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# 2

## Moodle Basics

In this chapter, we'll cover the basics of the Moodle interface and some of the options you have when setting up your class. Then we'll start adding some content to your first Moodle class.

### Getting Started

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Moodle is a web-based tool you can access through a web browser. This means that in order to use Moodle you need a computer with a web browser installed and an Internet connection. You also need to have the web address (called a Uniform Resource Locator, or URL) of a server running Moodle. If your institution supports Moodle, it will have a server with Moodle up and running. You can

then get the server address from the system administrator. If you don't have access to a server with Moodle installed, and you'd like to set up your own, visit the Moodle website for instructions on setting up a Moodle server on any platform.

After you've gotten the URL, open your web browser and type the address in the address bar. You'll then be taken to the Moodle main screen.

## The Moodle Interface

When you first visit your Moodle site, you'll see the main screen with the site news and the courses you are teaching or taking (see Figure 2-1).

The screenshot shows the Moodle University main screen. At the top, it says "Moodle University" and "You are logged in as Admin User (Logout)". There is a language dropdown menu set to "English (en)". Below the header, there is a search bar and a "Turn editing on" button. The main content area is divided into several blocks:

- Main Menu:** Contains a link to "Site news".
- Administration:** Contains links for "Configuration...", "Users...", "Courses", "Logs", and "Site files".
- Courses:** Contains a list of course titles: "CSC 0413-01 SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT Spring 2004", "CET - Using Blackboard copy 1", "CET - Using Blackboard", "Crs w/ Quiz", "Dina 101", "Eng 101", and "Moodle 101".
- Site news:** Contains the text "Add a new topic..." and "(No news has been posted yet)".
- Calendar:** Shows the month of November 2004, with the 30th highlighted.

Figure 2-1. Moodle main screen

Take a moment and familiarize yourself with the interface. Moodle uses a number of interface conventions throughout the system. Frequently updated or important information is presented in the middle of the screen. On the lefthand side of the screen you'll see several "blocks" that list available courses and site news. Blocks are useful for holding all kinds of tools and content. I'll be using the block terminology throughout the rest of the book.

## Languages

On the upper right, you'll see a dropdown menu with language options. As of August 2004, Moodle has been translated into 40 languages by the developer community. Anyone who uses Moodle, both students and teachers, can select the language in which Moodle's tabs and instructions will appear. For example, if I choose to view the site in Norwegian, the system labels will be translated into that language. However, Moodle does not translate user content. Any user-generated content remains in the language in which it was entered.

You can choose the language settings for the main site and for each course you visit. As an instructor, you can also force students to use a given language. This is a useful feature if you're teaching a language course and want the entire course to be in that language. Or you can simply confuse the heck out of your students by choosing some really obscure language and have them guess what everything means.

The system administrator can override this feature and force everyone to use the same language. If you cannot change the language for a course or for the Moodle main page, contact your system administrator and make sure he isn't forcing everyone to use one language.

## Moodle's Help System

Throughout Moodle, you will see a question mark in a yellow circle. This is a link to Moodle's very extensive help system. Although you shouldn't need it very frequently after you read this book, the community has worked hard to provide you with a help system that is tied to what you are doing at that moment.

When you click the question mark icon, a new window pops up with the help entry for the item you are asking about (see Figure 2-2). After you read the help entry, you can close the window with the "Close this window" or look at other help files by clicking on the "Index of all help files" link. You can then select any help item from anywhere in the help system.

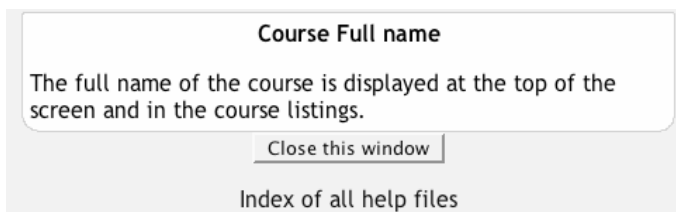


Figure 2-2. A help screen

## Creating an Account

Right above the language selection list, you'll find a hyperlink that says "Login." Click the link and Moodle will present you with the login screen, as shown in Figure 2-3. Your username and password will depend on how your system administrator set up the system. Moodle has a number of options for user authentication, including email authentication, or an LDAP (Lightweight Directory Access Protocol) server, or users can register their own accounts. Self-registration is the default method, and many sites use this.

