

Discussion and Private Messages

The Discussion and Private Messages tool in VSpace allows students to communicate with each other and the instructor through discussion forums and private messages. In addition to this, permissions can be set up in this tool by the Instructor allowing for private group discussion forums. It also has an editable profile that is separate from your VSpace/Sakai profile.

Accessing The Tool: Once you have entered the appropriate course, select the “Discussion and Private Messages” tool from the course menu on the left. The tool is now displayed and will look similar to the following:



Figure 1 -Example display for the tool

Setting Up Your Profile: To set up your Discussion and Private Messages profile select the “My Profile” link at the top of the tool.



Figure 2 -Select the “My Profile” link

A form is now displayed for you to fill out. The information you place on this form will be public, so only place information you want others to see into the form. In addition to this there are several preferences listed that you can change along with the ability to upload an avatar, which is an image that will be displayed to the left of your posts.

Posting To A Forum: To post to a forum you must first enter the forum by selecting its name from the discussion list.

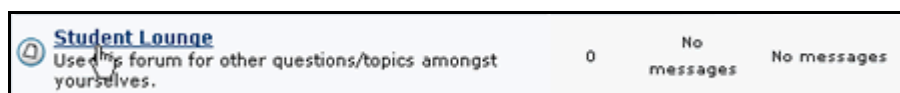


Figure 3 -Select a forum name

Adding A New Topic: A topic (also known as a thread) is a collection of related posts. If there isn't a topic in the forum that your post or question belongs to you may want to add it as a new topic. Once in the forum select the "new topic" button and then fill out the form that is displayed. If you want to add an attachment to the topic select "Attach Files" otherwise select "Submit".



Figure 4 -Select the "new topic" button

Replying To A Topic: To view posts to a topic within a forum, enter the forum and then select the topic name. The posts for that topic are then displayed. To post a reply select the "post reply" button and then fill out the form. Once you have appropriately filled out the form select "Attach Files" if you wish to attach a file to the posting or "Submit" if you wish to post the reply.

Watching A Topic: Watching a topic allows you to receive e-mail notifications when replies are posted to the topic. This is a useful feature if you wish to remain up to date on postings within a specific topic. To watch a topic, first select the topic name to display the posts within the topic and then select Watch. Another way to choose to watch a topic is by selecting the check box for "Notify when a reply is posted" when you post. If you no longer want to watch a topic simply click into the topic and then select Unwatch.

Post Information Breakdown: When you add a new topic or reply to a topic additional information is added to your posting based on what you have filled out in your Discussion and Private Messages profile. At the top is the date and time the author posted the message along with the subject. The "edit" button located at the upper right side of the post appears only for the author of the post if the instructor has allowed posts to be edited. On the left side of the post is the Author information and avatar. Directly under the text body of the post is the author's signature. Along the bottom are buttons to view the author's profile, private message the author, view the author's homepage and contact/add the author through/to Yahoo, AOL, MSN, or ICQ instant messenger programs if the author has filled out these fields in their profile.

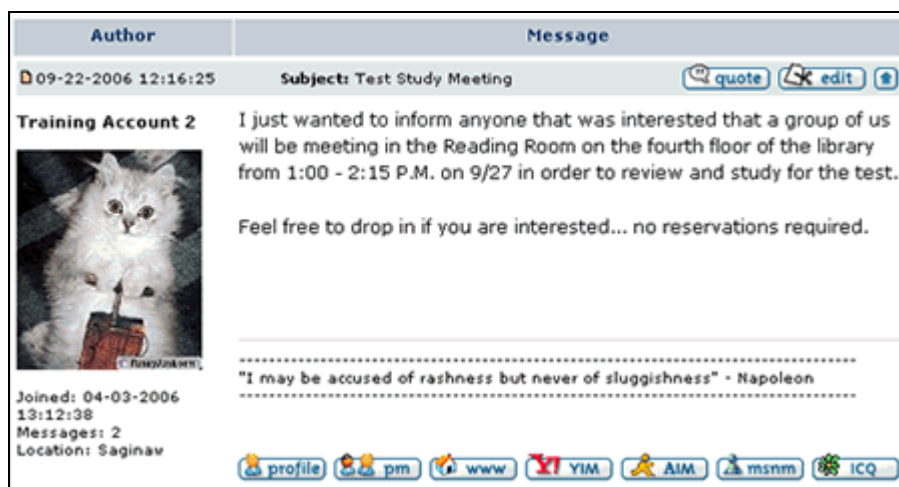


Figure 5 - An example post

Member Listing: To view a listing of everybody in your class select the "Member Listing" link.



