

## Create Discussions: Forums and Topics

- Discussions is the online discussion space for your class. Here you can create spaces for students to submit work that can be viewed by classmates as well as the instructor (although you may set some up as private) and that may or may not be graded. Discussion posts can include file attachments (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, image/audio/video files, etc.). Some examples:
  - An English professor might have students post early drafts of their essays here and ask classmates to offer peer response based on a specific set of provided peer response questions.
  - A science professor might create a forum with an application question and ask students to each post a different answer for how the scientific concept or technique learned can be applied in the real world.
  - Faculty could create a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) forum, where students can post questions about the class, chapter/unit, or specific assignment, and you—or other students—can respond.

In Brightspace, the taxonomy for discussions looks like this:

**Forum** – The top-level category in which your topics will live. Forums must have topics within them, or students won't be able to post. For example, in my ENG101 class, I have a forum for Essay 1, Essay 2, Essay 3, Essay 4, and Essay 5. You might have forums for each unit, section, or chapter that you cover in your class.

**Topic** – Topics are the areas within each forum where you indicate what is to be discussed or posted by students. In each ENG101 essay forum, I have topics labeled Rough Draft and Peer Response, Mid-Process Draft and Peer Response, and Final Draft and Review. Topics must reside within a forum.

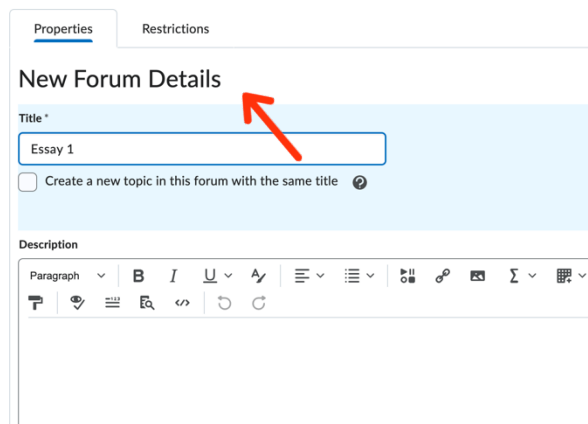
**Thread** – Threads are where students post their assignments or their responses to each topic. This allows the instructor and other students to respond. For example, each of my ENG101 students will post a rough draft of their Essay 1, then classmates will be assigned to post peer responses to it and I will post feedback on it to help the student better determine how to revise for the mid-process draft.

You can create all of your forums first then add your topics within each, or you can create each forum and all of its topics one at a time. We'll start with creating a forum.

1. In the blue navbar, click Discussions, click New, then click New Forum.
2. You'll see that there are two tabs at the top: Properties and Restrictions.

### Properties

Type a name for the forum and a brief description if needed.



The screenshot shows the 'New Forum Details' form in the 'Properties' tab. The 'Title' field is highlighted with a red arrow and contains the text 'Essay 1'. Below the title field is a checkbox labeled 'Create a new topic in this forum with the same title'. The 'Description' field is empty and has a rich text editor toolbar above it.

Establish any options you wish to associate with this forum, such as allowing anonymous posts, requiring that students must start a thread before they can read and reply to classmates (this prevents students from copying/echoing what others have already posted), requiring moderator approval first, and displaying the forum description within each topic (handy to include reminders for students for what or how to post).

Click Save if you'd like and click the restrictions tab if desired.