If you need to create your own account:

1. Click the "Start now by creating a new account" button.
2. Fill in the new account form by creating a username and password for yourself (see Figure 2-4).
3. Enter a valid email address because the system will send you an email to confirm your account. You won't be able to log in again until you confirm your account.
4. Click "Create my new account."
5. Within a few minutes, you should receive an email at the account you specified on the form.
6. Click the link in the email (or copy and paste it into the address window in your browser) to confirm your account.

The screenshot shows a login interface with two main panels. The left panel, titled "Returning to this web site?", contains a login form with fields for "Username:" and "Password:", a "Login" button, a "Login as a guest" button, and a "Send my details via email" button. The right panel, titled "Is this your first time here?", contains a welcome message, a 7-step list of instructions for creating a new account, and a "Start now by creating a new account!" button.

**Returning to this web site?**

Login here using your username and password:  
(Cookies must be enabled in your browser) ⓘ

Username:

Password:

Some courses may allow guest access:

Forgotten your username or password?

**Is this your first time here?**

Hi! For full access to courses you'll need to take a minute to create a new account for yourself on this web site. Each of the individual courses may also have a one-time "enrolment key", which you won't need until later. Here are the steps:

1. Fill out the New Account form with your details.
2. An email will be immediately sent to your email address.
3. Read your email, and click on the web link it contains.
4. Your account will be confirmed and you will be logged in.
5. Now, select the course you want to participate in.
6. If you are prompted for a "enrolment key" - use the one that your teacher has given you. This will "enrol" you in the course.
7. You can now access the full course. From now on you will only need to enter your personal username and password (in the form on this page) to log in and access any course you have enrolled in.

Figure 2-3. Login screen

You now have a verified account. Your account isn't automatically associated with the courses you're teaching. You'll need to find out from your system administrator how to enroll your account as an instructor in a course. By default, the system administrator will have to enroll you as an instructor in a course.

## Editing Your User Profile

Once you have successfully confirmed your account and logged in, you will find yourself back at the main page. As Figure 2-5 shows, your username will now be displayed at the top of the screen.




**Create a new username and password to log in with:**  
Username:   
Password:

**Please supply some information about yourself:**  
(Note: your email address must be a real one)

Email address:   
Email (again):   
First name:   
Surname:   
City/town:   
Country:

Figure 2-4. New account screen



**Moodle University** You are logged in as Admin User (Logout)  
English (en)

Main Menu

Figure 2-5. Main screen after login

If you look at the upper-right corner, you'll see that the "Login" link has changed. It now reads "You are logged in as" and whatever your username is, highlighted as a clickable word. Click on your username.

Moodle will then present you with your user profile summary, like the one shown in Figure 2-6. You'll see your profile summary, and the last time you logged in. From this screen you can also edit your profile or change your password. Let's take a moment and edit your profile to customize the site and help other people get to know you.



Figure 2-6. User profile page

To edit your user profile:

1. Start by click the Edit Profile button on the upper right hand side of the screen. Your user profile will look like Figure 2-7.

A screenshot of the 'User profile for Instructor Demo' editing page. The title 'User profile for Instructor Demo' is centered at the top. Below the title are several form fields for editing profile information:

- First name: Instructor
- Surname: Demo
- Email address: instructor\_demo@yahoo.com
- Email display: Allow only other course members to see my email address (dropdown menu)
- Email activated: This email address is enabled (dropdown menu)
- Email format: Pretty HTML format (dropdown menu)
- Email digest type: No digest (single email per forum post) (dropdown menu)
- Forum auto-subscribe: Yes: when I post, subscribe me to that forum (dropdown menu)

Figure 2-7. Editing your user profile

2. You'll see your username and a blank for your password. If you want to change either, do it here
3. You can then change the real name the system has stored for you.
4. The next four lines dictate how Moodle and other users can communicate with you through emails:

#### Email address

Make sure this is an address you check frequently and that it is correct. Moodle has a lot of important email features, and I wouldn't want you to miss out because your email address had a typo or is not an address you check frequently.

