Blackboard's Blogs, Journals and Wikis

Blogs, Journals and Wikis give students the opportunity to share and construct knowledge. Students can benefit from comments from peers and the instructor as they interact, collaborate, and share information, resources, opinions, and ideas. These advanced communication tools provide the opportunity for instructors to construct rich assignments and offer another means for evaluating students. Blogs, Journals and Wikis can be essential tools you can use to offer students constructive comments, guidance, and assessment.

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The Blogs Tool

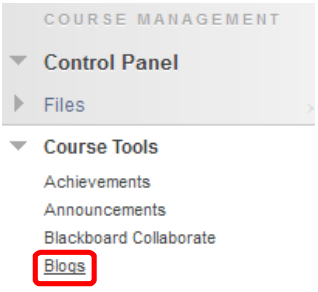
A Blog—shorthand term that means Web log—is a personal online journal that is frequently updated and intended for general public distribution. Each Blog entry can include any combination of text, images, links, multimedia, Mashups, and attachments.

An Instructor can choose to allow students to participate in Blogs in three ways:

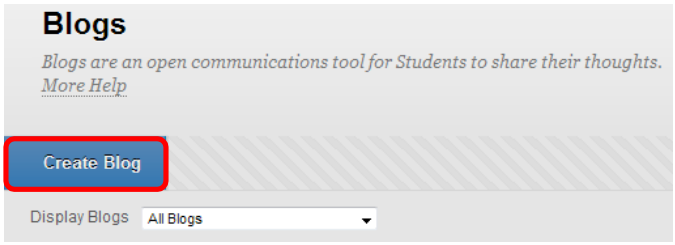
- **Course Blogs**: All Course members can add Blog entries and add comments.
- **Individual Blogs**: Only individual Course members are able to add Blog entries. All other Course members can view and add comments.
- **Group Blogs**: If the Blogs tool for Groups is enabled, all Group members can add Blog entries and make comments on Blog entries. Any Course member can view Group Blogs, but can only add comments.

Important: Once you have created a blog, you cannot go back and change the blog type. Instead, you will need to delete the blog and create a new one.

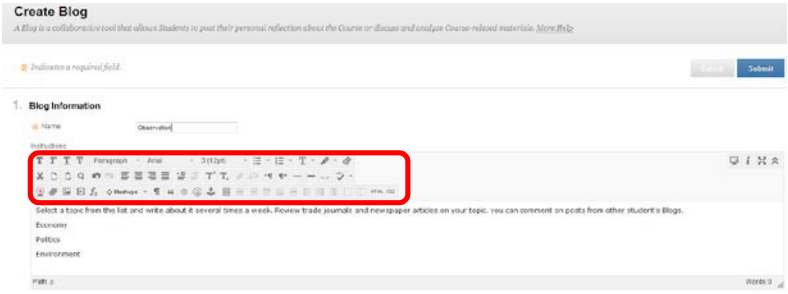
How to Create a Blog Topic



1. Access the Course. Ensure Edit Mode is ON.
2. In the Control Panel, expand the Course Tools section. Select Blogs.
3. On the Blogs listing page, click Create Blog on the Action Bar.



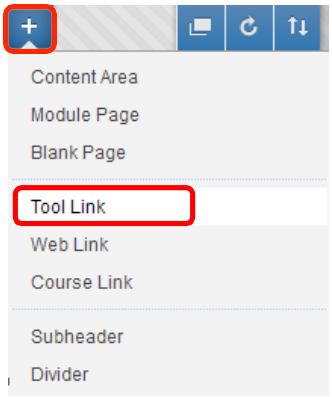
4. On the Create Blog page, type a Name for the Blog.
5. Type optional Instructions for the Blog. Format the text and add images, links, multimedia, Mashups, and attachments using the functions in the Text Editor, if needed. Attachments added using the Text Editor can have alternate text added to describe the attachment.



6. Under Blog Availability, select the Yes option to make it available to users.
7. Use the Display After and Display Until date and time fields to limit the availability of the Blog. Select the Display After and Display Until check boxes in order to enable the date and time selections.
8. Under Blog Participation, select Individual to All Students or Course. Select Allow Anonymous Comments for Individual Blogs or Allow Anonymous Entries and Comments for Course and Group Blogs, if needed.
9. Under Blog Settings, select Monthly or Weekly Index Entries.
10. Optionally, select the check box to Allow Users to Edit and Delete Entries.
11. Optionally, select the check box to Allow Users to Delete Comments.
12. Select No grading or the Grade option and type the number of Points possible. Points possible will apply to one or more entries made by the user to the Blog topic. Once a Blog is set to be graded, a column is created for it in the Grade Center. It is permanently gradable and cannot be set to No grading.
13. Click Submit.

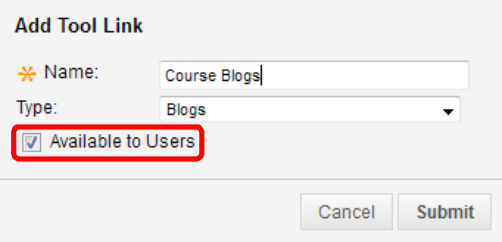
Adding a Course Menu Button for a Blog

To make the Blogs you have created easily accessible to your students you can add a Course Menu button or link to the Blogs Listing page named “Course Blogs” or something similar.



1. Select the plus sign at the top of your course menu and select Create Tool Link.
2. Give Button a Name.
3. Under Type, select Blogs.

4. Select “Available to Users.” Click Submit. This will link to the Blogs Listing page.



It is also possible to add a link to a specific Blog from within a course Content Area (e.g. “Course Documents” or “Course Information”) by using the Add Interactive Tool.

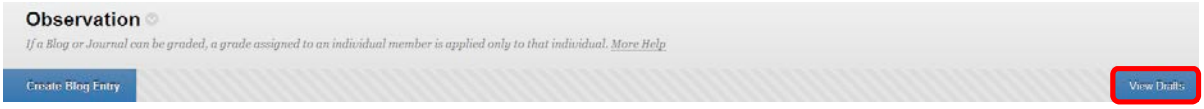
How to Create a Blog Entry

1. On the Blogs listing page, select a Blog title.
2. On the Blog's topic page, click Create Blog Entry on the Action Bar.

3. On the Create Blog Entry page, type a Title for the Blog entry.
4. Type text in the Entry Message text box. Format the text and add images, links, multimedia, Mashups, and attachments using the functions in the Text Editor, if needed.
5. Attachments added using the Text Editor can have alternate text added to describe the attachment.

6. If enabled, select the check box for Post Entry as Anonymous, if appropriate.
7. Alternatively, under Blog Entry Files, browse for a file to attach to the Blog entry.
8. Click Post Entry to submit the Blog entry or click Save Entry as Draft to add the entry later.