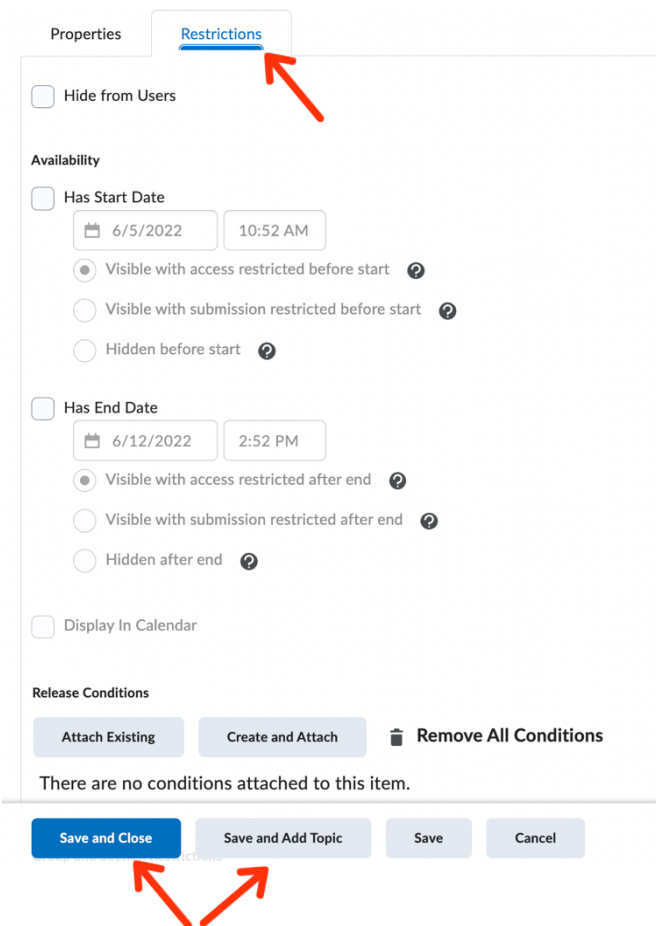
### Restrictions

Here you can set dates when the forum will be available for students. Notice that you can choose to make it visible but restrict access and/or submission before the start date.

You can also establish release conditions and/or restrict individual forums to only students in certain groups if you're setting it up for group collaboration within your class.

3. Click Save and Close if you want to add the next Forum.

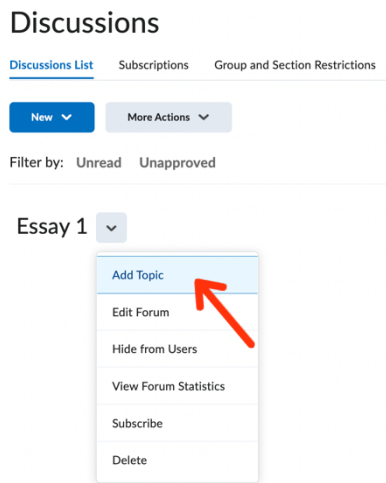
Click Save and Add Topic if you want to add all of the topics for this forum before moving on to create your next forum.



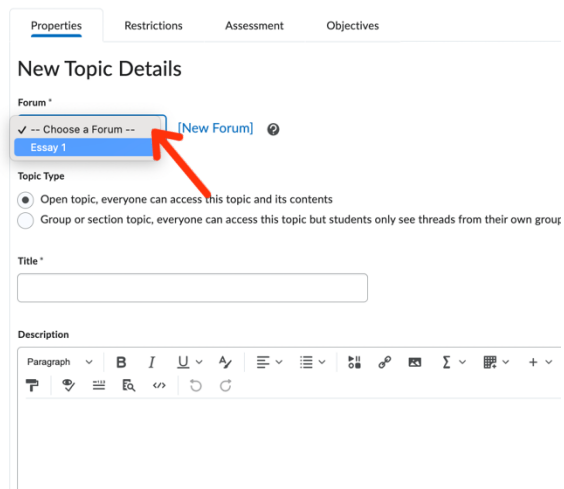
The screenshot shows the 'Restrictions' tab in the forum creation interface. The 'Restrictions' tab is selected and highlighted with a red arrow. The 'Availability' section is visible, showing options for 'Has Start Date' and 'Has End Date'. The 'Release Conditions' section is at the bottom, with buttons for 'Attach Existing', 'Create and Attach', and 'Remove All Conditions'. At the bottom of the form, there are four buttons: 'Save and Close', 'Save and Add Topic', 'Save', and 'Cancel'. Red arrows point to the 'Save and Close' and 'Save and Add Topic' buttons.

After you have created a discussion forum, you have several ways to create discussion topics. As shown above, while creating each forum, you have the option of clicking Save and Add Topic right at that point. Or, if you prefer to create all of your forums first, then you have two other options:

1. Click Discussions.
2. Click the drop-down arrow by name of a forum for which you'd like to add a topic.
3. Click Add Topic.



1. Click Discussions.
2. Click New, then click New Topic.
3. Click the drop-down arrow for Choose a Forum and select which forum this topic will reside within.



4. Finally you can customize the topic by completing the various tabs on the New Topic Screen.

- **Properties:** You must provide a title. Other options here include providing a description, setting the topic type as open to the entire class or limited to a group, and enabling anonymous posts and moderator approval as well as requiring students to post a thread before being able to read classmates' threads.
- **Restrictions:** Here you can set availability parameters, release conditions, and group or section restrictions.
- **Assessment:** Here you associate the discussion topic with an item in your gradebook if you are grading student posts, establish the total score possible, attach a rubric, and indicate if you'll grade all posts within a thread at once or each one individually.