#### Email display

You can choose who can see your email address. Your choices are to hide your email from everyone, allow only the people in your classes to see it, or display it for everyone who logs in to the site. If you choose to hide your email from other people, they will not be able to send you email directly from Moodle.

#### Email format

Here you can select whether mail sent from Moodle is formatted using HTML or is sent in plain text. Most modern email clients can receive and properly display HTML mail, although this may be a preference you have to enable in your email preferences. If you have a slow connection, or simply prefer your email plain and simple, the plain-text option is probably a good choice

#### Forum auto-subscribe

Moodle forums are a powerful communication tool for classes. (We will discuss forums in great depth in Chapter 4. For now, I'll simply mention that you have the option of "subscribing" to forums, which means that new forum posts will be sent to you via email.) This is a great way of keeping current with your course discussions without having to log in and look at the forums every day. Of course, if your discussions really get cooking you'll end up with a lot of email, but at least it won't be spam.

5. The next option, "When editing text:," lets you choose whether to use Moodle's native HTML editor to enter text or to use plain text. Moodle's HTML editor is an easy way to enter formatted text into your course site. We'll cover the specifics of how it works in Chapter 3.
6. After setting your city and country, you can choose your preferred language. Setting your language here makes it your default language for all pages.

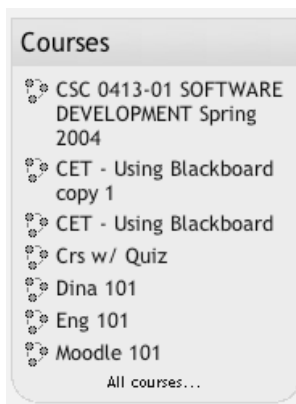


7. The timezone setting can be very important, especially if you're working with an international audience or will be traveling and accessing the system. Be sure to set the time zone to your local time, not the server's local time. I almost missed a meeting because I didn't set my time zone. The Moodle server we were using was in another country and I had left my profile setting on the default server's local time. The meeting was set for 11 p.m., which seemed odd to me. Then I realized I had the wrong time zone. When I changed the setting, I realized the meeting was scheduled for 8 a.m. my time!
8. The description box gives you a place to tell your Moodle community a little about yourself. If you don't feel comfortable writing a description, just put a couple of characters in here and the system won't complain.
9. The remaining optional fields allow you to include personal details about yourself, including your photo or a representative image, and contact information. Your picture will appear by your postings in the forums, in your profile, and in the course roster.
10. To upload a new picture, follow these steps:
  - a) Prepare the picture you want to use by converting it to a gif or jpeg if you haven't already. It should be smaller than the maximum upload size (see Chapter 3 for more details).
  - b) Click the Browse button and locate your prepared picture. Then click Choose in the dialogue box.
  - c) Then click Update Profile at the bottom of the screen. Moodle will crop your picture into a square and shrink it to 100-by-100 pixels.

Moodle provides you with a number of ways to personalize your experience and share information about yourself with other people.

## A First Look at a Course

On the left side of the main screen, you'll see a block that includes a list of all the courses you are teaching or taking as a student. You can access your courses by clicking on the course name in the block, as shown in Figure 2-8.



*Figure 2-8. Main screen course list*

Let's start with the upper lefthand corner of the course screen, as shown in Figure 2-9. There you'll see the name of your course as entered when the course was created. Either your system administrator entered your course name by hand or she got it from your institution's course database. (Read the "Course settings" section below if you need to change the name.)

The screenshot shows a Moodle course page for 'Moodle 101'. At the top, it indicates the user is logged in as 'Admin User (Logout)'. Below the course name, there is a breadcrumb trail: 'MoodleU » Mdl101'. A 'Turn editing on' button is visible in the top right. The page is organized into three main columns. The left column contains tool blocks: 'People' (with links for Participants, Groups, and Edit profile), 'Activities' (listing various activity types like Assignments, Chats, Dialogues, Exercises, Forums, Glossaries, Journals, Lessons, Quizzes, Resources, Wikis, and Workshops), and 'Administration' (with links for Turn editing on and Settings...). The center column is the 'Topic outline', showing a 'Summary of Week 0' with a list of items: News forum, Social forum, Directory, Uploaded File, Meaningful Assignment Name, Glossary Name, Journal Assignment Name, Descriptive Forum Name, Archive Forum, Chapter 1, and Chapter 1 Quiz. Below this, two topic sections are visible: '1' containing 'Here's a forum', 'web link', 'My text page', 'My text page', and 'Group Assignment'; and '2' containing 'Workshop', 'Lesson 1', 'New Chat', and 'Lesson 2'. The right column contains three tool blocks: 'Latest News' (with an 'Add a new topic...' link and a note that no news has been posted yet), 'Upcoming Events' (showing a 'Workshop' on Friday, 17 December at 04:10 PM), and 'Recent Activity' (showing activity since Sunday, 28 November 2004, 09:52 PM).

