KNOWLEDGE BASE ARTICLE

Discussions: A Quick Guide for End Users



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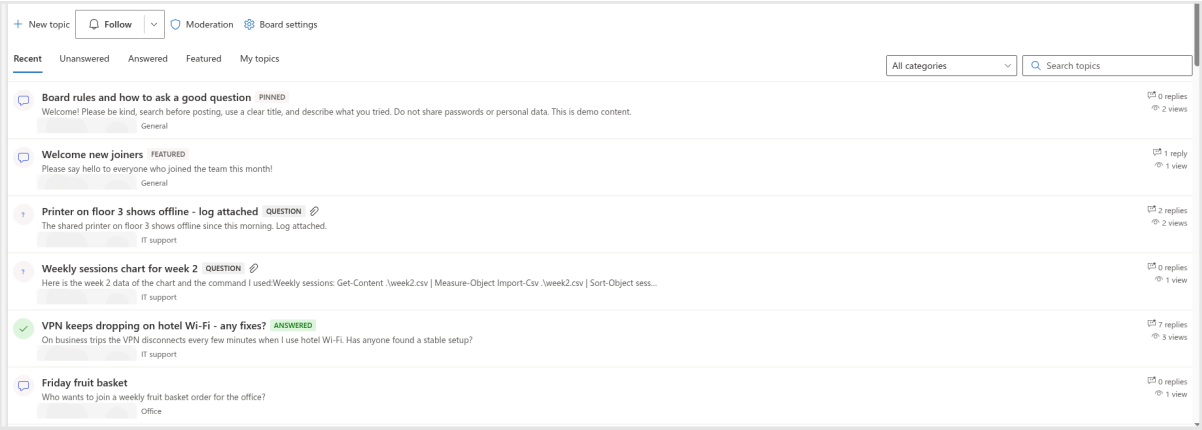
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What you see on the board

Discussions is a discussion board and Q&A forum that lives on a **SharePoint** page or in a **Microsoft Teams** tab. A board is a **list** of **topics**; each topic has a thread of **replies**. You open the board like any other page of your intranet, and everything you post is stored in lists of that same SharePoint **site**, protected by the site's permissions - nothing leaves your **Microsoft 365 tenant** (see KB10363. Where Vitextra Products Store Your Data: Privacy, Data Residency and GDPR).

The board opens on the **topic list**. Every row shows the topic title, a short excerpt of its text, the author, when it was last active and, if the page owner enabled them, the category and the **replies** and **views** counters. Topics that a moderator pinned stay at the top; all others are ordered by their last activity, newest first. An icon at the left tells the type of the topic at a glance: a speech bubble for a discussion, a question mark for an open question and a check mark for a question with an accepted answer.



The topic list of a Discussions board

Small badges next to a title explain its state:

Badge	Meaning
Pinned	A moderator keeps the topic at the top of the list.
Featured	The topic is highlighted by a moderator and appears in the **Featured view**.
Question	A question that has no accepted answer yet.
Answered	A question whose author or a moderator marked the best answer.

Badge	Meaning
Locked	The topic is closed for new replies.
Awaiting approval	Your topic is waiting for a moderator (shown only to you and to moderators).

A paperclip icon means that the topic has attachments.

Views: Recent, Unanswered, Answered, Featured and My topics

The tabs above the list switch between the **views** of the board:

- **Recent** - every topic, ordered by last activity.
- **Unanswered** - questions that have no accepted answer yet. This is the place to look when you want to help.
- **Answered** - topics with an accepted answer; useful as a ready knowledge base.
- **Featured** - topics a moderator has highlighted.
- **My topics** - the topics you started.

The page owner decides which view opens first. On a board that is set up for discussions only, the **Unanswered** and **Answered** tabs are not shown, because such a board has no questions to answer.

Long boards load in pages. When more topics exist than fit on one page, a **Load more** button appears under the list and fetches the next page without leaving the view.

Filtering by category and searching

If the board has categories, a dropdown next to the view tabs lets you narrow the list to one category; **All categories** brings the full list back. The **Search topics** box searches the **titles** of topics: type a word or a phrase and press Enter, and clear the box to return to the unfiltered list. Views, the category filter and the search work together, so you can, for example, list only unanswered questions in the *IT support* category whose title contains *VPN*.

