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# Admin and Mod Guide

## Vanilla Forums

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## Introduction

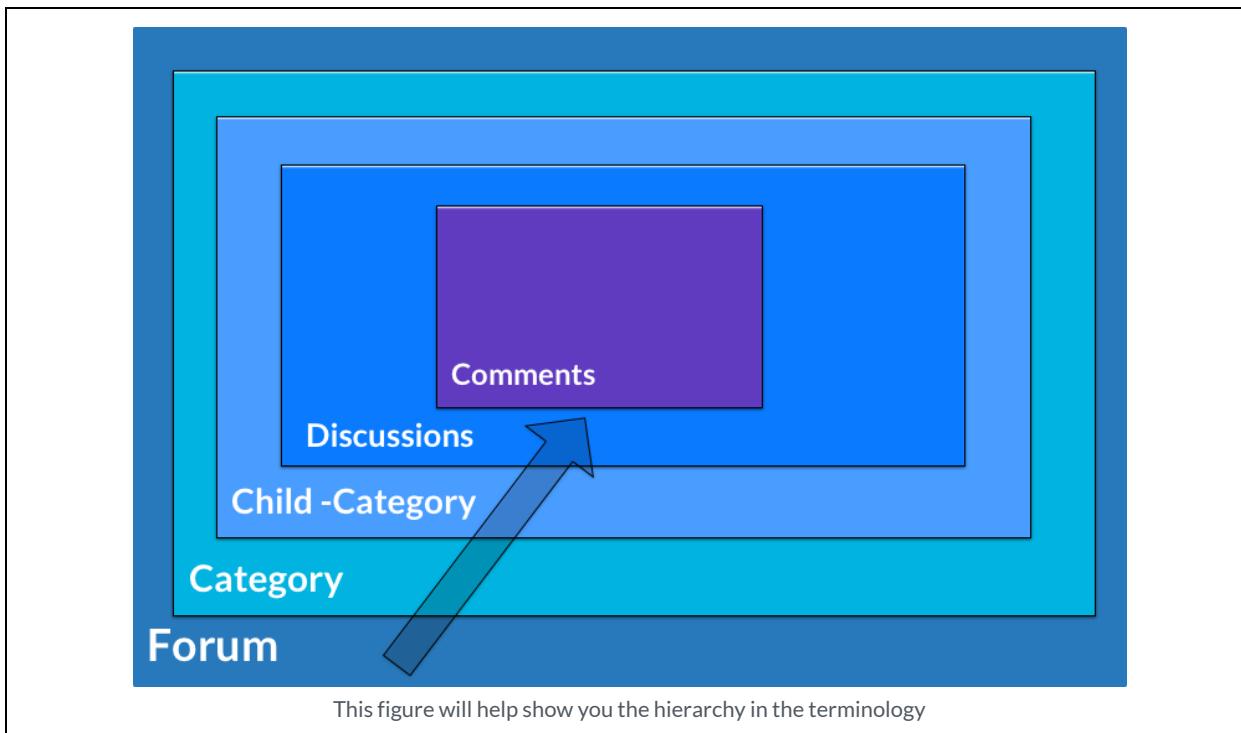
Congratulations on your new community! We are excited to have you as a new customer. To help you and your team learn the basics of running a Vanilla Forum, we have created the following guide. While we tried to cover most of the features, the best way to learn is to try it out before you go live. If you get stuck or need help, contact us on [our support forum](#). We also have some handy companion videos on our [YouTube Channel](#).

## Vanilla Forums Overview

Vanilla Forums is a software-as-a-service community forum software hosted in the cloud. Since 2009, we have been offering customers a way to focus on building their communities, while we worry about all the server and technical underpinnings. As you will see in the following pages, Vanilla is different than many of our competitors. We focus on user experience through better usability and make it easy for forum owners to reward users for positive participation. We also think our solution makes running and managing your community a lot easier (ahem, enjoyable), by not hiding what you need in deep menus and allowing you to spend more time engaging with your community. So let's get going so that you can focus on community building!

## Vanilla Forums Terminology

Before we get into the product, let's take a moment to look at terminology. If you have used forum software before, some of these terms will be common to you. Vanilla Forums, though, does have some different terminology too. Don't worry, it's quick to learn. Below are some terms we will use in this guide and you may encounter dealing with our team:



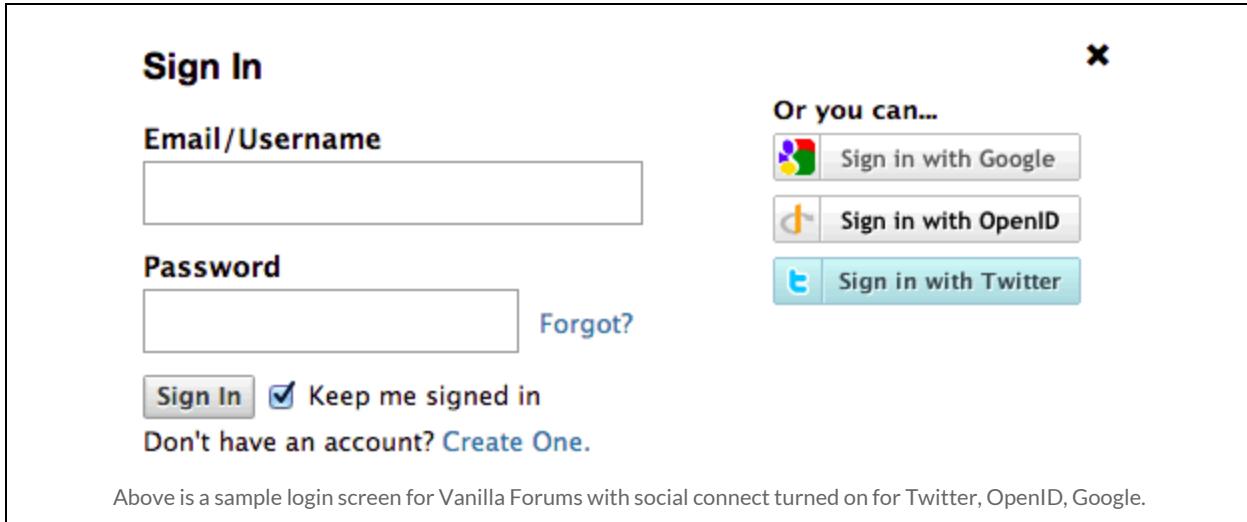
- Forum: This is the actual forum you have, it can also be called "Your Account" by our staff.
- Categories: Sometimes people will call this 'forums'.
- Child categories: These are also known as Sub-Categories or Sub-Forums.
- Discussions: Sometimes called 'threads'.
- Comments: These are replies to a discussion or thread.
- Posts can refer to either a discussion or a comment

There are many more terms to be found in this document, but if you get these basics down, it should help get you on your way.

## Feature Overview

Now with some of the main terms of Vanilla under your belt, let's dive into the features of your Vanilla Forums.

### Member Registration



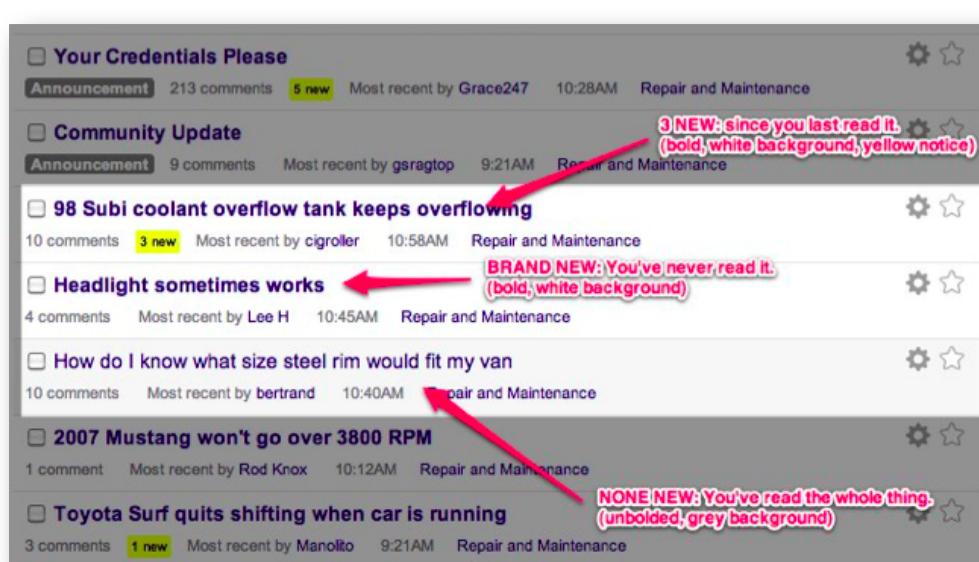
The image shows a sample login screen for Vanilla Forums. The screen has a "Sign In" header and fields for "Email/Username" and "Password". It also includes links for "Forgot?" and "Sign In" with a "Keep me signed in" checkbox. On the right, there is a "Or you can..." section with three social connect options: "Sign in with Google" (disabled), "Sign in with OpenID" (disabled), and "Sign in with Twitter" (enabled). Below the screen, a caption reads: "Above is a sample login screen for Vanilla Forums with social connect turned on for Twitter, OpenID, Google."

There are a couple of ways a user can become a member of your community. We will cover setup later (for admins), but here are the ways people can join your community:

- Basic : New users fill in a form and are granted access immediately.
- Approval : New users are reviewed and approved by your team.
- By invitation: Existing members can invite new members.
- Single Sign On (SSO): New users connect via an existing authentication system.
- Social connect: Users can join using existing social credentials from Google, Twitter, Facebook, Linkedin and Disqus.

## Discussions View

By default, Vanilla is set to the discussion view. In this view, discussions are displayed in chronological order based on latest comment to the Discussion. When a user is logged in, they will see which discussions are new, which have new comments and which are completely read. The number of new comments since the last login is also displayed.