Figure 2-9. Course layout

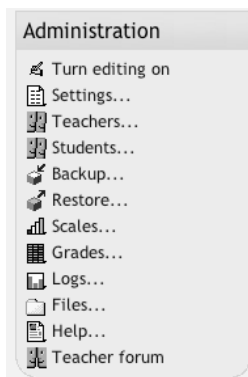
Below the course name is a bar that fills with the hyperlinked names of pages as you navigate from one page to another. Also known as “breadcrumbs,” these links track where you are in the course and allow you to easily find your way back to where you started or to return to a page. Frequently, the best way to return to the course main page is to click on the course ID in the breadcrumb trail. For example, in Figure 2-9, you would click on Mdl101 to go back to the course main page from another page in the course.

Below the navigation bar are three columns, which are also shown in Figure 2-9. The far-left and far-right columns contain tool blocks, while the center block contains your course content and activities. The topmost tool block on the left is the People block. From here, you and your students can view the individual profiles of other participants in the course and check who is a member of student workgroups.

Beneath the People block is the Activities block. As you add forums, quizzes, workshops, assignments, and other activities to your course, the activity types will be listed here. By clicking on the activity type, students can view all of the activities of that type that are currently available to them. For example, if you gave a quiz every week, each content block would list a quiz, and all of the quizzes would also be listed under the quiz link in the Activities block.

Next in the column is the Search block. The single text-entry field currently allows only you or your students to search the forums. As I write this, a more general course search is currently under development.

Below the Search block is the Administration block (see Figure 2-10), from which you can set your course options, manage your roster, perform backups of the course, and manage student grades. In this chapter, we'll cover the first two tools, "Turn editing on" and "Settings," and we'll cover the rest in detail as they arise throughout the book.



*Figure 2-10. Administration block*

The far-right column contains three blocks that report on activity in the course. The Latest News block lists the latest items added to the News forum, such as important news stories that pertain to the subject you're teaching. The Upcoming Events block lists events you've created in the calendar, such as exams and holidays. At the bottom of the block are links to view the calendar and add new events. Finally, there's the Recent Activity block, which lists the recent forum postings and uploads by you and your students.

The middle column is where the action is. This is where you add all of your content and activities, such as forums, quizzes, and lessons for students to access. Before we get to that, however, you need to make a choice about the format in which your course will be presented.

## Course Formats

Unlike some CMSs that force you into one format, Moodle provides you with a number of options for the general format of your course. You can choose to order your course chronologically by week, conceptually by topic, or socially with a big forum as the central organizing principle.

### Weekly format

With this format, you specify a course start date and the number of weeks the course is to run. Moodle will create a section for each week of your course, as shown in Figure 2-11. You can add content, forums, quizzes, etc. in the section for each week. If you want all your students to work on the same materials at the same time, this would be a good format to choose.

The screenshot shows a Moodle course interface in weekly format. On the left, there is a sidebar with navigation links: Forums, Glossaries, Journals, Lessons, Quizzes, Resources, Wikis, and Workshops. Below this is a 'Search' box with a 'Search forums' button. Further down is an 'Administration' section with links for Turn editing on, Settings..., Teachers..., Students..., Backup..., Restore..., Scales..., Grades..., Logs..., Files..., Help..., and Teacher forum.

The main content area is divided into three weekly sections:

- Section 1: 15 June - 21 June** (with a checkbox on the right). It contains: Archive Forum, Chapter 1, Chapter 1 Quiz, Here's a forum, web link, My text page, My text page, and Group Assignment.
- Section 2: 22 June - 28 June** (with a checkbox on the right). It contains: Workshop, Lesson 1, New Chat, and Lesson 2.
- Section 3: 29 June - 5 July** (with a checkbox on the right). It contains: OS in Higher Ed, CNN, and Wiki for essay 1.

