Discussions

About Discussions

Discussions allows you and your students and teaching assistants to engage in online discussions. *Discussions* is divided into different topic areas which allow you to create discussion forums around particular subjects. Topics can be public or private. Everyone in your course can access public topics, while private topics are available only to the set of students and teaching assistants that you choose.

By default, *Discussions* contains three public topics:

- *Main*: the main discussion area
- *Notes*: contains messages related to a page of content in a *Content Module*
- *All*: contains all messages from all public topics

With *Discussions*, you can:

- send and read messages
- search messages
- compile and download messages
- create, delete, or rename a topic
- add members to a private topic
- lock a topic, making it unavailable

For users who are new to WebCT, we recommend that you use the *Discussion Wizard*. The wizard guides you, step-by-step, through the following tasks:

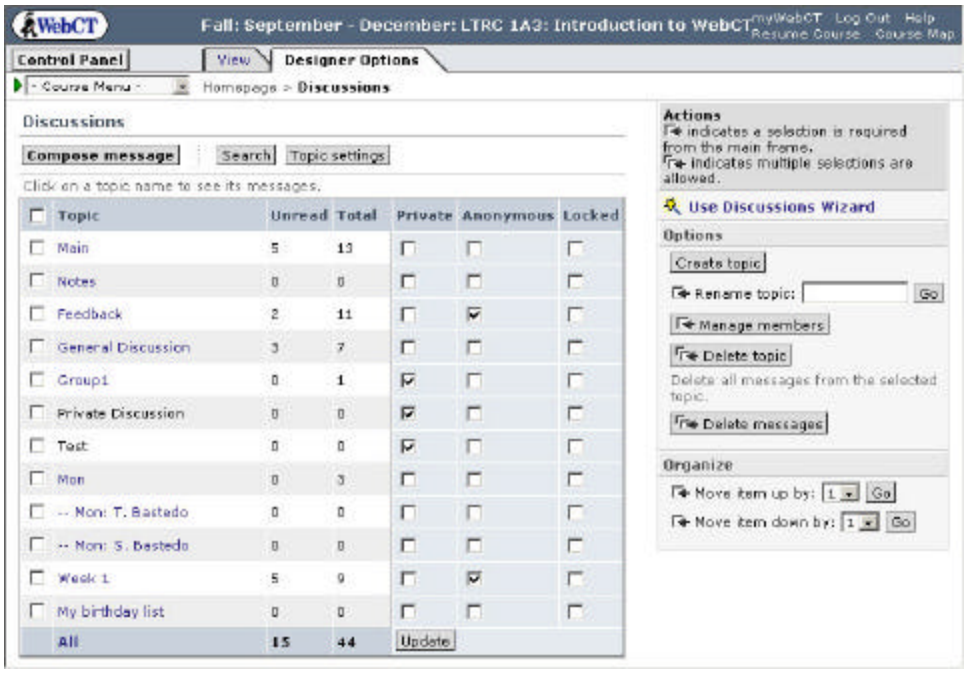
- create a topic and post a message
- post a message to an existing topic

To access the wizard from within *Discussions*, click *Use Discussion Wizard*.

Discussion Examples

- Create a public "help" discussion forum for students to help each other out with course related problems
- Propose open-ended synthesis questions
- Invite students to discuss their interpretations of an interesting image, a news event or a case study. Show something fun like a comic strip or joke. This may get them started with online discussion as well as allow them to enhance critical thinking skills, communication skills, negotiation skills and foster respect for diversity.
- Divide a large class into subgroups (tutorial groups, laboratory groups, etc). Have your TAs moderate discussions within these groups.
- Create public or private discussion forums to allow students working on group projects to communicate, share ideas and exchange files
- Encourage students to post and share relevant resources from the Internet or Library
- Allow students to post anonymously to a general class feedback forum
- Create a public forum for students to discuss anything of interest (outside the course topics) thereby allowing them to practice online discussion skills as well as building camaraderie among their peers.

Overview of the Discussion Tool



Compose message Create a new message. In the window that pops up, you will need to select which topic to place your message in.

Search Search through all current messages. You will be presented with various criteria for your search.

Topic settings Change how you view your discussion board.

