

# Preparing for an on-line course



**Student Guide**  
by Ray Lawrence

## Contents

Aims and Objectives .....	3
Student Guide - Introduction .....	4
Entering the course website .....	4
Entering the course .....	6
In the course .....	8
Basic navigation .....	8
Topics .....	9
Blocks .....	11
People block: .....	11
Online users block .....	11
Topics / Section links block .....	12
Activities block .....	12
Search block .....	12
My courses block .....	13
Calendar block .....	13
Upcoming events block .....	13
Recent activity block .....	14
Latest news block .....	14
Administration block .....	14
Topic 1 - Course resources .....	14
Topic 2 – Forums and the Text Editor .....	15

# **Aims and Objectives**

## **Aim**

- To provide an introduction to using an on-line learning environment.

## **Objectives**

After completing this course you will be able to:

- Navigate around the course.
- Identify the key elements of the course i.e. Topics, Blocks, Activities, Resources.
- Use the Activity modules showcased in the course.
- Interact with the course teacher and other students.

## Student Guide - Introduction

The course assumes that your teacher has confirmed that you have at least a basic knowledge of how to use a computer including using input devices like a mouse and a keyboard. In addition, it is assumed that you are familiar with your web browser and navigating between pages on the internet or an intranet.

In this guide you will be introduced to the basics of participating in an online course. This part of the course is on paper, as you will need to refer to it at the same time as taking notice of what is displayed on screen.

As the course progresses the emphasis will move from this guide to solely online activity. An online version of this guide is available within the course in case you wish to refer to it later in electronic format.

The actual appearance on screen is governed by settings on your own computer and as a result what you see may be slightly different to that shown in the examples.

Please follow the steps in the order shown until you have completed the section on basic navigation.

### ***Entering the course website***

Go to the course website using the site address provided to you by your teacher or the site administrator.

If you do not have an account you will need to create one.

Read carefully the text under the heading “Is this your first time here?” and then click on the “Start now by creating a new account!” button.

Returning to this web site?	Is this your first time here?
<p>Login here using your username and password: (Cookies must be enabled in your browser) ?</p> <p>Username: <input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Login"/></p> <p>Password: <input type="password"/></p> <hr/> <p>Some courses may allow guest access:</p> <p><input type="button" value="Login as a guest"/></p> <hr/> <p>Forgotten your username or password?</p> <p><input type="button" value="Send my details via email"/></p>	<p>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:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Fill out the <a href="#">New Account</a> form with your details.</li><li>2. An email will be immediately sent to your email address.</li><li>3. Read your email, and click on the web link it contains.</li><li>4. Your account will be confirmed and you will be logged in.</li><li>5. Now, select the course you want to participate in.</li><li>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.</li><li>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.</li></ol> <p><input type="button" value="Start now by creating a new account!"/></p>

To gain full access to courses you will need to create a new account for yourself on the course website. Each of the individual courses may also require a once only

"enrolment key", if this is the case which you will not need this until later. The following are the steps you must take to access the courses:

- Click on the “New account” link in the instructions or click the “Start now by creating new account” button.

### New Account

Start now by creating a new account!

- Fill out the New Account form with your details.

**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):

Given name:

Surname:

City/town:

Country:

- An email will be immediately sent to the email address you entered in the new account form.

An email should have been sent to your address at  
**moodletest2004@yahoo.co.uk**

It contains easy instructions to complete your registration.

If you continue to have difficulty, contact the site administrator.

- When it arrives, read this email and click on the web link it contains.

**To:** moodletest2004@yahoo.co.uk  
**Subject:** Test Site: account confirmation  
**Date:** Wed, 2 Jun 2004 04:06:04 -0700  
**From:** "Admin User" <f.boggin@birmingham.ac.uk>

Hi Bill,

A new account has been requested using your email address.

To confirm your new account, please go to this web address:

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/moodle/login/confirm.php?p=3m22Y03hQ514xwg&s=billboggin>

In most mail programs, this should appear as a blue link which you can just click on. If that doesn't work, then cut and paste the address into the address line at the top of your web browser window.