On the right side, there is a 'Recent Activity' widget showing activity since Saturday, 4 December 2004, 10:45 AM. It includes a link for 'Full report of recent activity...' and a message: 'Nothing new since your last login'.

Figure 2-11. A course in weekly format

### Topics format

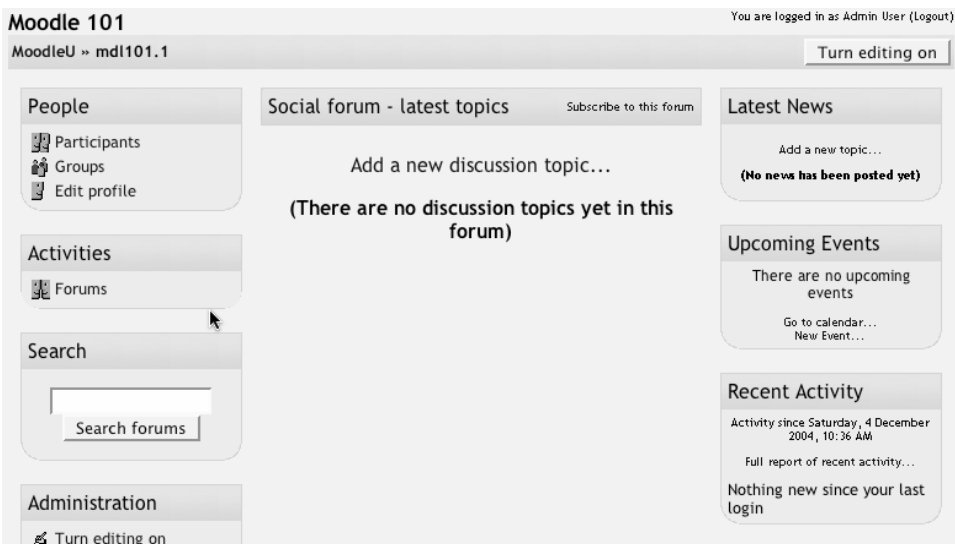
When you create a course using the topics format, you start by choosing the number of topics you will cover in your course. Moodle then creates a section for each topic, as shown in Figure 2-12. You can then add content, forums, quizzes, and other activities to each topic. If your course design is concept-oriented, and students will be working through a range of concepts but not necessarily according to a fixed schedule, this is a good choice.

The screenshot shows the Moodle interface for a course named 'Moodle 101'. The user is logged in as 'Admin User'. The page is in 'editing on' mode. The main content area is titled 'Topic outline' and is organized into sections. The first section is 'Summary of Week 0', which lists several activities: News forum, Social forum, Directory, Uploaded File, Meaningful Assignment Name, Glossary Name, Journal Assignment Name, Descriptive Forum Name, Archive Forum, Chapter 1, and Chapter 1 Quiz. Below this are two numbered topics. Topic 1 contains a forum post 'Here's a forum', a web link, two text pages, and a group assignment. Topic 2 contains a workshop, a lesson, a new chat, and another lesson. The left sidebar contains sections for 'People' (Participants, Groups, Edit profile), 'Activities' (Assignments, Chats, Dialogues, Exercises, Forums, Glossaries, Journals, Lessons, Quizzes, Resources, Wikis, Workshops), 'Search' (Search forums), and 'Administration' (Turn editing on, Settings...). The right sidebar contains 'Latest News' (Add a new topic... No news has been posted yet), 'Upcoming Events' (Workshop on Friday, 17 December), and 'Recent Activity' (Activity since Sunday, 28 November 2004).

Figure 2-12. A course in topics format

### Social format

The social format is based on a single forum for the whole course as shown in Figure 2-13. It's useful for less formal courses, or non-course uses, such as departmental sites.



