



- [Home](#)
- [Documentation](#)
- [Downloads](#)
- [Demo](#)
- [Tracker](#)
- [Development](#)
- [Translation](#)
- [Moodle.net](#)
- [Search](#)

You are here

GIFT format

Main page ► Managing a Moodle course ► Questions ► Managing questions ► Export questions ► **GIFT format**
Export questions

- **GIFT format**
- Moodle XML format
- XHTML format

GIFT format allows someone to use a text editor to write multiple-choice, true-false, short answer, matching missing word and numerical questions in a simple format that can be imported. The GIFT format is also an export file format available in Question bank. The format has been developed within the Moodle Community but other software may support it to a greater or lesser degree.

- When creating a large numbers of questions, GIFT can provide a quick way of bulk loading questions either into a question category, or into a Lesson.
- Sometimes it is easier proofing questions in a question category by viewing them in a GIFT file.

Contents

- 1 General instructions
 - 1.1 UTF-8 encoding

- 1.2 Format symbols
- 1.3 Format symbols explained
- 2 Question format examples
 - 2.1 Multiple choice
 - 2.2 Multiple choice with multiple right answers
 - 2.3 True-false
 - 2.4 Short answer
 - 2.5 Matching
 - 2.6 Missing word
 - 2.7 Numerical questions
 - 2.8 Essay
 - 2.9 Description
- 3 Options
 - 3.1 Line Comments
 - 3.2 Question Name
 - 3.3 Feedback
 - 3.4 Percentage Answer Weights
 - 3.5 Multiple Answers
 - 3.6 Special Characters ~ = # { }
 - 3.7 Specifying Categories
 - 3.8 Making questions case sensitive
- 4 Hints and Tips
- 5 Word processor and spreadsheet tools that create GIFTs
- 6 GIFT format with medias (images, sound...)
- 7 See also
- 8 External links

General instructions

At least one blank line must be left between each question.

In the simple form, the question comes first, then the answers are set in between brackets, with an equal sign (=) indicating the correct answer(s) and tilde (~) the wrong answers. A hash (#) will insert a response. Questions can be weighted by placing percentage signs (%..%) around the weight. Comments are preceded by double slashes (//) and are not imported.

Here are some useful GIFT examples than can be imported or used as rough template. Many of the examples below used the questions in the file as a starting point.

UTF-8 encoding

Any GIFT file **must** be correctly encoded in UTF-8. You can use Microsoft's text

editor Notepad which comes with Windows to save your file in UTF-8.

Note: ANSI format will (only) work for languages without any special characters (like ä, ö, ü, æ, å, ø, œ or ß). And don't use "Unicode" as format as this is actually UTF-16 and won't work. See Converting files to UTF-8 for further information.

Format symbols

Here are some common GIFT symbols and their use.

Symbols	Use
// text	Comment until end of line (optional)
::title::	Question title (optional)
text	Question text (becomes title if no title specified)
[...format...]	The format of the following bit of text. Options are [html], [moodle], [plain] and [markdown]. The default is [moodle] for the question text, other parts of the question default to the format used for the question text.
{	Start answer(s) -- without any answers, text is a description of following questions
{T} or {F}	True or False answer; also {TRUE} and {FALSE}
{ ... =right ... }	Correct answer for multiple choice, (multiple answer? -- see page comments) or fill-in-the-blank
{ ... ~wrong ... }	Incorrect answer for multiple choice or multiple answer
{ ... =item -> match ... }	Answer for matching questions
#feedback text	Answer feedback for preceding multiple, fill-in-the-blank, or numeric answers
####general feedback	General feedback
{#	Start numeric answer(s)
answer:tolerance	Numeric answer accepted within \pm tolerance range
low..high	Lower and upper range values of accepted numeric answer
=%n%answer:tolerance	n percent credit for one of multiple numeric ranges within tolerance from answer
}	End answer(s)
\character	Backslash escapes the special meaning of ~, =, #, {, }, and :
\n	Places a newline in question text -- blank lines delimit questions

