

HOLYOKE

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

WebCT's Discussion tool is a great way to provide open, ample communication between you and your students and among students as well. However, this could quickly become a huge time sink unless you learn how to read and manage your Discussion postings. This Quick Hit will teach you how to read and respond to a number of messages in an efficient manner.

Discussion Tool Basics

To read messages in your Discussions area, click on your Discussions icon on your course homepage. In the table of Topics, click on the Topic that contains the messages you want to read. This will display **ONLY** the messages in that topic. If you click on *All*, then **all** of the messages in all of your Topics are displayed.

When you click on a Topic, this will bring you to the Message Listing screen. In the example below, **Show all** messages are set to be displayed and they are displayed as **Threaded**. To see just the unread messages, you would click on *Show unread*.

<input type="checkbox"/> Topic	Unread	Total	Private	Anonymous	Locked
<input type="checkbox"/> Main	0	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Notes	0	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All	0	0	<input type="button" value="Update"/>		

Below is a screen shot from the message listing screen. Pay particular attention to the following points:

Status	Subject	Author	Date
▶ 0/1	<input type="checkbox"/> Welcome to the course dis...		
▼ 14	<input type="checkbox"/> how is everyone doing?		
<input type="checkbox"/>	how is everyone doing?	Elmer Fudd	August 30, 2002 2:04am
<input type="checkbox"/>	Re: how is everyone doing...	Daffy Duck	August 30, 2002 7:57am
<input type="checkbox"/>	Re: how is everyone doing...	Donald Duck	August 30, 2002 9:19am
<input type="checkbox"/>	Re: how is everyone doing...	Elmer Fudd	August 30, 2002 12:45pm

1. The text in the “grey” rows is the *Subject* of the discussion thread.
 2. In the first thread, “Welcome to the course dis...”
- There is a blue triangle pointing to the right. This indicates that there are messages listed beneath this subject. To view the message listing, click on the blue triangle so that it points downward.
 - You may also view the all of the messages within the thread by clicking on the magnifying glass next to the subject.
 - In the *Status* column, you’ll note that it says “0/1” for the first subject. This indicates that there is 1 message and it has been read.

3. In the second subject, “how is everyone doing?”:

- Note that the triangle is pointing downwards and all of the messages within that thread are listed.
- The title of the subject is bolded, indicating that there is an unread message.
- This is also indicated in the *Status* column, where it says “1/4”, indicating that there are 4 messages in the thread and one has not been read.
- Note too that there is a different icon next to the *Read* and *Unread* messages (an open envelope and closed envelope, respectively).
- Finally, note the paperclip next to the unread message. This indicates that this message has an attachment.

If you have gotten behind in your reading of Discussion messages, you may *Compile* them and print them for offline reading.

1. Click on your *Discussion* icon and then click on the *Topic* that contains the messages that you want to read (if you click on *All*, then all messages will be displayed).
2. Click in the box next to the messages you want to compile. Click on *Select All* if you want to read all of them. If you want to select all of the messages with in a single thread, click on the box in the gray row next to the subject of thread.
3. Once all of the messages have been selected, use the drop down box to select *Compile* and click on *Go*.
4. At this point, you may *Print* the compiled messages or *Download* for later.

Reading and Responding to Threaded Messages

If you have a number of messages in a thread that you need to respond to, it can be rather tedious to open each message, reply and then get back into the thread. Below are instructions for opening an entire thread in one window and responding to individual messages in another window.

1. Click on the title of the *Topic* that contains messages you need to read and reply to.
2. Click on the *box* next to the title of the thread in the gray row. This will select all of the messages in the thread.
3. Use the dropdown box to select *View thread* and click on *Go*.
4. This will open a new window that contains all of the messages in the thread, with separate *Reply* and *Quote* links for each message. Recall that these links were not available when you Compiled your messages!
5. To reply to a message without closing your compiled thread, use your **RIGHT** mouse button to click on *Reply*. Select *Open in new window* from the menu that appears.
6. Type in your message as usual and click on *Post*. The message window will close and your compiled thread will still be opened, allowing you to continue reading and responding!

