

Types of forums

Discussion forums are a great way to incorporate student dialog in a class, be it face-to-face, hybrid, or fully online. On WebAccess, we have 2 types of forum activities: Forum and Advanced Forum. They are very similar, with the Advanced Forums allowing for more setting options having to do with grading and other administrative elements. For both types of forums, you can choose from different types. It comes down to this question: how do you want the students to interact with each other?

News Forum

The News forum is automatically generated in each WebAccess course and all participants in the course are subscribed by default. Usually, only teachers and administrators may post to this forum. The standard Student role may not post new announcements or reply to announcements. It is usually used for important announcements like due date reminders, changes in the syllabus, class cancelation, etc.

Standard Forum for General Use

In order to foster community, it is common for a teacher to ask students to post something about themselves to a forum before actual classwork begins. The "Standard forum for general use" option is well suited to a conversation like this. Students are able to post and reply to as many new discussions as they wish as often as they like. This can also be a great forum for general discussion, both instructor-initiated and student-initiated.

A Single, Simple Discussion

There are times when a discussion needs to be more focused. A teacher may want students to respond to a question about a single like of poetry, for example. The "Single, simple discussion" forum type is well-suited for this. However, students can see other replies before submitting their own.

Each Person Posts One Discussion

There are times when a teacher needs more interaction than a single simple discussion and less than a standard forum for general use. If a teacher requires each student to begin a discussion about an interesting, useful resource he or she found on the Internet, the 'each person posts a single discussion' forum type might work well. Again, students can see each other's' posts before submitting their own.

Question and Answer Forum

The Q&A forum requires students to post once before they are able to view and respond to other students' posts. This forum is useful when a teacher wants to encourage students not to depend on their classmates' thoughts, but rather to think for themselves before posting. A teacher might want his or her students to answer a question like, "Was Huck Finn less racist at the end of the novel than at the beginning? (Support your answer with examples and/or facts.)" The Q&A forum is ideal for such a situation.

In this type of forum, the only person who can post a discussion thread is the instructor. Students reply to what the instructor has posted. They can only see the instructor's initial post at first; once they submit their own reply, they will then be able to see what their classmates have previously posted. This is idea in order to keep plagiarism to a minimum. In this type of forum, it is important to set up different due dates, so that students will be able to post an initial reply and also be able to respond or react to what their colleagues post.