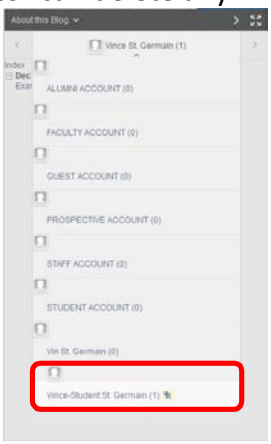
NOTE: To view or add to saved drafts, click View Drafts on the Action Bar on the Blogs listing page.



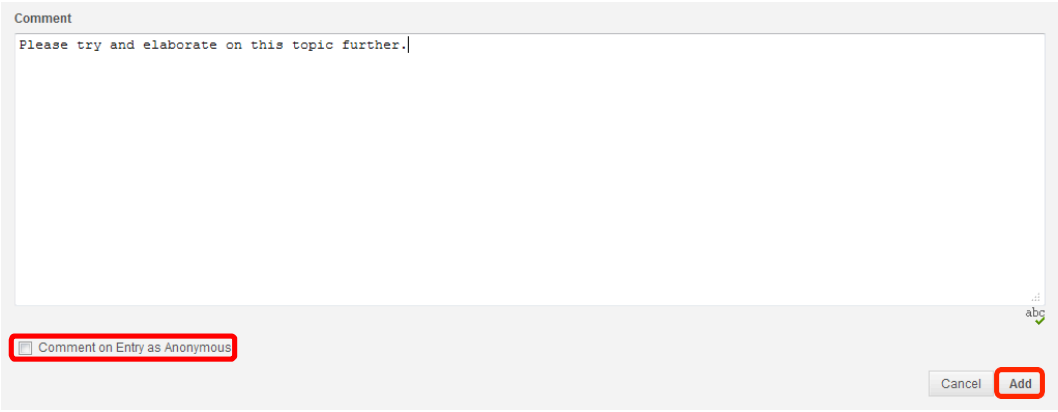
On the Blogs listing page, topics appear in alphabetical order. Under each Blog title, students can see if the Blog belongs to a group, the course, or to individual students.

How to Comment on a Blog Entry

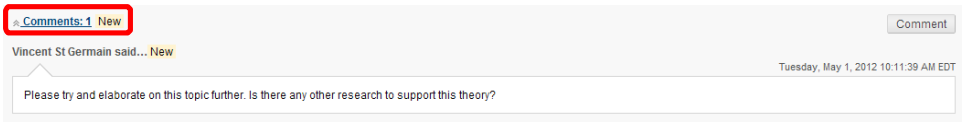
Because Blogs are meant to be read by others, students can comment on one another's Blog entries, whether they belong to an individual, the Course, or a Group. The Instructor determines if comments can be made anonymously or deleted. The Instructor can delete any user's comment by clicking the X. Comments cannot be edited after they are posted.



1. On the Blogs listing page, select a Blog title.
2. On the Blog's topic page, select a blog to view by selecting the user's name in the side panel. The user's blog entries open in the content frame.
3. Click Comment following the user's entry. The Comment text box appears.
4. Type a comment in the Comment text box.
5. Click Spell Check at the bottom of the Comment text box to check the spelling of the content before continuing.



6. If enabled, select the check box for Comment on Entry as Anonymous, if appropriate.
7. Click Add. Click the Comments link below the entry to view the comment.

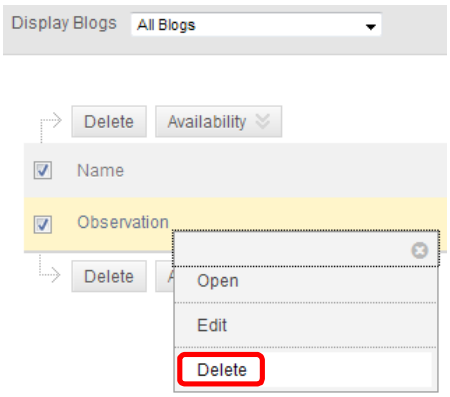


Editing and Managing Blogs

Instructors can edit basic properties of a Blog topic, including the name, instructions, availability, and some settings. Once a Blog topic is designated for individuals or the Course, it cannot be changed to the other. Instructors can edit any user's Blog entries and can delete Blog topics. Comments can be deleted by the Instructor, but no user is allowed to edit Comments.

How to Edit a Blog

1. Ensure Edit Mode is ON.
2. On the Blogs listing page, click a Blog's Action Link to access the contextual menu.
3. Select Edit.
4. On the Edit Blog page, make changes.
5. Click Submit.



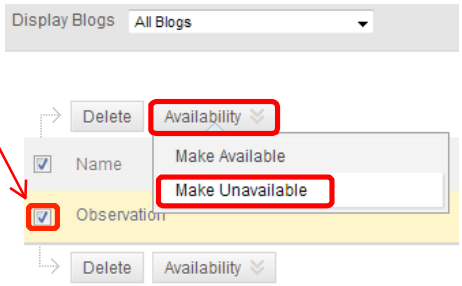
How to Delete a Blog

1. Ensure Edit Mode is ON.
2. On the Blogs listing page, click a Blog's Action Link to access the contextual menu.
3. Select Delete.
4. Click OK in the confirmation window. All entries and comments are deleted.

Note: When a graded Blog is selected for deletion, a Delete Confirmation page appears. Select the appropriate check box or boxes to delete the Blog or the Blog and the Grade Center column.

How to Change the Availability of a Blog

1. Ensure Edit Mode is ON.
2. On the Blogs listing page, select the check box next to the appropriate Blog.
3. Point to Availability on the Action Bar to access the drop-down list.
4. Select Make Available or Make Unavailable.

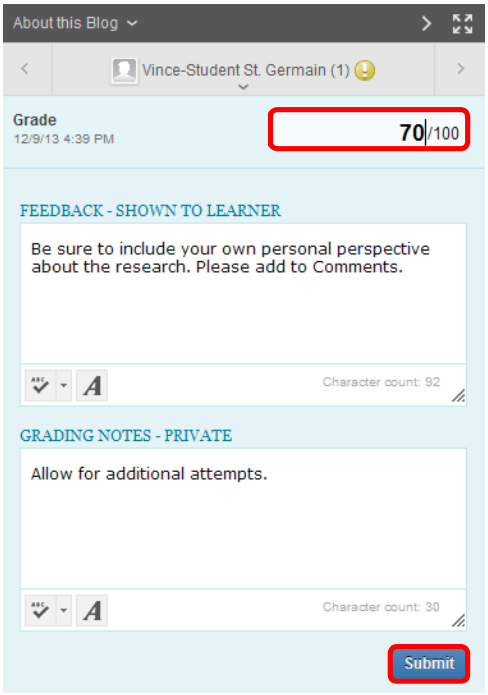


Grading Blogs

If you have chosen to grade the blog, a column will be added to the Grade Center automatically. Instructors can assign an overall grade for the student's blog contributions.