The screenshot shows a list of threads in the Discussions View. Each thread is represented by a card with the following information:

- Title:** The subject of the thread, such as "Your Credentials Please", "Community Update", "98 Subi coolant overflow tank keeps overflowing", etc.
- Type:** "Announcement" or "Discussion".
- Comments:** The total number of comments (e.g., "213 comments", "5 new").
- Most Recent:** The name of the user who posted the most recent comment and the time it was posted (e.g., "Grace247 10:28AM").
- Category:** "Repair and Maintenance".
- Read Status Annotations:**
  - 3 NEW:** Since you last read it. (bold, white background, yellow notice)
  - BRAND NEW:** You've never read it. (bold, white background)
  - NONE NEW:** You've read the whole thing. (unbolded, grey background)
- Settings and Star icons:** Gear and star icons for each thread.

Red arrows point to specific annotations:

- An arrow points to the "3 NEW" annotation above the "98 Subi coolant overflow tank keeps overflowing" thread.
- An arrow points to the "BRAND NEW" annotation above the "Headlight sometimes works" thread.
- An arrow points to the "NONE NEW" annotation above the "Toyota Surf quits shifting when car is running" thread.

The above example highlights how a user will see what is new content to threads they have read, new content they have not seen, and content they already have read.

To increase usability, when a member clicks into previously read discussion, they will jump to the last comment they read. (If you want to change this behaviour, you can contact support).

## Category View

Forum Communities		THREADS	POSTS	LATEST POST
FORUMS				
PAX General Discussion Child Categories: PAX Prime, PAX East, PAX Australia, PAX Archive		5.5K	289.1K	 New PAX? zeale • 8:47PM
Camp Weedonwantcha Camp Weedonwantcha, drawn and written by Katie Rice!		56	1.1K	 Camp Weedonwantcha by Katie Rice — Dwelling Tzinya • 8:31PM
Pinny Arcade This is the place for all your Pin needs. Do you covet pins? Do you crave them? Do you, in fact, need pins? This is the place for you.		34	6.7K	 Pinny Pal Community Thread 2.0 - Please read ... hacky • 8:44PM
Penny Arcade Games This is the place to talk about games Penny Arcade has made! These include but are not limited to Penny Arcade Adventures, the Paint the Line ECG and the games we make with Cryptozoic!		559	7.3K	 Translation BahaBulle • March 18

An example of category first view

Some users may be used to a category first view. This view allows users to see categories and child categories. It may be easier to have this view for existing communities which already have an established ecosystem. The board admin can modify this in appearance.

## Bookmarking

### Welcome to Our New Community


Adrian
March 27
in Announcements
★ ⚙️ 📁

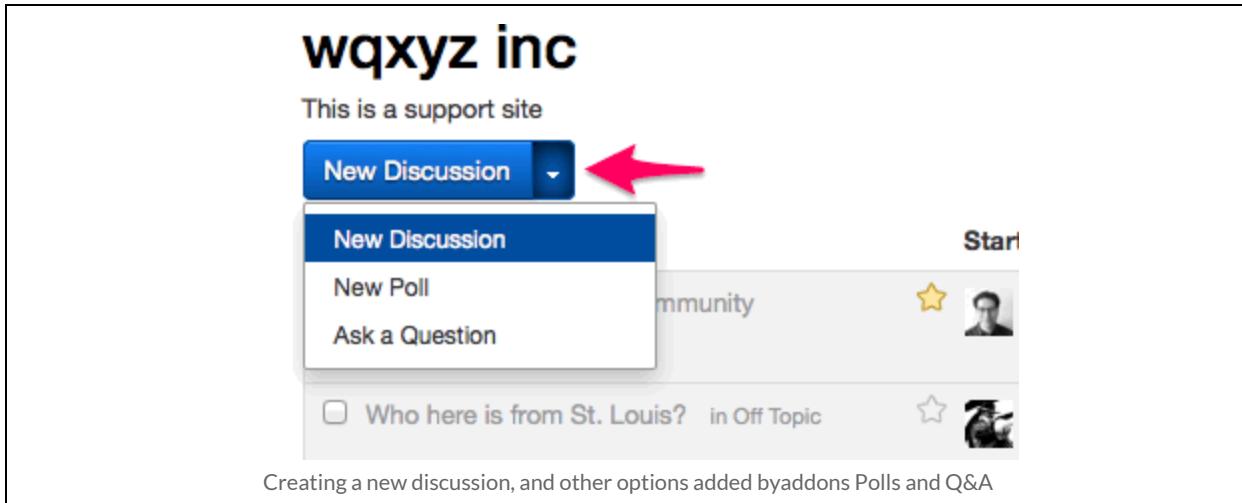
The bookmark by default is displayed as a star. It can be styled.

Welcome to our new community, we are excited to have you here. Please excuse the dust as we prepare to make this an awesome community. Get in early to benefit from our new system of badges. Simply register with your email or choose the social network of your choice.

The bookmark icon as seen in an individual discussion, can also be seen in discussion view as well.

The Bookmark function lets users “favorite” a discussion. They can bookmark in the individual discussion or from the discussion view. Members who bookmark a discussion can receive notifications if a new comment is added to a bookmarked thread.

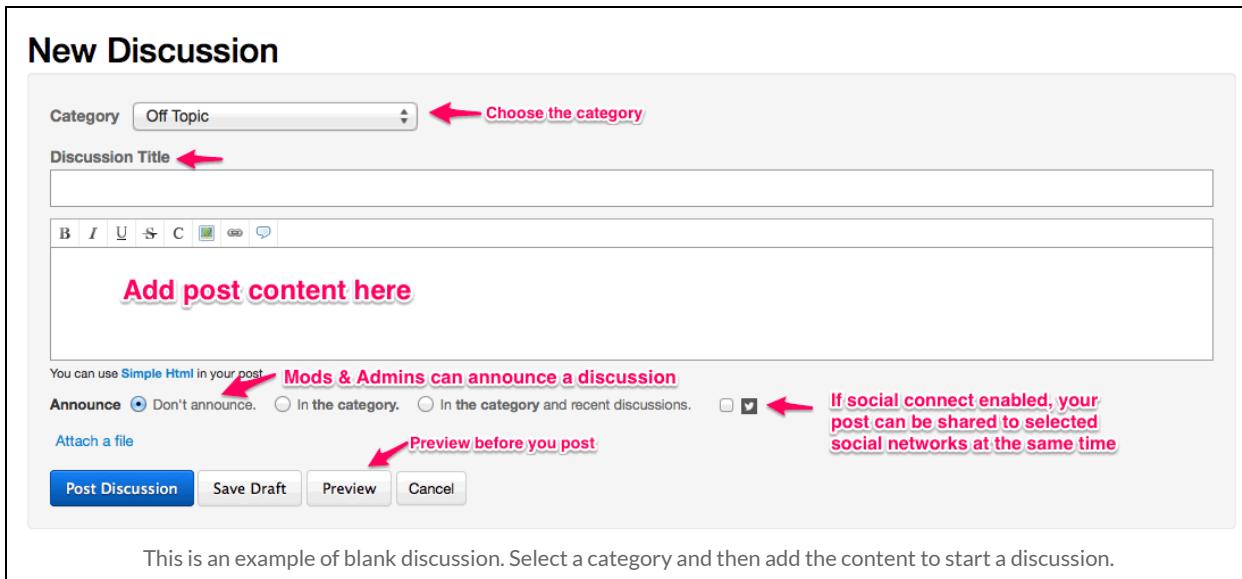
## Creating a Discussion



This screenshot shows the homepage of the wqxyz inc support site. At the top, there's a blue button labeled "New Discussion" with a dropdown arrow. A pink arrow points to this button. A dropdown menu is open, showing three options: "New Discussion", "New Poll", and "Ask a Question". Below the menu, there's a poll titled "Who here is from St. Louis? in Off Topic". On the right side, there are user profiles for "Community" and "Star". At the bottom of the page, a message says "Creating a new discussion, and other options added by addons Polls and Q&A".

You can add a discussion by clicking the “new discussion button”. If the Polls or Q&A addons are enabled by the admin of your community, you will have a drop down option to create a new poll or question.

Once new discussion is selected, it will load a new page which will allow you to compose your discussion. You will need to select a category and add text to the body before it's published. By default, users are allowed to add “Simple HTML” to their post. Our customer support team can change this to Markdown or BBCode.



This screenshot shows the "New Discussion" form. At the top, there's a "Category" dropdown set to "Off Topic" with a pink arrow pointing to it labeled "Choose the category". Below it is a "Discussion Title" input field with a pink arrow pointing to it. The main body area has a placeholder "Add post content here" with a pink arrow pointing to it. At the bottom, there are several options: "Announce" (radio buttons for "Don't announce.", "In the category.", "In the category and recent discussions."), a checkbox for "Preview before you post" (with a pink arrow pointing to it), and a note about social connect: "If social connect enabled, your post can be shared to selected social networks at the same time". At the very bottom, there are four buttons: "Post Discussion", "Save Draft", "Preview", and "Cancel". A note at the bottom of the form says "This is an example of blank discussion. Select a category and then add the content to start a discussion."

The account can also be set to just support text and links with no markup at all. This is common for communities that target children and teens.

If the community admin enables the Ranks addon (more on this later), it is possible to restrict members from using certain kinds of markups until they have proven themselves by “earning” a higher rank.

Out of the box, the discussion box will not have an editor. The most basic editor is the button bar editor, which makes it easy for your members to make simple actions, such as bold text or insert images. There is also a WYSIWYG editor addon which can be used instead of the button bar. We do not recommend the WYSIWYG editor, though, since overly formatted posts can look ugly and too much HTML can set off SPAM filters.

## Announcements

An announcement in Vanilla may also be known as a “Sticky” in other forum software terminology. It’s a way to “pin to the top” or place a particular discussion at the top of the most recent discussions, or if you choose, at the top of a specific category only. You can announce a discussion at the time of discussion creation, or by editing an existing one.

**Edit Discussion**

Category

Discussion Title

Welcome to our new community, we are excited to have you here. Please excuse the dust as we prepare to make this an awesome community. Get in early to benefit from our new system of badges. Simply register with your email or choose the social network of your choice.

There are also lots of things you will appreciate about this community besides Badges & Reactions, for example, automatic embeds. All you need to do is paste the link from Twitter, Pinterest, Vine, YouTube, or Vimeo. Below is an example:

<https://twitter.com/vanilla/status/385330833890217984>

Anyway, enjoy your time here, and don't be shy to reach out with any questions

You can use [Simple Html](#) in your post.