Options

Create topic

Click to create a new topic

Rename Topic

Select a single topic first, then type in the new name and click *Go*

Manage members

Select a *Private Topic* first, then click here to select which students will have access to the topic.

Delete topic

Select one or more topics that you wish to delete.

Delete messages

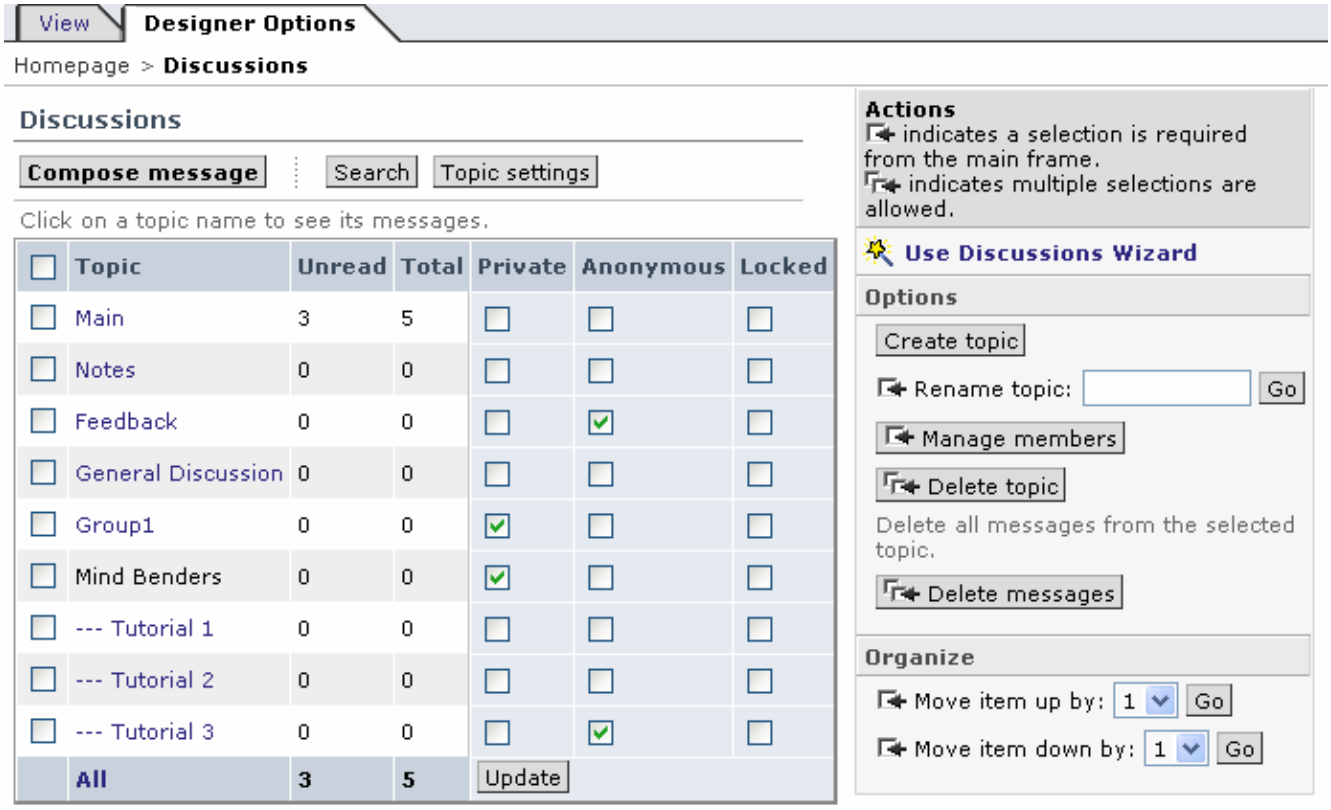
Delete all of the messages in a topic, but the topic remains.

Organize

Here you can change the order in which your topics are displayed.

Topic	List of current Topics in your discussion board
Unread	Number of messages you have yet to read.
Total	Total number of messages in a Topic
Private	Check if you only want a certain set of students to view this topic.
Anonymous	Check if you don't want your students to know who wrote the messages in that topic
Locked	Check if you want students to view the topic, but not add any messages.

