UDiscuss User Guide

Official Manual of the University of Utah's Discussion Board Website 10/21/2022

Rationale Behind Our Design Decisions

We decided to create our user guide within a pdf because we found it common in other discussion forum applications to do so. Piazza, for instance, has multiple pdfs for user guides of various lengths, such as their quick guide and user manual. Canvas uses a pdf for their user guide as well, but also has a community website that one can be redirected to by hitting the "Help" button in Canvas. Thus, we thought it would be a good idea to create a pdf and have it linked in our "Help" page in UDiscuss. Another reason behind us using a pdf is that creating a clickable table of contents is easy and very user-friendly. With this, we were also able to make clickable links throughout the document that directs a user to a different section.

Our user guide is split up into seven sections, each containing specific questions one may have about that section. The first section, Introduction, introduces new users to the application and gives an overview of basic navigation throughout the application. The rest of the sections - Posts, Comments, Settings, Professors, Class Instructors, and Administrators, goes into great detail about what each item is and how tasks are carried out to achieve goals. The questions in each section walk the user through how they would go about a specific task, generally walking them through examples to make tasks absolutely clear.

As of right now, we have decided not to have a section specifically for common errors - we believe that if common errors arrive, we will want to redesign our application as opposed to making many users learn from the guide. However, applications do get complex and we are willing to rethink this. We believe that our guide is straightforward enough to use so that when errors do arrive, users can easily navigate to the section they need help in using our table of contents.

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Introduction

What is UDiscuss?

UDiscuss is an online classroom forum application that's purpose is to meet the discussional needs of students and their instructors in a straightforward manner. UDiscuss' main functionalities are similar to those already found in other forum applications, such as Piazza. It allows students and instructors to create questions and notes, while also letting them write questions and comments on existing posts. Students can post anonymously, send private messages to instructors, and edit posts using a rich text editor. To better understand UDiscuss, please navigate through this guide. You can click any of the questions in the table of contents to more quickly reach it in the user guide.

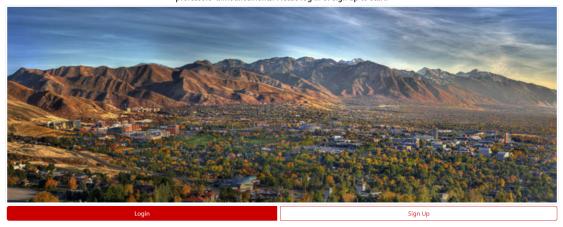
How do I sign up?

On the welcome page, click the button that says "Sign Up" in the bottom right.

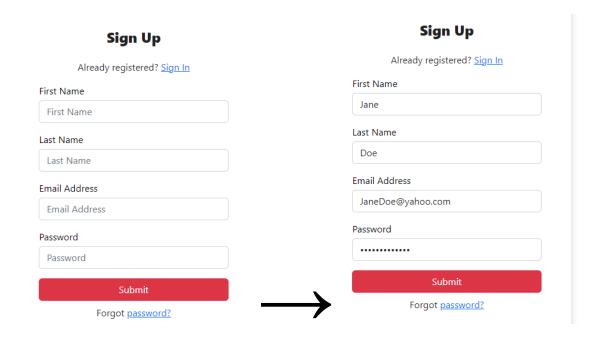
Welcome To



Home of the university's new online discussion forum. Here is where you can post questions to your class, participate in discussions, and view your professors' announcements. Please log in or sign up to start!



The following page will be brought up, in which all fields are required. Fill them out, then click "Submit'.



You will then be prompted to login, which is described in the next section.

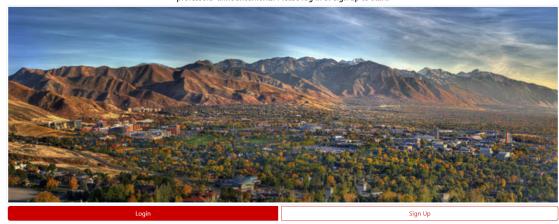
How do I login?

You will automatically be directed to the UDiscuss welcome page if you are not logged in:

Welcome To



Home of the university's new online discussion forum. Here is where you can post questions to your class, participate in discussions, and view your professors' announcements. Please log in or sign up to start!