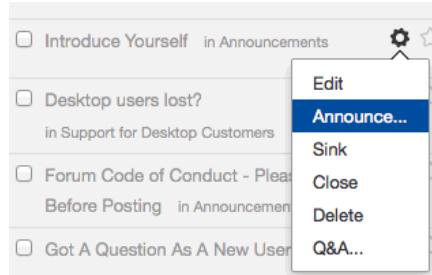
Announce  Don't announce.  In the category.  In the category and recent discussions. ←

Attach a file

You can announce a discussion from the create a discussion page, or by editing an existing discussion

**Choose if you want a discussion to be announced by selecting in this menu**

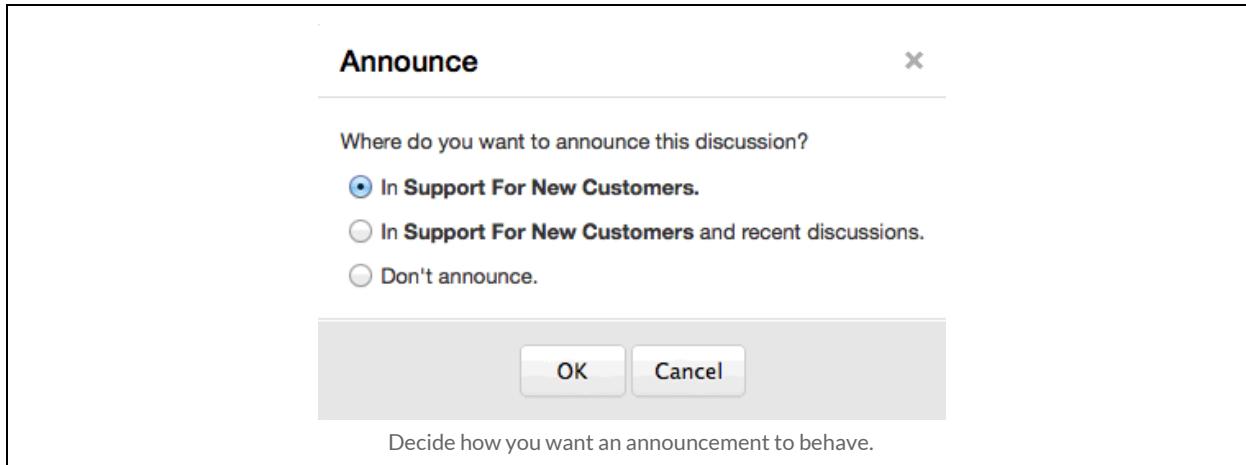
There is also an option to announce right from the category view page by clicking on the gear icon.



You can announce a discussion from the category page, by clicking the gear icon.

Once you click the gear icon, a pop-up will open which allows you to control how you want

the announcement to be handled. You modify or edit this at any time by clicking the gear icon again.



## Adding a Comment

Need Diet Advice

themod 2:13PM In Off Topic

So I started this new diet called the cabbage soup diet. I have lost over 30 lbs. However, once it's done I am done with the whole process I am worried about ballooning up again. Anyone have advice for continuing to eat healthy? I already workout at the gym 3 time a week, so I think I am okay in this department. Thanks!

**Quote** 

**Quote button shows if Quote plugin enabled by admin**

**@mention will notify user that someone is writing about them. Also great way to bring others into conversation**

**Auto-Embed Youtube Video**

**If enabled, you can share your answer to social networks**

**You can attach a file (if your plan allows it)**

**Preview before post**

Leave a Comment

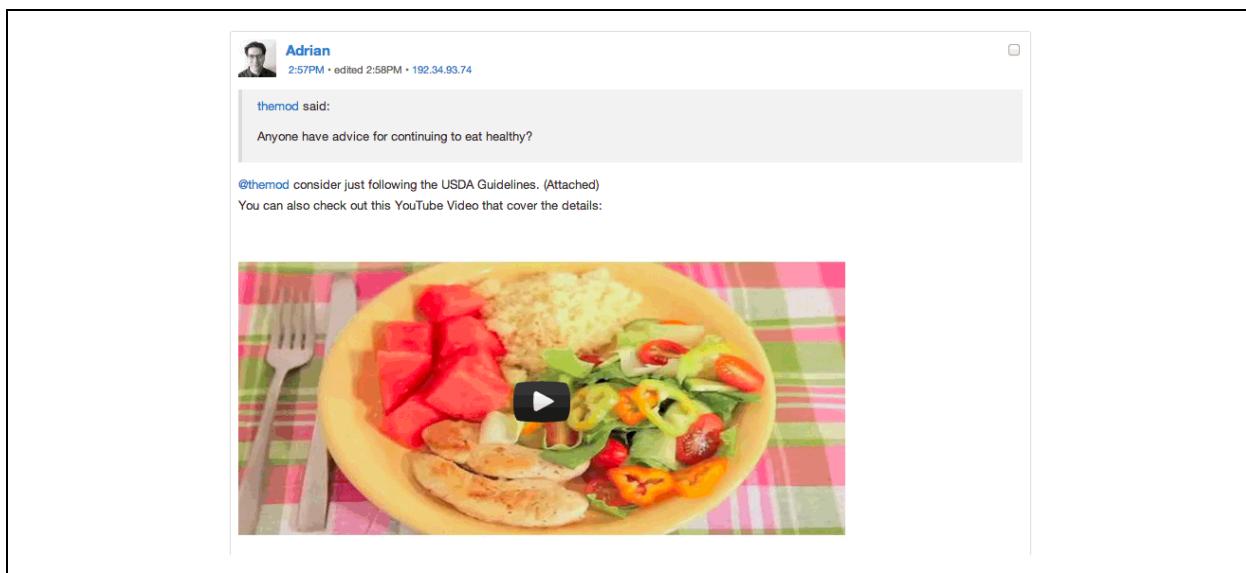
An example of a reply to a discussion

A comment is a reply to a discussion. There are a couple of features to highlight that you

and your community members have access to when making a comment:

- Quoting: A user can choose to “quote” a discussion or a previous comment by clicking the quote button. This button will only appear if the “quotes” addon is enabled by the forum admin.
- @mention: allows you to “mention” users. When you use an @ symbol and begin typing their username, you will be presented with an autocomplete function. Choose the appropriate username. You can also mention other members too in any comment. All mentioned parties will be notified if mentioned. It’s a great way to add others to a discussion
- Auto-embeds: Vanilla automatically formats content from the following services: Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Getty, Pinterest, Vine and Vimeo. It’s as simple as posting the link to the content to have it embedded.
- If social connect is enabled, you can share your comment on the community and have it pushed to whichever social network you select.
- Depending on your plan, Vanilla also allows you the ability to upload files. You can control which users can upload files (with permissions). By default, the following types are enabled to be uploaded: txt, jpg, jpeg, gif, png, bmp, tiff, ico, zip, gz, tar.gz, tgz, psd, ai, fla, swf, pdf, doc, xls, ppt, docx, xlsx, log, rar, 7z. Contact support to modify this list.
- You can also preview the post before it goes live.

Here is an illustration of the example comment published:



## Badges & Reactions

These are two addons which are core to Vanilla's reputation system. They assist in a number of ways:

- Engagement
- Peer moderation
- Content Curation
- Ranks (another addon which assigns capabilities based on reputation)

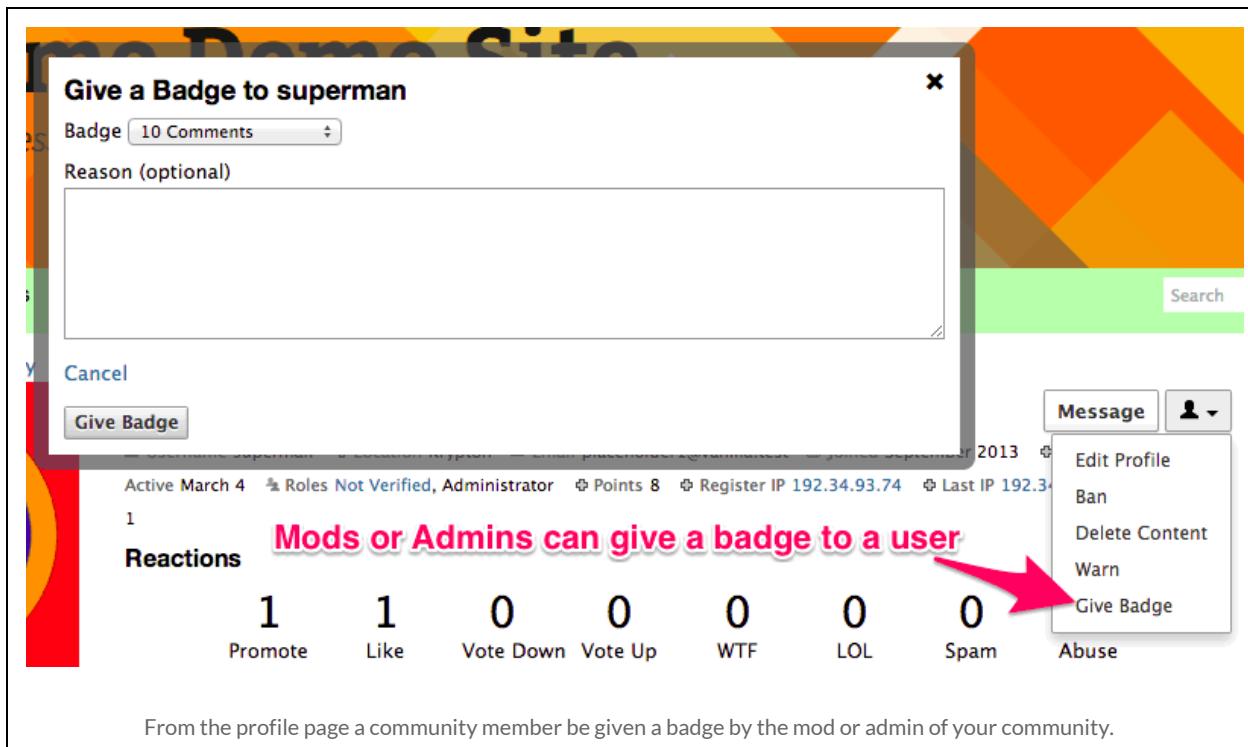
Community members acquire badges and reputation points by receiving positive reactions from other members and from participating in a constructive manner. We will now look a little closer at each of these addons:

### Badges



Badges are a fun addition to any community. Vanilla Forums comes with some standard

badges, but the forum owner can also add or create new custom badges. These custom badges can be made to reference a community's subject matter. They are a great way to



reward users and engage them in positive behaviour. Custom badges can be awarded manually by mods and admins. Only Badge icons and point values can be changed by admins.

