



# WebCT OWL



## Discussions in OWL

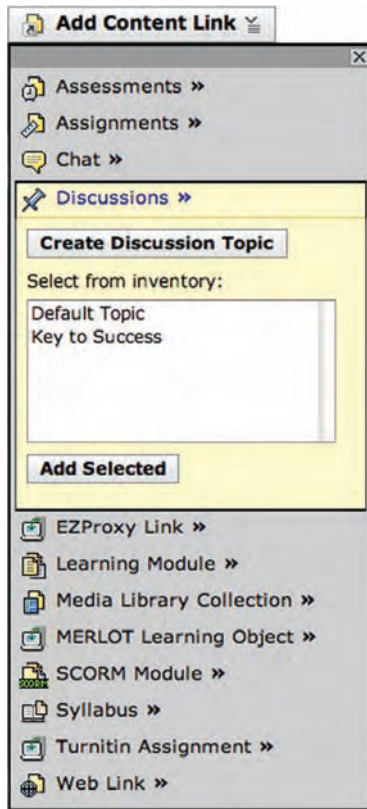
## Overview

Discussions are used within the OWL environment to facilitate communication between the students and the instructor, as well as to provide a collaborative writing space for the students. The following guide will cover :

- how to add and configure a discussion within your OWL course
- the difference between a Threaded Topic, Blog Topic and Journal Topic
- using Peer Review

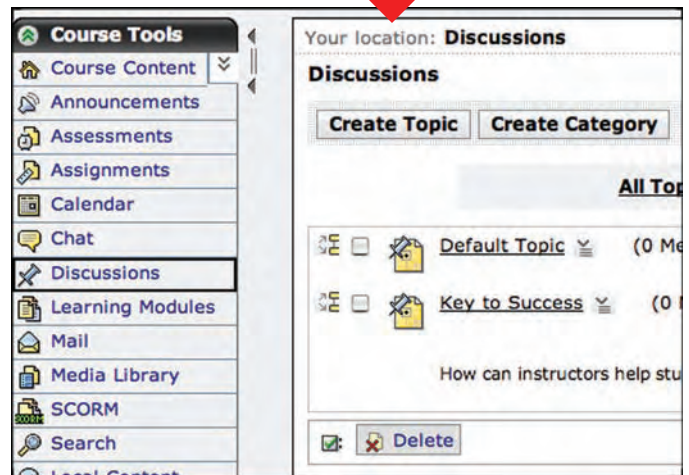
## Adding a Discussion to your OWL Course

There are two ways to add a Discussion Topic to your OWL course. First, make sure you are under the Build tab then click on the Add Content Link located on your OWL course homepage. A drop-down menu will appear. Click on Discussions.



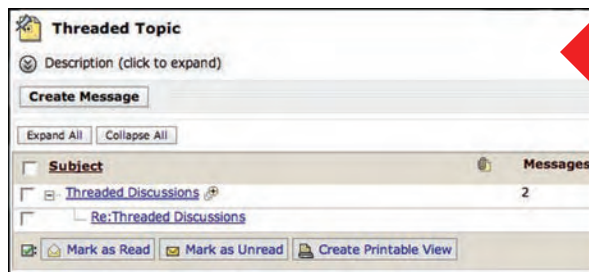
The window that appears within the drop-down menu allows you to create a new discussion topic, or select a topic from your inventory that you have already created.

You can also create a new Discussion Topic by clicking on Discussions in the navigation bar on the left and then clicking Create Topic.



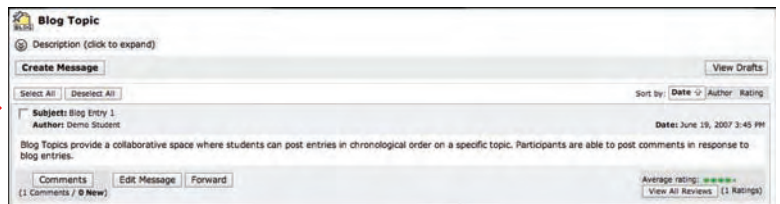
## Choosing a Discussion Topic

There are three different types of Discussion Topics you can add to your OWL course: Threaded Topic, Blog Topic and Journal Topic.