From here, click the login button in the bottom left. From there, you will be presented with this screen:

Sign In

Not registered yet? Sign Up

Email address

Enter email

Password

Enter password

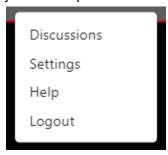
Submit

Forgot password?

Now, put in your login details (keep in mind you need to sign up before doing this step). Once you have done so, click submit and you will be logged in.

How do I log out?

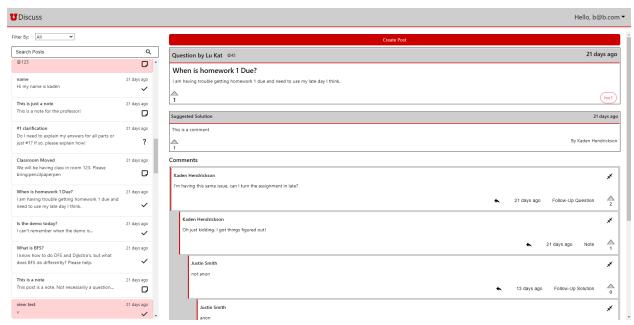
You can log out by clicking your first name in the top where it says "Hello, <Your Name>" and you will be presented with this dropdown:



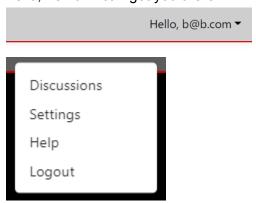
Then you just select the "logout" button to log out of your account.

How do I navigate through the application?

When logged in, you will be directed to the main page called "Discussions":



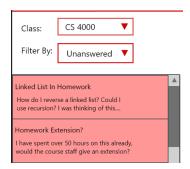
To participate in class discussions, all information you will need is here. However, if you'd like to change your settings, go to the help page, or logout, the dropdown at the top right that says Hello, <email> can get you there:



Note that <u>professors</u> and <u>administrators</u> will have extra dropdown options for managing courses and user roles.

How do I view posts from a different class?

To view a class' posts, navigate to the discussions page. There will already be a class selected by default, but you can change it using the "Class" dropdown:



Posts

What is a post?

Posts are written by students and instructors in order to ask questions or make something known to the rest of the class.



A post can be of two types:

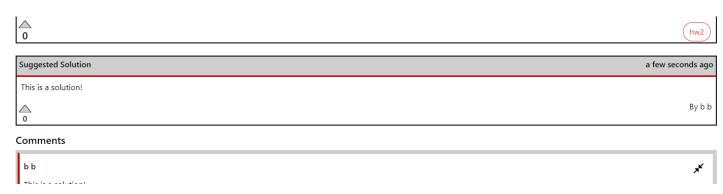
- A note is a post that other users may find useful to view and does not require a solution reply be written. However, it does allow for follow-up questions and notes in the comment section.
- A question is something that a user is looking for an answer to and requires the course staff or a member of the class to post a solution reply for it. Question posts allow for comments to be solutions, follow-up questions, follow-up solutions, and notes.

How do I view the solution to a question post?

If a post is of type question, then a solution box will be used for its best answer. If no answer is given, a post will be shown like this:

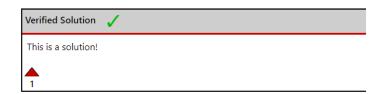


As you can see, it says no solution exists at this time. If a user is to <u>make a solution comment</u>, then a solution box will appear:



This solution is a "Suggested Solution", since it has not been <u>verified by an instructor</u> yet. When there are multiple solution comments, it will take the comment with the most upvotes and place it into this box.

After a professor verifies a solution, it will be brought up into the solution box if it wasn't there already. The "Suggested Solution" text will now be read as "Verified Solution":

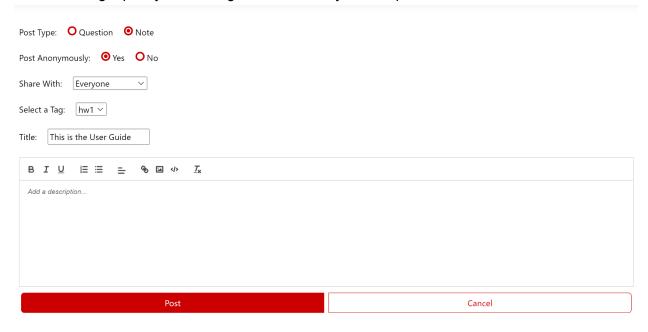


How do I create a post?

