# How to Set Up Forum Topics in Sakai

Before using the Forums tool for online discussions, the instructor must add the Forums tool to the site AND create one or more topics.

Step 1: Add a Forum to your Sakai site

1. To add the Forums tool to your course site:

   - Go to **Site Info** > **Edit Tools**, select the **Forums** tool, click **Continue**, then **Finish**

2. On the main course menu, click the **Forums** button to go into the Forums area.

3. In the Forums area, you'll see that Sakai has created an initial course forum based on your course name. Underneath this forum is a TOPIC called General Discussion.
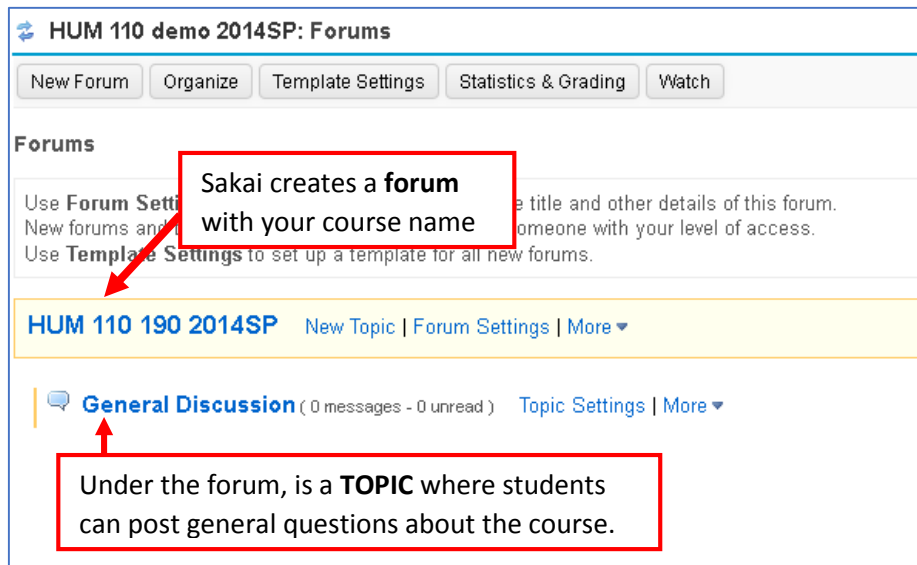

The General Discussion topic can be a place for students to ask general questions about the course or engage in discussion not related to specific course content.

- **TIP:** If you don't want to use (and monitor!) the General Discussion topic, you should delete it. To do that, to the right of the General Discussion topic, click **More** and choose **Delete Topic**.

Step 2: Add Topics to the Forum

Under the course forum, the instructor should add a new TOPIC for each week of the course (or for each topic the class will discuss). To do this, to the right of the course forum title, click **New Topic**.
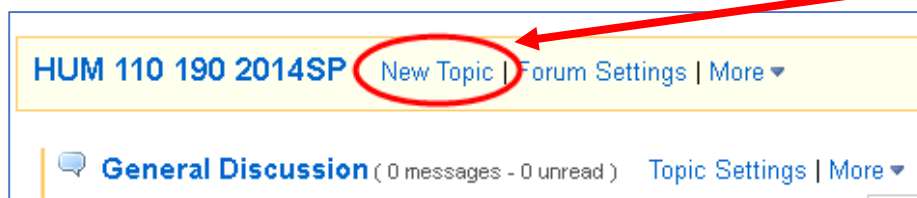
These are the recommended Topic settings:

1. **Topic Title** (**required**)
   Example: Week 1 Topic

2. **Short Description**
   The short description must be 255 characters or less and will display to students below the topic title. If your question or instructions are very short, you can put them here. If not, use the larger (full) description box below.

3. **(Full) Description** (*recommended)*
   The (full) description can be very long and the text can be *formatted*. This is a good location for your topic questions and instructions; it replaces the need to create an instructor post.

   - **TIP:** Your students must click on the **View Full Description** link to see the (full) description. If you put important info in the (full) description, you should also put a note in Short Description that says: "Click VIEW FULL DESCRIPTION to see the question."

4. **Attachments** (*optional*)
   This is a good place to attach a grading rubric to remind students of your expectations. Students must click the **View Full Description** link to see your attachments.

5. **Topic Posting**

   ❑ **Lock Topic** (*Students can't post, but they can view topic postings*)
   Select this option *after* the due date has passed if you would like to allow students to *read but not submit posts* after the due date. Students will not be able to post when the topic is locked.

   ❑ **Moderate Topic** (*NOT recommended*)
   Posts must be approved by a moderator before students can see them.

   ❑ **Require user to post before reading** (*recommended*)
   Students must post to the topic first before they can see any other posts.
   As shown below: In the Topic, students are only provided a *Start a Conversation* link, and are given an informational message to post to the topic.
   Note: If you use this feature, you must post your questions in the (Full) description, or provide the student questions in Lessons or Resources.

6. **Availability**
   - ❑ Show immediately (*topic will be visible to students now)*
   - ❑ Specify dates to open (show) and/or close (hide) the topic from students
     - • <mark>**TIP:**</mark> If you want students to be able to review old discussions, do not enter a close date. Instead, consider "locking" the topic after the due date so students can read but not post (see item5 above).

7. **Mark All Messages in Conversations Read** (*not recommended*)

8. **Grading**

   To send forum grades to Sakai's Gradebook, first you must go into the Gradebook and add a Gradebook item for each forum topic. Then, you will be able to select the appropriate Gradebook item from the dropdown list here.

   Grading is covered fully in a separate handout and video on *How to Grade Discussion Posts*.

9. **Permissions** (DO <u>NOT</u> touch this!)

   IMPORTANT: Do NOT change anything in the Permissions area in any tool in Sakai!

10. Click **Save** and your new topic will be created. (To make changes, just click **Topic Settings**.)

Now you are ready for students to post. To post, students will click on the topic title (in the picture above: "Week 1 Topic") and then click "Start a New Conversation".