

Getting Started with Moodle (Students)

IITS Publications

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What is Moodle?

Moodle is an acronym for **Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment**. Moodle is a Course Management System (now often referred to as well as a Learning Management System). Moodle is similar to software products such as WebCT and Blackboard. Unlike these commercial and proprietary products however, Moodle is Open-Source software. Each site can modify and use Moodle freely, as they participate in the world-wide community of Moodle users.

As a Course Management System, Moodle provides tools that allow the instructor to “manage students, activities, homework, quizzes, grades, discussions, and resources across the internet to any computer with a browser”. It permits teachers to present a course containing information resources (textual and tabular information, photographs and diagrams, videos, audio recordings, web pages, Acrobat documents and many others) and student activities such as uploadable assignments, quizzes, user polls, forums and others.

How do I access Moodle?

Students enrolled in a course using Moodle have automatic access via the MyConcordia portal (<https://www.myconcordia.ca/>). To access your Moodle course, you must first login to the portal using your *netname* and *password*.

The primary means of opening Moodle is by clicking on any of your personalized courses listed under ‘**My Moodle Courses**’ on the lower left side. You may also click on ‘all courses’. This will bring you to your selected course or to the main menu of Moodle depending on your choice. It is important to note that if your instructor has not activated Moodle for your course, then you will not be able to view it under my moodle courses. In the case where none of your moodle sites have been

activated you will receive a message saying, “*You are not associated with a Moodle Course at this time. At the beginning of term , moodle courses are gradually activated by professors*”.

A secondary option is available under ‘**My Concordia Menu**’. Select ‘**Course Websites (Moodle)**’ and then in the new window select ‘**Course Websites (Moodle)**’ again from the course websites sub-menu. The Moodle website opens in a new browser window. If the new browser window does not open select ‘*Click here to bypass popup block*’.

Moodle screen layouts

The basic layout of a Moodle-based course home page consists of a central pane filled with **theme boxes**, with narrower side panes on either side, consisting of various function boxes called **blocks**.

A course’s theme boxes may be organized according to weekly items, by various course topics, or around key discussion groups, depending on the nature and the needs of each course. Instructors post content within the theme boxes. Examples are shown below.

The image displays four examples of Moodle course home page layouts:

- Theme Boxes: Weekly Format:** Shows a 'Weekly outline' with a 'News forum' block and two numbered topic boxes: '1 3 January - 9 January' and '2 10 January - 16 January'.
- Theme Boxes: Topic Format:** Shows a 'Topic outline' with a 'Course Overview' block, a 'News forum' block, and three numbered topic boxes: '1 Topic One', '2 Topic Two', and '3 Topic Three'.
- Basic Screen Layout:** Shows a central 'Theme Box' flanked by 'Function Block's on both sides.
- Theme Boxes: Social Format:** Shows a 'Social forum - latest topics' block with a 'Add a new discussion' link, and a 'Course centred around Class Discussion' block by Roger Kenner dated Tuesday, 7 December 2004, 04:01.

A course page's basic layout is established upon creation, but may be changed later through a setting available to the instructor.

Moodle function blocks

On either side of the theme boxes is a space reserved for various function blocks. Every new course comes with a default set of typical function blocks, but an instructor may add, delete, or re-arrange these blocks at will. Below are the most commonly used blocks by students.

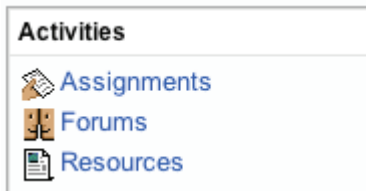
People

The People block allows you to quickly see the profile of all students registered in the course. If you do not wish your email address to appear to other students, you may edit this setting in your personal Moodle profile. You may also upload a thumbnail photo of yourself at the same time.



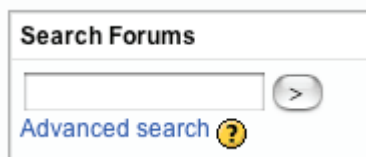
Activities

The Activities block provides direct access to interactive activities by type. Various discussion forums may be spread across different theme boxes, for example, but this box will provide a direct-access menu to all of them.



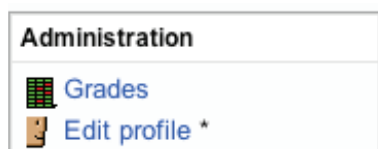
Search Forums

The Search block only searches through discussion board postings, not through documents posted by the teacher.



Administration

The primary purpose of the Administration



blocks for students is to see their grades and to edit their profiles. You may not see any grades if the instructor is not using this function.

Latest News

The Latest News block provides you with an area for timely reminders and announcements. You will also receive copies of Latest News posting by email. You may edit your personal Moodle profile to control the manner in which these emails are sent out.



Calendar

Important events are listed on the calendar.

- 1) Global Events are site-wide announcements posted by the Moodle administrator.
- 2) Course Events are key dates in the course, as posted by the instructor.
- 3) Group Events may be visible only to members of the same group.



User Events are dates which an individual student posts on the calendar. These events are visible only to the student posting the event.