The screenshot shows a Moodle course page titled "Moodle 101" with the course ID "mdl101.1". The user is logged in as "Admin User" and can click "Logout" or "Turn editing on". The main content area is titled "Social forum - latest topics" and contains the text "Add a new discussion topic..." and "(There are no discussion topics yet in this forum)". The left sidebar includes blocks for "People" (Participants, Groups, Edit profile), "Activities" (Forums), "Search" (Search forums), and "Administration" (Turn editing on). The right sidebar includes "Latest News" (Add a new topic...), "Upcoming Events" (There are no upcoming events), and "Recent Activity" (Activity since Saturday, 4 December 2004, 10:36 AM).

Figure 2-13. A course in social format

To set the course format:

1. Click Settings in the Administration block.
2. Select the course format from the dropdown list just below the course summary block (see Figure 2-14).
3. Enter the parameters for your course:
  - a) For the weekly format, set the start date and the number of weeks.
  - b) For the topic format, set the number of topics.
  - c) For the social format, set the course start date. You don't need to worry about the number of weeks or topics.

**Edit course settings**

Category:  ?

Full name:  ?

Short name:  ?

ID number:  ?

Summary:   
 Trebuchet | 1 (8 pt) | Heading 1 | **B** *I* U ~~S~~ x<sub>2</sub> x<sup>2</sup>   
   
 Path: body ?

Format:  ?

Course start date:    ?

Enrolment period:  ?

Number of weeks/topics:  ?

Figure 2-14. Course settings screen

Moodle allows you to switch between formats if you find that a given format isn't working for you. Simply follow the instructions above and select a different format. You can also add or remove topics or weeks at any time. So you don't have to worry too much about locking yourself into a format before you really understand the system.

## Course settings

The settings area where you set the course format (see Figure 2-14) also gives you access to a number of important course options. You'll find it is important to take a moment to review the settings for your course to ensure that it behaves the way you want.

To change your course settings:

1. Click Settings in the Administration block.
2. Review each of the settings options to ensure they are correct for your course:



### Category

Your system administrator may have created course categories, such as department or college labels, to help students and teachers find their courses. Depending on how your system is set up, you may be able to categorize your course by department, subject, or other organizational principle.

### Full Name

This is the name that is displayed on the top header of every screen in your course. The name should be descriptive enough so students can easily identify the course in which they are working, but it shouldn't be too long. For example, use "English 400 – Beowulf" and not "ENG400 – Beowulf and the heroic poems of the ancient world."

### Short Name

Enter the institutional shorthand for your course. Many students recognize Eng101, but not Introduction to Composition. The short name also appears in the breadcrumbs bar at the top of the screen.

### Summary

The summary will appear in the course listings page when other users scan the course catalogs. A good one-paragraph summary will help communicate the essence of your course to your students.

### Course Start Date

The start date is the day the course is first active.

### Enrollment Period

The enrollment period is the number of days after the start of the course during which students *are* enrolled. After the enrollment period, all of your students will be unenrolled from the course.

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Warning: Be very careful when using the enrollment period setting. When we first started using Moodle, we thought the enrollment period was how long a student had to enroll in a course, not how long she would stay enrolled. After 14 days, hundreds of students were suddenly unenrolled from their courses, causing headaches for weeks.

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### Group Mode

Moodle can create student workgroups. We will cover workgroups extensively in Chapter 13. For now, you need to decide if you want your groups to work independently or to be able to view each other's work. You can also set the group mode separately for many activities or force the group mode to be set at the course level. If everything in the course is done as part of a group, or you are running cohorts of students through a course at different times, you'll probably want to use the group mode to make management easier.

### Availability

Use this setting to control student access to your course. You can make a course available or unavailable to students without affecting your own access. This is a good way to hide courses that aren't ready for public consumption or hide them at the end of the semester while you calculate your final grades.

### Enrollment Key

A course enrollment key is a code each student enters when they attempt to enroll in a course. The key makes it more difficult for students who aren't officially in the class to gain access to your Moodle site. Create the key here and give it to your students when you want them to enroll in your Moodle course. They will need to use the key only once when they enroll.

### Guest Access

You can choose to allow guests to access your course, either with an enrollment key or without it. Guests can only view your course and course materials; they can't post to the forums, take quizzes, or submit any materials.

### Hidden Sections

When you hide an upcoming topic block to prevent your students from jumping ahead, you can choose to display the title as a collapsed section or simply hide the topic altogether. Displaying the collapsed sections will give your students a roadmap of the upcoming topics or weeks, so it's probably a good idea to leave this on the default setting.