A post can be created by clicking the "Create Post" button at the top of the discussions page:



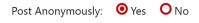
When creating a post you will be greeted with a myriad of options:



A post can have a number of options selected. The post has a post type that can either be a question or a note, as described in the previous section:



Users have the ability to post anonymously if they wish to not reveal their identity to other classmates and the instructors when making their post. They can do so by simply clicking the "Yes" option for "Post Anonymously":



Posts also have the "Share With" field that has a dropdown menu with 3 different options to choose from. This controls who will be able to see their post. The options are: everyone, which will be shared with everyone in the class; instructor only, and professor only.



Next is the tag section, which allows the user to decide which class category (or tag) this post belongs in (refer to this section to learn more about tags). These categories are created by the instructor and usually consist of homework assignments, quizzes, and tests.



There is a textbox for the title which will be the title of the post that appears when a user is viewing the post on the post list or when the post is selected.

Title: This is the User Guide

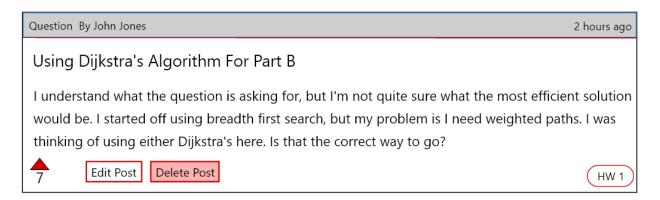
Lastly, there is the post description. This is a rich text editor and is where the description of the post goes. The post description will appear when a post is selected in its unabridged form and it will appear in a preview form on the post list on the sidebar. The description allows for rich text editing with the options shown below:



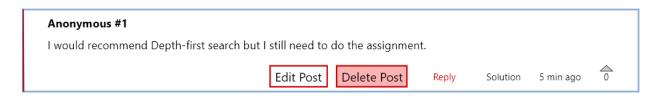
Once your post is fully written, click the "Post" button in the bottom left. Upon successfully getting uploaded, a "Success" message will appear and you will be redirected to the Discussions screen.

How do I edit or delete my posts and comments?

You will notice that on posts you have created, there will be "Edit" and "Delete" buttons on them:



Similarly, comments will as well:



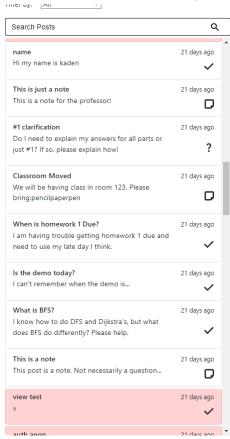
Clicking "Delete" will give this warning before it permanently deletes:



Clicking "Edit" will bring you to the <u>post creation</u> or <u>comment creation</u> page as before, but with your post data already filled in.

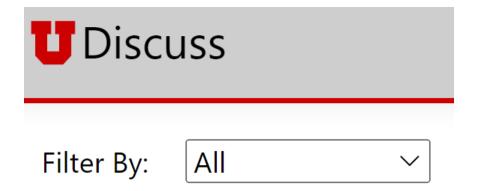
How do I view a different post?

You can view a different post by clicking any post in the post list:



How do I filter through posts?

You can filter through posts by selecting the drop down in the upper right corner that says "Filter By":

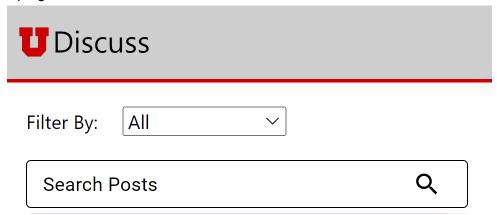


There are five different options to filter by:

- "All" will display all of the posts in that class that you can view.
- "Unread" will only display posts that you have not yet viewed.
- "Unanswered" will display all of the question posts that have not been answered yet.
- "Answered" will display all question posts that have at least one an answer comment to them.
- "Instructor Posts" will display all of the posts that were made by instructors.