Editing your Profile

To edit your profile click the "Edit profile" link located in the Administration block.

• First name, surname

The first two fields are self-explanatory and cannot be changed.

• Email address

The email address should be the address at which the student receives acknowledgements and messages from the system, and is also the address that is displayed to the instructor and other users of the



Moodle site. This assumes that they have set the “Email display” option to allow other participants in the course to see their address, so it should be a mail address that they check regularly.

Note: *You cannot update your email address here; you must do so within the MyConcordia Portal itself.*

Other email display options available are the ability to hide your mail address from all users (it will still be visible to admins and instructors), or to make it available to everyone who visits the course, (not just those that are enrolled).

•Email display

This controls the visibility of the address to others, allowing you to show or hide your email in the class. There are three options: you can set it so that all users (including guests) can see your email, or so that only other enrollees in the course can see the email address, or so that no one could see your email address at all.

•Email activated

You can either enable or disable emails being sent to an address. **Note:** *If this is disabled, students will not receive any mail whatsoever from the site.*

•Email format

There are two formats “Pretty HTML” (which means that the messages will be formatted with different fonts and colours to make them easier to read) and “Plain text” (plain text with no fancy formatting or colours).

•Email digest type

This setting determines how you receive any posts from forums to which you are subscribed. There are three possible choices: No digest (one receives individual emails), complete (a single digest daily) or subjects (a single digest daily with only the post topics included).

•Forum auto-subscribe

This setting lets one decide if you want email copies of posts that are added to forums. If you set this to subscribe, the system will automatically email one copy of new posts in forums that you post in, unless they manually override it when posting.

•Forum tracking

Enabling forum tracking means highlighting the posts you have not read yet, which should improve your forum navigation.

•When editing text

This can usually be left on “Use HTML editor (some browsers only)”. This allows for text formatting options, but requires newer browsers. If you find your browser is not letting you edit text, change this setting to “Use standard web forms”.

•City/town; country

These fields are used to further identify you by geographical location.

•Timezone

You must leave this setting on ‘server local time’ or key elements of your course may not function properly.

•Preferred language and theme

The E-learning server can display in several different languages and colour themes, which you can choose from in these two options. You may also select your preferred language from the drop-down box in the upper-right hand side of your personal menu. Some instructors have used the ‘force language’ option to require you to work in a particular language.

•Description

In this field you can enter some text about yourself. It can be information about your studies, hobbies, qualifications or anything else that does not break the acceptable use policy of this site. This text will be visible to anyone that views your profile.

•New Picture

You may upload a thumbnail image of yourself, which will appear next to your name in forum postings and other locations.



Problems downloading Powerpoint, Word files

You must have the Powerpoint or Word applications on your computer in order to view the appropriate posted files. Recent 'security' upgrades on Internet Explorer, plus the plethora of firewalls out there, have rendered the receipt and viewing of application files more problematic.

If you cannot read these documents from Moodle, it's a good bet you can't read them from other sites as well.

The most typical situation with Internet Explorer is that you get a 'pop-up' warning telling you to click on a yellow bar at the top of the display. When you do so, you are given the option to allow 'downloading' of the suspicious file. Depending on the security settings in your Internet Explorer, however, this may not be permitted at all. If you have a 3rd party firewall installed, you definitely won't be able to download a file.

Check your own computer, browser, and firewall settings to make sure you can download and view application files over the web.

If you are using Internet Explorer, consider downloading and installing the free 'Mozilla Firefox' browser, in addition. You can keep Explorer as your main browser; the two can co-exist.

Troubleshooting

Problems entering Moodle

It may occur that you are continually asked to update your Moodle profile each time you access Moodle. When you fill in the information, everything works for a while, but the next day you are asked again. You must fill in your email address within your PORTAL profile. Moodle updates its information from the Portal daily.

Enrolment Key

If you are registered in a course and section, you need no extra keys to gain access to that course's Moodle web site; your inscription is automatic. Allow at least 24 hours for Moodle's records to be updated. If you wish to access a site or section in which you are not registered, or before the term begins, you may approach the instructor and ask them to give you the 'enrolment key', which they find under 'Settings' in their 'Administration' box.

It is up to the instructor's discretion whether this key will be provided or not.

Merging Netnames

Sometimes students obtain employment at the University and receive a staff netname. Optionally, then, they may decide to merge both their student and staff netnames into one.

If you do this, you will have to contact the Helpline and ask that your Moodle Profile be updated. Do not access Moodle with your staff netname until you have requested this update.

My Moodle Password does not work

You cannot access Concordia's Moodle server directly. You may manage to reach Moodle's default login screen, and you may get Moodle to generate a new password for you, but it will not work. Your only access to Moodle is via your MyConcordia portal account.

Helpline

Specific problems can be addressed to the IITS Helpline at 7613 or helpline@concordia.ca.

For more Info notes...

Info notes can be obtained at the Hall Bldg. (H-925) and Loyola (CC-207) service areas. Online versions of *Info notes* can be found on the **Instructional & Information Technology Services** World-Wide Web server at : <http://helpline.concordia.ca>