Badges can be awarded for doing things like uploading a profile photo, getting positive reactions for other users or answering questions should your community have the Q & A addon enabled.

Members will get a notification when a badge is awarded and it will also be posted to the community activity stream.

## Reactions

Reactions are a small footer below every discussion and comment in your community which allow other community members to react to the content added by members in your community. It is an integral part of the reputation system so admins will want to take great care into which reactions they turn on.

There are also some advanced settings to decide how reactions appear. For example, reactions can also be public or private. We recommend making them public to reduce members abusing the reaction system.

**best steak in the city?**

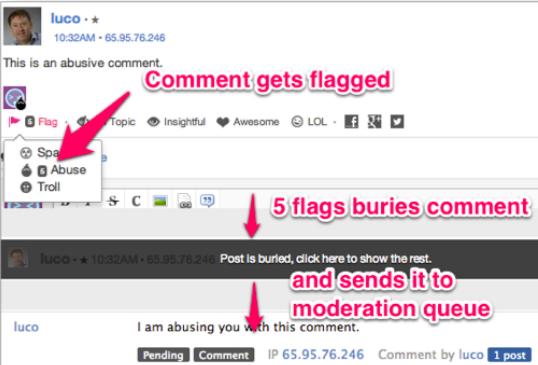
 **superman** Krypton Administrator Level 0  
March 4 edited 5:03PM in Food Flag

Who makes the best  joker

▶ Flag ⚡ Quote - 📲 Promote 🙌 Like 🕊 Vote Down 🔍 Vote Up 🤨 WTF 😂 LOL - Log

An example of reactions.

Reactions work on a point system. By default, a positive reaction awards 1 point. A negative reaction removes 1 point. Moderators have a special reaction called 'promote' which awards 5 points. Similarly, if a Mod/Admin clicks on the SPAM reaction, it is automatically sent to the SPAM moderation queue. If a Mod/Admin clicks on the Abuse reaction, the user is sent to the Moderation queue. If a comment or discussion receives 3 Abuse or SPAM reactions from regular members, it will be sent to moderation.

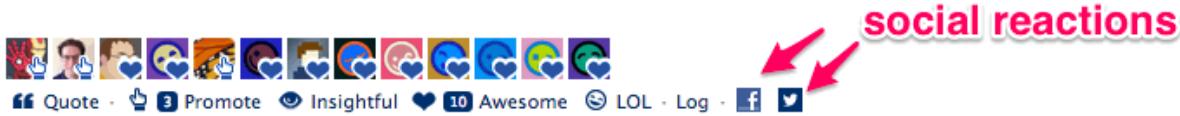


The screenshot shows a comment by user 'luco' with a flag icon. A red arrow points to the 'Flag' button with the text 'Comment gets flagged'. Another red arrow points to the message '5 flags buries comment' with the text '5 flags buries comment'. A third red arrow points to the message 'Post is buried, click here to show the rest.' with the text 'and sends it to moderation queue'.

Content flagged and sent to the moderation queue.

Content is automatically buried if it gets 5 abuse reactions. It will be greyed out and collapsed. It will then be up to the moderator to review.

Positive reactions (e.g.: like, agree) or promote reaction from a mod on a members post or discussion will promote it to the 'Best of' page (more on this coming later in manual).



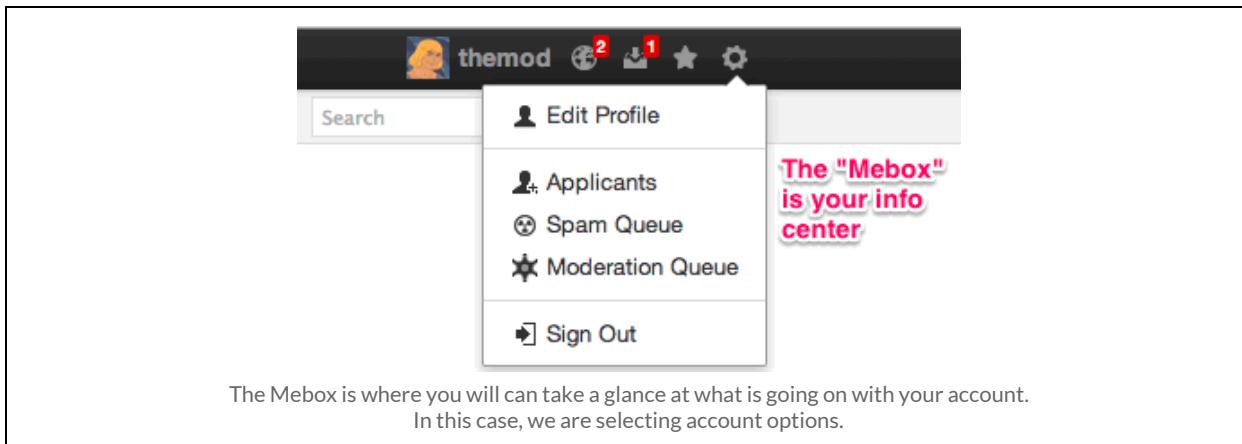
The screenshot shows a row of reaction icons followed by social sharing icons for Facebook and Twitter. Red arrows point to these social icons with the text 'social reactions'.

Social reactions will show if social connect is enabled.

In the reaction footer, but not controlled by the reactions addon, are social reactions. When social integrations are enabled by the forum admin, social icons will appear next to reactions. If enabled, both registered and non-registered members will be able to share content on Twitter, Facebook or Google+ without leaving the community.

Vanilla marks up content with Open Graph tags, so that it is properly displayed without any other steps needed by forum members.

## Mebox

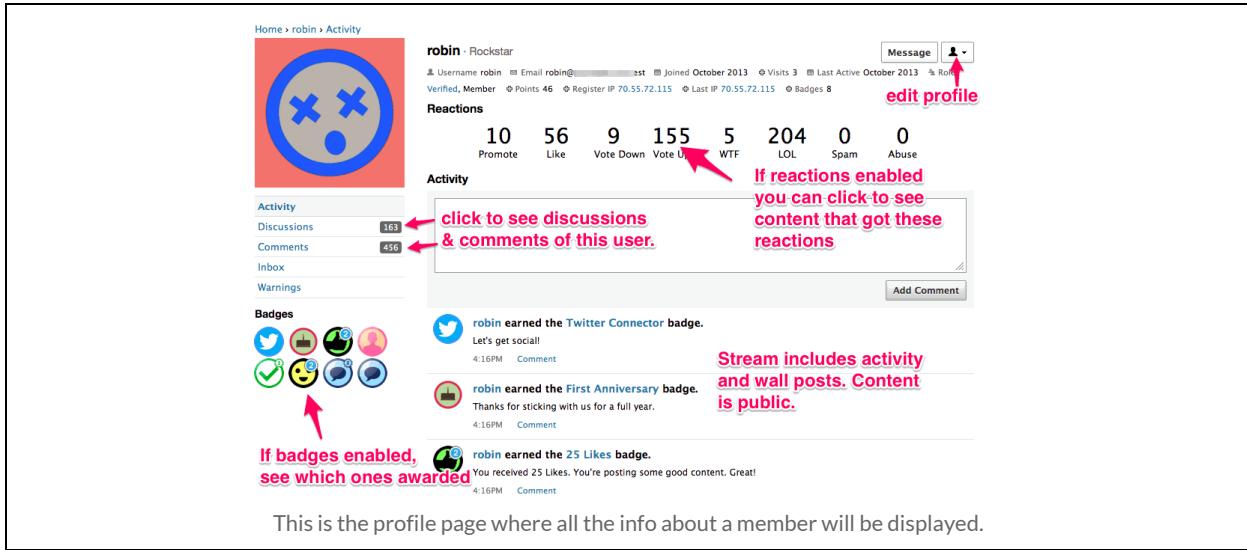


The screenshot shows a user profile page with a sidebar titled "Mebox". The sidebar contains links for "Edit Profile", "Applicants", "Spam Queue", "Moderation Queue", and "Sign Out". A pink callout box highlights the "Edit Profile" link with the text "The 'Mebox' is your info center". Below the sidebar, a text box states: "The Mebox is where you will can take a glance at what is going on with your account. In this case, we are selecting account options."

The “Mebox” is where you can quickly get info about your account on the forum. From left to right you have the following information:

- Notifications: Any notification related to you or your content. For example, when you get mentioned, when someone comments on your discussion or when you receive a special badge.
- Inbox: This is where you will get a notification should you have any unread private messages.
- Bookmarks: Quickly access any discussions you have bookmarked.
- Account Options: Click these links to modify your profile or view the spam or moderation queue. (More on those queues later.)