### News Items to Show

Use this setting to determine the number of course news items displayed on the default page.

### Show Grades

This setting allows you to choose whether grades are displayed to students. If you are using the Moodle gradebook, I would recommend allowing students to view their grades. Checking grades has become one of the most popular features of CMS systems.

### Show Activity Reports

This setting allows students to view their activity history in your course. This is useful if you want students to reflect on their level of participation, or if they are graded on participation.

### Maximum Upload Size

This setting is used to limit the size of any documents you or your students upload to the class. The maximum size is set by your system administrator, but you can choose to limit students to files that are smaller than the system maximum. You can limit the amount of storage space each assignment can take or limit the size of picture or video files your students upload.

### Your Word for Teacher/Teachers

The next two settings allow you to enter the word you want Moodle to use for the singular and plural versions of the word that designates the teacher's role. You can call teachers instructors, facilitators, professors, etc.. Whatever you want to use, enter it here.

### Your Word for Student/Students

Again, you can choose the word you want Moodle to use for people in the student role, such as "participants" or "learners."

3. Once you've made all your selections, click Save Changes.

## Editing Mode

Now that you've decided on a format and settings for your course, we'll look at how to add content to your course. To start the process, you'll first need to turn on *Editing Mode* (see Figure 2-15), which will allow you to add resources and activities to your course. On the left side of the screen of any course you are teaching, you'll see a link labeled, surprisingly enough, "Turn Editing Mode On." Clicking on this link will present you with a new array of options.

The screenshot shows the Moodle course editing mode interface. On the left, there is a sidebar with several sections: 'People' (Participants, Groups, Edit profile), 'Activities' (Forums), 'Search' (Search forums), and 'Administration' (Turn editing off, Settings...). The main content area is titled 'Topic outline' and contains a list of forum topics: 'News forum' and 'Social forum'. Below each topic, there are two dropdown menus: 'Add a resource...' and 'Add an activity...'. The interface also includes a 'Latest News' section with a 'No news has been posted yet' message, an 'Upcoming Events' section with 'There are no upcoming events', and a 'Recent Activity' section showing activity since Saturday, 4 December 2004, 10:37 AM.






Figure 2-15. Editing mode

Starting at the top of the screen, let's look at what Editing Mode enables you to do. At the top of each block, you'll see an icon of a hand holding a pencil. When you click it, you are presented with a Summary text area. You can use this to label and summarize each topic or schedule blocks in your course. You should keep the summary to a sentence or

two for each block to avoid making the main page too long. Click Submit when you've added your summary. You can go back and change it later by clicking the hand-and-pencil icon again.

On the lefthand side, next to the label for the People block, you'll see the icons described in Table 2-1.

*Table 2-1: Block icons*

Icon	Function
	Show or hide item. If you want to keep an item in your course, but don't want your students to see it, you can use this to hide it from them.
	Delete item. Removes the item or block from your course. Items will be permanently removed; blocks can be added again using the Blocks menu.
	Move item. Clicking this will allow you to move an item to another topic or schedule block.
	Move right or left. You can move blocks to the left- or righthand columns. You can also use this to indent items in your content blocks
	Move up or down. Moves items and blocks up or down in their respective areas.

You will use these icons throughout Moodle to customize the interface for your needs.

In addition to the icons for manipulating the blocks, each content block in the middle column has two dropdown menus. On the left, the menu labeled "Add a resource..." gives you tools for adding static content, such as web pages and word-processing documents. On the right, the "Add an activity" menu gives you tools to add activities such as forums, quizzes, lessons, and assignments.

The resource menu, shown in Figure 2-16, gives you access to tools for adding content. There are a number of ways you can create content directly within Moodle, or link to content you've uploaded. We'll cover each of these tools in depth in the next chapter.

#### Compose a text page

From here, you can create a simple page of text. It doesn't have many formatting options, but it is the simplest tool.

#### Compose a web page

If you want more formatting options, you can compose a web page. If you selected to use the HTML editor in your personal profile, you can simply create a page as you

would using a word processor. Otherwise, you'll need to know some HTML for most formatting.

