK Notify me when a reply is posted** to generate an email to yourself when replies are posted to the forum.

Sticky/Announcement - The radio buttons at the bottom of the posting form allow you to set the post as Normal, or Sticky. These options will only be visible to a user for the top post in a topic.

Polls - To add a poll, look to the bottom of the posting form. These options will only be visible to a user if they have permission to make Polls.

Sticky Topics

Sticky topics are a special type of topic. In the View Forum page, Sticky topics appear above all other topics. Sticky topics only appear on the first View Forum page.



The image shows a screenshot of a forum posting form's options section. On the left, under the heading "Options", there are three status indicators: "HTML is ON", "BBCode is ON", and "Smilies are ON". To the right, there are five checkboxes: "Disable HTML in this post" (checked), "Disable BBCode in this post" (unchecked), "Disable Smilies in this post" (unchecked), "Attach signature (signatures can be changed in profile)" (checked), and "Notify me when a reply is posted" (unchecked). At the bottom, there is a "Post topic as:" label followed by three radio buttons: "Normal" (selected), "Sticky", and "Announcement". A red rectangular box highlights the "Post topic as:" label and the three radio buttons.

To make a topic sticky, SELECT the **Sticky** radio button on the posting form.

Polls

Polls are a special type of post that allows community members to vote on an idea or issue. Polls can only be made from the top post in a topic.

Poll Question - This is the subject of the Poll, the question that is being answered by the poll. The poll question appears at the top of the topic, above the poll options. This is required for the poll.

Poll Option - Poll Options are the possible answers to the poll question. To add poll options, type the option into the text field and **CLICK Add Option**. To have a valid poll, at least two options must be offered.

Run Poll for - Number of days to run the poll for. After the specified time has passed, the results of the poll are displayed in the topic, and no one else may vote.

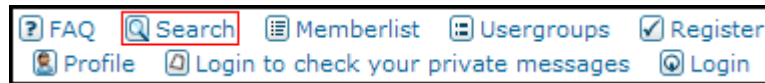
Editing Posts

To edit a post, **CLICK Edit** at the top right corner of your post. You will be taken to the posting form to edit your post, and then **CLICK Submit** to enter it into the database. If you edit a post after it has been replied to, a small message will appear at the bottom of it indicating how many times it has been edited, and when and by whom the last edit occurred.

To delete a post, **CLICK Edit** and **CHECK Delete this Post**. **CLICK Submit** to finish deleting the post. You may not delete a post if it has been replied to (i.e. it is not the last post in the topic)

Searching

Cornell's discussion boards have a search system that will allow you to find topics you are interested in. To get to the search page, **CLICK** the small **Search** link at the top of any page.

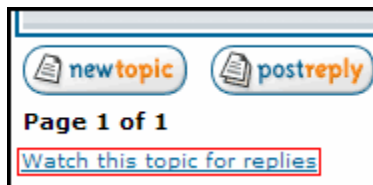


Watching Topics

You may subscribe to specific topics. When a topic you are subscribed to is replied to, an email will be sent to the email address that your username is registered to. The email will contain a link to the topic that has been replied to. You will only receive one email per topic until the next time you log in to the board.

Subscribe to a Topic

To subscribe to a topic, look at the lower left corner of the Topic View page. **CLICK** the small **Watch this topic for replies** link.



Additionally, if you post or reply to a topic, you may check **Notify me** when a reply is posted to subscribe to a topic.

Unsubscribe from a Topic

To unsubscribe from a topic, look at the lower left corner of the Topic View page. **CLICK** the small **Stop watching this topic** link.



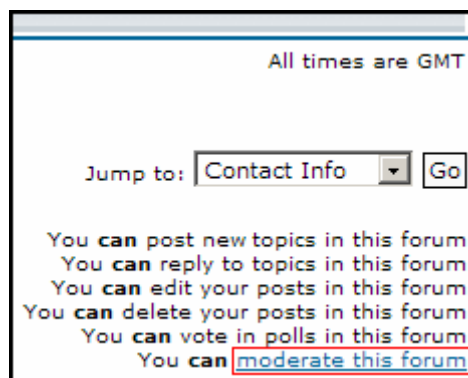
Alternatively, you may look at your notification email. At the end of the email (right above the signature) there is a link that will unsubscribe you from the topic.

Moderating

Moderation allows content on your board to be controlled. A moderator of a forum may edit, delete, split, or move topics in that forum. A moderator may also edit or delete any post in a topic in that forum. A board administrator automatically has moderator permissions to every forum on that board. Moderator permissions for a specific forum may also be granted to a user or group of users.

Moderator Control Panel

To get to the Moderator Control Panel, CLICK the small **moderate this forum** link. This link appears in the lower right corner of Forum View and Topic View pages that you have moderator permissions in.