How do I search posts for keywords?

To search posts for keywords you can use the "Search Posts" search bar that is located in the top right:



You can then type in the keywords that you want to search for in posts inside of this textbox. To run the search, you can click the magnifying glass or press the enter key. The search will display a post if each keyword is in the post's title, body, or somewhere in the comment section. To remove a search, simply press the X that appears after a search is underway.



How do I narrow down posts by using class tags?

At the top of the Discussions page, there are class tags (or categories) that each post must be a part of:



Clicking on a tag will narrow down the post list to have posts only in that category and will gray out the button.

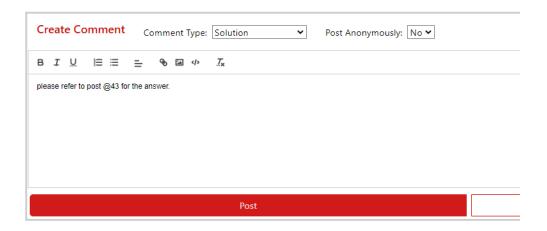


How do I create a reference to another post in my post or comment?

Each post has a reference number that starts with an '@' and has digits following it. It is displayed in the header bar of a post and can be clicked to copy it to your computer. For instance, the post below has reference number @43:



Now, when creating a post or comment, you can simply paste in this reference. Alternatively, you can type out the reference:



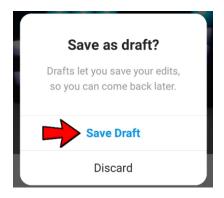
Upon creating a new post or comment, the reference number will now be a link:



Clicking this will redirect you to the referenced post (post @43) as desired.

How do I save a post as a draft?

Once you start creating a post, UDiscuss will recognize that a draft is being created. If you are to hit the cancel button or try navigating to a different page or a post, a pop-up will appear:



By selecting save as draft, your post will now be saved!

How do I view my drafts?

Along the topbar of the discussions page, there is a "Drafts" button beside the Categories:



Upon clicking the button, the posts in the post list will be removed and replace with your draft posts for your class. You will notice that the button is now colored gray:



Upon clicking any of your posts in the draft list, you can edit a draft as before.

What do the symbols on posts mean?

There are three different symbols that appear in the post list items on the far right, like the checkmark shown:



The checkmark means that this is a post of type question and has at least one answer. A question post that is unanswered and will have a question symbol as shown:

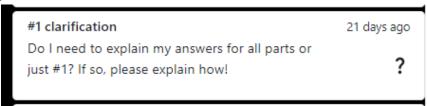


The last symbol is a notepad, which means that the post is a note:



What does the color of the post in the post list mean?

The posts in the post list can be white or red. White means that the user has already viewed the post:



Red means that the post has not been read (or clicked) by the user yet:



What do the growing and shrinking speech bubbles mean when I create a post?

You may notice that there are speech bubbles that grow and shrink below your post as you create it:



These bubbles contain posts that we believe may be similar to your based on the keywords within each. If you think this is the case, click on one of the bubbles to view that post. It will automatically save your post as a draft and show you the similar post.

Comments

What is a comment?

A comment is just that - a way to reply to other users.



You can reply to a post or to another comment There are four comment types:

Solutions - meant to directly answer posts marked as questions. They are only available
on question posts and as top-level comments (a solution cannot be a reply to another
comment).

- Follow-up Questions a way to ask another question related to the original post. They can be written in response to any type of post or as a reply to any other comment.
- Follow-up Solutions used as answers to follow-up questions. This type only appears when replying to a comment of type follow-up question.
- Notes used to provide users with useful information. They are generally used for any type of comment that doesn't fall under the above 3 types.

Where do I view a post's comments?

In order to view a post's comments, you must first select a post. Once you have selected the post, you will see the information about the post such as its title, description, and other useful information about the post. To view the comments, scroll down to the section labeled "Comments" and you will see the comments as pictured:



How do I create a comment?

Create a comment by selecting going to the comment section and selecting the "Add Comment" button:



Alternatively, you can create a comment by replying to a different comment:



After clicking the button, you will be greeted with the comment creation text editor:



Each comment requires you to select its type in the top-left dropdown.