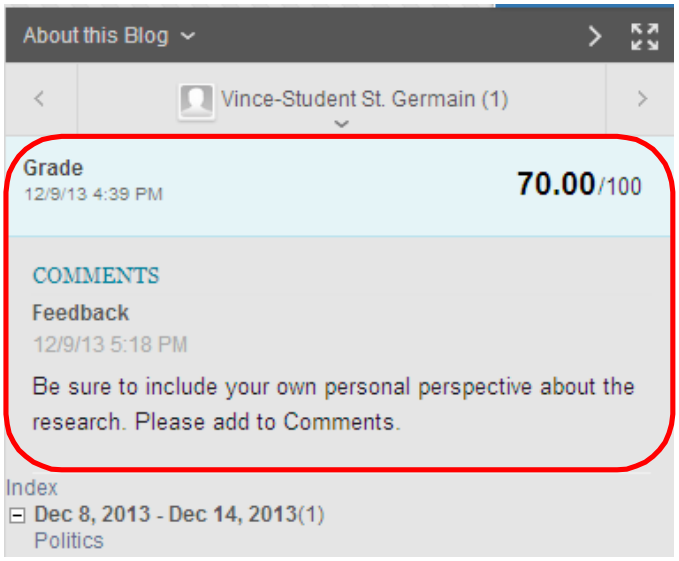
To grade a student's blog posts, you can either enter the grades through the Grade Center or directly from the blog. To grade from the blog, do the following:

1. Enter the blog that you wish to grade.
2. On the Blog's topic page, select a blog to view by selecting the user's name in the side panel.
3. Enter a grade in the Grade window, any feedback to the student, private grading notes for yourself, and click Submit. This will be a grade for the overall blog, not for individual posts.



You can go back and edit the grade at any time. The grade will be saved in the Grade Center automatically.

Once Blog entries have been graded, students can view the grade in two places. The grading information appears on the Blog topic page and in the My Grades tool.

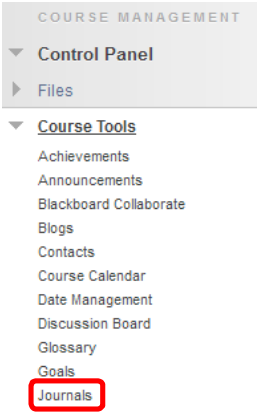


The Journals Tool

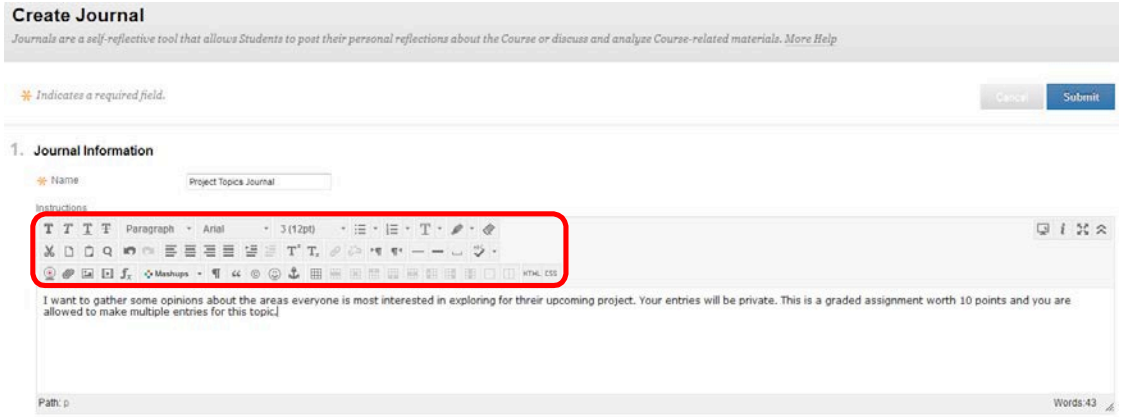
Journals are a personal space for students to communicate privately with the instructor. Students can also use Journals as a self-reflective tool to post their opinions, ideas, and concerns about the course, or discuss and analyze course related materials.

How to Create a Journal

1. Access the Course. Ensure Edit Mode is ON.
2. In the Control Panel, expand the Course Tools section. Select Journals.
3. On the Journals listing page, click Create Journal on the Action Bar.



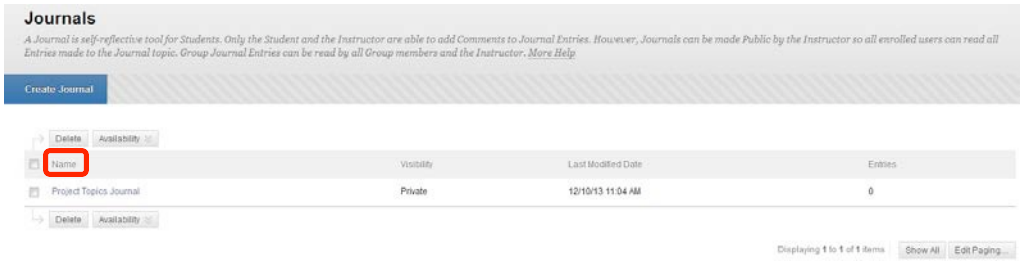
4. On the Create Journal page, type a Name for the Journal.
5. Type optional Instructions for the Journal. Format the text and add images, links, multimedia, Mashups, and attachments using the functions in the Text Editor, if needed. Attachments added using the Text Editor can have alternate text added to describe the attachment.



6. Under Journal Availability, select the Yes option to make it available to users.
7. Use the Display After and Display Until date and time fields to limit the availability of the Journal. Select the Display After and Display Until check boxes in order to enable the date and time selections.
8. Under Journal Settings, select Monthly or Weekly Index Entries.
9. Optionally, select the check box to Allow Users to Edit and Delete Entries.
10. Optionally, select the check box to Allow Users to Delete Comments.
11. Optionally, select the check box to Permit Course Users to View Journal. If selected, the Journal becomes public. All users can view all Journal entries made to the Journal topic.

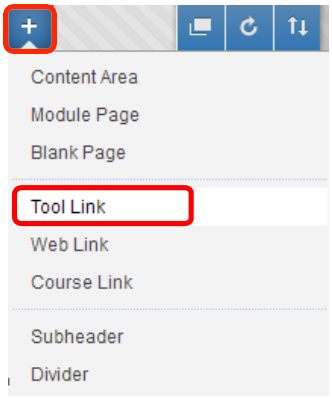
12. Select No grading or the Grade option and type the number of Points possible. Points possible will apply to one or more entries made by the user to the Journal topic. Once a Journal is set to be graded, a column is created for it in the Grade Center. It is permanently gradable and cannot be set to No grading.
13. Click Submit.