## User Profile



The screenshot shows the User Profile page for a member named 'robin'. At the top right, there are 'Message' and 'edit profile' buttons. Below them is a 'Reactions' section with counts: Promote (10), Like (56), Vote Down (9), Vote Up (155, highlighted with a red arrow), WTF (5), LOL (204), Spam (0), and Abuse (0). To the right of the 'Vote Up' count is a note: 'If reactions enabled you can click to see content that got these reactions'. Below the reactions, there's an 'Activity' sidebar with links to Discussions (163), Comments (456), Inbox, and Warnings. Under 'Badges', several icons are shown, with one highlighted by a red arrow and the text: 'If badges enabled, see which ones awarded'. A callout box over the 'Activity' sidebar says: 'click to see discussions & comments of this user.' At the bottom, a note states: 'Stream includes activity and wall posts. Content is public.' Below the note, three recent activity items are listed:

- robin earned the Twitter Connector badge. Let's get social! 4:16PM Comment
- robin earned the First Anniversary badge. Thanks for sticking with us for a full year. 4:16PM Comment
- robin earned the 25 Likes badge. You received 25 Likes. You're posting some good content. Great! 4:16PM Comment

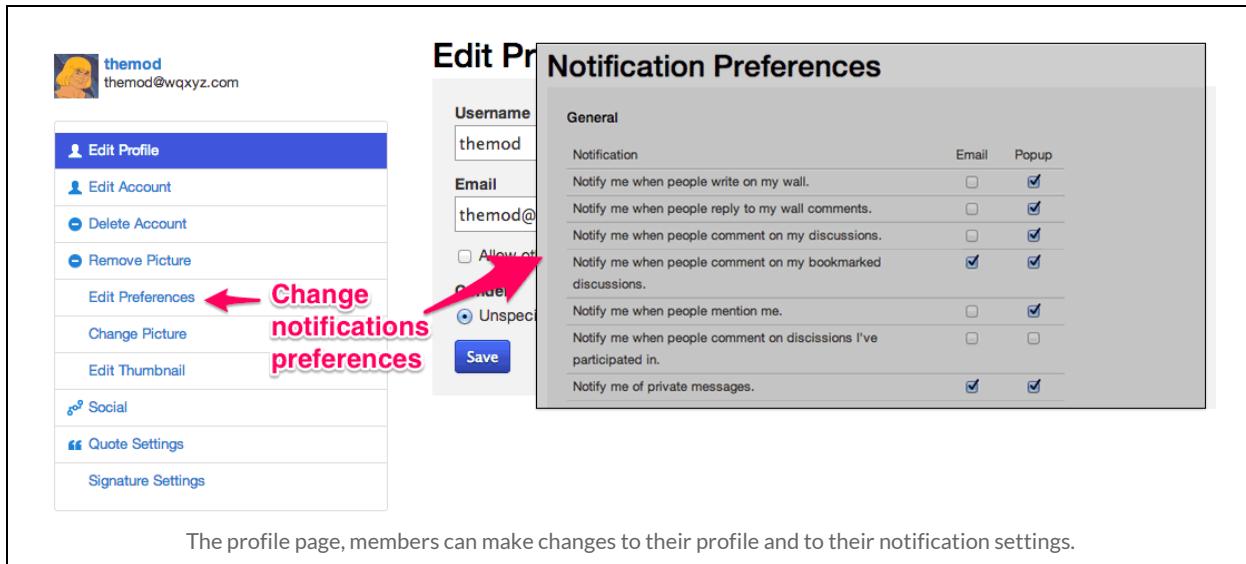
This is the profile page where all the info about a member will be displayed.

The user profile page contains info about individual users and their activity in your community. From this page, you and members can see information about any member. What can be seen is determined by the user and, to a larger extent, the Admin of your community. The Admin can enable a couple of addons that increase the functionality of this page:

- Profile Extender addon: This adds additional profile fields that can be seen on the profile. For example, you can ask them about their hobbies or favourite films.
- Badges: On the profile page, if the badges addon is enabled, you can see which ones were awarded to a community member. Clicking on a badge will show you who and when others in the community got the same badge.
- Reactions: If reactions are enabled on the profile page, click a specific reaction type to see the content that garnered those reactions from others in the community.

You will see all these features, as noted, if the community admin has enabled these addons. Also, please note, as some members may not realize, messages posted on the profile page are public.

## User Settings



The screenshot shows the profile page of a user named 'themod' (themod@wqxyz.com). On the left, there's a sidebar with options like Edit Profile, Edit Account, Delete Account, Remove Picture, Edit Preferences (which has a red arrow pointing to it with the text 'Change notifications preferences'), Change Picture, Edit Thumbnail, Social, Quote Settings, and Signature Settings. The main area shows the 'Edit Profile' form with fields for Username (themod), Email (themod@wqxyz.com), and a radio button for 'Unspecified'. A red arrow points from the 'Edit Preferences' link in the sidebar to the 'Unspecified' radio button in the form. Below the form is a 'Save' button. To the right, a modal window titled 'Notification Preferences' is open, showing a table of notification settings. The table has columns for 'Notification' (checkboxes), 'Email' (checkboxes), and 'Popup' (checkboxes). Most checkboxes are checked.

Notification	Email	Popup
Notify me when people write on my wall.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Notify me when people reply to my wall comments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Notify me when people comment on my discussions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Notify me when people comment on my bookmarked discussions.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Notify me when people mention me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Notify me when people comment on discussions I've participated in.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Notify me of private messages.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

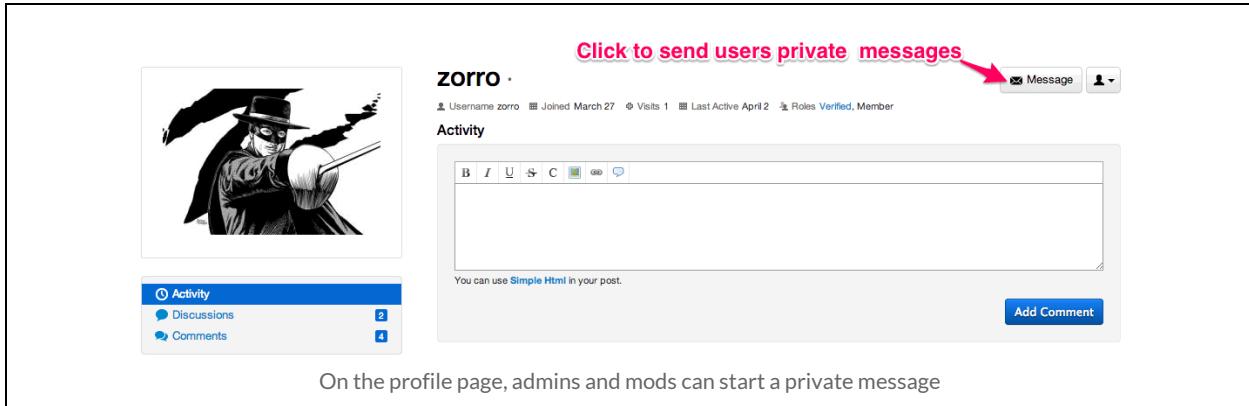
The profile page, members can make changes to their profile and to their notification settings.

From the profile page, members of the community can modify the following:

- Change email address
- Control email address visibility
- Change password
- Control notification preferences (user can decide to get email or popups)
- Change their profile picture (and thumbnail)
- Connect preferred social networks for easy sharing

If the Quotes addon or Signature addon is enabled by the community admin, users will also be able to modify their settings for these features on these pages. Admins have the ability to follow individual categories and be notified of all posts within them.

## Private Messaging

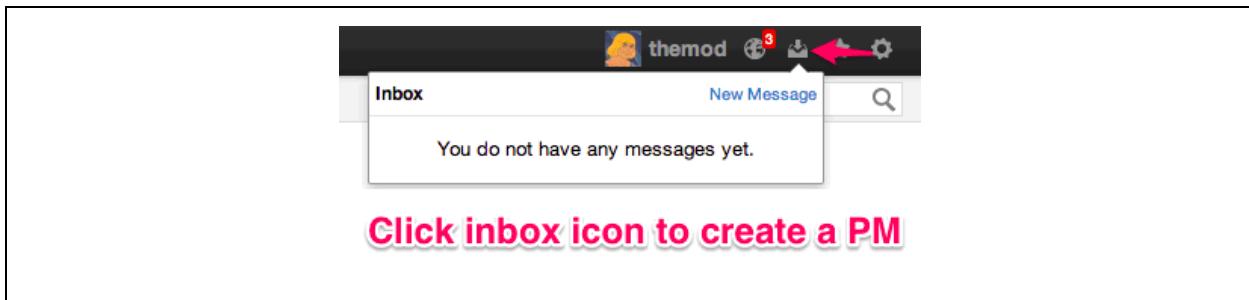


The screenshot shows a user profile for 'zorro'. At the top right, there is a 'Message' button with a red arrow pointing to it, accompanied by a small user icon. Below the profile picture, there is a 'Activity' section with 'Discussions' (2) and 'Comments' (4). The main area contains a text input field with a toolbar above it, and a 'Add Comment' button at the bottom right.

**Click to send users private messages**

On the profile page, admins and mods can start a private message

Private messages (PM's), can be created from the user profile page (by admins and mods), or by clicking the “inbox” icon in the Mebox (by all members).



The screenshot shows the Mebox interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a user icon, the name 'themod', a globe icon with a '3' notification, and a gear icon. Below the bar, there are two buttons: 'Inbox' and 'New Message'. A red arrow points to the 'Inbox' button. A message below the buttons states 'You do not have any messages yet.'

**Click inbox icon to create a PM**

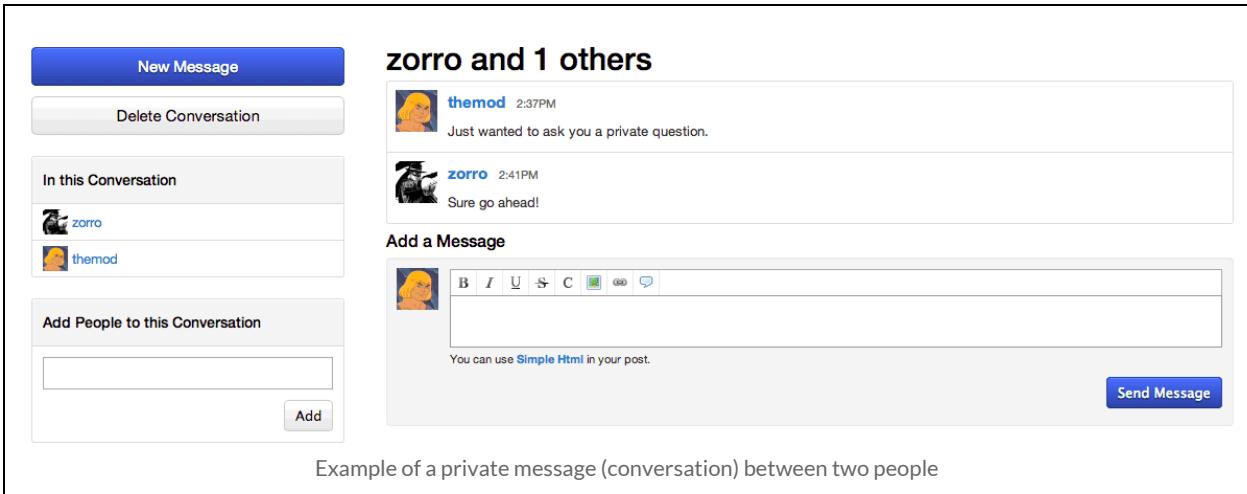
Once in the new message screen, you can address the message to the recipients you choose and add a message for the member to see.