Comment Type:	~

To the right of the "Comment Type" dropdown is a "Post Anonymously" dropdown. You must select between two options - "Yes" and "No". By selecting "Yes", you will post this comment without identity being shown.

Post Anonymously:	~

You can now fill out the comment body, which has the same rich text editor that is present when creating a post. This allows for text to be formatted into different and more readable or fancy formats.

After you have added a description to your comment, click the "Post" button to post the comment.



How do I collapse comments?

Comment threads can get very long. Sometimes it is easier to read through them by collapsing ones that a user has already read. Consider this example of a comment thread:



By clicking the two arrows pointing to each other on a comment,



The comment thread can be collapsed like in this example:



You can see that this comment thread has collapsed. The arrows now are indicating that if we were to click on them it would expand the comment thread:



Comment threads can also be collapsed on any level. Given the original long comment thread example above, if you were to collapse one of the nested conversations it would look like this:



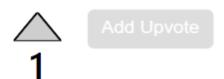
You can now see that this sub-conversation is out of the way, so you can easily view other parts of the conversation.

How do I vote or remove a vote on a post or comment?

If you would like to vote on a post or comment, you will see a gray arrow button in the corner of it:



Hovering over this button will make it clear that clicking will cause you to make an upvote:



Upon clicking, the button will turn red and the total votes will increment!



If you would like to remove a vote, you can click on the arrow again. Similar to adding a vote, hovering over the button confirms that clicking will remove the vote:



Settings

How do I edit my personal information?

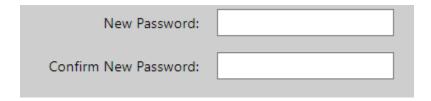
You can edit your personal information by <u>navigating</u> to the Settings page:



In the profile information box, you can change your name and email simply by filling out the text fields:



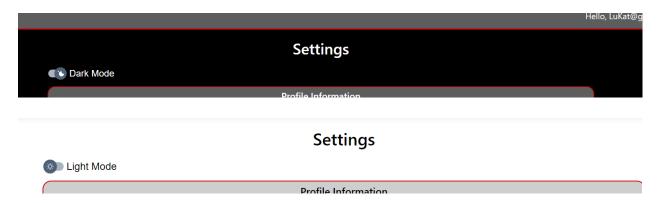
If you would like to change your password, click the red words. Two new textboxes will appear - one that says "new password" and another that says "confirm new password". Type your password into both these boxes:



Lastly, press the save button to save this information.

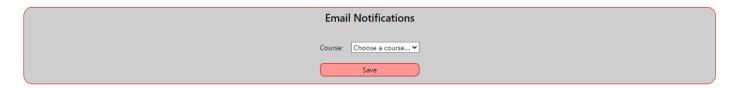
How do I toggle between light and dark mode?

<u>Navigate</u> to the Settings. Then, click the toggle button as shown below to toggle between the two:



How do I set my email notifications?

First, <u>navigate</u> to the settings page. On the settings page, there will be an email notifications box as shown:



Click the "Course" dropdown and select a course. Upon selecting it, your current email settings for that course will be displayed.

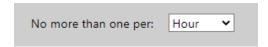


You will have five options for type:

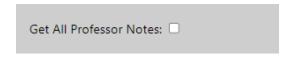
None - You will receive no emails for this course.

- Mine Only this makes it so you only get emails for when people reply to one of your posts or comments.
- Instructors Only this makes it so you only get emails when teaching assistants and professors make posts.
- Mine and Instructors Only Emails sent for the above two options.
- All You will receive emails for posts made by all users in this course.

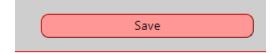
You can then set a maximum of how often you get these emails in the "No more than one per" dropdown. This way, you aren't getting emailed too often. You can set this for an hour, 6 hours, 12 hours, day, 3 days, or week.



Lastly, there's a checkbox for getting all professor announcements. Checking this will make it so you get all note posts made by the professor, regardless of your other notification settings.



When your settings have been set how you want them, click the "Save" button.



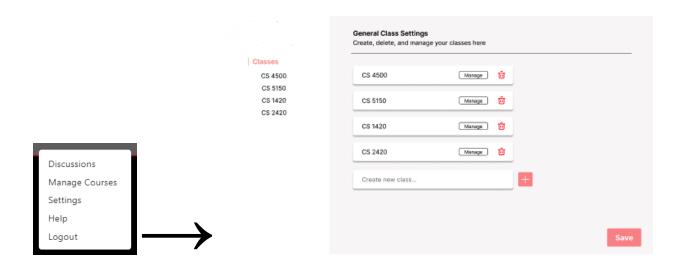
Professors

How do I become a professor in UDiscuss?

<u>Sign up</u> as any other user would. You will initially be in the system as a student, but will have to contact a UDiscuss administrator to have them change your role to a professor. If you do not know an administrator, please email <<u>temporary@utah.edu</u>> to inquire about your role status.

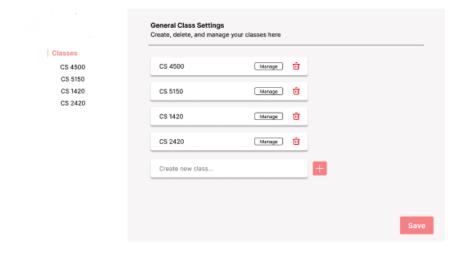
How do I manage courses?

All course management can be completed on the "Manage Courses" page. To navigate there, click the dropdown in the corner that will now have the additional "Manage Courses" option:



How do I create a course?

A course can be created by first <u>navigating</u> to the classes page:



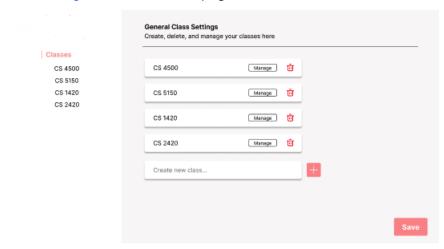
In the bottom textfield write the name of your class, then press the + button.



Your course has now been created!

How do I remove a course?

First, <u>navigate</u> to the courses page:

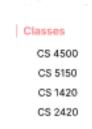


In the list of your courses, find the one you'd like to remove and click the garbage can symbol to complete this task.

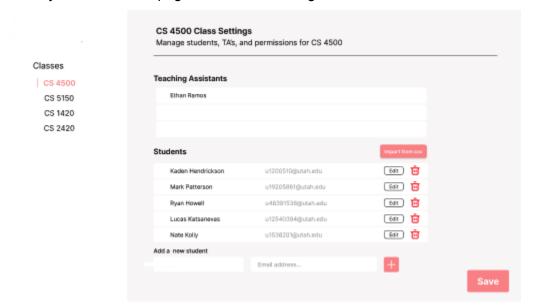


How do I add and remove users from a course?

<u>Navigate</u> to the courses page. Start by selecting the course from the list of courses in the sidebar:



Then, you arrive at the page with all of the things related to the course:



Then add the user's email to the "Add a new Student" section and click the plus:



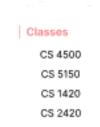
If you would like to remove a student, simply click the garbage icon:



Finally, remember to click the "Save" button to complete the process.

How do I promote a user to a teaching assistant?

<u>Navigate</u> to the courses page. Start by selecting the course from the list of courses in the sidebar:



Then we scroll down to the student in the students list. By clicking edit we will be able to change the role of the user:



Upon clicking edit, there will be two new buttons. One will promote the student to a TA and the other will cancel the editing.



If the student already is a teaching assistant, the "Promote to TA" button will instead say "Demote TA":



In the end, you can save your changes by clicking the "Save" button at the bottom.

How do I add or remove class categories for my class?

<u>Navigate</u> to the courses page. Start by selecting the course from the list of courses in the sidebar:



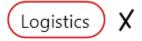
On this page, you will notice the category tag section:



If you want to add a new class category, click the + button. Doing so will create a new cell to type into:



If you would ever like to remove a tag, simply hover over the tag and an X will appear. Clicking the X will remove the category.



Note that removing a course category tag will cause current posts in that post category to no longer have a category associated with it.

Class Instructors

How do I verify a solution for a question post?