The Journal topics appear in alphabetical order on the Journals listing page. Columns can be sorted by clicking the column title or caret.

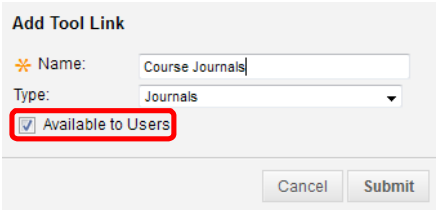


Adding a Course Menu Button for a Journal

To make the Journals you have created easily accessible to your students you can add a Course Menu button or link named "Reflective Journal" or something similar.



1. Select the plus sign at the top of your course menu and select Create Tool Link.
2. Give Button a Name.
3. Under Type, select Journals
4. Select "Available to Users." Click Submit. This will link to all course blogs.

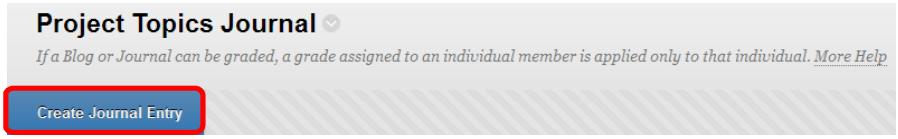


It is also possible to add a link to a specific Journal from within a course Content Area (e.g. "Course Documents" or "Course Information") by using the Add Interactive Tool.

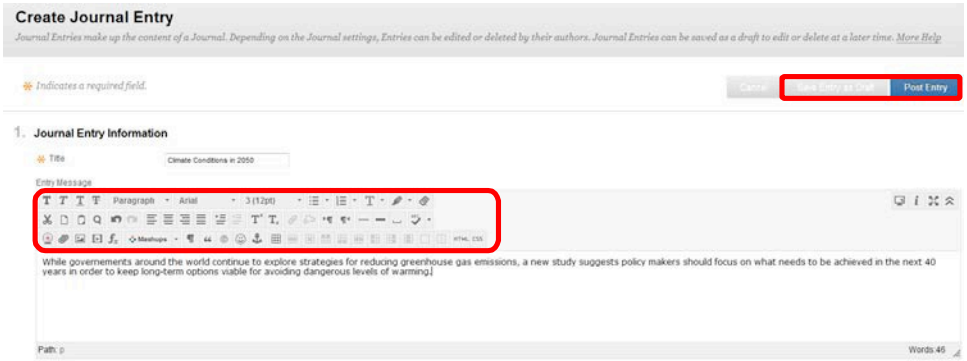
How to Create a Journal Entry

Instructors and Students can create Journal entries. Only Instructors can comment on Students' private entries. On the Journals listing page, information is provided about each Journal. Students can see if their entries will be Private—between the Student and the Instructor—or Public.

1. On the Journals listing page, select a Journal title.
2. On the Journal's topic page, click Create Journal Entry on the Action Bar.



3. On the Create Journal Entry page, type a Title for the Journal entry.
4. Type text in the Entry Message text box. Format the text and add images, links, multimedia, Mashups, and attachments using the functions in the Text Editor, if needed. Attachments added using the Text Editor can have alternate text added to describe the attachment.



5. Alternatively, under Journal Entry Files, browse for a file to attach to the Journal entry.
6. Click Post Entry to submit the Journal entry or click Save Entry as Draft to add the entry later.

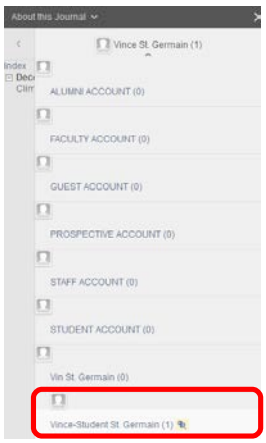
NOTE: To view or add saved drafts, click View Drafts on the Action Bar on the Journals topic page.

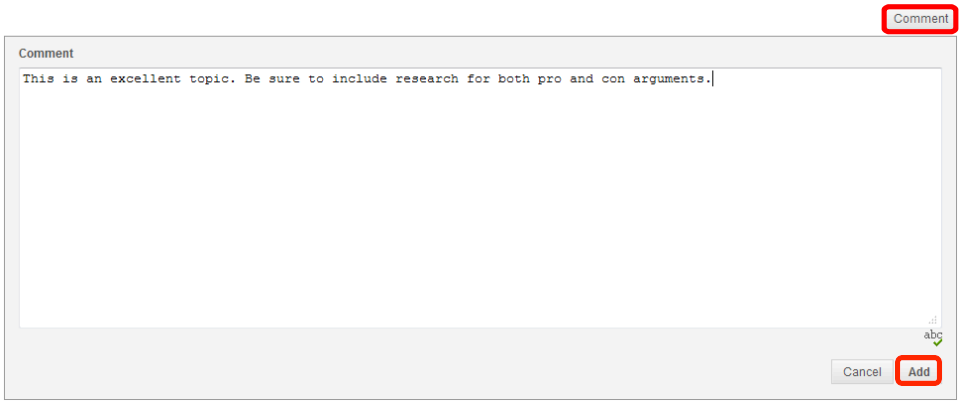
How to Comment on a Journal Entry

Journaling can be essential for interaction between the Student and the Instructor, especially in a Web-based course. Student entries and Instructor comments can help build rapport and can create a healthy intellectual exchange.

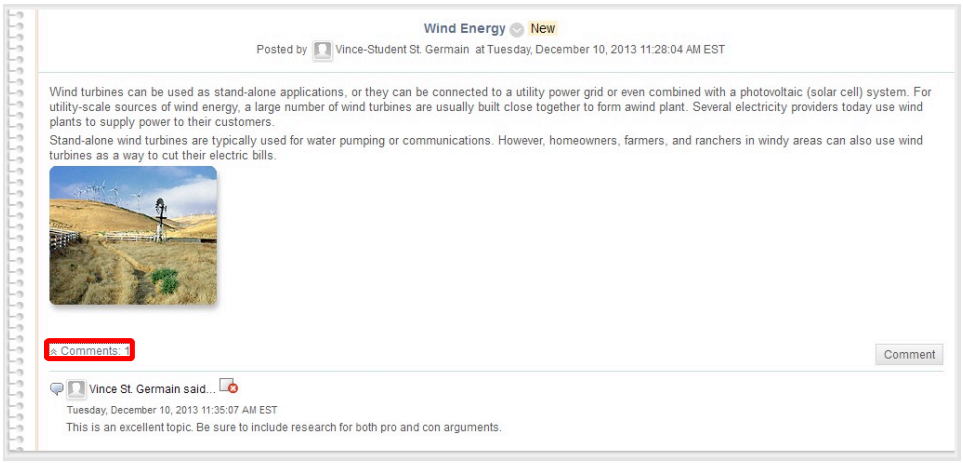
A Student can make a comment after an Instructor comments on an entry to continue the conversation. Students cannot make comments on another Student's Journal entry, even if the Journal has been made public. Students can only comment on another Student's entry when they are members of a Group. For Group Journals, all Group members and the Instructor are allowed to make comments on individual entries.