Here are some quick examples:

```
// true/false
::Q1:: 1+1=2 {T}

// multiple choice with specified feedback for right and wrong answers
::Q2:: What's between orange and green in the spectrum?
{ =yellow # right; good! ~red # wrong, it's yellow ~blue # wrong, it's yellow }

// fill-in-the-blank
::Q3:: Two plus {=two =2} equals four.

// matching
::Q4:: Which animal eats which food? { =cat -> cat food =dog -> dog food }

// math range question
::Q5:: What is a number from 1 to 5? {#3:2}

// math range specified with interval end points
::Q6:: What is a number from 1 to 5? {#1..5}
// translated on import to the same as Q5, but unavailable from Moodle question interface

// multiple numeric answers with partial credit and feedback
::Q7:: When was Ulysses S. Grant born? {#
    =1822:0      # Correct! Full credit.
    =%50%1822:2 # He was born in 1822. Half credit for being close.
}

// essay
::Q8:: How are you? {}
```

Format symbols explained

The multiple choice format below as a comment line // for the question, when Moodle exports it the question unique id number will appear here.

The first set of :: precedes the question title.

The second :: precedes the actual question. The first { indicates the start of the answers. The correct answer is preceded by an = sign and wrong answers by a ~. Teacher responses have a # in front of them. The question ends with a } and then a blank line. NOTE it is { } not () parenthesis! Usually these are obtained with help of the [AltGr] key.

```
//Comment line
::Question title
:: Question {
=A correct answer
~Wrong answer1
#A response to wrong answer1
~Wrong answer2
#A response to wrong answer2
~Wrong answer3
#A response to wrong answer3
~Wrong answer4
#A response to wrong answer4
}
```

The shortest format for a multiple choice question is:

```
Question{= A Correct Answer ~Wrong answer1 ~Wrong answer2 ~Wrong answer3 ~Wrong answer4 }
```

Tip: If you don't specify a question title the WHOLE question will be used as the title at the time of import into Moodle. There are pros and cons to allowing this to happen.

- Cons: This can add a lot of unnecessary words. This can include characters which might confuse the export GIFT process.
- Pros: On the other hand, if the start of each question is different, it can make finding a single question easier in a category list of questions. It will save you typing. Having the same title for every question is a very bad idea.

Question format examples

There are several ways to use a text editor to write a GIFT format. We will try to show the simple version for example and in some formats we will introduce some more complex features that can be imported into many Moodle Question formats.

Multiple choice

For multiple choice questions, wrong answers are prefixed with a tilde (~) and the correct answer is prefixed with an equal sign (=).

Here is a simple acceptable GIFT multiple choice format:

```
Who's buried in Grant's tomb?{=Grant ~no one ~Napoleon ~Churchill ~Mother Teresa }
```

Here is a longer format that uses most of the GIFT elements:

```
// question: 1 name: Grants tomb
::Grants tomb::Who is buried in Grant's tomb in New York City? {
=Grant
~No one
#Was true for 12 years, but Grant's remains were buried in the tomb in 1897
~Napoleon
#He was buried in France
~Churchill
#He was buried in England
~Mother Teresa
#She was buried in India
i}
```

Multiple choice with multiple right answers

That is, using checkboxes, not radio buttons:

```
What two people are entombed in Grant's tomb? {
  ~%-100%No one
  ~%50%Grant
  ~%50%Grant's wife
  ~%-100%Grant's father
}
```

True-false

In this question-type the answer indicates whether the statement is true or false. The answer should be written as {TRUE} or {FALSE}, or abbreviated to {T} or {F}.

```
// question: 0 name: TrueStatement using {T} style
::TrueStatement about Grant::Grant was buried in a tomb in New York City.{T}

// question: 0 name: FalseStatement using {FALSE} style
::FalseStatement about sun::The sun rises in the West.{FALSE}
```

Short answer

Answers in Short Answer question-type are all prefixed by an equal sign (=), indicating that they are all correct answers. The answers must not contain a tilde.

Here are two examples using the simple method showing possible right answers for credit.

```
Who's buried in Grant's tomb?{=Grant =Ulysses S. Grant =Ulysses Grant}
```

```
Two plus two equals {=four =4}
```

If there is only one correct Short Answer, it may be written without the equal sign prefix, as long as it cannot be confused as True-False.

Matching

Matching pairs begin with an equal sign (=) and are separated by this symbol "->". There must be at least three matching pairs.

```
Match the following countries with their corresponding capitals. {
  =Canada -> Ottawa
  =Italy   -> Rome
  =Japan   -> Tokyo
  =India    -> New Delhi
}
```

```
}
}
```

Matching questions do not support feedback or percentage answer weights.