Manage Discussion Topics



Adding a topic

Note: When you add a new topic, it is automatically set as a public topic.

1. From the *Course Menu*, click **Discussions**. The *Discussions* screen appears.
2. Under *Options*, click **Create topic**. The *Create Topic* screen appears.
3. In the *Topic name* text box, enter the name for the new topic.
4. Click **Create**. The *Discussions* screen appears and the new topic is displayed in the *Discussions* table.

Renaming a topic

Note: You cannot rename a topic that is associated with a presentation group.

1. From the *Course Menu*, click **Discussions**. The *Discussions* screen appears.
2. In the table, select the topic you want to rename.
3. Under *Options*, in the *Rename topic* text box, enter a new name for the topic.
4. Click **Go**. The *Discussions* screen refreshes and the topic is renamed.

Creating a private topic

To create a private topic, first add the topic, then assign it private status, and then assign members to the private topic. **Note:** Only assigned members can view and post messages to a private topic.

Add the topic:

1. From the *Course Menu*, click **Discussions**. The *Discussions* screen appears.
2. Under *Options*, click **Create topic**. The *Create Topic* screen appears.
3. In the *Topic name* text box, enter the name for the new topic.
4. Click **Create**. The *Discussions* screen appears and the new topic is displayed in the *Discussions* table.

Assign the private status:

6. In the table, under *Private*, select the check box that corresponds to the topic you just created.
7. Click **Update**. The *Discussions* screen refreshes and the status of the topic is updated.

Assign members to the private topic:

8. In the table, select the private topic you just created.
9. Under *Options*, click **Manage members**. The *Private Topic* screen appears.
10. Click **Select members**. The *Member Selection* screen appears.
11. Select the members you want to add to the private topic:
    - To select members individually, select each member.
    - To select all members, select *Status*.
12. Click **Update**. The Private Topic screen appears displaying the topic's members in a table.
13. Click **Done**. The *Discussions* screen appears.

Changing a public topic to a private topic

1. From the *Course Menu*, click **Discussions**. The *Discussions* screen appears.
2. In the table, under *Private*, select the check box that corresponds to each topic that you want to make private.
3. Click **Update**. The *Discussions* screen refreshes and the status of the topic(s) is updated.

Adding members to a private topic

1. From the *Course Menu*, click **Discussions**. The *Discussions* screen appears.
2. In the table, select the private topic to which you want to add members.
3. Under *Options*, click **Manage members**. The *Private Topic* screen appears.
4. Click **Select members**. The *Member Selection* screen appears.
5. Select the members you want to add to the private topic:
    - To select members individually, select each member.
    - To select all members, select *Status*.
6. Click **Update**. The *Private Topic* screen appears displaying the topic's members in a table.
7. Click **Done**. The *Discussions* screen appears.

Viewing members of a private topic

Note: Depending on administrator settings, students may not be able to view the members of their private topics.

1. From the *Course Menu*, click **Discussions**. The *Discussions* screen appears.
2. In the table, select the private topic that you want to view.
3. Under *Options*, click **Manage members**. The *Private Topic* screen appears with a list of all members in the topic.
4. Click **Done**. The *Discussions* screen appears.

Allowing anonymous postings to a topic

When a topic is assigned an anonymous status, individuals have the choice of whether or not to post messages to that topic anonymously.

1. From the *Course Menu*, click **Discussions**. The *Discussions* screen appears.
2. In the table, under *Anonymous*, select the check box that corresponds to each topic that you want to make anonymous.
3. Click **Update**. The *Discussion* screen refreshes and the status is updated.

Locking a topic

When a topic is locked, no further messages can be posted to it.

1. From the *Course Menu*, click **Discussions**. The *Discussions* screen appears.
2. In the table, under *Locked,* select the check box that corresponds to each topic that you want to lock.
3. Click **Update**. The *Discussion* screen refreshes and the status is updated.

Moving a topic up in the table

You may want to reorganize topics in the *Discussions* table after adding them. Use this action to move a topic up in the table.

1. From the *Course Menu*, click **Discussions**. The *Discussions* screen appears.
2. In the table, select the topic that you want to move up.
3. Under *Organize*, from the *Move item up by* drop-down list, select the number of places to move the topic up.
4. Click **Go**. The *Discussions* screen refreshes and the topic is in its new location.

Moving a topic down in the table

You may want to reorganize topics in the *Discussions* table after adding them. Use this action to move a topic down in the table.

1. From the *Course Menu*, click **Discussions**. The *Discussions* screen appears.
2. Click the **Designer Options** tab if it is not already selected.
3. In the table, select the topic that you want to move down.
4. Under *Organize*, from the *Move item down by* drop-down list, select the number of places to move the topic down.
5. Click **Go**. The *Discussion* screen refreshes and the topic is in its new location.

Deleting a topic

1. From the *Course Menu*, click **Discussions**. The *Discussions* screen appears.
2. In the table, select each topic you want to delete.
3. Under *Options*, click **Delete topic**. A warning message appears.
4. Click **OK**. Each selected topic, and all of its associated messages, is deleted.

Managing Messages

Moving a message to a different topic

1. From the *Course Menu*, click **Discussions**. The *Discussions* screen appears.
2. Click the **Designer Options** tab if it is not already selected.
3. From the *Discussions* table, under *Topic*, click the topic name. The *Discussion Messages* screen appears.
4. The messages for the topic appear in the table under the heading, *Subject*. Locate the message you want to move.
    - To view only unread messages, click **Unread**; to view all messages, click **All**.
    - To view messages in chronological order, click **Unthreaded**; to view messages as a thread, click **Threaded**. **Note:** Threading the messages groups all the reply messages together under each subject.
    - To view a thread of messages, click the icon next to the thread.
5. Select each message you want to move to a different topic. To select all of the messages displayed, select *Subject*.
6. Click **Designer message options**.
7. From the *Move to* drop-down list, select the new topic for the message(s).
8. Click **Go**. The screen refreshes and each selected message is moved to the new topic.

Deleting selected messages

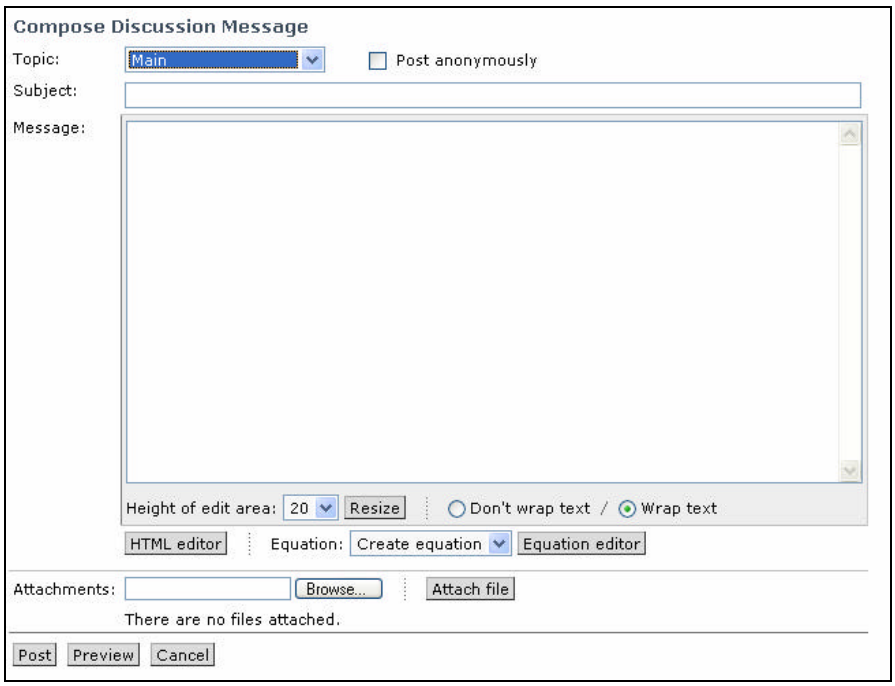
1. From the *Course Menu*, click **Discussions**. The *Discussions* screen appears.
2. Click the **Designer Options** tab if it is not already selected.
3. From the *Discussions* table, click the topic name. The *Discussion Messages* screen appears.
4. The messages for the topic appear in the table under the heading, *Subject*. Locate the message you want to delete:
    - To view all messages, click **All;** to view only unread messages, click **Unread.**
    - To view messages in chronological order, click **Unthreaded**; to view messages as a thread, click **Threaded**. **Note:** Threading the messages groups all the reply messages together under each subject.
    - To view a thread of messages, click the icon next to the thread.
5. Select each message you want to delete.
6. Click **Designer message options**.
7. Click **Delete**. A warning message appears.
8. Click **OK**. The screen refreshes and each selected message is deleted.

