

Getting Started for Teachers and Teaching Assistants

What is Moodle?

Moodle stands for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment, and is the online learning management system used by the Graduate Theological Union. Moodle is made up of blocks and modules, which are described in greater detail below.

The Moodle Course Page

By default each course page is divided into three columns. The left- and right-hand columns contain various blocks, which are items contained in the boxes. These blocks allow for administrative tasks or tasks that do not connect directly with the weekly modules. The center column is the weekly outline; each section of the outline contains the modules for a particular week. It is best to think about the center column as a syllabus.

A typical Moodle course appears as the following (notes added):

The screenshot shows a Moodle course page for 'Test Course' with several annotated components:

- Breadcrumbs:** Home > My courses > Test Course
- Navigation Block:** Access to other courses, course participants, user profile
- Editing Icons:** Located above the weekly outline sections.
- Summary:** general text pertaining to week/topic (e.g., 'Our objectives for this week are: recall information from the syllabus and construct discussion groups.')
- Module:** a resource or activity assigned to week/topic (e.g., 'Discussion 1')
- Adding Modules Drop-Down Menus:** resources and activities that can be added to the course
- Settings Block:** administrative tasks for instructors

Additional visible elements include a left-hand navigation menu, a right-hand sidebar with 'Moodle Support', 'Copyright Notice', and 'Reference Desk', and a 'Turn editing off' button in the top right corner.

Editing the Course Page

To add or alter activities or resources, a teacher must turn editing on using the “Turn editing on” button on the course homepage. The same button will also turn editing off.



When editing has been turned on, a variety of editing icons appear next to all editable objects in the course. The table below illustrates some of the icons you are likely to see. For more details about each editing activity, visit editing a course.

Icon	Effect	Icon	Effect	Icon	Effect	Icon	Effect
	Edit item	*	Close/Hide item	**	Delete/Remove		Move
	See all weeks/topics	*	Open/Show Item		Indent/shift right		Indent/shift left
	See one week/topic		Help		Group mode configured		Personalized Learning Designer

* Note: the open eye indicates that the resource is visible, while clicking it changes it to be invisible (to students), and vice versa with the closed eye.

** Note: the **X** deletes resources and activities (with a warning), while it only removes blocks (which can be added at any time later).

The “Switch role to...” menu (underneath the Settings block) allows the teacher to see the course page as a student would see it.

Besides being a place to list the various modules, each week also contains a summary, which is text connected with the week. To edit the summary text, click on the Edit icon underneath the weekly date heading. The summary can contain text, hyperlinks, tables, images, and embedded objects.

Modules: Resources

Resource-type modules deal purely with content delivery (in any digital format) and are not dynamic/interactive. Resources can be added to the weeks in the weekly outline by selecting them from the “Add a resource” drop-down menu when editing is turned on.



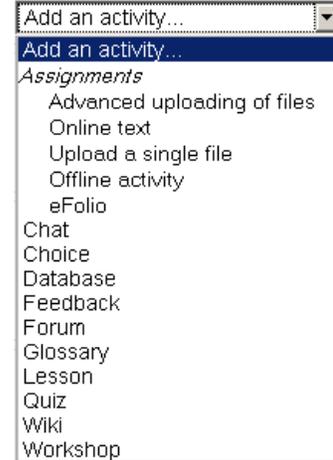
Resources can be content that is created directly in Moodle, such as an online book or text/web page. Resources can be content that is uploaded to Moodle or available on another website (via URL).

Modules: Activities

Activity-type modules are dynamic/interactive, including different assessment and communication tools. Activities can be added to the weeks in the weekly outline in the same way that Resources are added.

Communication in Moodle can happen two ways: synchronously and asynchronously. Synchronous communication requires that users be at their computers at the same time. Asynchronous communication does not require students to be on Moodle at the same time, but rather allows for a more reflective approach. Examples of this type are Forum and e-mail.

Students may “hand in” homework assignments by using the various Assignments activities. Homework submitted through this activity is automatically connected with Moodle’s gradebook, which allows the instructor to add comments and calculate grades in a variety of ways. The Workshop module allows students to complete self- and peer-review. Lessons and quizzes are also connected with the gradebook.



Collaboration is an important aspect of online and distance learning. Students may collaborate on web-based documents by using the Wiki module, which allows the students to contribute to a set of web pages while the instructor can track who is contributing what. The Glossary module allows students to work together to construct terms and definitions (in any format) for use in the course, and the Database module allows students to compile data of any type together.

Blocks

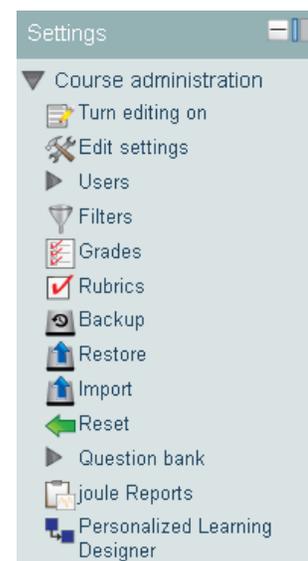
Blocks Visible to Students

Each course page contains blocks in the left- and right-hand columns. Blocks may be added or deleted, moved up/down or left/right, or hid right when editing is turned on.

Some blocks, including the first three in the right-hand column (Support, Copyright, Library) are required and cannot be changed. Other blocks appear by default, including “Latest News” (which is connected to the News Forum as a place to add announcements) and “Upcoming Events” (which is connected to the course calendar).

Course Administration

An instructor with editing rights also has a course settings block, which is where the instructor can create groups, view the gradebook, upload files, import material from another course, and backup the course after the term has ended.



General Suggestions

- Subscribe to the forums so that an e-mail with all the forum activity is sent directly to you. You can also configure the forums as RSS feeds to be read through an external news reader.
- Encourage your students to fill out their user profile (including photos), and have the students read the profiles of the other students. This provides an easy way for students to get to know one another.
- Keep notes about the course in the Notes section of your user profile. Personal notes are visible only to you, and course notes are visible to anyone assigned the Teacher role in the course.
- View the logs by accessing the Reports link in the Administration block. You may view logs specific to an activity or student, or see the overall log for the course.
- When navigating through Moodle, always click on the buttons on the Moodle page itself. First, click on any button that says “Save” or “Update” to prevent data from being lost. If those buttons are not visible on a page, use the “breadcrumbs” (GTU ► Course ► Module) to navigate. Never use the Back and Forward buttons in the browser.
- Documents uploaded to Moodle should be in Adobe Acrobat (PDF) format, and images should be in JPEG format. PowerPoint presentations may remain in PPT format or converted to an Adobe Flash video. Do not upload anything to Moodle in Microsoft Office 2007 format (convert it to 2003 or lower).
- Disable popup blockers for the GTU domain.
- Your computer should have the following software on it (latest version of each):
 - Mozilla Firefox or Microsoft Internet Explorer
 - Adobe Reader (to read PDFs)
 - Adobe Flash (to watch any uploaded videos)
 - Windows Media Player and/or QuickTime (for video and audio files)

For more information, visit <http://www.gtu.edu/library/faculty/moodle-help> to access helpful videos and documentation.

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