Move a Topic

In the Moderator Control Panel, you may move any number of topics from the current forum to another forum. To do this, check the boxes next to each topic and CLICK **Move**. Select the forum that you would like to move the topics moved to. Select if you would like to leave Shadow Topics, and CLICK **Yes** to complete the move.

Shadow Topics

Shadow Topics may be left when a topic is moved from one forum to another. Shadow topics exist so that when someone commonly checks a topic, they will not be confused when it gets moved. A shadow topic appears in the original forum, and links to the topic in its new forum. The text "Moved: " will appear in front of the shadow topic in the old forum. A shadow topic will not be marked unread when new replies are posted to the topic, so it should eventually move down the forum as new topics are made and replied to. The actual topic (in the new forum) will be updated as replies are posted.

Delete a Topic

In the Moderator Control Panel, you may delete any number of topics. To do this, check the boxes next to each topic and CLICK **Delete**. You must confirm your decision by clicking **Yes**.

Lock or Unlock a Topic

In the Moderator Control Panel, you may lock or unlock any number of topics. To do this, check the boxes next to each topic and **CLICK Lock** or **Unlock**. A locked topic may only be posted to by moderators and administrators.

Split a Topic

In the Moderator Control Panel, you may split a topic by clicking on the topic title. You will be taken to the Split Topic Control Panel. You may select the posts to split; they will then be removed from the topic and put into a new topic. This will allow you to move off-topic posts to another topic, keeping your topics more organized.

New Topic Title - The title of the new topic created by the split.

Forum for new topic - The forum that the new topic will be located in.

To split only specific posts from a topic, check the box next to each post and **CLICK Split selected posts**.

To split a post and every post after that one, select the first post to split and **CLICK Split from selected posts**.


Moderator Quick Actions

Moderator Quick Actions are small buttons at the bottom of each topic.




They allow moderation tasks to be performed quickly for the specified topic.

Moving Topics

To move a topic, **CLICK** the **Move Topic** button. 



Select the forum to move the topic to, select whether a shadow topic will be left, and **CLICK Yes** to complete the move.

Deleting Topics

To delete a topic, **CLICK** the **Delete Topic** button. 


You must confirm the delete by clicking **Yes**.

Locking and Unlocking Topics

To lock or unlock a topic, CLICK the **Lock Topic** button  or **Unlock Topic** button. 

The appropriate button will be displayed based on whether the topic is currently locked or unlocked. A locked topic may only be posted to by moderators and administrators.

Splitting Topics

To split a topic, CLICK the **Split Topic** button. 

You will be taken to the Split Topic Control Panel.

Things to Consider

Privacy

Cornell Web Authentication protects all course forums from access by individuals or systems not affiliated with the university. Course forums are not indexed by search engines, nor can they be made publicly available.

By default, discussion boards are set up as public groups, where new members can add themselves to a board without moderator intervention. Private groups, which require a moderator to add a new member who has asked to join a group, are available on request.

STUDENT HANDOUT

How to Access the Course Forum

This course uses a phpBB forum that has been provided by CIT.

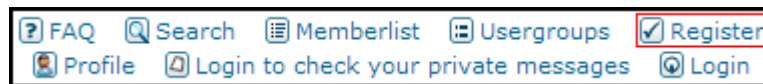
Where to find the forum

<http://forums.cit.cornell.edu>

You will be presented with the CUWebLogin screen. Enter your Cornell Net ID and password to continue to the forums.

Register as a phpBB user

1. In order to use the forum, you must register a username. To do this, **CLICK** the small **Register** link at the top of any page.



You will be taken to the Registration Agreement Terms, which you must agree to in order to register.

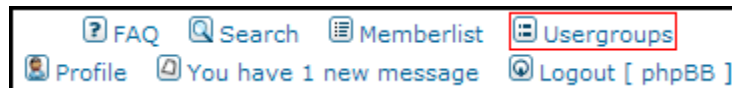
2. Next you will see the registration information form. Fill out each of the required fields, and any of the optional fields you like.

You must specify an email address. All email from the board to you will be sent to that address.

3. Check your email and **CLICK** the activation link there before logging in for the first time.

Join the course group

1. Make sure you are logged in. (Do you see [Log out \[net id\]](#) in the menu at the top of the page? If not **CLICK Login** now.)
2. **CLICK** the link entitled **Usergroups** at the top of the page.



3. **SELECT** your course from the Non-member groups drop-down menu; the group name for your course is _____.
4. **CLICK View Information.**
5. Verify you have the right class by reviewing the group information.
6. **CLICK Join Group**
7. **CLICK** the option that returns you to the Index, or wait a moment to be automatically returned. You should now see the new board.