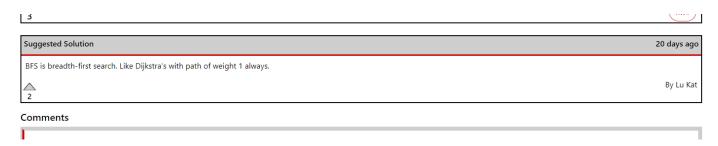
First, navigate to the desired post and scroll to the comment section. You can either:

- Write your own solution comment and verify it (see how to create a comment here).
- Verify an already existing comment.

A comment can be verified only if its type is marked as a solution. You will notice that only top-level comments can be tagged as solutions - replies to other comments cannot be (see <u>solution</u> section for more information). Consider the post shown, where each top-level solution comment has a green "Endorse" button on it:



Also notice that below the post and above the comment section, the solution box currently has a proposed solution since none have been verified yet. This proposed solution is the top-voted one at the moment.



To verify a solution, click "Endorse". As a result, the verify button will go away on all comments and only a "Remove Endorsement" button will be shown on the comment that was verified.



You can ensure the new solution has been verified by taking a look at the solution box. It now has our verified solution in it and is marked as such.

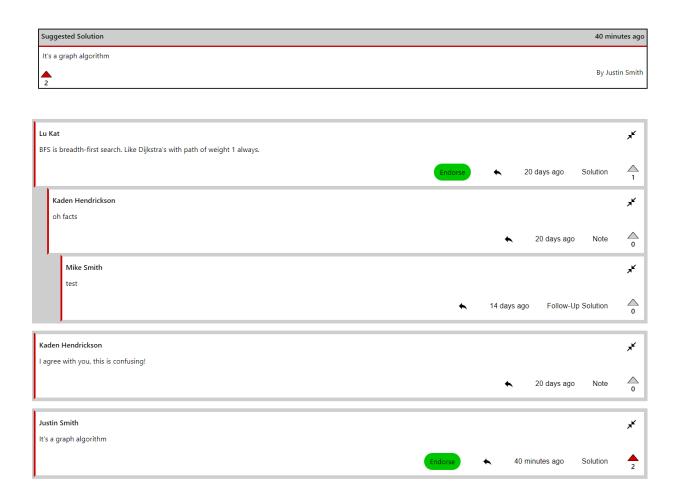


How do I remove a solution's verification?

Navigate to the desired post and scroll down to its comment section. Find the comment of the verified solution. It should have a red "Remove Endorsement" button on it as shown:



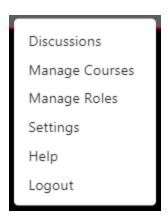
Click the "Remove Endorsement" button to complete this task. Notice that the solution box will now contain a proposed solution now and all of the green "Endorse" buttons will reappear on comments marked as solutions.



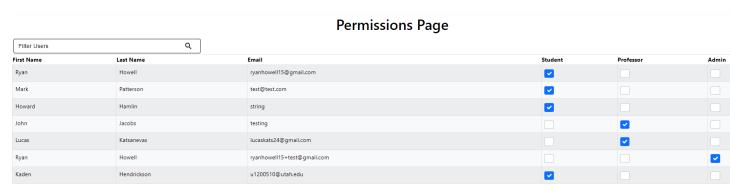
Administrators

How do I change the roles of users?

Click the dropdown button in the top right corner of the screen. Since you are an administrator, there will be an extra option called "Manage Roles". Click that option:



You will be redirected to a new page where all users of the system are displayed on one line each, as shown below:



If you would like to navigate to a specific user, you can scroll through the list.

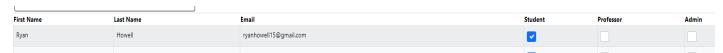
To get to a user quicker, you can use the search bar to search for them by name or email. Do this simply by typing in and then clicking the magnifying button or pressing enter to do the search.



You can remove a search's filtering by clicking the 'X' that appears in the search bar after a search has been made or by .



To change the role of a user, click the radio button in the column of the role you'd like to place them in. The role the user had been in before will now be replaced by the new one.



Note that trying to remove yourself from the admin role will fail and give you an error message.