If you need help, please contact the site administrator, Admin User (f.boggin@birmingham.ac.uk)

- Your account will be confirmed and you will be logged in.

**Thanks, Bill Boggin**

**Your registration has been confirmed**

-> **Courses**

- Now, click on "Courses" to see the available courses.

### ***Entering the course***

When you first access the course pages you will see a list of the courses on the site.

 <b>Introductory</b>	
Getting Started	
 <b>Level 1</b>	
Course 1	
Course 1a	
Course 1b	
 <b>Level 2</b>	
Course 2	
Course 2a	

Find the course in which you wish to enrol (you may find additional information by clicking on the information icon).



When you are confident you have the correct course, click on the text of the course's title. In this example we will be enrolling in the "Getting Started" course.

### Getting Started

If you are not already logged into the site you will be redirected to the log in page where you must enter your user name and password in the boxes provided, see below. The username and password will be those you specified when you created your new account to access the site.

A screenshot of a login form. It features two input fields: the first is labeled 'Username:' and contains the text 'demouser'; the second is labeled 'Password:' and contains ten black dots. To the right of the password field is a 'Login' button.

In some cases the course may be protected so that only students who have been provided with an enrolment key (password) may enter. If this is the case you will see a "key" icon adjacent to the course title.



When you attempt to enrol on the course, displaying a "key" icon, for the first time you will be prompted for the enrolment key which you will need to enter before you can proceed.

A screenshot of a dialog box for entering an enrolment key. It contains the text 'Enrolment key:' followed by an empty input field. Below the input field are two buttons: 'Login' and 'Cancel'.

The enrolment key will be provided to you separately, please do not share it with others unless you are requested to do so by your teacher or the site administrator.

Before we move on, it's worth mentioning one other icon you may encounter – the "Guest" icon.



This icon indicates that a course may be viewed by guests who are not enrolled on the course. Guests are not allowed to participate in activities in the course. In some cases guests are required to enter an enrolment key to gain access to the course.

## ***In the course.***

In this section we will take a quick tour of the course environment. Some of the items will be described in more detail later. Please bear in mind that you may not see all of the following in future courses, as they are not all essential for every course.

The course title is shown in the top left hand part of the screen. In this case we are in the “Getting Started” course.

## **Getting Started**



In the top right hand corner you will see something like the following:

You are logged in as [Demo User](#) ([Logout](#))

This shows your user name (in this case Demo User), if you click on the user name you will display your own profile where you can enter information about yourself. In addition, the word “Logout” is displayed, if you click on this you will exit the both the course and the site.

## ***Basic navigation.***

There are a number of ways to move around the course.

“Breadcrumbs” – this is a menu positioned below the course title which shows your position in the course. The notes below the following breadcrumbs example will make this clearer.

[Home](#) -> [GS](#) -> [Quizzes](#) -> [Animal Quiz](#)

- Home: Clicking on this would take you to the screen which displays all of the courses on the site.
- GS: This is the shortened name for this course, clicking on this would take you the main course page.
- Quizzes: Clicking on this would display a list of all of the quizzes in this course.
- Animal Quiz: This is in a different colour and indicates that this is the activity currently being viewed.

The above is only one example of many possible permutations of the breadcrumbs menu. Keep any eye on this as you navigate around the course, you will notice that it changes to reflect your current position.

Another method for navigating can be found at the foot of each screen or activity. This takes the form of a text link which will take you to either the homepage of the site (where all the courses are listed) or the main screen of your course. The link will either display the word used to describe the homepage of the site i.e. Home” in this example, see below;

[Home](#)

or the shortened name of the course (in this case “GS” for “Getting Started”).

[GS](#)



Text links are used extensively in courses and are used for a number of purposes in addition to navigation e.g. display information, turn options on or off.

Whilst in a course activity you can move to another activity or resource in the course by means of the following:



The “Next / Previous” buttons (below) will take you back and forth between the activities and resources in the order in which they appear in the course topics, whilst clicking the drop down list will allow you to select from the complete list, in topic order, and navigate directly to your selection.



Note that if you use the above or click on the “Home” or shortened course name links to navigate to another area of the course your input may not be saved. To avoid this always ensure that you complete what you are doing within the activity first e.g. post to a forum, save changes.

Throughout the website and course you will encounter text which changes colour and becomes underlined when you move your on screen cursor over it. These are text links which, when clicked, will take you whatever is described in the link text.

Finally, it is possible to navigate between pages by using the navigation buttons on your web browser. This is not recommended, you will obtain more consistent results by using the navigation options within the website and course pages.

The main course page is divided into a number of specific areas which you will encounter often (although not necessarily always as mentioned above). An overview of these is given in the following sections.

## **Topics**



Topics often reside in the centre of the course main page. It is in the topics that your teacher will place the activities etc., which make up the online elements of your course. The column of topics may vary in appearance depending on how your teacher has designed the course. Topics may be identified by a number, a number and date range or simply by a descriptive name. Examples of each are shown below:

Topic outline	
This area can contain a welcome message, instructions, course activities, course resources or be left blank.	
1	This is a topic. <input type="checkbox"/>
	A sample forum
	A sample quiz

Weekly outline


This area can contain a welcome message, instructions, course activities, course resources or be left blank.

1 **1 December - 7 December**

This is a topic.  
 A sample forum  
 A sample quiz

Social forum - latest topics [Subscribe to this forum](#)

[Add a new discussion topic...](#)

 **Topic name**  
by [Demo Teacher](#) - Tuesday, 1 June 2004, 04:27 PM

A description of the topic, what is required etc.



[Discuss this topic](#) (0 replies so far)

For the first two types of topic above, it is possible to focus on one topic only and to access the other topics by selecting from a drop down list. This can make navigation more convenient where there are many topics in a course.

To achieve this click on the squares at the right edge of the topic area you want displayed, see below.

This area can contain a welcome message, instructions, course activities, course resources or be left blank.

1 This is a topic.



 A sample forum  
 A sample quiz

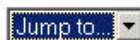
2

This will “collapse” the topics leaving just one in view. The process can be reversed by clicking one of the two squares now displayed at the right of the topic area.

This area can contain a welcome message, instructions, course activities, course resources or be left blank.

1 This is a topic.

-  [A sample forum](#)
-  [A sample quiz](#)



When clicked, the “Jump to ...” menu allows you select other topics to view.






## Blocks

Blocks are on screen areas which are placed at the side of the main course page. They fulfil a range of functions as described below.

### People block:

People

-  [Participants](#)
-  [Groups](#)
-  [Edit profile](#)

The People block provides links to a list of all participants in the course by clicking “Participants” and your own user profile by clicking “Edit profile”.

Sometimes you will see a reference to “Groups” in this block. This means that your teacher has established separate groups amongst the participants in the course. The manner in which you may view or interact with members of other groups (if at all) will vary depending on the needs of the course.

### Online users block

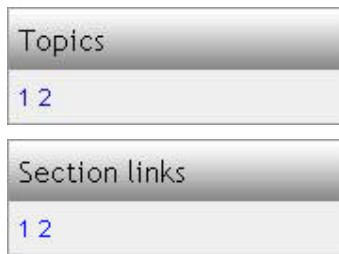
Online Users

(last 5 minutes)

-  [Demo User](#)

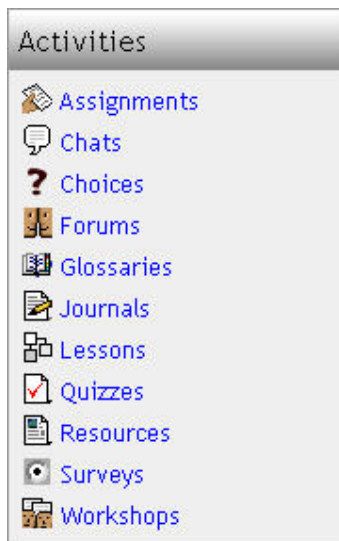
This block displays who is (or has been online) in the course.