The screenshot shows the 'New Message' dialog box. It has a 'Recipients' section where 'zorro' is listed. Below that is a toolbar with text formatting options. The main body of the message starts with 'Just wanted to ask you a private question.' There is a note at the bottom stating 'You can use Simple Html in your post.' At the bottom left is a 'Post Message' button, and at the bottom right is a 'Cancel' button.

Once you send the message, users will be notified by their preferred method of notification. An indicator will also show the user that they have a new message in their inbox.

Other users can be added to the conversation, and you can leave the conversation anytime you choose. The following is what a user will see when they go to read the message.



The screenshot shows a private message interface. On the left, there's a sidebar with buttons for 'New Message' (highlighted in blue), 'Delete Conversation', and 'Add People to this Conversation'. Below these are two user profiles: 'zorro' (with a black and white mask icon) and 'themod' (with a yellow and orange face icon). The main area is titled 'zorro and 1 others'. It contains two messages: one from 'themod' at 2:37PM asking a question, and one from 'zorro' at 2:41PM responding. Below the messages is a text input field with a toolbar above it containing bold (B), italic (I), underline (U), strikethrough (S), code (C), a link icon, a photo icon, and a comment icon. A note says 'You can use Simple HTML in your post.' At the bottom right is a 'Send Message' button.

Example of a private message (conversation) between two people

Here is a breakdown of some of the features in the private conversation view:

- New message: create a brand new conversation
- Delete conversation: It will remove you from the conversation, but other parties will still have their copies.
- In this conversation: These are the users in the conversation. Users who have left the conversation will have a line through their name.
- Add people to this conversation: You can include other members in a conversation or you can re-invite someone who may have left a conversation.

Also note that private messages can be seen by mods, if they have the permission enabled (This permission requires a request to support to enable.) The private conversation feature can also be removed, if you so desire. This may be something to consider for communities for children or teens.

## Activity Page

The forum activity page shows the forum activity, such as the new members who join, badges being awarded, profile picture changes and wall messages. You modify visibility of this page within your theme.

[Home](#) > [Activity](#)

**THIS WEEK'S LEADERS**

	currently	83 Points
	Ots	77 Points
	Primal	74 Points
	Squeal_Like...	73 Points
	Smasher	72 Points
	Sewlek	71 Points
	xDragon	71 Points
	Strayan (NS...	67 Points
	Fat_Man_Li...	67 Points
	Hypergrip	65 Points

**ALL TIME LEADERS**

**RECENT ACTIVITY**

- overdub, Igherlan, PeterShultz, GRAT0R, TheJohnyLee and 31 others joined.**  
Welcome Aboard!  
2:53PM
- raz0r, Darkomicron, Slice, Llama2000, endar and 6 others earned the First Anniversary badge.**  
Thanks for sticking with us for a full year.  
[Leaderboard](#)
- raz0r, Darkomicron, Slice, Llama2000, endar and 6 others earned the Second Anniversary badge.**  
Thanks for sticking with us for 2 years.  
1:29PM
- raz0r, Slice, Llama2000, redlinetheturk, nonesocruel and 2 others earned the Third Anniversary badge.**  
Thanks for sticking with us for 3 years.  
1:29PM
- raz0r, Slice, Llama2000, redlinetheturk, Slycaster and VeNeM earned the Fourth Anniversary badge.**  
Thanks for sticking with us for 4 years.  
1:29PM

An example an activity page showing the recent activity within a orum.

On the activity page is also a leaderboard, where you can see how many points users got during the week and all-time. Points are obtained either for positive actions or by assignment. Settings in the various addons (such as badges and reactions) can also award points. They are a great way to identify top contributors in your community.

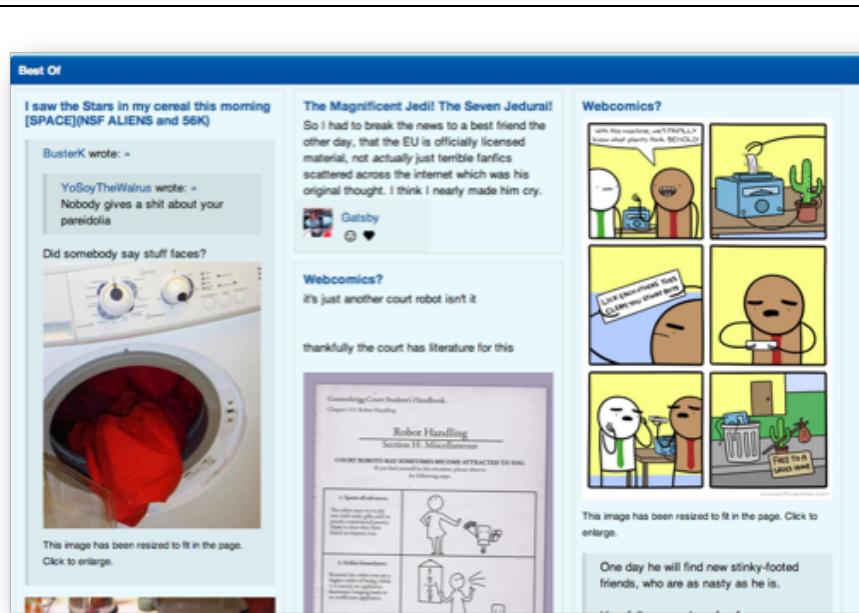
24

## Best of Page

Vanilla's Best of Page is meant to make it easy for your community members to see the most popular content based on the reactions it receives. The new Best of Gallery shows this content in a pin board format which makes it more visually appealing and easier to browse.

The Best of Page can be set as your forum homepage, which is a great way to increase your conversion rate of visitors to registered members.

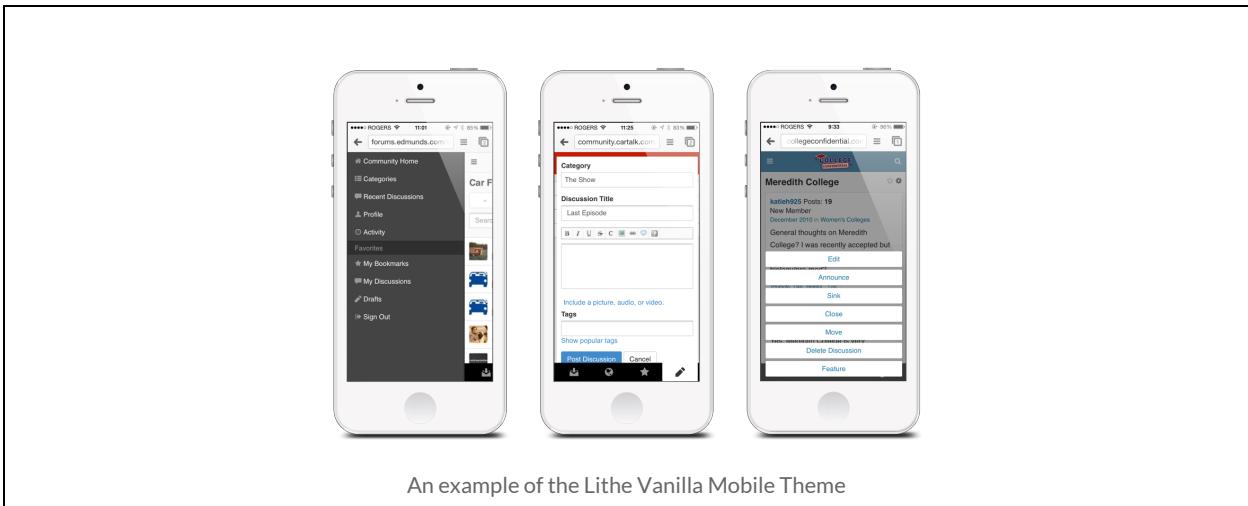
Posts that get 5 points appear on this page. One positive reaction = 1 point. The default threshold points for Best Of Page can be reduced or increased for lower and higher traffic communities. You can ask our Support team to make this change for you or, if your plan affords you one, you can ask your Customer Success Manager for this change. Also, moderators can 'promote' a post using the Promote reaction to display the post on the best of page.



Example of the best of page.

## Automatic Mobile Themes

Users to your community on mobile devices will not need to download a third-party app. Vanilla comes with an included mobile theme, which makes the mobile experience for users

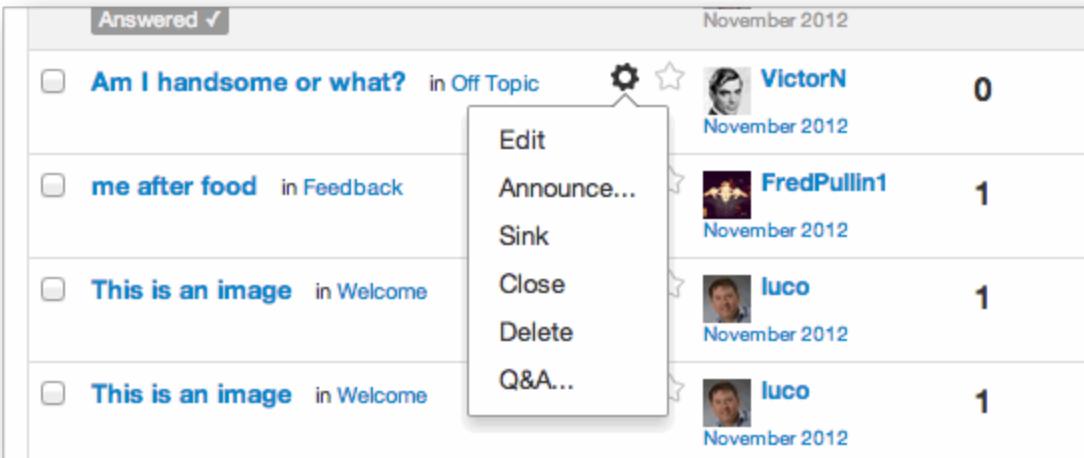


much easier. It has many features one would expect from a native web app, such as larger buttons, easy navigation and mobile friendly menus. Your forum admin will be able to select an appropriate mobile theme and settings for your forum.