1. On the Journals listing page, select a Journal title.
2. On the Journal's topic page, select a journal to view by selecting the user's name in the side panel. The user's journal entries open in the content frame.
3. Click Comment following the user's entry. The Comment text box appears.
4. Type a comment in the Comment text box.





5. Click Spell Check at the bottom of the Comment text box to check the spelling of the content before continuing.
6. Click Add. Click the Comments link below the entry to view the comment.

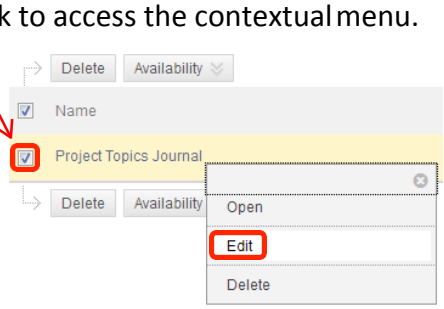


Editing and Managing Journals

Instructors can edit basic properties of a Journal topic, including the name, instructions, availability, and some settings. Journal topics can be changed from Private to Public and Public to Private. Instructors can edit any user's Journal entries and can delete Journal topics. Comments can be deleted by the Instructor.

How to Edit a Journal

1. Ensure Edit Mode is ON.
2. On the Journals listing page, click a Journal's Action Link to access the contextual menu.
3. Select Edit.
4. On the Edit Journal page, make changes.
5. Click Submit.



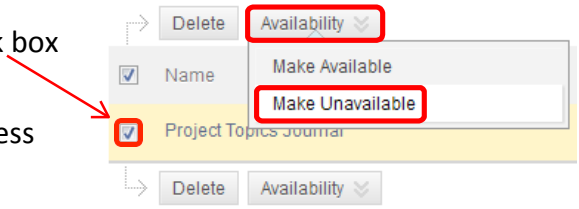
How to Delete a Journal

1. Ensure Edit Mode is ON.
2. On the Journals listing page, click a Journal's Action Link to access the contextual menu.
3. Select Delete.
4. Click OK in the confirmation window. All entries and comments are deleted.

Note: When a graded Journal is selected for deletion, a Delete Confirmation page appears. Select the appropriate check box or boxes to delete the Journal or the Journal and the Grade Center column.

How to Change the Availability of a Journal

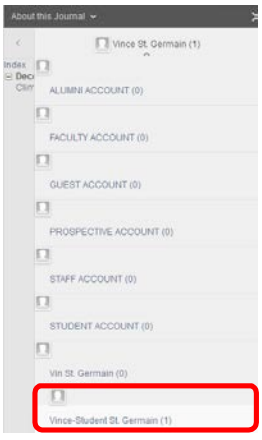
1. Ensure Edit Mode is ON.
2. On the Journals listing page, select the check box next to the appropriate Journal.
3. Point to Availability on the Action Bar to access the drop-down list.
4. Select Make Available or Make Unavailable.



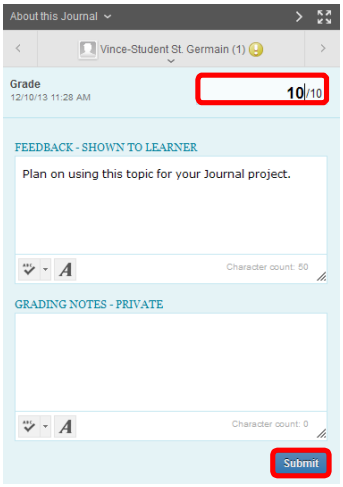
Grading Journals

Once you have set a Journal topic to be graded, a column is automatically created in the Grade Center. Individual student Journal entries can then be graded from the Journal topic page, where you can refer to all entries and comments.

1. Access the Journal topic page and select the Journal entry to grade by selecting the user's name in the side panel. The user's Journal entry or entries open in the content frame.

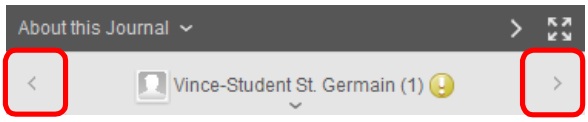


2. Enter a grade in the Grade window, any feedback to the student, private grading notes for yourself, and click add. This will be a grade for the overall journal, not for individual posts.



You can go back and edit the grade at any time. The grade will be saved in the Grade Center automatically.

Use the Previous User and Next User arrows to quickly access another students Journal entries to grade.



NOTE: You cannot change a graded Journal topic to ungraded. You need to delete the graded Journal topic from the Journals listing page and the Grade Center and create a new ungraded topic.

The Wikis Tool

Wikis are used to create a collaborative space within a Course where all students can view, contribute, and edit content. The most common example is Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia that allows anyone in the world to contribute content to it.

About Course Wikis

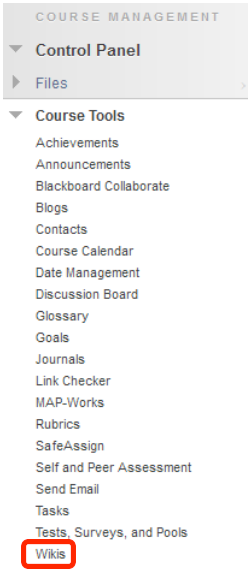
Any Course member can add pages unless the Instructor intends to be the sole author and use the Wiki as course content.

About Group Wikis

Any Course member can read the Group Wiki, but the user must be a member of the Group to edit a page or make a comment on a Group Wiki page.

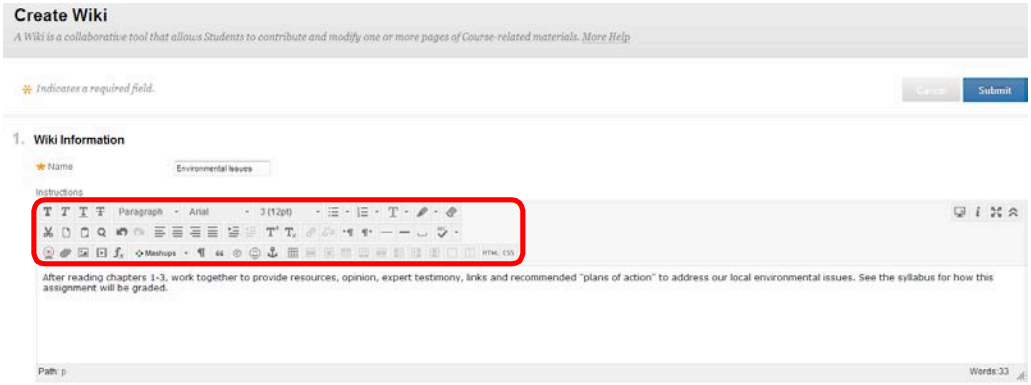
How to Create a Wiki

Only the instructor can create Wiki topics.