#### Link to a file or web site

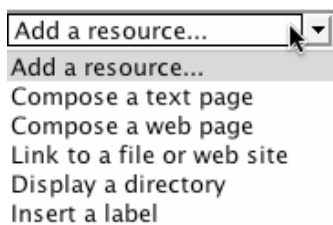
If you want to upload your course documents in another format, you can save them on Moodle and provide easy access for your students. You can also easily create links to other web sites outside your Moodle course.

#### Display a directory

If you upload a lot of content, you may want to organize it in directories. Then you can display the contents of the entire folder instead of creating individual links to each item.

#### Insert a label

You can use labels to organize the links in your course's main page. The only thing they do is provide a label within the content block.



*Figure 2-16. Resource menu*

The Add Activity Menu, shown in Figure 2-17, allows you to add interactive tools to your course. The bulk of this book is dedicated to describing how each of these tools works and how to apply them in your course.

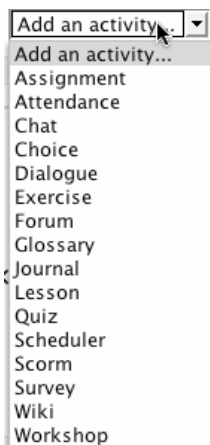


Figure 2-17. Add Activity menu

Table 2-2 explains each tool very briefly. We'll learn more about these tools as they arise later in the book.

Table 2-2: Activity types

Tool type	Description
Assignment	A basic task with which you can describe what you want the students to do or record a grade. You can also have the students upload a response and score it later.
Attendance	Used to manually or automatically track student participation in the class.
Chat	A group chat room where people can meet at the same time and send text messages.
Choice	A simple poll displayed within a content block.
Dialogue	Like a chat, but allows for one-to-one communication between students and teachers.
Exercise	A variant of the assignment tool with which you give students an exercise and they upload their work and then assess themselves. You can grade their work and their self-assessments.
Forum	Treaded discussion boards. They are a powerful communication tool.

Glossary	Dictionaries of terms that you can create for each week, topic, or course. You can have your students participate in building them.
Journal	Self-reflection is an important idea in social constructivism. Journals are free-response opportunities for students to reflect on the course materials.
Label	A way to insert text or other HTML elements into the content area.
Lesson	A set of ordered materials that use questions to determine what content the student sees next.
Quiz	A good, old-fashioned web quiz with a lot of flexibility.
Resource	A file, web page, link, or other content for students to view or download.
SCORM	SCORM is an acronym for Sharable Content Object Reference Model. It's a packaging standard for educational content. Moodle now has tools to allow you to upload content packaged as SCORM.
Survey	Gathers feedback from students using pre-packaged questionnaires.
Workshop	A very nice tool for student peer assessment. Students upload their work and score their peers' work using a scoring guide you create.

## Adding Content to a Course

By now, you're probably wondering, "When the heck do I get to add stuff to my course?" I've provided a lot of background here so you'll understand some of the options you have. But now's the time to start building your course.

Let's start with a News item to announce to the world that your online materials are coming soon. The News forum is a special type of forum (for a full description of forums, see Chapter 4). The News forum is automatically created when the course is first generated. Everyone in the course can read the postings, and the news is automatically emailed to them. It's a good tool for making general announcements and sending reminders to students about upcoming assignments.

To add a news item:

1. Click News forum.
2. Click “Add a NewTopic.” You’ll see the screen to add a new topic such as the one shown in Figure 2-18.
3. Type your new message to your class.
4. Click Save Changes. You will now be back at the main News Page.
5. Click on your course name in the navigation bar at the top.

**Your new discussion topic**

**Subject:**

**Message:**

Trebuchet | 1 (8 pt) | Heading 1 | **B** *I* U ~~S~~ | x<sub>2</sub> x<sup>2</sup> |

Read carefully ?  
Write carefully ?  
Ask good questions ?  
About the HTML editor ?

Path: body

**Formatting:** HTML format ?

**Subscription:** Everyone is subscribed to this forum ?

Figure 2-18. The News forum posting screen



## Summary

In this chapter, we've looked at how to create your account and personalize your profile. We've become acquainted with Moodle's user interface and tools, and we got the format of your course set up the way you want it. In the next chapter, we'll start adding different types of content to your new Moodle course.