Deleting all messages from a topic

1. From the *Course Menu*, click **Discussions**. The *Discussions* screen appears.
2. Click the **Designer Options** tab if it is not already selected.
3. From the *Discussions* table, select each topic that contains the messages you want to delete.
4. Under *Options*, click **Delete messages**. A warning message appears.
5. Click **OK**. All messages in the selected topic(s) are deleted.

Sending messages

1. From the *Course Menu*, click **Discussions**. The *Discussions* screen appears.
2. In the *Discussions table*, click the topic to which you want to post a message. The *Discussion Messages* screen appears.
3. Click **Compose message**. The *Compose Discussion Message* screen appears in a new browser window.



4. In the *Subject* text box, enter the subject for your message.
5. Compose your message by doing one of the following:
   - In the *Message* text box, enter your message. The following message options are available:
     - To change the number of viewable lines in the *Message* text box, from the *Height of edit area* drop-down list, select a number, and click **Resize**.
     - To allow text to continue horizontally beyond each visible line, select *Don't wrap text*.
   - Click **HTML editor**.
6. If you want to create or import an equation, WebEQ Equation Editor for Windows or for Macintosh
7. If you want to attach a file:
   - To locate and select the file, next to the *Attachments* text box, click **Browse**. Your computer's file browser appears. Select the file you want to upload. The path and filename you selected is displayed in the *Attachments* text box.
   - Click **Attach file**. The file is attached to your message.
8. If you want to preview your message before sending:
   - Click **Preview**. A preview of your message appears in a new browser window.
   - Click **Close**. The *Compose Discussion Message* screen appears.
9. Click **Post**.

Replying to messages

You can reply to discussion messages that were posted by other users in the course. Note: **If replying to a message containing an equation, you cannot edit the equation. You can insert or edit an equation only by replying privately or quoting the message.**

1. From the *Course Menu*, click **Discussions**. The *Discussions* screen appears.
2. From the *Discussions* table, click the topic containing the message to which you want to reply. The *Discussion Messages* screen appears.
3. Click the message to which you want to reply. The message appears in a new browser window.
4. Choose the format for your reply:
   - To reply to all members of the topic without including the original message, click **Reply**. The *Reply to Message* screen appears.
   - To reply only to the person who posted the message, click **Reply Privately**. The *Reply Privately to Message* screen appears. **Note**: When you reply privately, your reply is sent as a mail message to the person who posted the message, rather than being sent as part of the discussion forum. The recipient of your reply should check their mail messages for your response.
   - To include the original message in your reply to all topic members, click **Quote**. The *Reply to and Quote Message* screen appears.
5. In the *Subject* text box, enter or edit the subject for your message.
6. Compose your message by doing one of the following:
   - In the *Message* text box, enter your message. The following message options are available:
     - To change the number of viewable lines in the *Message* text box, from the *Height of edit area* drop-down list, select a number, and click **Resize**.
     - To allow text to continue horizontally beyond each visible line, select *Don't wrap text*.
   - Click **HTML editor**.
7. If you are replying privately or quoting a message and you want to insert or edit an equation, use the WebEQ Equation Editor for Windows or for Macintosh
8. If you want to attach a file. See Step 7 of **Sending Messages** for more help with this step.
9. If you want to preview your message before sending, click **Preview**.
10. Click **Post**.

Quoting messages

You can reply to a discussion message and quote the original message in your reply.

