D2L's Brightspace: Creating Discussions

Quick Summary

There are two primary ways to create Discussions in Brightspace:

1. From the Discussion link in the teal navigation bar.
2. From the module where you want the discussion to live.

This guide will review Brightspace's discussion terminology and go over the steps for each method of discussion creation.

Additional Resources on Discussions:
Getting Started | Editing Discussions | Participating In and Grading Discussions

Video

If you prefer to watch a video, select the link: Brightspace Discussions Part 2: Creating

Terminology & Structure

Brightspace uses unique terminology for discussion, organizing them into the following structures:

Forum
A container to organize your discussions.

Topic
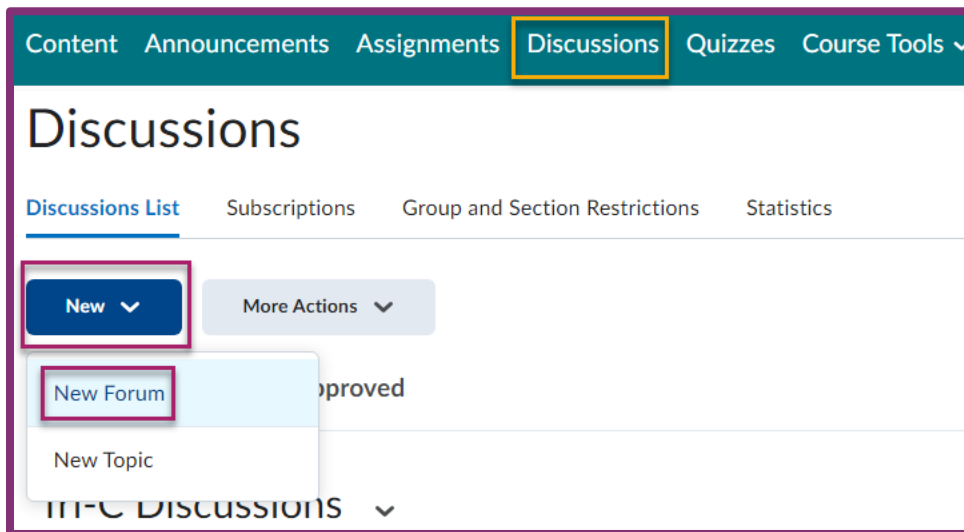The prompt to which your students will reply. Topics live inside of Forums to help keep them organized.