Figure 6 - Select the "Member Listing" link

The listing displays additional information than just the member's name. It also has a private message and an email button, if they have filled out an email address in their Discussion and Private Messages profile, to the right of the member's name that you can use to contact that person. In addition to this it also provides you with the number of postings they have made, what their karma is and where they are from if they chose to fill in that portion of the profile form.

Name	Private Message	E-mail	From	Registration date	Messages	Karma
Account 2, Training			Saginaw	04-03-2006 13:12:38	2	0
Doe, John				03-10-2006 14:57:04	0	0
Smith, Bob				03-10-2006 14:58:04	0	0

Figure 7 - An example member listing

Private Messages: You are able to send private messages to other members of your class along with your instructor and also receive private messages through the Discussion and Private Messages tool.

Sending A Private Message: To send a private message to someone you can select the button at the bottom of one of their posts, next to their name in member listing or by selecting the "Private Messages" link then choosing "new topic" and then choosing "find user" and searching for them.

Viewing Private Messages: To view private messages that you have received or sent select the "Private Messages" link. Note that if you have received new private messages the "Private Messages" link will inform you how many new private messages you have received by changing to say "New Private Messages: (X)". The messages that you have received are listed first, to list all of the private messages you have sent, select "Sent Box". To view the contents of a private message select its title from the list.

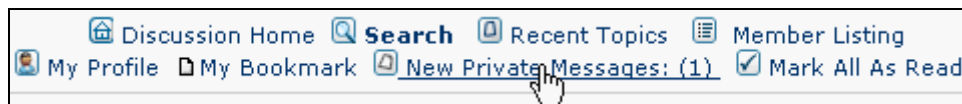


Figure 8 - Selecting the link to view private messages

Linking to Web sites: To share links to website locations in discussion posts, either A) Type (or paste) the entire address into the text box (it will become a link after you submit the post), or B) Type a logical title for the website, highlight it, then use the Insert / Edit link toolbar option, as shown below. Note - long URLs (addresses) should be pasted into the Insert / Edit link tool, which pops up, after clicking it.

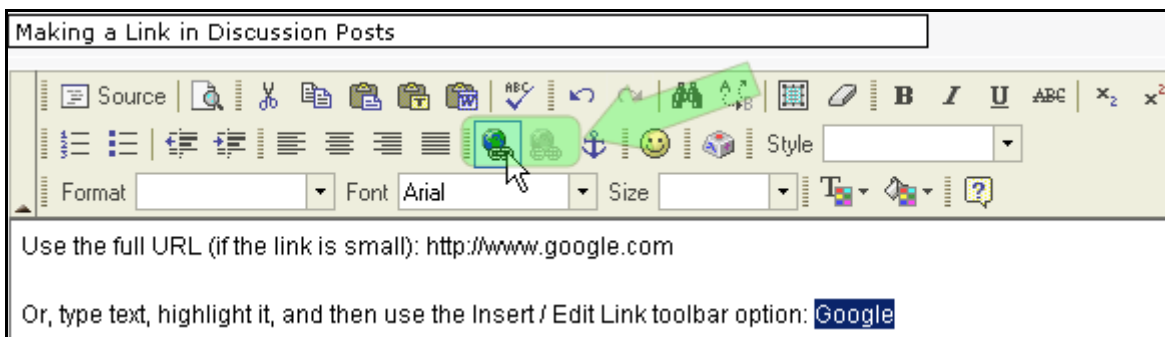


Figure 9 - Insert / Edit Link toolbar option in action