1. From the *Course Menu*, click **Discussions**. The *Discussions* screen appears.
2. From the *Discussions* table, click the topic containing the message to which you want to reply. The *Discussion Messages* screen appears.
3. Click the message that you want to quote. The message appears in a new browser window. **Note:** If the message contains an equation, the equation will be displayed.
4. Click **Quote**. The *Reply to and Quote Message* screen appears. The original message appears at the bottom of the screen.
5. In the *Subject* text box, enter or edit the subject for your message.
6. Compose your message by doing one of the following:
    - In the *Message* text box, enter your message. The following message options are available:
    - Click **HTML editor**.
7. If you want to create, import, edit, or export an equation, use the WebEQ Equation Editor for Windows or for Macintosh
8. If you want to attach a file: See Step 7 of **Sending Messages** for more help with this step.
9. If you want to preview your message before sending, click **Preview**.
10. Click **Post**.

Compiling and downloading messages

You can compile *Discussion* messages into one file and download the file.

1. From the *Course Menu*, click **Discussions**. The *Discussions* screen appears.
2. In the *Discussions* table, click the topic containing the messages you want to compile and download**.** The *Discussion Messages* screen appears.
3. From the list of messages, select the messages to be compiled. To compile all messages in a thread, select the check box next to the thread. To select all of the messages displayed, select *Subject*.
4. Click **Compile**. The *Compiled Messages* screen appears displaying your compiled messages. **Note:** If this message option is not visible, click **Designer message options** to move to the bottom of the screen.
5. To download your compiled messages, click **Download**. Your browser's file download dialog box appears. Follow the on-screen instructions.
6. When the download is complete, click **Close**. The *Discussion Messages* screen appears.