### Topics / Section links block



Clicking on the numbers within this block will take you to the appropriate topic within the course. (The block title displayed varies according to the topic layout chosen by your teacher).

### Activities block



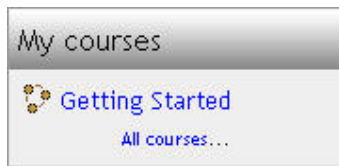
This block displays all of the available activity types in the course. Clicking on the text to the right of the activity icon will display a list of all of the available activities of that type.

### Search block



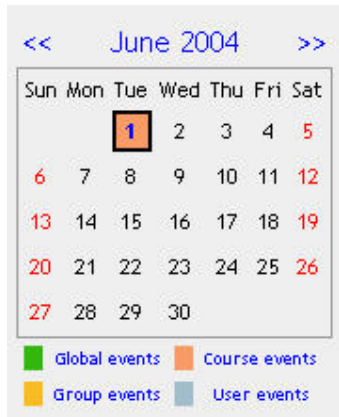
This block can be used to search for text amongst the forum entries in the course. Forums are a particular type of course activity which we will look at in more detail later. To search simply enter the text sought in the field and click the “Search forums” button.

## My courses block



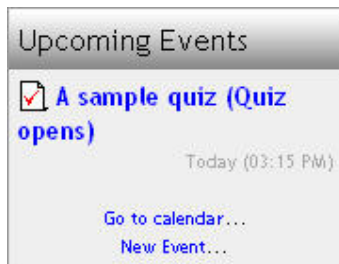
This block displays the courses in which you are enrolled and provides a link to a list of all courses on the site.

## Calendar block



As the name suggests this block provides a calendar function for the course. The calendar will be examined in more detail later.

## Upcoming events block



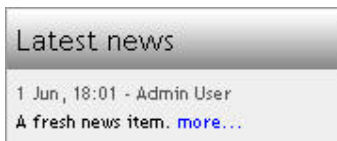
This block displays upcoming events together with links to view the calendar and to create a new event in the calendar. The number of upcoming events and the period covered is set by the teacher and may vary between courses.

## Recent activity block



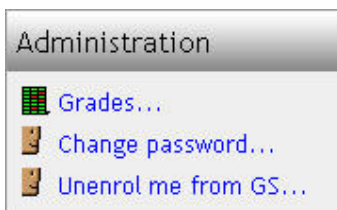
This block displays recent activity within the course together with links to the activity itself and a full report of recent activity. The number and nature of the items will depend on the amount and type of activity in the course.

## Latest news block



This block displays brief details of news added to the Course News Forum including who posted the news, the title of the news item and the date and time. Clicking on the word “more...” will take you directly to the full news item.

## Administration block



This block contains a link to the Grade book where you can monitor your achievement against each graded activity.

Click on the “Change password...” link to be taken to another screen where you can amend your password details.

If allowed on your site the “Unenrol me from GS ...” link will allow you to un-enrol from the current course.

## Topic 1 - Course resources

As the title of this section suggests, a course can contain various resources which you will need to assist you in your study. These can take various forms e.g. text, images, video, web pages, Microsoft Office documents, Acrobat pdf files to name a few.

Resources are accessed by clicking the text link to the right of the resource icon (an example is shown below).



If you look at Topic 1 in the Getting Started course you will see a number of resources, the first one is an electronic version of this guide. Open the resources to see what they contain, returning to the following section “Topic 2 – Forums and the Text Editor” in this guide when you have done so.

## ***Topic 2 – Forums and the Text Editor***

In Topic 2 we’ll be looking at how to use the “Forum” feature within a course. Again there are numerous options available to teachers who decide to include a forum in a course, some of the most common alternatives have been selected here.

Commence this topic by reading the contents of the resource “Learning about forums and the text editor”. Keep an eye on your email inbox as your teacher will be sending you some instructions (you may have received them already) about what to do next.