1. Access the Course. Ensure Edit Mode is ON.
2. In the Control Panel, expand the Course Tools section. Select Wikis.
3. On the Wikis listing page, click Create Wiki on the Action Bar.

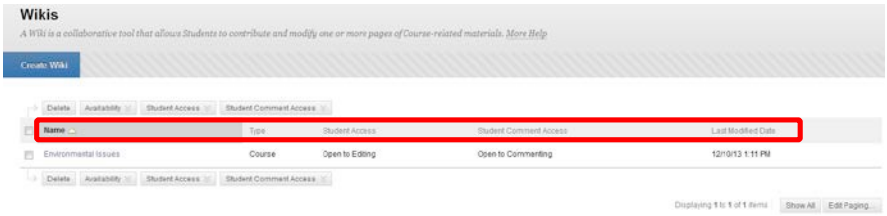
4. On the Create Wiki page, type a Wiki Name.
5. Type optional Instructions for the Wiki. Format the text and add images, links, multimedia, Mashups, and attachments using the functions in the Text Editor, if needed. Attachments added using the Text Editor can have alternate text added to describe the attachment.



6. Select the Yes option to make the Wiki available to users.
7. Use the Display After and Display Until date and time fields to limit availability of the Wiki. Select the Display After and Display Until check boxes in order to enable the date and time selections. Display restrictions do not affect the content in the Wiki, only the appearance of the Wiki.
8. Select the Student Access option. Student Access can be changed at any time.
    a. Closed to Editing: Select this option when the Instructor will be the only one contributing pages or to disallow further page editing by users, such as when the Wiki pages are set to be graded. Wikis can still be viewed when Closed to Editing is selected.
    b. Open to Editing: Allows users to modify any Wiki page. In a Group Wiki, a user must be a member of the Group to edit a Wiki page.

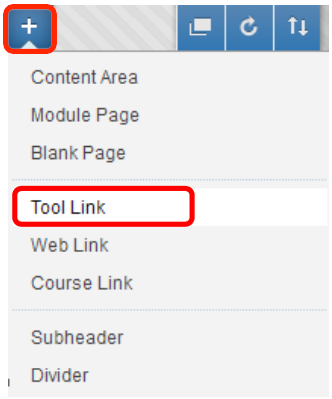
9. Select No grading or the Grade option and type the number of Points possible. Points possible will apply to one or more pages added and all edits by the user. Once a Wiki is set to be graded, a column is created for it in the Grade Center. It is permanently gradable and cannot be set to No grading.

The Wiki topics appear in alphabetical order on the Wikis listing page. Columns can be sorted by clicking the column title or caret.

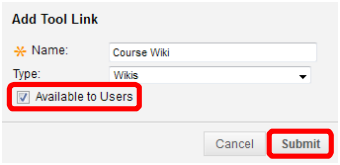


Adding a Course Menu Button for a Wiki

To make the Wikis you have created easily accessible to your students you can add a Course Menu button or link named "Course Wikis" or something similar.



1. Select the plus sign at the top of your course menu and select Create Tool Link.
2. Give Button a Name.
3. Under Type, select Wikis
4. Select "Available to Users." Click Submit. This will link to all course blogs.

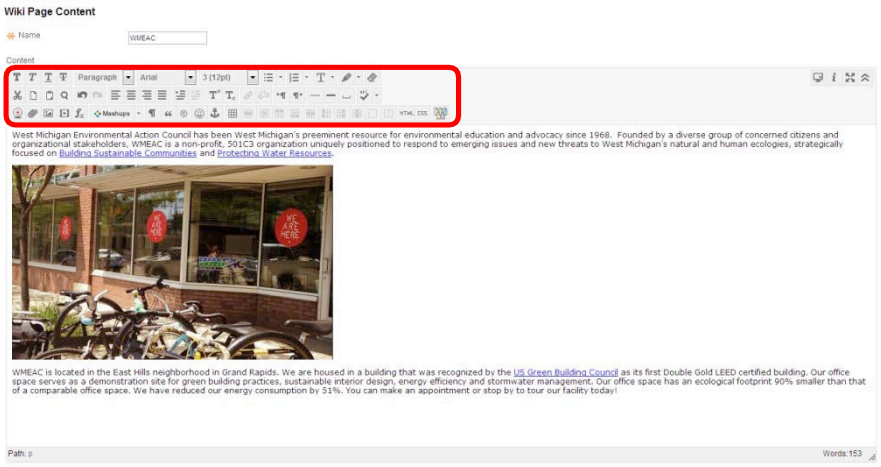


How to Create a Wiki Page

Each newly created Course or Group Wiki requires a first page, which is the home page. The Instructor or any Course or Group member can create the home page. The home page cannot be deleted, but if the Wiki is open to editing, it can be edited by any Course or Group member. The home page and all subsequent pages are created following the same steps.

1. On the Wikis listing page, select a Wiki title.
2. On the Wiki's topic page, click Create Wiki Page on the Action Bar.
3. On the Create Wiki Page, type a Name for the Wiki page.

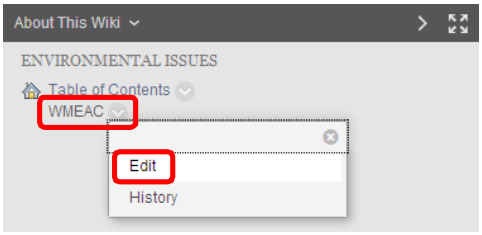
4. Type text in the Content text box. Format the text and add images, links, multimedia, Mashups, and attachments using the functions in the Text Editor. Attachments added using the Text Editor can have alternate text added to describe the attachment.
5. Click Submit.



How to Edit Wiki Content

Any Course member can edit a Course Wiki page and any Group member can edit a Group Wiki page, unless the Instructor has disabled this function. When a Wiki page is being edited by one user, it is locked to prevent others from editing the same page. If a user tries to edit a page someone else is editing, he or she is informed that the page is currently being edited by another user.

Note: Students do not have the ability to delete Wiki pages.



1. Access the Wiki. The Wiki topic page appears.
2. Select the page to review and edit. The Wiki page opens in the content frame.
3. In the side panel, click the page's Action Link to access the contextual menu and select Edit.
4. On the Edit Wiki Page, changes can be made to the name and content of the page. Additional content can be added also. Use the functions in the Text Editor to format existing text or add links, images, multimedia, Mashups, attachments, and link to other Wiki pages.
5. Click Submit.