Thread
Students and/or instructors create threads to respond to topics.
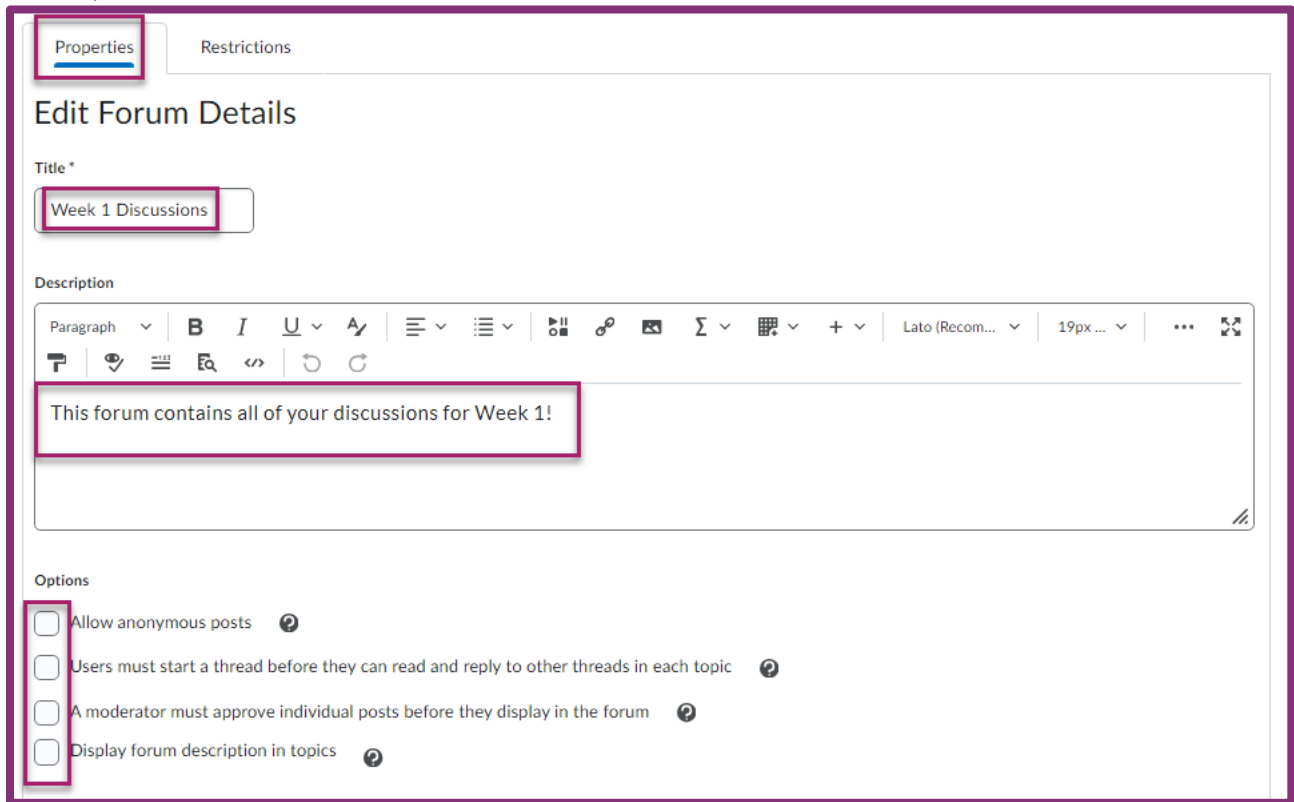
Create a Discussion from the Discussions Link

Step 1: Create Forums
- Select Discussions in the teal navigation bar.
- Select "New" from the dropdown menu.
- Select "New Forum."

- Edit the "Properties" tab (title, description, select desired settings to apply to all Topics in the Forum)

- Optional: Select the "Restrictions" tab to set up availability dates and release conditions.

- Select "Save and Close"

Step 2: Create Topics

- Option 1: From the Discussions page, select "New" and then "New Topic."

- Option 2: From the dropdown menu of a given Forum, select "Add Topic."
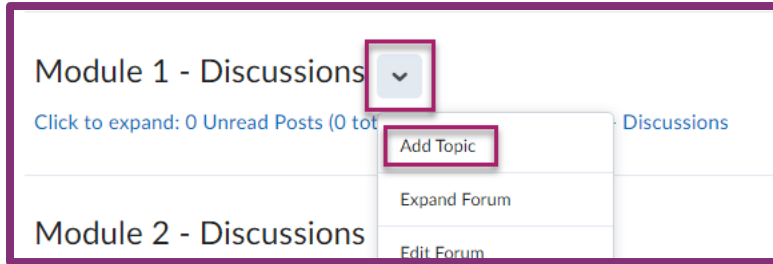
At this point, we will quickly export how to create a Discussion Topic directly from a module. Once a topic is started, the process for creating it is the same.