## Moderation Features

The following are some features which will aid Moderators in doing their job. Some features must be enabled by the owner or Admin of the forum. It is at their discretion to turn on these features. We will note when this is the case so you can ensure they are enabled if you require them.

## In-Line Moderation



An example of moderation from the front end via the gear icon

Unlike most forum software, the majority of your moderation activity can be done “in-line”. In other words, you will not be required to log into any dashboard, or fiddle with dials or knobs.

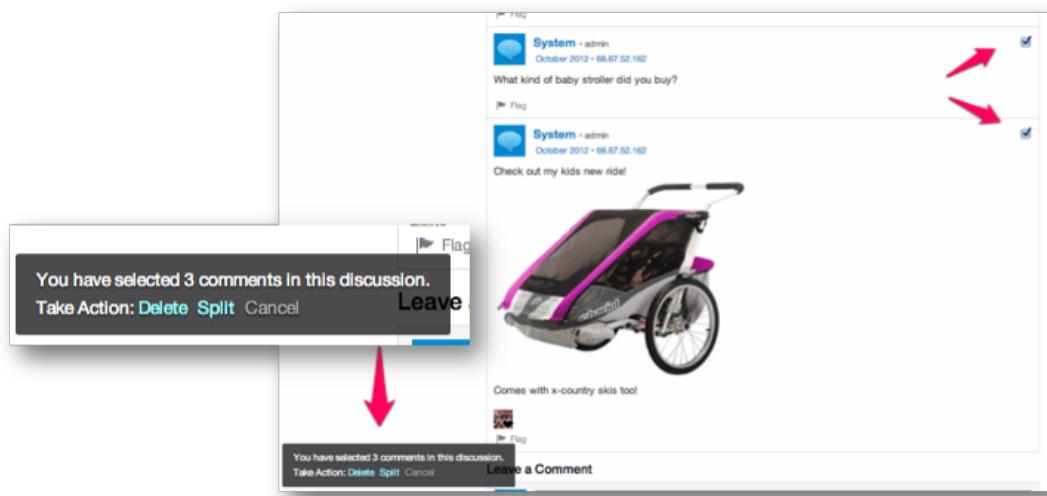
The following are the actions you can take with in-line moderation:

- Delete discussions or comments
- Close (no more comments)
- Sink (Discussion drops even when new comments are added)
- Announce (makes Discussion sticky)

You can access these functions by clicking on the gear icon which will appear on hover next to the relevant discussion or comment. In some cases, moderation actions require multiple items to be selected (to enable this, go to your Dashboard, Forum Settings, Advanced and make sure that *Enable admin checkboxes on discussions and comments* is

selected) or addons (split/merge) to be activated by your board admin. These functions include:

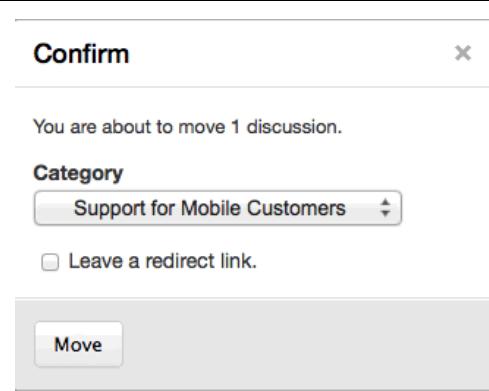
- Delete multiple discussions (use multi-checkboxes)
- Delete multiple comments (use multi-checkboxes)
- Move multiple discussions (use multi-checkboxes)
- Merge discussions (Requires split/merge addon)
- Split a discussion (Requires split/merge addon)



The screenshot shows a list of comments in a discussion thread. Two comments are selected, indicated by blue checkmarks in the top right corner of their respective rows. A red arrow points to these checkmarks. A modal dialog box is overlaid on the page, containing the text "You have selected 3 comments in this discussion." and "Take Action: Delete Split Cancel". A red arrow points from this dialog down to another identical dialog at the bottom of the page, which also contains the same text. The background shows a baby stroller image and some forum navigation links.

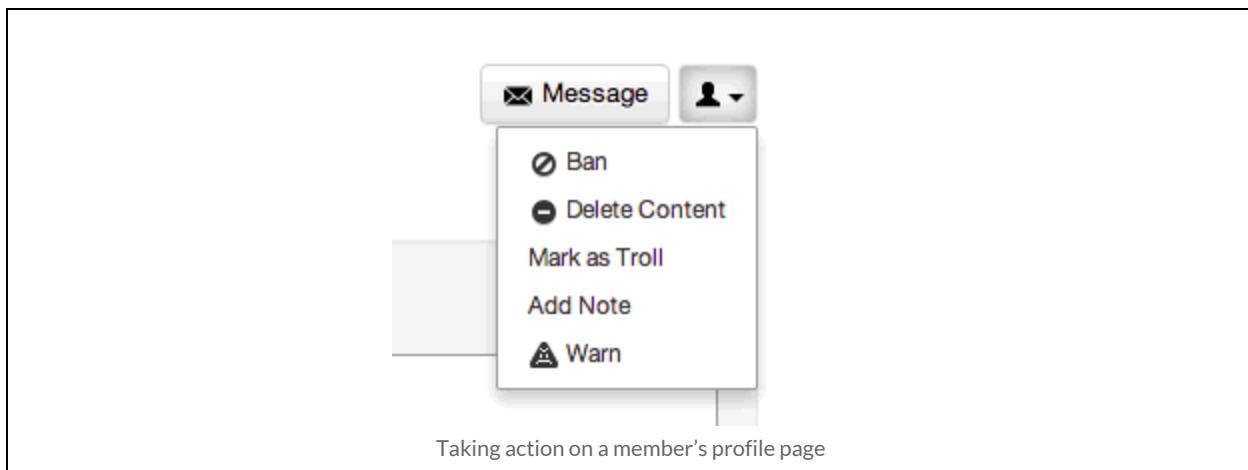
Example of multiple selections of comments to take action

When you select the conversations to modify, you will get a small notification box in lower corner with the actions you can take. Once you select the action, you will trigger a pop-up with further choices you can make.



The screenshot shows a "Confirm" dialog box. It displays the message "You are about to move 1 discussion." Below this is a "Category" section with a dropdown menu set to "Support for Mobile Customers". There is also a checkbox labeled "Leave a redirect link." which is unchecked. At the bottom of the dialog is a large "Move" button. A red arrow points to this "Move" button. Below the dialog, the text "An example of moving a discussion" is displayed.

## Member Moderation



From any user's profile page, you will have the ability to perform a number of moderation actions. Most moderation actions will take place on a member's profile page. You can access this by clicking on their name or avatar on a comment or discussion. Click on the icon of the human head and select the action you wish to take. The actions you can take include:

- Edit profile: You can change their access level (admin only)
- Ban: Stops a user from being able to participate in the community
- Delete Content: This will delete all of the user's content, but they are not banned.
- Mark as Troll: If the troll addon is enabled and you mark them as a troll, all of their posts will become invisible to the rest of the community, except themselves.
- Warn: If the warnings addon is enabled, you have the option to give demerit points to a user and place them in "jail" for a specific time period. (More on this shortly).
- Give Badge: If badges is enabled, you can give users custom badges at your discretion. Be careful in doing so, however, as you cannot remove a badge once it has been awarded.

Two other tools at a moderator's disposal are pre-moderation and private conversations. Pre-moderation makes posts from unverified users subject to approval. Moderators also

have the option of using private conversations to send a private message to a member before taking more severe actions.

## Warnings

This is a very powerful addon which will come in handy when addressing troublemakers. Warnings can be given to users by moderators for behavior that is not appropriate in the community. Warnings use a points system that increases a user's warning level with successive warnings until the warnings expire. Jailing or banning users will happen once users reach a certain amount of points.

### Warn lewis

**Severity**

Notice 0 points  
 Minor 2 points · lasts 1 week  
 Major 3 points · lasts 2 weeks

**Message to User**

B I S  For continuing to be extremely rude to new users in the welcome thread.

You can use [Simple Html](#) in your post.

**Private Note for Moderators**

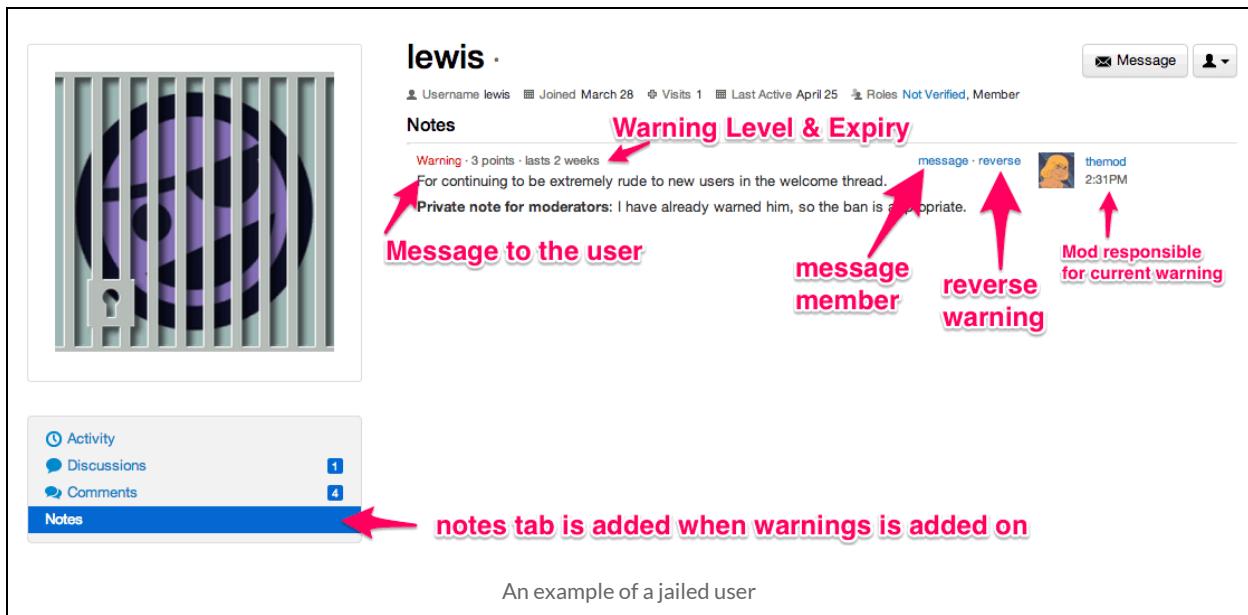
I have already warned him, so the ban is appropriate.