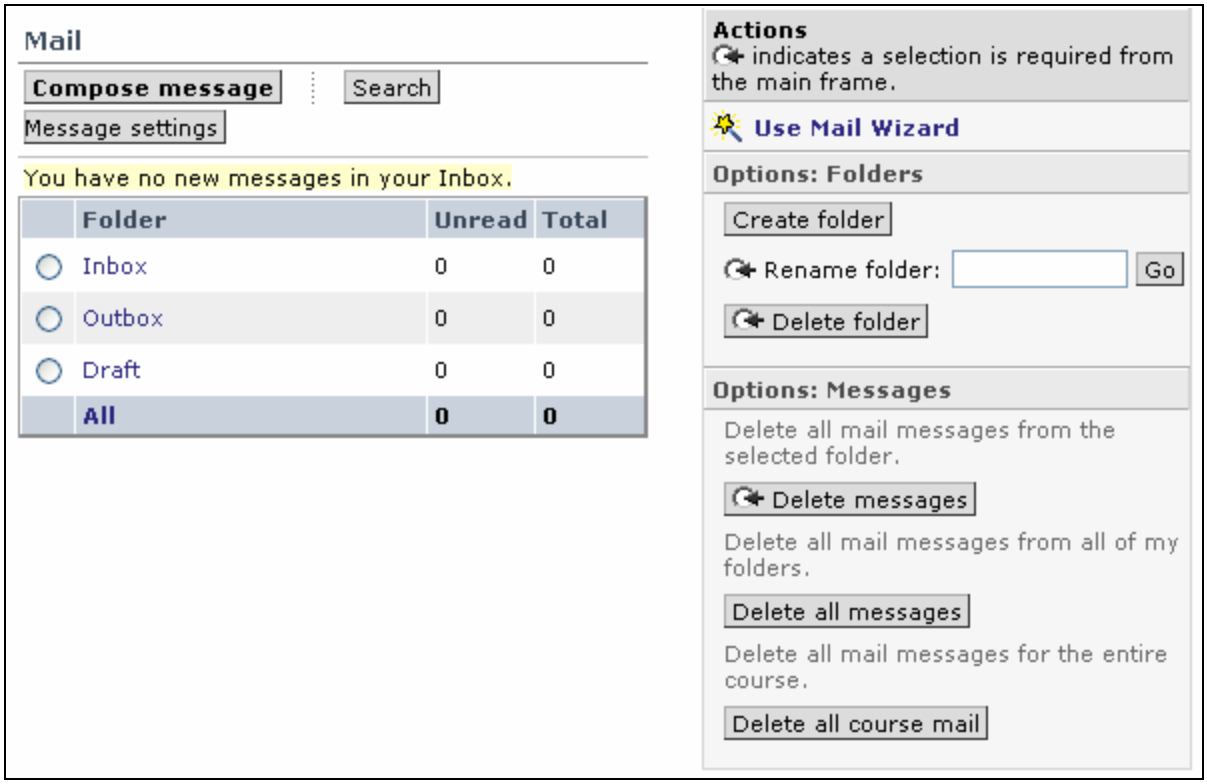
WebCT Mail

About the Mail Tool

Mail allows you, your students, and teaching assistants to send, receive, reply, and forward mail messages to others in the course. You can also store drafts of mail messages, search your mail messages, and add mail folders.

There are four default folders for each user. The default folders cannot be renamed or deleted:

- *Inbox:* contains all received messages
- *Outbox:* contains all sent messages
- *Draft:* contains messages that you have composed but not sent
- *All:* contains all messages



Before you and your students can use *Mail*, you must add it to your course. For instructions, see ***Add Page or Tool.***

For users who are new to WebCT, we recommend that you use the *Mail Wizard*. The wizard guides you, step-by-step, through the task of creating a mail message.

To access the wizard, click *Use Mail Wizard*.

Sending and Reading Mail Messages

Sending and reading mail messages works very similar to sending and reading discussion messages. For more details on how to attach documents and preview messages before sending them, refer to the Discussion in the last section.

Sending messages

You can send messages to other users in the course.

1. From the *Course Menu*, click **Mail**. The *Mail* screen appears.
2. Click **Compose message**. The *Compose Mail Message* screen appears in a new browser window.
3. Complete the *Send to* text box by doing one of the following:
   - Enter the name of each recipient, separated by commas.
   - To see a list of possible recipients:
     a. Click **Browse**. The *Select Recipients* screen appears.
     b. To select a recipient, click their name. To select multiple recipients, hold down the CTRL key (Windows) or the Apple key (Macintosh) and click each name.
     c. Click **Select**. The *Compose Mail Message* screen appears and the selected recipients appear in the *Send to* text box.
4. In the *Subject* text box, enter a subject for your message.
5. Compose your message
6. Click **Send**. The message is sent and a copy is placed in the *Outbox* folder.

Replying to messages

You can reply to messages that were sent from other users in the course. Note: **If replying to a message containing an equation, you cannot edit the equation. You can insert or edit an equation only by forwarding or quoting the message.**

1. From the *Course Menu*, click **Mail**. The *Mail* screen appears.
2. From the *Folder* table, click the folder that contains the message to which you want to reply. The *Mail Messages* screen appears.
3. Click the message that you want to reply to. The message appears in a new browser window.
4. Choose the format for your reply:
   - If you want to reply to the author, click **Reply**. The original message is not included in your reply.
   - If you want to forward the message, see ***Forwarding messages to another user within the course.***
   - If you want to include the original message in your reply to the author, see ***Quoting messages.***

   The *Reply to Message* screen appears. The original message appears at the bottom of the screen.
5. Complete the *Send to* text box (see ***Sending Messages*** above for more detail)
6. In the *Subject* text box, enter or edit the subject for your message.
   a. Compose your message
7. Click **Send**. The message is sent and a copy is placed in the *Outbox* folder.

Quoting messages

You can reply to a message and quote the original message in your reply.

1. Click the message that you want to quote. The message appears in a new browser window.
2. Click **Quote**. The *Reply to and Quote Message* screen appears. The original message appears at the bottom of the screen.
3. Complete the *Send to* text box (see ***Sending Messages*** above for more detail)
4. In the *Subject* text box, enter or edit the subject for your message.
5. Compose your message
6. Click **Send**. The message is sent and a copy is placed in the *Outbox* folder.

Forwarding messages to another user within the course

You can forward messages to another user in the course.

1. Click the message that you want to forward. The message appears in a new browser window.
2. Click **Forward**. The *Compose Mail Message* screen appears.
3. Complete the *Send to* text box (see ***Sending Messages*** above for more detail)
4. In the *Subject* text box, enter or edit the subject for your message.
5. Compose your message
6. Click **Send**. The message is sent and a copy is placed in the *Outbox* folder.