Creating a Topic from a Module

Step 1: Navigate to "Content" and from the Table of Contents, select the module where you want to create a discussion topic.
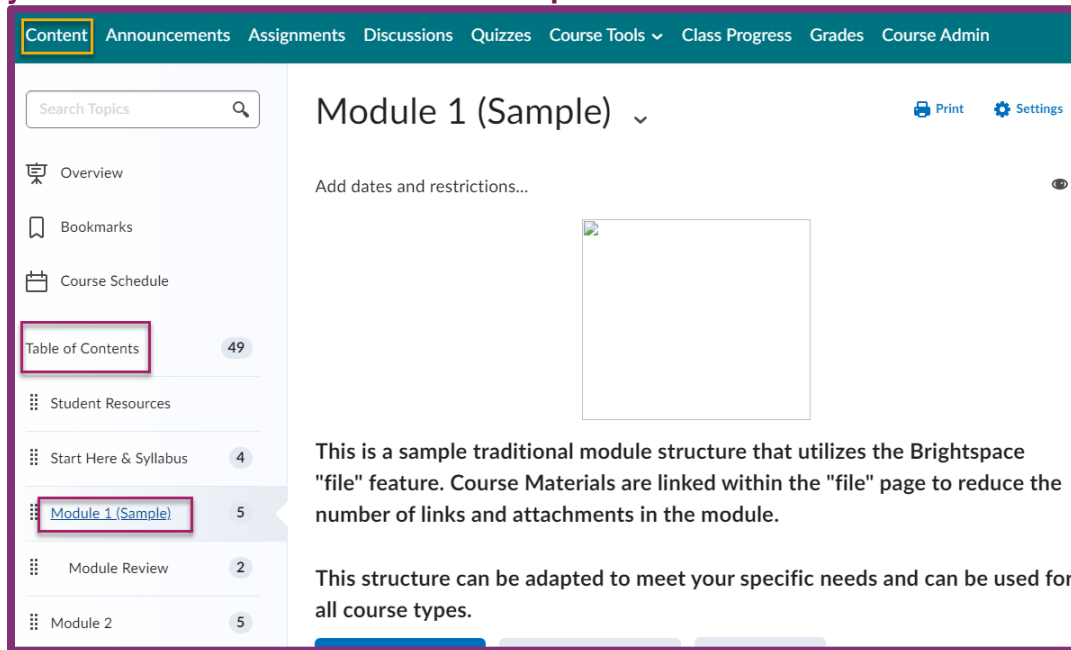