KNOWLEDGE BASE ARTICLE

Limits and Performance: Large Boards, Long Threads and the List View Threshold

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Overview

Discussions keeps every board of a site in a handful of ordinary SharePoint lists, so the limits that apply are the limits of SharePoint Online lists plus a few fixed values built into the web part. This article lists those values as implemented in version 26.10.2, explains how the web part stays under the list view threshold, and gives recommendations for sites with very large boards or very long threads. The lists and columns themselves are described in KB10426. Discussions Lists and Columns Reference.

The limits at a glance

Item	Value	Where it comes from
Topics loaded per page	**Topics per page** setting: 5–100 in steps of 5, default 20	Property pane, **Appearance** group
Topics in a board, boards on a site	No limit in the web part	SharePoint list limits apply
Boards offered in drop-downs	First 500 boards of the site, sorted by title	Fixed value
Replies loaded for a topic	All replies, read from the server in batches of 500	Fixed value
Nesting depth of replies	Unlimited	Data model (materialized path)
Topic title	255 characters	SharePoint Title column
Inline image	10 MB per file; image files only	Fixed value, **The image is larger than 10 MB.**
Attachments per topic or reply	No limit in the web part	SharePoint list item attachments
Attachment file name	Reserved characters replaced by _; longer than 120 characters truncated	Fixed rule
Items per section of the moderation queue	200 most recent	Fixed value

Item	Value	Where it comes from
Items in the Discussions Activity web part	**Maximum items** setting: 1–50, default 5	Property pane, **Appearance** group
Subscriptions read per user and board	500	Fixed value
Classic items read by the importer	Batches of 2,000 until the source list is exhausted	Fixed value

How the topic list stays fast

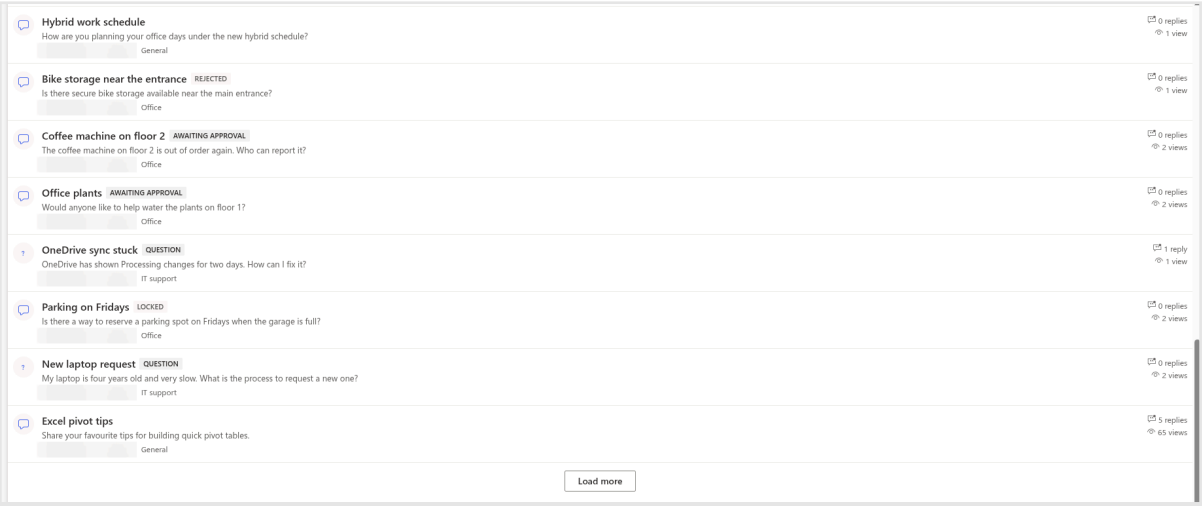
The topic list never asks SharePoint for the whole board. Every request is a server-side query against the `Discussions Topics` list that is limited to one page of **Topics per page** rows and sorted by the *Pinned* flag and then by *Last activity*, newest first. The **Load more** button requests the next page with the continuation link that SharePoint returned, so a board with tens of thousands of topics costs the same per page as a board with twenty.

Every filter the web part adds is backed by an indexed column, which is what keeps queries under the list view threshold of 5,000 items:

Filter	Column	Used by
Board	`VtxBoard` (lookup, indexed)	Every query
Approval	`VtxApprovalStatus` (indexed)	Members: approved items and their own
View **Unanswered**	`VtxTopicType` and `VtxStatus` (indexed)	Questions with status *Open*
View **Answered**	`VtxStatus` (indexed)	Status *Answered*
View **Featured**	`VtxIsFeatured` (indexed)	Featured topics
View **My topics**	*Created By*	The current user's topics
Category drop-down	`VtxCategory` (indexed)	Selected category
Sort order	`VtxIsSticky`, `VtxLastActivity`	Every query

Filter	Column	Used by
	(indexed)	

The search box is the exception: it adds a *contains* condition on the topic **Title**, which is not an indexed operation. SharePoint still applies the indexed board filter first, so the search is safe as long as a single board stays well below 5,000 topics. On a larger board, a search can be slow or refused by SharePoint with a list view threshold error; see the recommendations below.