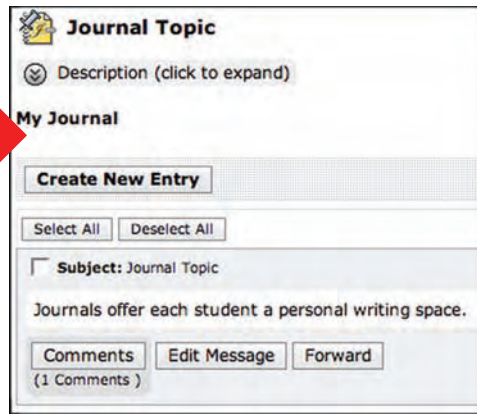


**Threaded Topics** offer a more traditional online discussion area where students can post and reply to messages. Replies to messages are grouped together in threads that can be expanded and collapsed. Clicking on Create Message opens a window that allows you to type your message and add it to the discussion.

**Blog Topics** provide a collaborative space where students can post entries in chronological order on a specific topic. Participants are able to post comments in response to blog entries.



**Journal Topics** offer each student a personal writing space. The instructor is able to determine whether the section will remain a private writing area, shared between the student and the instructor, or a public writing area viewable to all students.



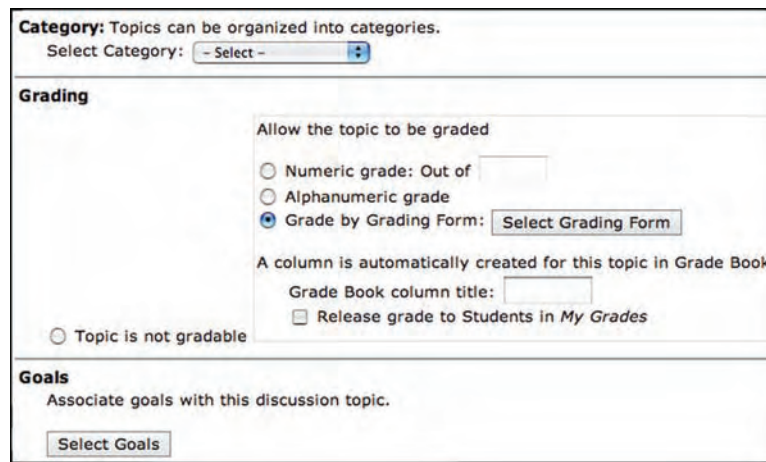
Notes

## Setting the Parameters: The Basics

Once you have chosen the type of Discussion Topic you would like to use, you must specify the parameters regarding topic behaviour. First, enter a title for your Discussion Topic. You can also enter a description of your topic, but this feature is optional. Choose whether you would like the item to visible or hidden. You can unhide the item later if you would like to hide it at this time.

## Categories, Grading & Goals

You are able to organize your Discussion Topics into course-wide categories by selecting a category, or by creating a new category by clicking Select and then Create New Category.



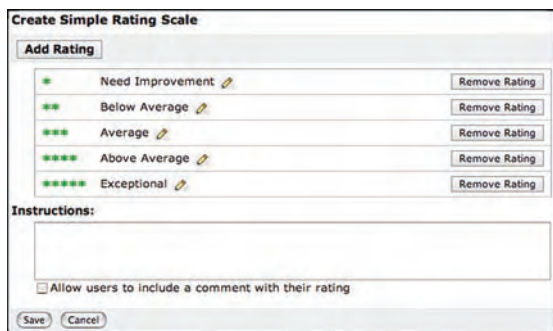
Discussion Topics can also be graded. You can either choose to set a numeric grade, alphanumeric grade or use a Grading Form that you have previously created. Additionally, you can enter a Grade Book column title, as well as choose whether or not you would like the grades released automatically to the students. If you would not like to have your Discussion Topic graded, simply choose the Topic is not Gradable radio button.

Goals you have previously defined may also be attached to a Discussion Topic by clicking Select Goals. Attaching Goals to a topic may help provide your students with an idea of what is required of them within the Discussion.

## Peer Review



Peer Review allows students to review posts made by others. The reviewing criteria is established using a rating scale or a Grading Form you have previously created.



To create a rating scale click on the Create Scale button. This will open a window that will allow you to edit a simple five-star rating scale. To edit a rating simply click on the pencil tool. You can also create additional ratings or remove ratings to suit your needs.