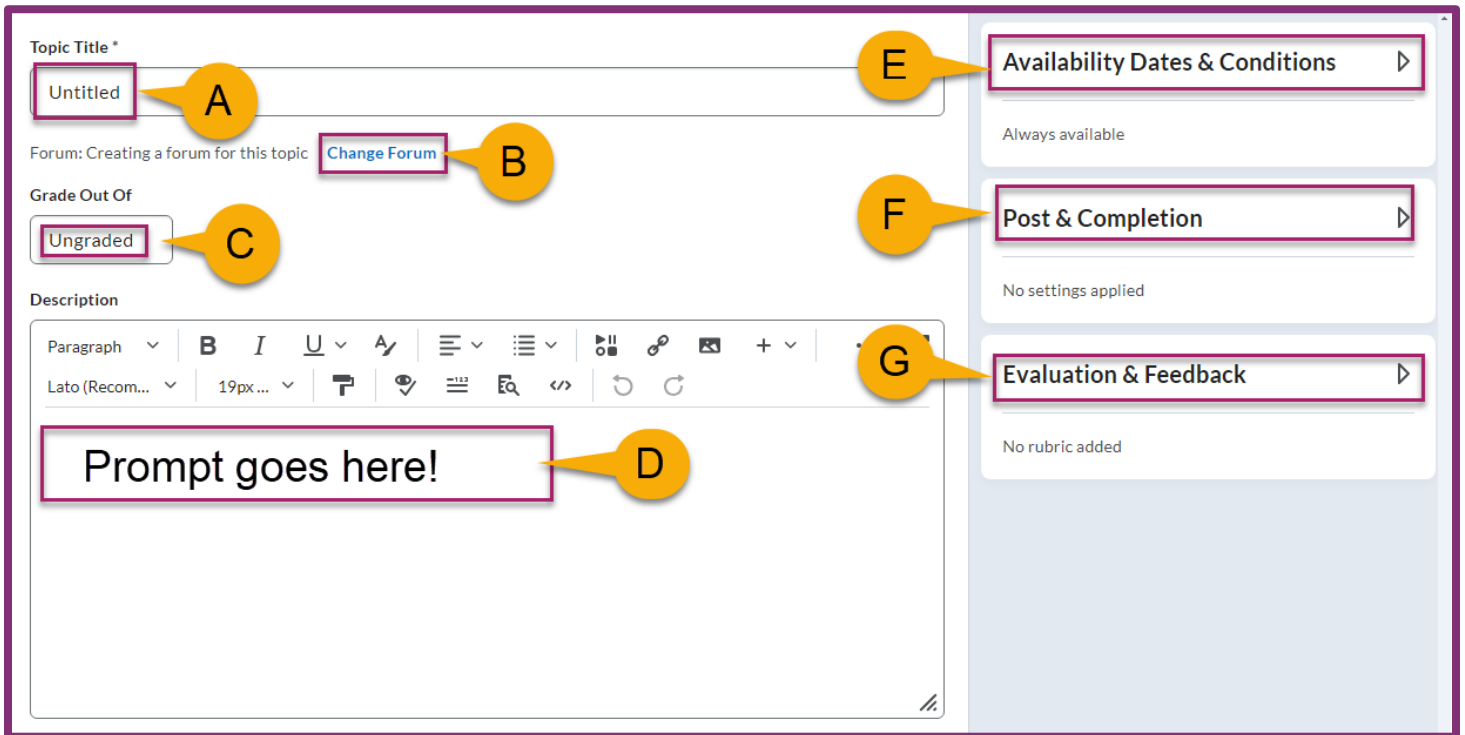
Step 2: Select "Upload Create" and choose "New Discussion."
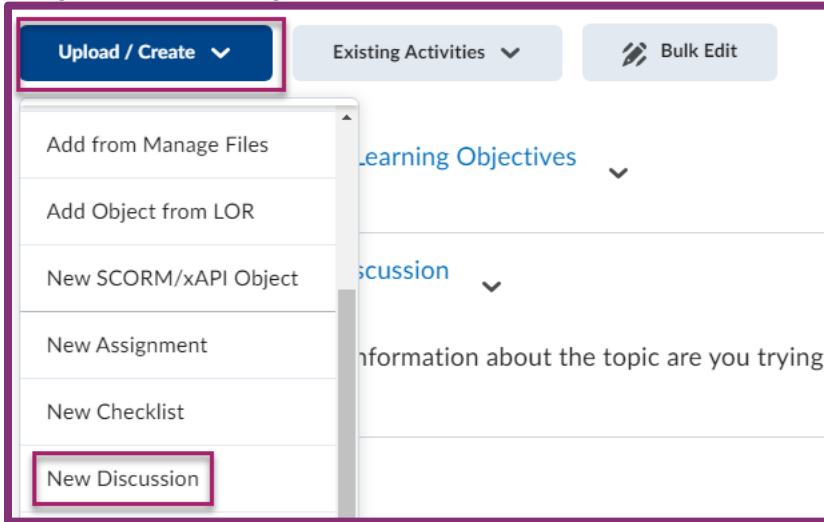
## Writing Your Discussion Topic Prompt and Choosing Options