A paged topic list with the Load more button

Note

The web part searches topic titles only. Reply text and topic bodies are not searched; to find them, use the SharePoint search of the site, which indexes the `Discussions Topics` and `Discussions Posts` lists like any other list.

Long threads

When a topic is opened, the web part loads **all** of its replies, not just the first page. Replies are read from the `Discussions Posts` list in batches of 500 through the indexed `VtxTopic` lookup, and the reply tree is then built in the browser from the parent and path columns. There is no limit on nesting depth and no "show more replies" step inside a thread.

The practical consequences:

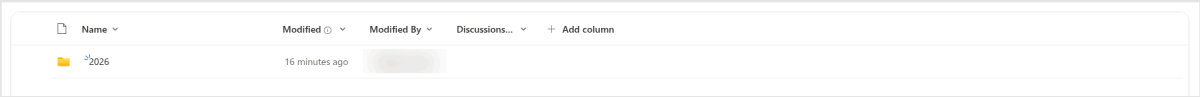
- A thread with 2,000 replies needs four requests before it is shown; a thread with 10,000 replies needs twenty. The page becomes noticeably heavier long before

SharePoint limits are reached, because every reply is rendered at once.
- Deeply nested replies are indented level by level. On narrow screens, very deep branches become hard to read; moderators can **Lock** a topic that has run its course and ask for a new one.
- The *Replies* counter in the list is a stored number on the topic, not a live count (see KB10432. Counters, Last Activity or Best Answer Look Wrong).

Images and attachments

Inline images pasted, dropped or inserted with the **Insert image** button are uploaded to the `Discussions Assets` document library. The web part creates a folder per calendar year (for example `2026`) and stores every image there under a unique name, so no single folder grows without bound and the library stays comfortably below the view threshold for many years of use. Images larger than 10 MB are rejected before the upload starts; files that are not images are ignored by the editor.

Attachments added with **Attach file** are ordinary list item attachments on the topic or reply. The web part puts no limit on their number or size; the limits of SharePoint Online for list item attachments apply. File names are made safe for SharePoint before the upload: the characters `\ / : * ? " < > | # % & { } ~` are replaced by an underscore and names longer than 120 characters are shortened.



The Discussions Assets library with a folder per year

Moderation queue, Activity web part and subscriptions

- The **Moderation** screen reads at most 200 items per section (topics waiting for approval, replies waiting for approval, reported topics, reported replies), newest first. Pending and reported replies are queried for the whole site and then narrowed to the current board, so on a site with several busy boards a very long backlog may be shown in portions: approve or reject the visible items and the next ones appear.
- The **Discussions Activity** web part reads only the number of topics set in **Maximum items** (1–50), filtered on the indexed approval column and sorted by last activity, so it is cheap to place on a home page.
- Subscriptions are read per user and per board, up to 500 rows, which is far beyond what one person follows in practice.

Counters and versioning

Reply counts, view counts, last activity and the like are stored on the topic item and

updated by the browser of the user who replies or opens the topic. Each such update creates a new version of the topic item, because the lists are created with versioning enabled. On a very active board, the version history of a popular topic grows quickly; a site owner can lower the number of versions kept in **List settings** → **Versioning settings** of `Discussions Topics` without affecting the web part.

Warning

Do not remove the indexes from the `Vtx` columns and do not switch the lists to a different template. The web part creates its indexes on first use and relies on them for every query; a board that outgrows 5,000 topics without them will start failing with the list view threshold error.

Recommendations for very large boards

1. **Split by audience, not by year.** Several boards on one site (IT Help Desk, HR, a board per course) share the same lists but are filtered by the indexed board column, so each board stays small for queries while the site keeps one place to search.
2. **Keep single boards below 5,000 topics** if your users rely on the search box. Above that, keep searches to categories and views, or point users to the site search.
3. **Use categories** rather than many near-identical boards; the category filter is indexed and costs nothing.
4. **Lock finished threads** and start new ones instead of letting a single topic collect thousands of replies.
5. **Page size.** The default of 20 topics per page is a good balance; raising it to 100 makes the first render heavier on slow connections without changing the server cost per page.
6. **Imports.** The classic board importer reads the source in batches of 2,000 and writes items one by one; a classic board with tens of thousands of messages takes a long time but no special preparation. See KB10417. How to Import a Classic SharePoint Discussion Board into Discussions.

Tip

If you plan a board for the whole organization, set a default view and a page size that fit the audience, as described in KB10422. Views, Paging, Search and Counters: Display Settings of the Discussions Web Part, and put the **Discussions Activity** web part on the home page so that people reach recent topics without scrolling the board.