Missing word

The Missing Word format automatically inserts a fill-in-the-blank line (like this _____) in the middle of the sentence. To use the Missing Word format, place the answers where you want the line to appear in the sentence.

```
Moodle costs {~lots of money =nothing ~a small amount} to download from moodle.org.
```

If the answers come before the closing punctuation mark, a fill-in-the-blank line will be inserted for the "missing word" format. All question types can be written in the Missing Word format.

There must be a blank line (double carriage return) separating questions. For clarity, the answers can be written on separate lines and even indented. Some examples:

```
Mahatma Gandhi's birthday is an Indian holiday on {
~15th
~3rd
=2nd
} of October.

Since {
~495 AD
=1066 AD
~1215 AD
~ 43 AD
}
the town of Hastings England has been "famous with visitors".
```

Numerical questions

The answer section for Numerical questions must start with a number sign (#). Numerical answers can include an error margin, which is written following the correct answer, separated by a colon. So for example, if the correct answer is anything between 1.5 and 2.5, then it would be written as follows {#2:0.5}. This indicates that 2 with an error margin of 0.5 is correct (i.e., the span from 1.5 to 2.5). If no error margin is specified, it will be assumed to be zero.

Here is a simple numerical format question. It will accept a range of 5 years.

```
When was Ulysses S. Grant born?{#1822:5}
```

It is a good idea to check the margins of the range, 3.141 is not counted as correct and 3.142 is considered in the range.

```
What is the value of pi (to 3 decimal places)? {#3.14159:0.0005}.
```

Optionally, numerical answers can be written as a span in the following format {#MinimumValue..MaximumValue}.

```
What is the value of pi (to 3 decimal places)? {#3.141..3.142}.
```

Moodle's browser interface does not support multiple numerical answers, but Moodle's code can and so does GIFT. This can be used to specify numerical multiple spans, and can be particularly usefully when combined with percentage weight grades. If multiple answers are used, they must be separated by an equal sign, like short answer questions.

```
When was Ulysses S. Grant born? {#  
    =1822:0  
    =%50%1822:2  
}
```

Note that since Moodle's browser GUI didn't support multiple answers for Numerical questions, there's no way in older Moodle versions to see them or edit them through Moodle. The only way to change a numerical answer beyond the first, is to delete the question and re-import it (or use something like phpMyAdmin). But better would be to upgrade your Moodle to at least 1.9.

Essay

An essay question is simply a question with an empty answer field. Nothing is permitted between the curly braces at all.

```
Write a short biography of Dag Hammarskjöld. {}
```

Description

A description "question" has no answer part at all

```
You can use your pencil and paper for these next math questions.
```

Options

In addition to these basic question types, this filter offers the following options: line comments, question name, feedback and percentage answer weight.

Line Comments

Comments that will not be imported into Moodle can be included in the text file. This can be used to provide headers or more information about questions. All lines that start with a double backslash (not counting tabs or spaces) will be ignored by the filter.

```
// Subheading: Numerical questions below
What's 2 plus 2? {#4}
```

Comments will be exported from Moodle and will include the unique question id. The above question after it was imported and then exported from Moodle:

```
// question: 914 name: What's 2 plus 2?
::What's 2 plus 2?:What's 2 plus 2?{#
    =4:0#
}
```

Question Name

A question name can be specified by placing it first and enclosing it within double colons (::.....:).

```
::Kanji Origins::Japanese characters originally
came from what country? {=China}
```

```
::Thanksgiving Date::The American holiday of Thanksgiving is
celebrated on the {~second ~third =fourth} Thursday of November.
```

If no question name is specified, the entire question will be used as the name by default.

Feedback

Feedback can be included for each answer by following the answer with a number sign (# also known as a hash mark) and the feedback.

```
What's the answer to this multiple-choice question? {
  ~wrong answer#feedback comment on the wrong answer
  ~another wrong answer#feedback comment on this wrong answer
  =right answer#Very good!
}
```

```
//From The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy
Deep Thought said " {
  =forty two#Correct according to The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy!
  =42#Correct, as told to Loonquawl and Phouchg
  =forty-two#Correct!
} is the Ultimate Answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, The Universe, and Everything."

42 is the Absolute Answer to everything.{
FALSE#42is the Ultimate Answer.#You gave the right answer.}
```

For Multiple Choice questions, feedback is displayed only for the answer the student selected. For short answer, feedback is shown only when students input the corresponding correct answer. For true-false questions, there can be one or two feedback strings. The first is shown if the student gives the wrong answer. The second if the student gives the right answer.

Percentage Answer Weights

Percentage answer weights are available for both Multiple Choice and Short Answer questions. Percentage answer weights can be included by following the tilde (for Multiple Choice) or equal sign (for Short Answer) with the desired percent enclosed within percent signs (e.g., %50%). This option can be combined with feedback comments.

Difficult question.{ ~wrong answer ~%50%half credit answer =full credit answer}

```
::Jesus' hometown::Jesus Christ was from {
  ~Jerusalem#This was an important city, but the wrong answer.
  ~%25%Bethlehem#He was born here, but not raised here.
  ~%50%Galilee#You need to be more specific.
  =Nazareth#Yes! That's right!
}.

::Jesus' hometown:: Jesus Christ was from {
  =Nazareth#Yes! That's right!
  =%75%Nazereth#Right, but misspelled.
  =%25%Bethlehem#He was born here, but not raised here.
}
```

Note that the last two examples are essentially the same question, first as multiple choice and then as short answer.

Note that it is possible to specify percentage answer weights that are NOT available through the browser interface. The Match Grades drop-down on the import page determines how these are handled. You can either request that an error be reported or that the answer weight be adjusted to the nearest valid answer weight.

Specify text-formatting for the question The question text (only) may have an

optional text format specified. Currently the available formats are moodle (Moodle Auto-Format), html (HTML format), plain (Plain text format) and markdown (Markdown format). The format is specified in square brackets immediately before the question text. See Formatting text for further information.

```
[markdown]The *American holiday of Thanksgiving* is celebrated on the {
~second
~third
~fourth
} Thursday of November.
```

Multiple Answers

The Multiple Answers option is used for multiple choice questions when two or more answers must be selected in order to obtain full credit. The multiple answers option is enabled by assigning partial answer weight to multiple answers, while allowing no single answer to receive full credit.

```
What two people are entombed in Grant's tomb? {
~No one
~%50%Grant
~%50%Grant's wife
~Grant's father
}
```

Note that there is no equal sign (=) in any answer and the answers should total no more than 100%, otherwise Moodle will return an error. To avoid the problem of students automatically getting 100% by simply checking all of the answers, it is best to include negative answer weights for wrong answers.

```
What two people are entombed in Grant's tomb? {
~%-50%No one
~%50%Grant
~%50%Grant's wife
~%-50%Grant's father
}
```

Special Characters ~ = # { }

These symbols ~ = # { } : control the operation of this filter and cannot be used as normal text within questions. Since these symbols have a special role in determining the operation of this filter, they are called "control characters." But sometimes you may want to use one of these characters, for example to show a mathematical formula in a question. The way to get around this problem is "escaping" the control characters. This means simply putting a backslash (\) before a control character so the filter will know that you want to use it as a literal character instead of as a control character. For example:

```
Which answer equals 5? {
  ~ \= 2 + 2
  = \= 2 + 3
  ~ \= 2 + 4
}
```

```
:::GIFT Control Characters:::
Which of the following is NOT a control character for the GIFT import format? {
  ~ \~      # \~ is a control character.
  ~ \=      # \= is a control character.
  ~ \#      # \# is a control character.
  ~ \{      # \{ is a control character.
  ~ \}      # \} is a control character.
  = \       # Correct! \ (backslash) is not a control character. BUT,
            it is used to escape the control characters.
}
```

When the question is processed, the backslash is removed and is not saved in Moodle.

Specifying Categories

It is possible to change the category into which the questions are added within the GIFT file. You can change the category as many times as you wish within the file. All questions after the modifier up to the next modifier or the end of the file will be added to the specified category. Up to the first category modifier the category specified on the import screen will be used. Note that for this to work the from file: box must be ticked on the import screen.

To include a category modifier include a line like this (with a blank line before and after):

```
$CATEGORY: tom/dick/harry
```

or simply

```
$CATEGORY: mycategory
```

...the first example specifies a path of nested categories. In this case the questions will go into harry. The categories are created if they do not exist.

To find out how your categories are organized, you might try exporting some questions including category data first and check the exported GIFT formatted file. The lowest level of system context might give you something like
\$CATEGORY: \$system\$/...