Regardless of how you create your discussions, you will see this screen:

Important: Unlike other gradable items in Brightspace, you cannot add a due date from this screen. Due dates for discussions need to be added from inside a Module; see instructions under the heading "Editing Discussions."

A. Give the Topic a title.

B. If you created the Topic from the "New" menu, it will default to creating a new Forum with the same title as the Topic. This is a valid way to set up your Discussions! If you want to add the Topic to an existing forum and did not create it from the "Add Topic" option in the Forum itself, select "Change Forum" and either select an existing forum or create a new one.

C. If you want to add points to your Discussion Topic, select "Ungraded" and change it to the point total. This will bring up the following options:
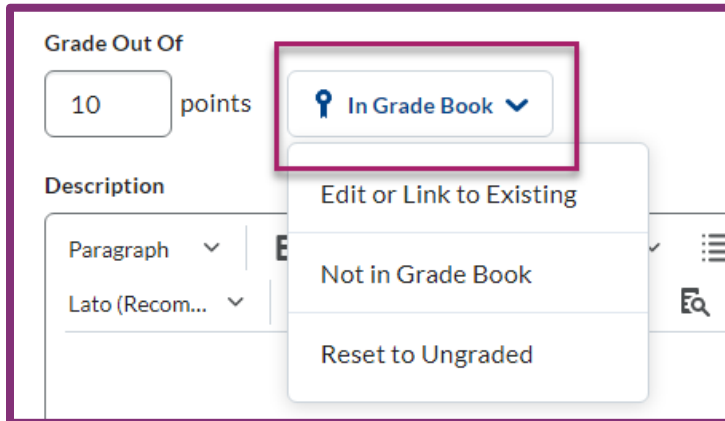
- o **In Grade Book:** This is the default; it will create a gradebook column for the discussion topic automatically with the points you have set.
- o **Edit or Link to Existing:** Choose this option if you already have a gradebook column set up for the discussion topic and just need to link the two together.
- o **Not in Grade Book:** Choose this option if you want to provide points for feedback purposes, but not count the discussion topic towards students' grades.
- o **Reset to Ungraded:** Turns the graded topic into an ungraded topic and removes any points you have associated with it.

D. Write the prompt that your students will respond to.

E. Set availability dates and release conditions or select a group (optional)
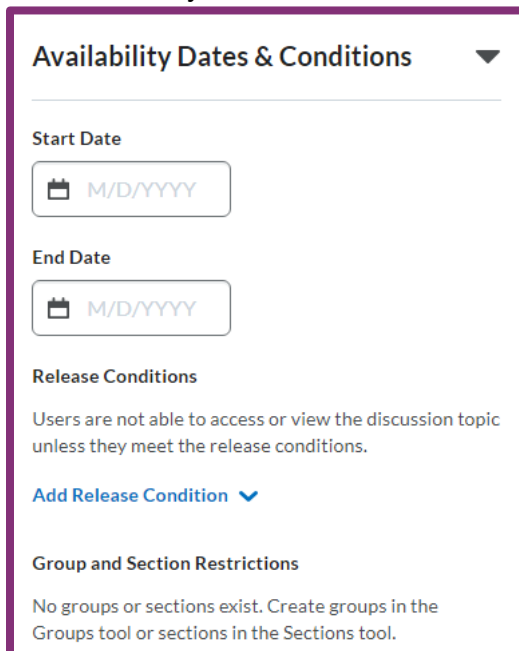
F. Select options for how students will submit their threads (optional)

- o **Allow learners to hide their name from other learners:** Students have the *option* of appearing to other students as "Anonymous," but as the instructor, you will know who wrote each thread/reply. This option can be useful if students are discussing a controversial topic.
- o **Learners must start a thread before they can view or reply to other threads:** This is a popular option to prevent plagiarism and encourage students to freely post their own thoughts without the influence of others.
- o **Posts must be approved before they display in the topic:** You, the instructor, will need to approve each thread/reply before they become visible to others in the course. This option can be useful if you have a contentious class, but it can also be time-consuming and may delay student participation with each other.

G. Add a rubric (recommended), decide how you want to evaluate multiple posts, and decide if you want students to rate posts.

- o **Rubrics** are a helpful tool to set clear expectations for students and provide objective, fair feedback. They also save you time grading!
- o **Allow evaluation of individual posts:** This is a popular option if you require an initial post plus follow-up responses to other students. You can provide separate scores for each reply.

o **Allow learners to rate posts:** Creates a more "social media" feel for the discussion topic; could be used to gamify the experience. There are three options for ratings:
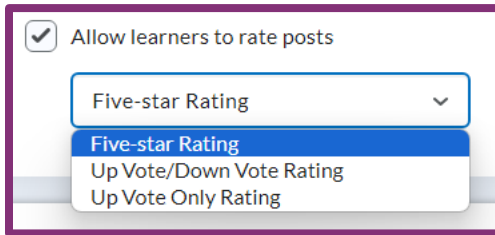