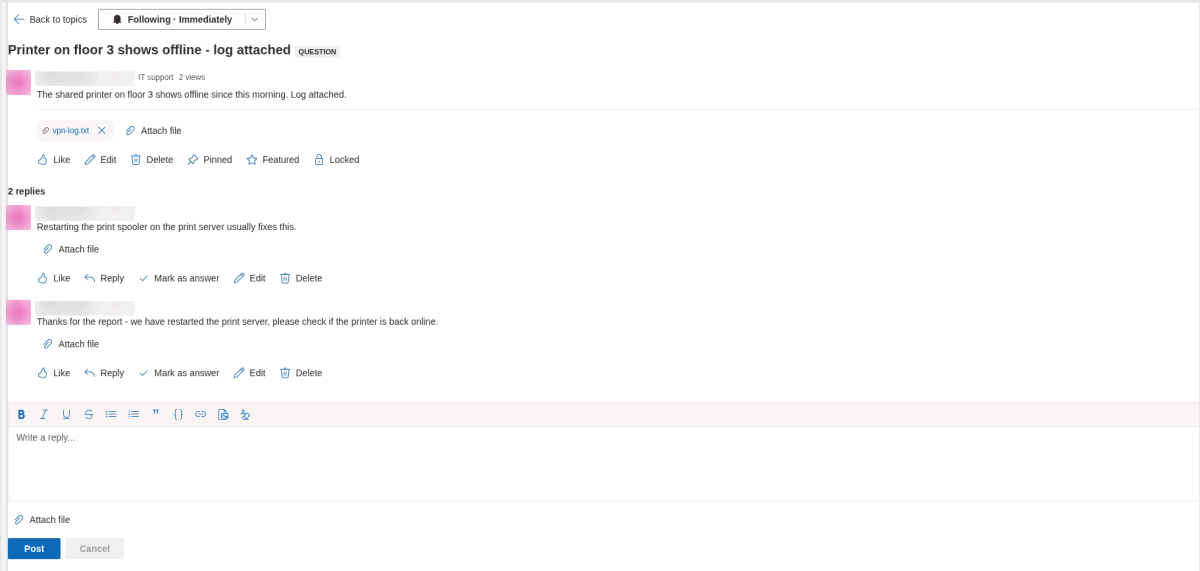
When no topic matches the current filter or search, the board says *Nothing found.*; an empty board with no topics at all shows *No topics yet. Start the first one.*

Note

Search looks only at topic titles, not at the text of topics or replies. Give your topics descriptive titles so that colleagues can find them later.

Opening and reading a topic

Click a topic to open it. The topic page shows the author, when the topic was posted (hover over the time to see the exact date), its category and the number of views, then the text, attachments and the thread of replies below it. The **Back to topics** button returns you to the list.



An opened topic with its replies

While a topic is open, the page address contains the topic number (`?topic=ID`). Copy the address from the browser and send it to a colleague: the link opens the board with that topic already open. To share a topic, use its SharePoint page URL; copying the Teams window address does not create a topic-specific Teams deep link. A link to a topic that is still awaiting approval or was rejected works only for its author and for moderators; anybody else sees the message *This topic is not available. It may be awaiting approval or may have been removed.* and the **Back to topics** button. Attachments are shown as small chips under the text; click a chip to download the file.

Replies are shown as a tree: a reply to a reply is indented under the message it answers, with nesting limited by the 255-character parent path. Within one level the oldest reply comes first. In a question topic the accepted answer is placed at the top of the thread and carries the **Accepted answer** badge.

Starting a topic

Click **New topic** in the command bar above the list. Enter a **Topic title** (required), pick the type (**Discussion** or **Question**) when the board allows both, choose a **Category** if the board has any, write the text in the editor, attach files if needed and click **Post**. The new topic opens immediately and you are automatically subscribed to it. As the author you can later **Edit** your topic - its title, category and text - as long as it is not locked, and **Delete** it together with all its replies; the board asks for confirmation before deleting. The form and the differences between discussions and questions are described in KB10398. Starting a Topic: Discussions and Questions.

Replying and liking

To answer the topic itself, write in the editor at the bottom of the thread and click **Post**. To answer a specific message, click **Reply** under it: an inline editor labelled *name]* opens and your reply is nested under that message. The editor supports formatting, links, images, code blocks, attachments and @mentions.

You can **Edit** your own replies at any time and **Delete** them as long as nobody has replied to them; the board asks you to confirm the deletion. The details are in KB10399. Replying in Threads: Reply, Edit and Delete.

Like marks a topic or a reply you found useful; the number of likes is shown next to the button, and clicking again removes your like. If you asked a question and one of the replies solved it, mark it with **Mark as answer** - see KB10400. Marking the Best Answer in Q&A Topics. If you see a post that breaks the rules, click **Report** to flag it to the moderators; each person can have one active report per post.