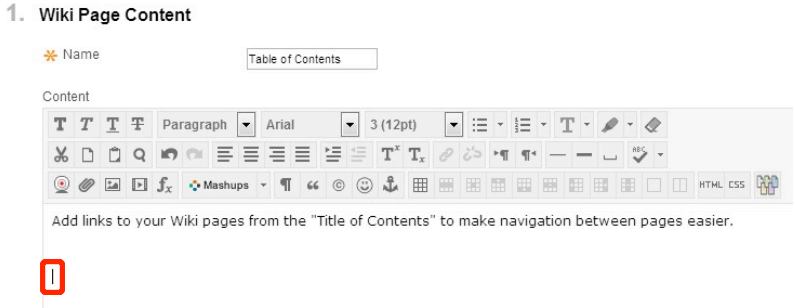
Note: Select History from a page's contextual menu to see how the page has been modified, view any version, and compare two versions side by side. The Page History page allows the Instructor to retrieve information about the development of any page and see who contributed content.

How to Link to Other Wiki Pages

When creating or editing a Wiki page, users can use the Link to Wiki page function in the Text Editor to link to another Wiki page within the current Wiki.

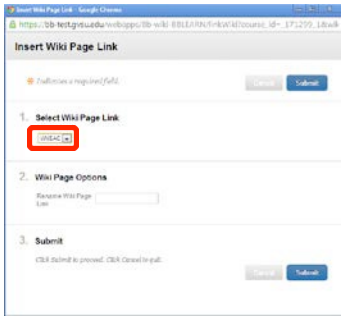
Links to other Wiki pages can be created when at least two pages exist.

1. Access the Wiki. On the Wiki topic page, click Create Wiki Page.
2. On the Create Wiki Page, type a Wiki Name and Content.
3. In the Content text box, position the mouse pointer where a link will be added to another Wiki page.

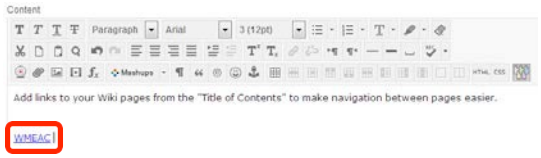


4. Click the Link to Wiki page function in the Text Editor, represented by several sheets of paper. If there is only one page in the Wiki, this function is disabled.

5. In the pop-up window, select the Wiki page to link to from the drop-down list.



6. Optionally, type a name for the link in the Rename Wiki Page Link text box. If the link is not renamed, the original page title is used as the link. Click Submit. The link appears in the Text Editor.

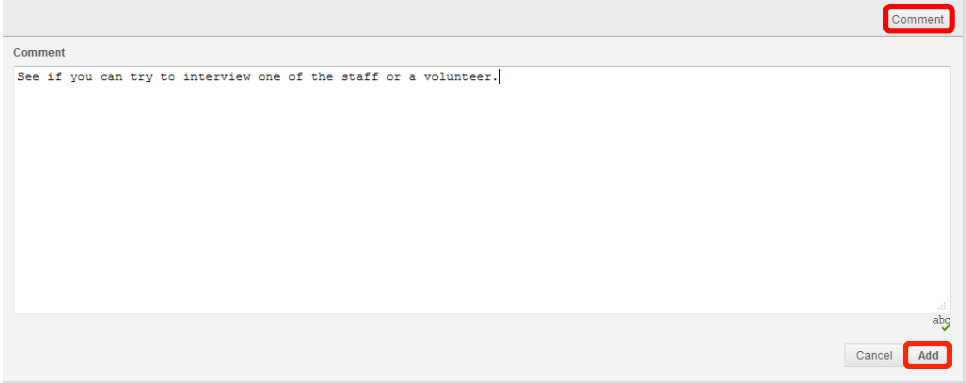


7. Click Submit. The new page with the link to the other page is added to the Wiki.

How to Add a Comment to a Wiki Page

Any Course member can add a comment to a Course Wiki page rather than add to or edit a page. By default, Group Wikis can be read by all Course members, but a user must be a member of the Group to make a comment on a Group Wiki page. The Instructor can change the default setting to allow only Group members to view a Group Wiki.

1. Access the Wiki.
2. On the Wiki topic page, select the page to view in the side panel. The Wiki page opens in the content frame.
3. Click Comment following the user's contribution. The Comment text box appears.
4. Type a comment in the Comment text box.



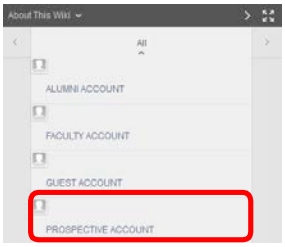
5. Click Spell Check at the bottom of the Comment text box to check the spelling of the content before continuing.
6. Click Add. Click the Comments link below the contribution to view the comment.

How to View the Participation Summary

On the Participation Summary page, Instructors are able to view a list of all Student participation for the current Wiki being viewed.

1. Access the Wiki.
2. On the Wiki topic page's Action Bar, click Participation and Grading for graded Wikis or Participation Summary for Wikis with no grading.

3. On the Participation Summary page, view participation for the Students who have contributed to the Wiki.
4. In the side panel, view information about the Wiki and select a user to view his or her Participant's Contribution page.



- **Page Versions**: The Page Version column displays all pages created and edited by the user. This allows the Instructor to see precisely how and what content the user contributed and edited.
- **Words Modified**: Tally of any words added, deleted, or edited in all pages and each page's version of the Wiki.
- **Page Saves**: Tally of any time Submit is clicked on the Edit Wiki Page in the Wiki, regardless of whether or not content has been changed.

How to Grade a Course Wiki

After a Wiki is set to be graded, a column is automatically created in the Grade Center. Then, individual Student contributions can be accessed from the Wiki's Participation Summary page.

A graded Wiki cannot be set to ungraded. Delete the graded Wiki from the Wikis listing page and the Grade Center, and create a new ungraded Wiki. Alternatively, do not include the graded Wiki column in Grade Center calculations, if the Wiki pages need to be retained.

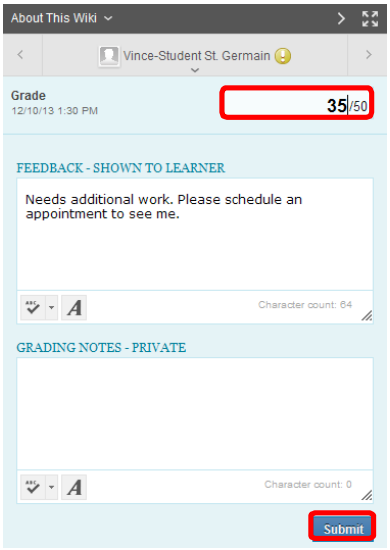
1. Access the Wiki to be graded.
2. On the Wiki topic page, click Participation and Grading on the Action Bar.

3. On the Participation Summary page, select a user's name in the side panel. Users with contributions ready for grading appear with the exclamation mark, the needs grading icon.
4. On the Participant's Contribution page, a list of the user's pages and page versions open in the content frame. You can also view information about the contributions. In the Page Version column, click a page's title to review it.