Adding an Existing Topic to a Module

Brightspace encourages linear course design. If you created your Discussion Topics under the "Discussions" page, it is recommended that you also add them a module as part of a sequence of learning experiences that make sense for your course.
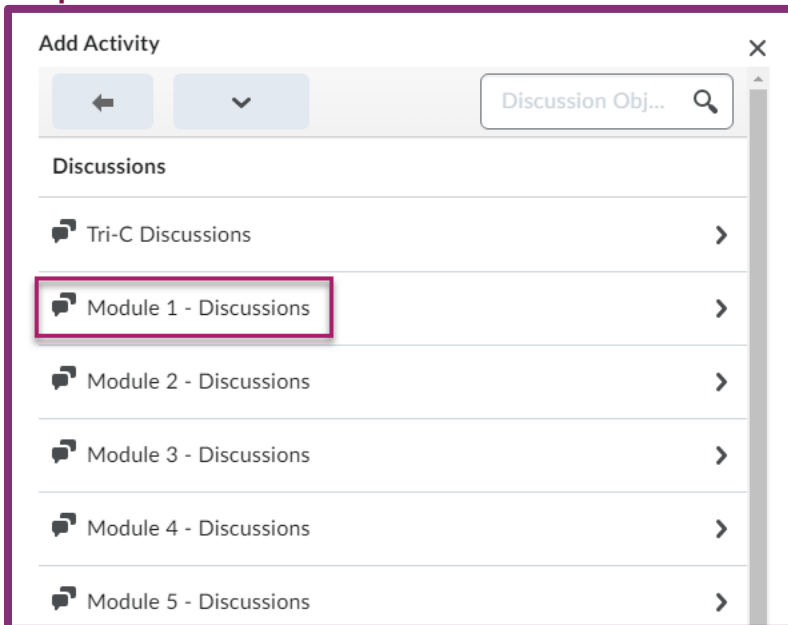
Step 1: Navigate to "Content" and from the Table of Contents, select the module where you want to create a discussion topic.
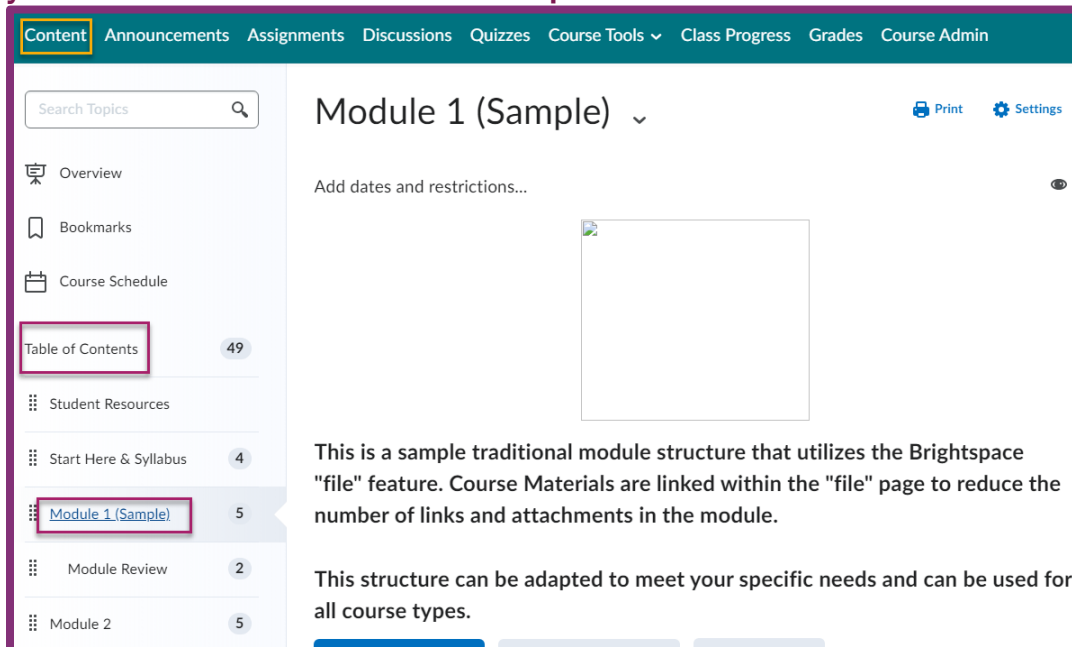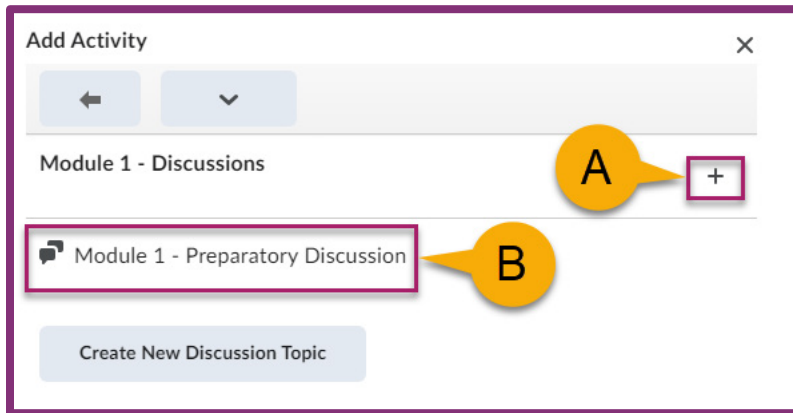
Step 2: Select "Existing Activities" and then "Discussions."
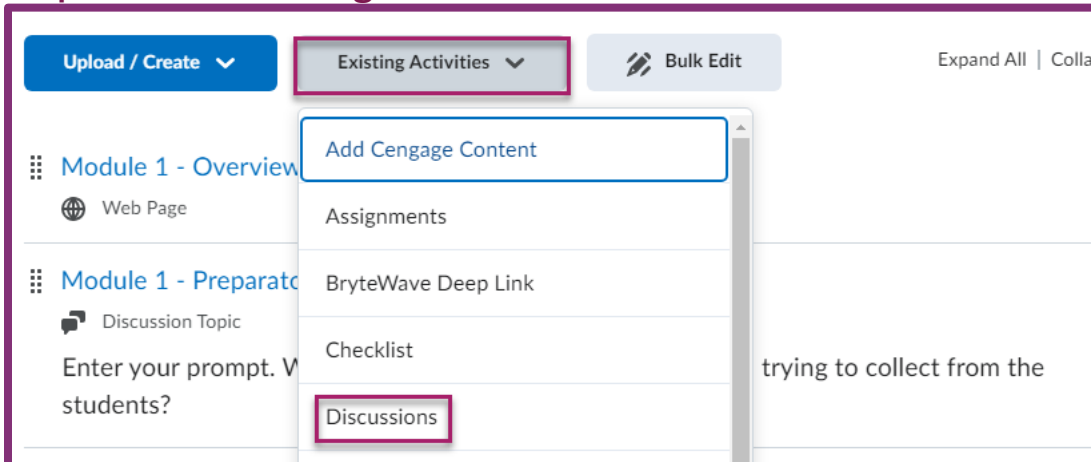
Step 3: Select the Forum where the Discussion Topic lives.

This brings up the following options:

A. Selecting the plus sign deploys the entire Forum to your Module.
B. Selecting the title of a Topic deploys only that topic.
C. You could also create a new Discussion Topic from here, which is a helpful shortcut!

Need Help?

- For help migrating or creating your discussions, please contact the Help Desk.
- For help creating engaging discussion prompts, organizing discussions into your course design, or selecting appropriate settings for your discussions, please make an appointment with the Instructional Design Team.
  - Book a Virtual Appointment
  - Email Us to meet in-person