

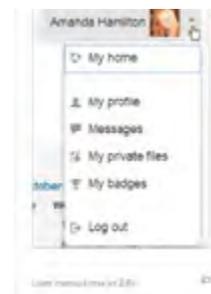


## Creating a Course

## 2.2.1 TOPIC 1: CREATING A COURSE IN MOODLE

### Navigating a Moodle Course

In the upper right of the main page, there is access to **profile and settings**. Here teachers can also access grades and received messages.



On the main course page, there are **blocks** on the left and right side, they will help add functionality to the course. There are a wide variety of different blocks that teachers will be able to add in order to customize the course layout and functionality. Example of blocks can be the Upcoming Events, Latest News, Online Users and Calendar. There is however a variety of different blocks that can be added. One of the blocks is this Latest News block in the upper right, which notifies students of any news or notifications that teachers post.



In the centre is where our course is broken up into sections. Courses are generally divided up into different topics. For example at the top there could be an introduction and below being listed all different course sections: "Chapter 1" "Chapter 2" and so on. Within each section, teachers will add learning resources, including pages, files, assignments, and quizzes. Resources are the main learning material, the documents and tools students will access to integrate the lessons content. They can be PDF opening in a pop-up on the Moodle platform for students to view.

But they can as well be video which students can watch or links to webpages.

If at any point teachers want to make changes to the course, it is needed to turn editing on. In the top right corner, there is a button titled "Turn editing on." This also appears in the Administration block on the left-hand side. On the left-hand side, there are two very important blocks: The Navigation block that permits teacher to move around the course.

From here it is possible to navigate to different areas within the course and even access resources.

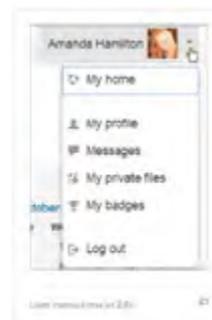
Below the Navigation block is the Administration block. The Administration block allows to create and manage the course. In the Administration block editing can be turned on and off, teacher can change the settings of our course, users can be enrolled or gathered in groups, or changed their permissions.

From here teachers can see reports and grades and a wide variety of other things.

### Customizing account settings

Administrator will set up a profile for every teacher and provide credentials to log in. When logged teachers have the ability to customize their settings according their needs.

In the upper right-hand corner there is a drop down menu for Login Information and there we can select **My Profile**.



This will give information about your profile and you'll notice in this main section here we can click on **Edit Profile**. Here we can edit information such as our name, email, whether to allow people to see our email or if we prefer to keep it hidden. There are a lot of personal information that can be customized such as city, country, time zone. It is also possible to enter a brief description, a short bio or some personal interests. Down below we have the option to include a user picture.

Of course, we can add our web page, Skype ID, Yahoo ID, and several other things.

Another important customization tool can still be reached through the dropdown menu in the upper right and selecting **Preferences**. Here, we can check a lot of different preferences in our account, including changing our password or our preferred language.

A very common customization concerns the **Notification** settings. To do that, we need to click on Messaging. From there we can customize the way that we want to receive notifications for our course. There are a lot of different things we can be notified about within our notifications section.

We have the option to be notified as a Popup or to be notified via Email. And for each of

## Using the text editor

Moodle provides a text editor, to enter the learning content text.

Clicking on Preferences, there is an option called **Editor Preferences**. Here we have the option to select the text editor that we'd like to use. You can select the ATTO HTML editor, the TinyMCE HTML editor or just the plain text area. Both ATTO and TinyMCE editors are very powerful.

Let's take a look at how they work. To use and test it you need to select an option requiring text editing, for example under the **latest news** block we can click on **Add a new topic** where we can enter a message with our text editor. Now the style of text editor will likely be familiar to you already, because it mostly works like Word or other popular word processors, giving you the ability to choose fonts and its size, format text, decide alignment, highlight words in bold, italic and so on.

What is important is that you can immediately have a glance of how the final result will be so that you can set the text messages and layout exactly how you'd like it.

Being conceived to enter learning material, ATTO has features to write different equations, including ones for square roots and for fractions. It is also possible to enter Tables and customize them, setting colours and style for the borders.

## Using Moodle's in-line help

You'll notice that when navigating in a Moodle page, you'll often see a circle with a question mark inside of it. This is Moodle's inline help, and it can be very helpful. Clicking on the question mark, an explanation of that feature will pop up, letting you know more about it. For example, going to **Edit Profile**, there is an area denominated "Description", clicking on the inline help, it will say, "This box enables you to enter some text about yourself, which will then be displayed on your profile page for others to view." If I click the "X" I can get rid of it. The question mark next to our picture let us know that we're able to put a .jpeg or .png file here, and that it will be cropped to a 100x100 pixel image.

Moodle is a quite complex platform, with a lot of features to explore, in-line help is a powerful tool to have a hint of what each button and option does.

## Creating a course

In Moodle Administrator have the ability to create course shells and assign users the role of Teachers. So, teachers will find in the Navigation block the shell (empty structure) of a course that they can feed with learning material, resources and activities.

Course shells set up by administrators have already a name and appear in the Navigation block from where teacher can click to start customization.