5. When ready to grade, enter a grade in the Grade window.

Note: If a Rubric has been created for this graded Wiki, click View Rubric. The Rubric must be created and added to the appropriate Grade Center column in advance.

6. Optionally, type Feedback for the user and Grading Notes, which appear to the Instructor and Grader only. Optionally, use the Spell Check function in the bottom of each text box. Click Text Editor to access all the Text Editor functions for formatting text and adding URLs, attachments, images, Mashups, and multimedia.
7. Click Submit to add the Grade, Feedback, and Grading Notes to the Grade section and to the Grade Center.
8. The Grade, Feedback, or Grading Notes can be edited again at any time. The changes appear in the Grade section and in the Grade Center. The changes are documented in the Grade Center in the Grade History tab on the user's Grade Details page.



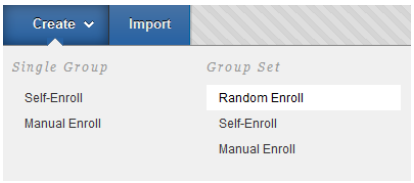
Use the Previous User and Next User arrows in the side panel to quickly access other users' contributions to grade.

Creating Group Blogs, Journals and Wikis

When a Group is added to the course, you select the tools you want the Group to use to collaborate. At the time of Group creation, you also determine if you want the Group Blog, Journal and/or Wiki to be graded and add the total points. A Grade Center column will automatically be created when you set the Group tool to be graded.

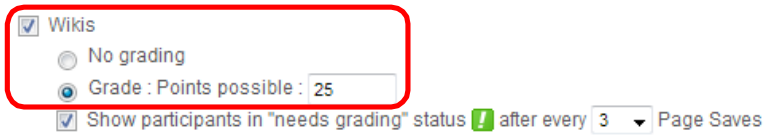
How to Create Groups

1. Click Users and Groups on the Control Panel. Click Groups.
2. Select the Create button and from the Create Single Group or Create Group lists, choose an enrollment option. The Create Group page will open.



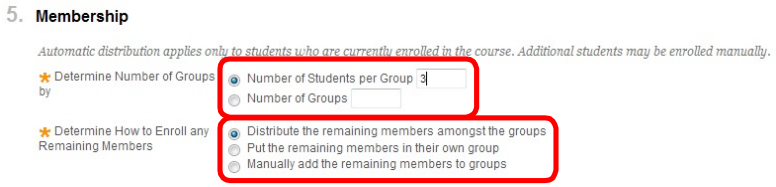
3. Type a name for the Group.
4. Type text in the Description text box and choose to make the Group Available.

5. Set the Tool Availability for each Group. If selecting Blogs, Journals or Wikis choose No grading or the Grade option and type the number of Points possible. Points possible will apply to one or more entries made by the user for the topic. Once a Blog, Journal or Wiki is set to be graded, a column is created for it in the Grade Center. It is permanently gradable and cannot be set to No grading.



6. Determine the Number of Groups and How to Enroll any Remaining Members.

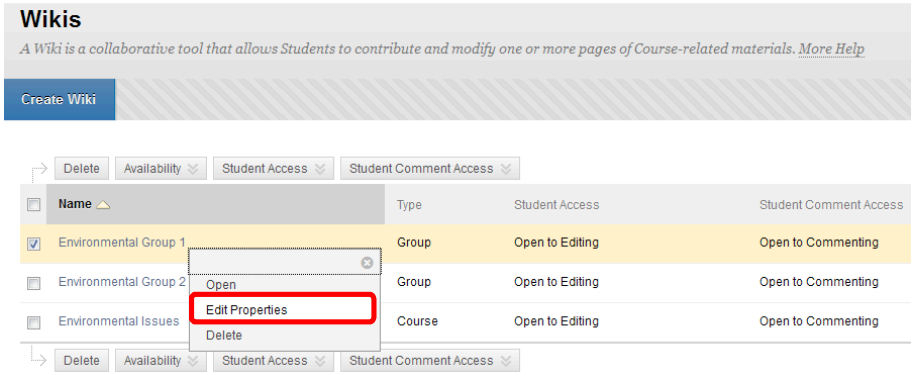
7. Click Submit



How to Edit Group Settings

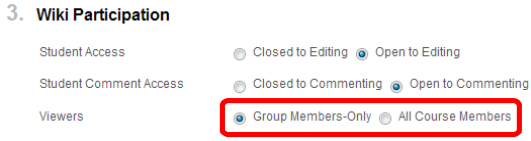
If you want to add instructions for the Group or change the default settings, you can access the Group Blog, Journal or Wiki from their respective listing page. As an Example:

1. Select the Course Wiki link on the Course Menu.
2. On the Wikis listing page, click the Action Link for the Group that you want to edit.
3. Select Edit Properties.



4. On the Edit Wiki page, the default name for the Group Wiki is the name of the Group. You can change the Group Wiki's Name, if you want.
5. Type optional Instructions in the text box. Format the text and add images, links, multimedia, Mashups, and attachments using the functions in the Text Editor.

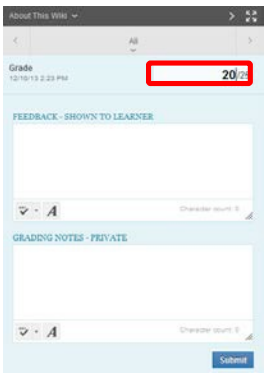
6. Make changes to the settings, if you want. For example, if you do not want all course members to view a Group's Wiki, select the Group Members-Only option.



7. Click Submit.

How to Grade Groups

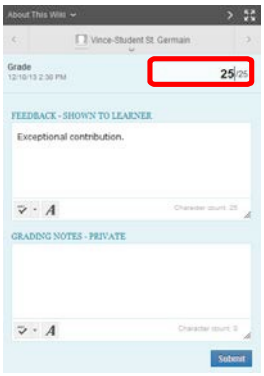
When a grade is assigned for a Group Wiki on the Participation Summary page, the grade is automatically given to all the members of the Group and is populated in the corresponding column in the Grade Center for each Group member. All members are assigned a grade, regardless if a member did not contribute.



Change an Individual Member's Group Grade

You can assign an individual Group member a different grade than the Group by editing the grade for the member.

1. Select a user's name in the side panel and review the individual's pages.
2. Type a new score in the Grade text box.
3. Optionally, type Feedback for the user and Grading Notes, which appear to the Instructor only. Click Text Editor to access all the Text Editor functions for formatting text and adding URLs, attachments, images, Mashups, and multimedia.
4. Click Submit. The edited grade will appear in the Grade Center and in the side panel on the Group Wiki page currently being viewed.



If a Group member's grade is changed, and a new Group grade is given, the new Group grade will not affect the individual's new grade. The individual's new grade will not appear to the other Group members.