Making questions case sensitive

Short Answer questions can be made case sensitive by changing "0" to "1" in the following line **of your moodle/question/format/gift/format.php file**:

```
$question->usecase = 0; // Ignore case
```

Hints and Tips

- Use the ::title:: at the beginning of every question to organize your questions when Moodle presents a list or exports them as another GIFT file. When the title is left blank, Moodle will put the beginning of the question as the title. Some teachers want to see something like "001 LIT101 Poe ref Purloin Letter" or "The Purloin Letter was written by (AmLit pg 254)" in the title.
- You can specify markup if you need to format the question by setting [html], [moodle], [plain] or [markdown] just before the question text. See more about this in the reference pdf below.
- In the Lesson module, in a question page, correct answers jump by default to Next page and incorrect answers jump to This page (i.e. student has to "try again"). When importing from a GIFT format file, this is exactly the mechanism which is used.
- If you want a student to be taken directly from one question to the next irrespective of their answer being correct or incorrect: in the Lesson Settings, set Maximum number of attempts: to 1.
 - Please note, however, that a message "correct / incorrect" will still be displayed to the student upon answering each question. If you do not want this (default) feedback message to be displayed then enter your own feedback message (i.e. "continue", "---", etc.)
 - In case you want no visible message displayed then enter a non-breaking space as feedback. Moodle will not put it's automatic response because it sees the blank space. To do this, put a # after the answer and write (without spaces between these characters).
- Need to use a special GIFT character in your question or answer? Put a \ in front of the GIFT character.
 - For example if you want to use curly braces, { or }, or equal sign, =, or # or ~ in a GIFT file (in a math question including TeX expressions) you must "escape" them by preceding them with a \ directly in front of each { or } or =. It is possible to use a replace program/macro/editor filter to do this conversion before importing to Moodle.
- Want to change T/F type questions to multiple choice? Consider exporting the T/F questions as a GIFT file, then using a text editor to replace the (T) with (=True ~False). Perhaps change the title slightly so you will recognize the new questions.
- Alphabetic case-sensitive comparison is disabled by default. If you need case-sensitive comparison for short answer questions (an unusual need), precede them with:

```
$question->usecase = 1;
```

surrounded by blank lines.

Word processor and spreadsheet tools that create GIFTs

Several contributors have used macros to generate GIFT files from a more familiar popular programs.

- There are Word macros available for easily creating GIFT files. See this forum thread for links to downloadable files for different Word versions..
- There are several Excel spreadsheets for generating GIFT files. Several people have built upon other contributors work.
 - The latest version was posted on 10 April 2007 and can be found in this thread with this file name: Excel2GIFTv1.1.zip by Timothy Takemoto. There is also a set of instructions Excel2GIFTv1.1_Instructions.rtf by Jeff Shek on the same day in that thread.
 - video tutorial for using Excel2GIFTv2.xls
 - An earlier version of this Excel spreadsheet for generating multiple choice GIFT files initially created by Olga Forlani and improved by A. T. Wyatt.
- There is a project, Libre Office templates, for generating GIFT files in Writer. It is located in

OOo template 2013 to write exams and convert to GIFT format

- There are Open Office templates for generating GIFT files in Writer. These are located in the Quiz forum in the OOo template to write exams and convert to GIFT format thread.
 - The most recent for OO 2.x is "OOo2GIFT_Template_05.zip" posted 17 December 2005 by Enrique Castro.
 - An earlier version is "GIFT_template_OOo.zip" posted 22 March 2005 by Enrique Castro.
- There is an easy to use on line multiple question generator at a4esl.org. Here you write your question(s) without formatting marks, select Moodle and press the generate quiz button. This creates GIFT formatted text that can be pasted into a file for importing into Moodle.
 - The initial format requires fewer keystrokes (it uses line position and returns) than the GIFT format, so you should save time and be less likely to create invalid data.
 - Quiz authoring template for Microsoft Word link
 - Moodle XML Converter [1]
 - GIFT format parser library in Ruby [2]

GIFT format with medias (images, sound...)

The GIFT with medias optional plugin is an import format similar to Gift and uses the same syntax, but instead of a text file it imports a zip file containing the gift text file and media files (images, sounds, ...).

See also

- Here is a 2-column PDF GIFT Reference Sheet
- Import and export FAQ
- Aiken Format

External links

- Google Summer of Code 2010 Proposal: GIFT Conversion (Wikiversity)
- GIFT Format for Quiz Items with Images
- On line Gift format generator from plain text

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Category: Questions

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