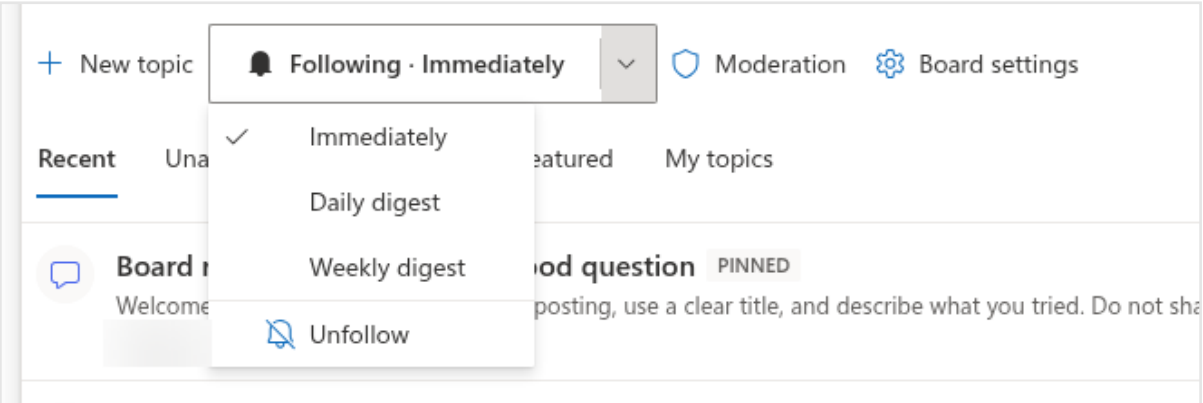
Warning

On a board where a site owner enabled approval of new posts, topics and replies from non-moderators are shown with the **Awaiting approval** badge and the message *Thank you. Your post will be visible after a moderator approves it.* Until a moderator approves them, only you and the moderators can see them.

Following a board or topic

The **Follow** button appears in the command bar of the board and at the top of every topic. One click subscribes you with the **Immediately** frequency; the arrow next to the button opens a menu where you choose **Immediately**, **Daily digest** or **Weekly digest**, or **Unfollow**. While you are subscribed the button reads **Following** with the chosen

frequency. Following a board covers new topics on that board; following a topic covers new replies in it. You follow the topics you start automatically.



The Follow menu with digest frequencies

Tip

The board records your subscription; the e-mail itself is sent by a **Power Automate** flow that your site owner sets up. If you follow a topic but receive no mail, ask the owner whether the flow is in place. See KB10404. Following Boards and Topics: Subscriptions and Digest Frequency.

What you can do depends on your permissions

Discussions does not have its own user accounts or roles: it uses the permissions you already have on the SharePoint site.

You have	You can
Read on the site (visitor)	Browse the views, filter and search, open topics, download attachments, follow deep links. The **Like**, **Reply** and **Follow** buttons are not available.
Add items (member with Contribute or Edit)	Everything above, plus start topics, reply, like, follow, report posts, edit and delete your own topics and replies (a reply only while it has no replies), and attach files.
Manage Lists (site owner, moderator)	Everything above, plus approve, reject, pin, **feature** and lock topics, edit and delete other people's topics and replies, open the **Moderation** queue and change

You have	You can
	the board's settings in the **Board settings** panel.

Guests invited to the site take part with the same rules. If a button described in this article is missing for you, your **permission level** on the site may be the reason - see KB10408. Permissions in Discussions: Who Can Read, Post and Moderate.

Pinned topics still have to match the current view, category and search. Only approved top-level replies in unlocked question topics can be marked as answers. Moderators publish immediately, even when approval is enabled. The default Edit permission level includes Manage Lists and therefore grants moderation rights; use Contribute for ordinary participants. A missing button can also be caused by the topic state or board settings.

Terms

Feature
A feature is a set of SharePoint elements (artifacts), such as site columns, content types, web parts, application pages, custom actions, list templates, list instances, and others.

List
A list is a storage unit in SharePoint. A list can contain columns of different types, content types, and views. A document library is a special type of list and therefore inherits the functionality of a list.

Microsoft 365
Microsoft 365 is a cloud-based subscription service that combines productivity apps such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook with cloud services such as SharePoint, OneDrive, Teams, and Exchange Online, together with advanced security and device management.

Microsoft Teams
Microsoft Teams is a chat-based collaboration platform for business communications with features for online meetings, live events, and document sharing.

Permission Level
A permission level is a named set of permissions, such as Read, Edit, or Full Control, that can be assigned to users and groups on a SharePoint site, list, library, or item.

Power Automate
Microsoft Power Automate is a cloud-based service that allows users to create automated workflows between applications and services. It enables the automation of repetitive tasks and processes, such as data collection, notifications, and approvals, without the need for extensive coding knowledge.

SharePoint
SharePoint is a web-based collaboration platform that provides content management, document management, workflow applications, search, and other tools that empower employees and teams to work together. SharePoint is also a secure place to store, organize, and access shared information.

Terms

Site
A SharePoint site is a container for information within the SharePoint platform. Sites typically offer features such as document libraries, lists, calendars, discussion boards, and workflows, facilitating collaboration, communication, and document management within teams or across departments. Sites can be customized and configured to suit the specific needs and workflows of an organization.

Tenant
A Microsoft 365 tenant is a dedicated instance of Microsoft 365 services. The tenant holds the organization's information, such as users and domains (Microsoft Entra ID), configurations, subscriptions, and services. An organization receives a tenant by signing up for Microsoft 365 services.

View
A view is a saved configuration that determines which items of a list or library are displayed and how, including the columns, sorting, filtering, grouping, and layout. Views can be personal or public.