The appearance of the shell largely depends on how administrators have set up it. Let's imagine our administrator has organized the course, but teachers have the ability to edit the course and change its structure. If you have Teacher Manager permissions in the course, you should be able to turn Editing on.

In the upper right corner, you can see a Turn Editing On button. This means that you have Editing permissions in this course. In the Administrative block, you'll also see a link for turning Editing on. If for some reason, you're not able to edit the course, you'll need to talk to your Site Administrator. On the left and right of the screen there are blocks that permit to add functionality and customize the course.

In the centre of the screen are the different sections or Units, that the course has been divided up into.

If we see sections identified by dates, (i.e 25th of November to December 1<sup>st</sup>, and so on) it means that the course is currently broken up into weeks. It is however possible to change this structure and organize your class into chapters, units, quarters or whatever you want to organize it.

To do it we need to navigate to the left-hand side in the administration block and click on on **Edit Settings**. This will bring up all of our course settings, and there are a lot of them. There's a lot of settings all over in Moodle, which is a good thing because it allows us to customize our course the way we like it. Now we don't have time to cover all of the settings, but remember to take advantage of Moodle's in-line help, which is represented by a question mark with a circle around it.

For instance, here under Course Short Name, if we click on the in-line help, it lets me know that the short name of the course is displayed in the navigation and is used in the subject line of course email messages, so we need to adjust accordingly. So for this, in the settings, we can adjust the name of the course.

One very important thing in the General tab is the visibility. This is whether the course will appear visible to students, if we are not done completing the course, we can click on Hide and the course will not be visible to students (teachers will see it grayed out, to indicate the course is existing but not available to students).

Another setting is ability to adjust the course start date, the description and, very important, the **course format**, that dictates the way our course will be structured.

In our previous example, our blank course was set up as weeks. If this isn't the structure that we want, we can make this change in the course format settings, where we can select a

topics format, which will allow me to list different topics or units. It is of course possible to define the number of different topics.

In the settings we can also adjust the appearance of our course. The most important thing here is whether we want to show the grade book to students or we can adjust the maximum upload size for files and uploads. For default it is set to the max of 32 megabytes. However, we could lower that.

When we are done, just click Save and Return and we will see that our dashboard has now been changed, instead of the different weeks, we have the topics.

Adjusting course settings appropriately is a delicate task that requires time but will save you a lot of time and frustration as your course gets going.

Another way to customize our course page is define which **blocks** display on course page.

On the left-hand side and the right-hand side, I notice different blocks set up by Administrator in the course shell: they can be customized, keeping the blocks we want to make available and eliminating those we do not want our students use.

There are also other blocks that we may decide worth showing.

To do so, let's click "Turn editing on." You'll notice some buttons, such as "Edit," or "Add activities." will appear on existing blocks. We also have some additional icons that on our default blocks.

If I click the plus symbol the corresponding block is expanded. There is an icon to dock that block or another icon that permits to move a block in a different position, to position it in the upper or lower part of the page or to move from right hand to left end side and vice versa.

Clicking on the gear icon we have the ability to configure the block, to delete it or to change the permissions. Some blocks are so important that we cannot delete them (i.e. Navigation and Administration) but others can be deleted if we want to. For instance, we can get rid of the Search Forums block, if our course will not have a Forum.

We can also add more blocks. So if you have a specific need for a block, you can add different types of blocks on the Moodle platform. Scrolling down, on the left-hand side, there is a block here titled, "**Add a Block**," with a drop-down menu. Clicking here, you can see the number of different blocks that we can add.

We can add Activities, Blog Menus, Online Users, Calendar and a number of other things.

### **Customizing sections and adding content to a course**

In previous sections we have learned how to structure our course in a number of different topics. We are now ready to customize these; however, we will not see how to make changes to them if we do not click on **Turn editing on**. Once done, a bunch of buttons and icons will appear, allowing us to customize this page.

Above Topic 1, there is a section that appears. This is the Introduction section. We can make changes to this or customize it by clicking on the top "Edit" button and then "Edit section." If we want to change the section name, we are unable to click in the text box until we uncheck the "Use default section name." When we do we are able to enter our own title.

We can edit text and add an introduction to our course or we can open a document and copy and paste what we need in that section.

We can also add a picture: using the Atto text editor we can click on the Image icon and browse our hard disk to load the image we want to use.

Beside each topic there is an **Edit topic** button that lets us load chapter content.

Now again, it's going to say Topic 1 as a default name and if we want to change this, we need to uncheck the "Use default section name." As for the Introduction we can edit the text box or copy and paste content we have already saved in a different document. Before leaving this page let's not forget to click on "Save changes." On the main page you'll see that the content of Topic 1 has changed.

If I want to move topics around, we have to click on the icon with arrows going in four different directions, holding it down and dragging we can change topic position in our course page.

Continuing to add the rest of my topics, we will complete our course.

However, as you can see, below each one of the sections, there is another active link that says **Add an activity or resource**. This is where we can add different resources to the topics that we can deliver to the students. If I click on it, a wide variety of activities and resources will pop up.

Under Activities we have Assignments, Chats, we have Forums, Glossaries, Quizzes and much more. Under Resources, we have Books, Files, Folders, Labels, Pages, URL's and more.

We will discuss Resources and Activities in further detail in another module.