**OK** **Cancel**

An example of a warning being given

User notes are messages that can be attached to individual users that only moderators can add and see. They allow moderators to keep track of information about users that may be important to other moderators.

When a moderator warns a user, the severity of the warning determines how many points it adds to the user's warning level and when the warning expires. Admins can see a user's warning level from the member profile via a banner at the top. Moderators can see the details of warning and expiry from the notes tab.



An example of a jailed user

The screenshot shows a user profile for 'lewis'. The user has a warning level of 3, which is indicated by a jail icon overlaid on the user's purple and black striped avatar. The profile includes standard information like username, joining date, and roles. A prominent 'Warning Level & Expiry' section is displayed, showing a warning for being rude to new users. A 'Message to the user' note from a moderator explains the warning. The 'Notes' tab is highlighted with a blue arrow, and a note from a mod named 'thermod' is visible. The bottom navigation bar also features a 'Notes' tab.

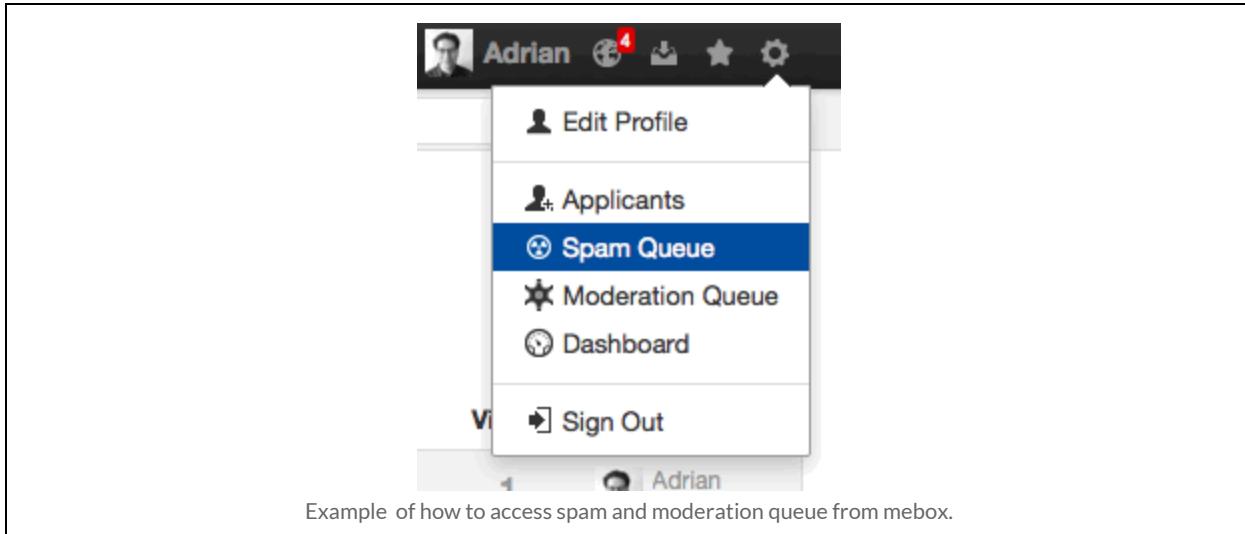
When a user's warnings expire, their warning level will be reset to zero and the user will have a clean slate. If you warn a user who has already been warned, then the points from the new warning will be added to their warning level and their warning's expiry will be extended. When a user reaches certain warning levels they will be punished.

Users that reach warning level 3 are considered jailed. Being jailed means the following:

- A jail icon is overlaid over the user's avatar.
- The user can't start new discussions.
- The user is flood controlled so they can only post once every 150 seconds.
- The user's signature is hidden.

Being jailed punishes the user for their misbehavior, but allows them to continue to participate in the community in a limited capacity. Jailing shows the user that the way they acted was unacceptable, but offers them the chance to correct their behavior. If a member reaches warning level 5, they are banned from the community completely.

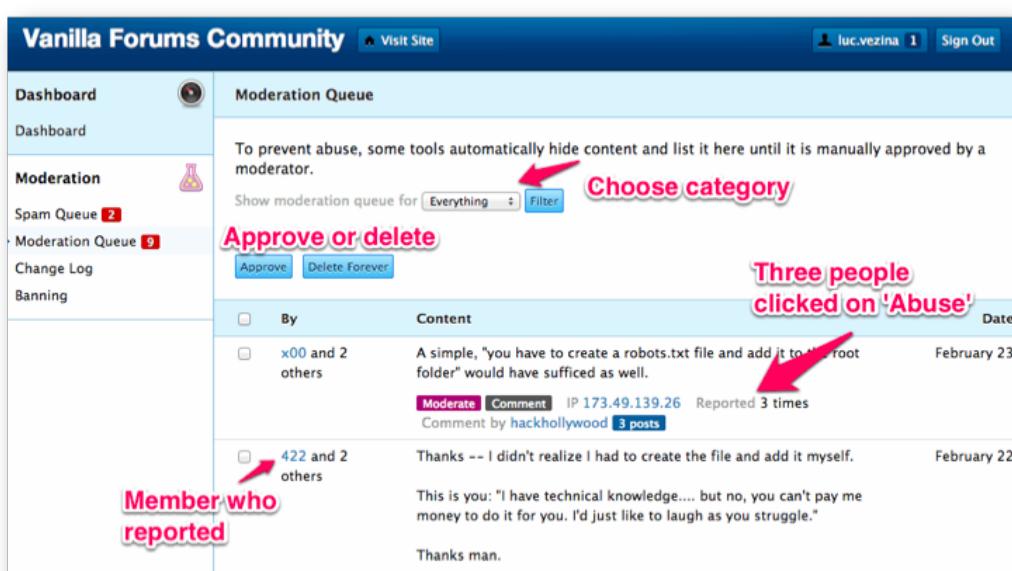
## Moderation Queues & Spam Queues



The moderation and spam queues are accessed via the dashboard. You can access the queues directly from a link found in the mebox. The following are some more details about each of the queues and what you can expect from each.

## Moderation Queues:

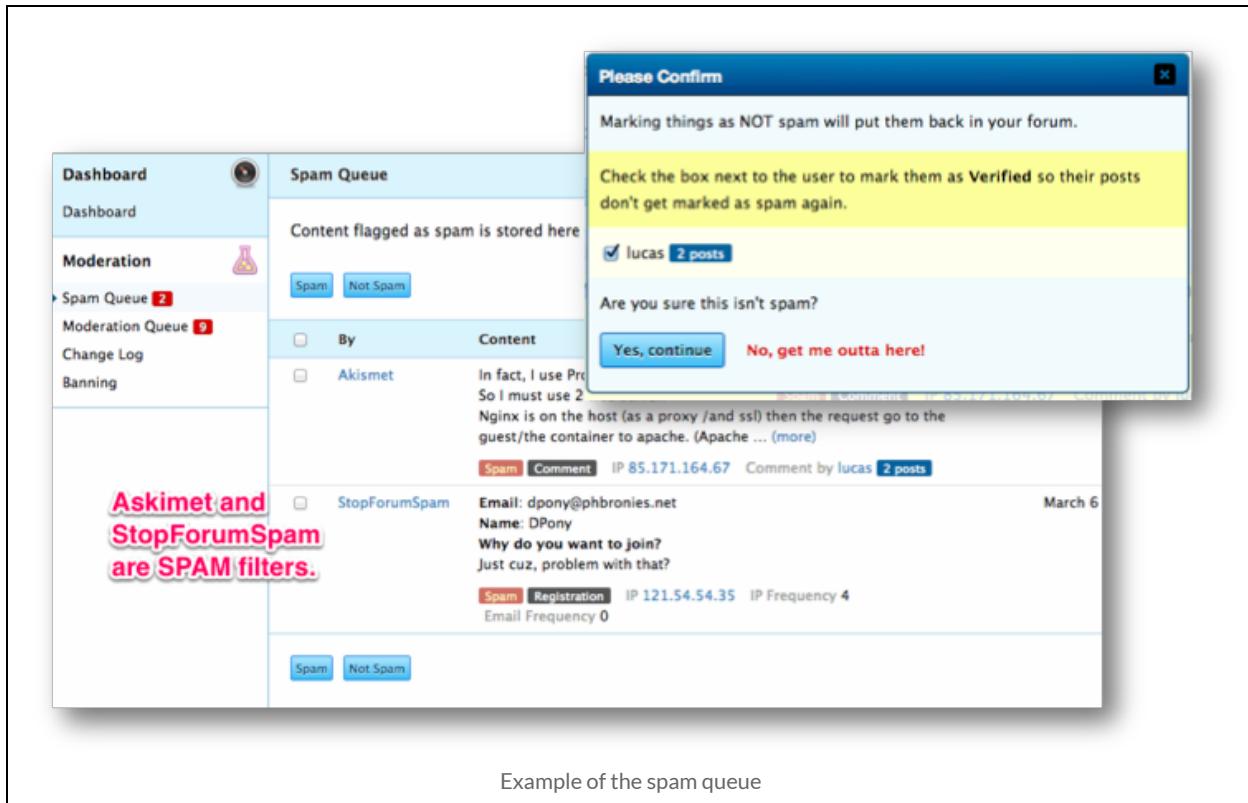
This is content which has been sent here due to reactions or if pre-approval is enabled.



Example of the moderation queue

Pre-moderating every comment made in the community is generally not a good idea, but it can make sense for certain kinds of communities. Pre-moderation is an option that is turned on by adding the permission “Approval = Required”. Pre-moderation can be turned off for a user by changing his/her Role or by ‘whitelisting’ the user by marking the user as verified on the user detail on the profile page or by editing the user.

## Spam Queues:



The screenshot shows the Vanilla CMS interface with a sidebar on the left containing links like Dashboard, Moderation (with Spam Queue 2), and Change Log. The main area is titled 'Spam Queue' with the sub-instruction 'Content flagged as spam is stored here'. It includes 'Spam' and 'Not Spam' buttons. A modal window titled 'