1 Introduction

Moodle is free software that can be used to create interactive web sites where teachers and students can communicate and collaborate in educational ways. It needs to be installed on a web server. Moodle has features that allow it to scale to very large deployments and hundreds of thousands of students, yet it can also be used for a primary school or an education hobbyist.

- Many institutions use it as their platform to conduct fully online courses, while some use it simply to augment face-to-face courses (known as blended learning).
- Many users love to use the activity modules (such as Forums, Wikis, Databases and so on) to build richly collaborative communities of learning around their subject matter (in the social constructionist tradition), while others prefer to use Moodle as a way to deliver content to students (such as standard SCORM packages) and assess learning using assignments or quizzes.

1.1 The Moodle Interface

When Moodle site is visited for the first time, the front page with the site news and the courses being taught or taken are seen (Fig. 1). Moodle uses a number of interface conventions throughout the system. Important information is usually presented in the middle of the screen. On the left hand side of the screen several blocks that list available courses and site news are seen. There are a number of useful blocks installed by default on a Moodle server. Additional optional blocks to add different functionality may be installed.

1.2 Languages

In the upper-right corner, drop-down menu with language options is seen. As of September 2007, Moodle has been translated into over 70 languages. The number of languages is now so large that Moodle only loads one language by default. The system administrator can download additional language packs to provide support for new languages. Moodle also supports UTF-8, a standard for the display of non-Latin character sets, like Chinese or Arabic characters. The language features can be useful for learning foreign languages or supporting students from different countries. Anyone who uses Moodle can select the language in which Moodle’s labels and instructions will appear. For example, if the site in Norwegian is chosen to be viewed, the labels and help files will be translated into that language. Moodle does not translate user-generated content—such as forum posts—automatically, though it’s possible to create multilanguage content. You can choose the language settings for the front page and for each course you visit. As an instructor, you can also force students to use a given language. This is a useful feature if you’re teaching a language course and want the entire course to be in that language. The system administrator can decide not to display the language drop-down menu on the front page. If you want to change the language and find that you cannot, contact your system administrator.
Fig. 1 - A MOODLE site

1.3 Moodle’s Help System and Documentation

Throughout Moodle, a question mark in a yellow circle can be seen. This is a link to Moodle’s very extensive help system. When you click the question mark icon, a new window pops up with the help file for the item you are asking about (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2 A help file

Once the help file is read, you can close the window with the “Close this window” button or look at other help files by clicking on the “Index of all help files” link. You can then select any help file from anywhere in the help system. In addition to the help system, if you are logged in as a teacher or an administrator, you’ll find a “Moodle Docs for this page” link at the bottom of each page. Clicking this link will take you to the corresponding page on http://docs.moodle.org/. Moodle Docs is the documentation for Moodle, written by the Moodle community.
1.4 A First Look at a Course

On the left side of the front page, you’ll see the My Courses block, which includes a list of all the courses you are teaching or taking as a student. You can access your courses by clicking on the course name in the block. Let’s start with the upper-left corner of the course page, as shown in (Fig. 3). There you’ll see the name of your course as entered when the course was created. Your system administrator either entered your course name by hand or got it from your institution’s course database. Below the course name is a navigation bar that fills with the hyperlinked names of pages as you navigate from one page to another. Frequently, the best way to return to your My Courses block course page is to click on the course short name in the navigation bar.

![Course page](image)

**Fig. 3. Course page**

For example, in Fig. 3, you would click on Features to go back to the course page from another page in the course. Below the navigation bar are three columns. The far-left and far-right columns contain tool blocks, while the center column contains your course content and activities. The topmost tool block on the left is the People block. From here, you and your students can view the individual profiles of other participants in the course and check who is a member of student workgroups. Beneath the People block is the Activities block. As you add forums, quizzes, assignments, and other activities to your course, the activity types will be listed here. By clicking on the activity type, students can view all activities of that type that are currently available to them. For example, if you gave a quiz every week, each content section would list a quiz, and if you clicked the Quizzes link in the Activities block, it would list all of the quizzes in the course. Next in the left column is the Search Forums block. Below the Search Forums block is the Administration block. Assuming you’ve been assigned the role of teacher, you’ll find links to set your course options, assign roles, perform backups of the course, and manage student grades in the Administration block (see Fig. 4). The far-right column includes...
three blocks that report on activity in the course. The Latest News block lists the latest items added to the News forum, such as important news stories that pertain to the subject you’re teaching. The Upcoming Events block lists events you’ve created in the calendar, such as exams and holidays, together with assignment and quiz deadlines. At the bottom of the block are links to view the calendar and add new events. Also, there’s the Recent Activity block, which lists recent course activity, such as forum postings and uploads. The middle column is where the action is. This is where you add all of your content and activities, such as forums, quizzes, and lessons for students to access. First you need to make a choice about the format in which to present your course.

![Fig. 4. Administration block](image)

**1.5 Course Formats**

Unlike some CMSs that force you into one format, Moodle provides you with a number of options for the general format of your course. You can choose to order your course chronologically by week, conceptually by topic, or socially with a big forum as the central organizing principle. The course formats you can choose are:

**1.5.1 LAMS Format**

The Learning Activity Management System (LAMS) is an open source Learning Management System (LMS) that allows teachers to use a Flash-based authoring environment for developing learning sequences. LAMS has been integrated with Moodle to allow teachers to develop LAMS activities within a Moodle course. This course format makes LAMS central to the course, only displaying the LAMS interface. Very few institutions use LAMS, as it duplicates much of the Moodle functionality.

**1.5.2 SCORM Format**

The Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM) is a content packaging standard. SCORM packages are self-contained bundles of content and JavaScript activities that can send data to Moodle about the students’ scores and current locations. Moodle can use
SCORM packages as an activity type or as a course format. If you have a large SCORM object you want to use as an entire course, you can select this course format.

1.5.3 Social Format

The social format is based on a single forum for the whole course. It’s useful for less formal courses or for non-course uses such as maintaining departmental sites.

1.5.4 Topics Format

When a course using the topics format is created, start by choosing the number of topics that will be covered. Moodle creates a section for each topic, as shown previously in Fig. 4. Content, forums, quizzes, and other activities to each topic section can be added. If the course design is concept-oriented, and students will be working through a range of concepts but not necessarily according to a fixed schedule, this will be a good choice.

1.5.5 Weekly Format and CSS/no Tables

With this format, a course start date and the number of weeks can be specified. Moodle will create a section for each week of the course. The current week is highlighted. The content, forums, quizzes, and so on can be added in the section for each week. If you want all your students to work on the same materials at the same time, this is a good format to choose. The CSS/no tables variant of the weekly format displays the weekly course format without using tables for layout. This improves the accessibility of the format, but older browsers may have trouble displaying it correctly.

To set the course format:

1. Click Settings in the Administration block.
2. Select the course format from the drop-down list just below the course summary (see Fig. 5).
3. Enter the parameters for your course:
   • For the weekly format, set the start date and the number of weeks.
   • For the topic format, set the number of topics.
   • For the social format, set the course start date. You don’t need to worry about the number of weeks or topics.

Moodle allows you to switch between formats if you find that a given format isn’t working for you. Simply follow the preceding instructions and select a different format. You can also add or remove topics or weeks at any time. So you don’t have to worry too much about locking yourself into a format before you really understand the system.

1.6 Course Settings

This section covers the following course settings. The settings page, as shown in (Fig. 5), where the course format is set, also gives access to a number of important course options. It is important to take a moment to change your course settings:

1. Click Settings in the Administration block on your course page.
2. Review each of the general options to ensure they are correct for your course.
1.6.1 Editing Mode

Now that a format and settings for the course has been decided, the next step is to add content. To start the process, first turn editing on (see Fig. 6), which will allow to add resources and activities to the course. At the top right of the page of any course there is a button labeled, “Turn editing on.” Clicking on this button will present a new array of options.

![Fig. 5. Editing the course settings](image1.png)

![Fig. 6. Course page with editing turned on](image2.png)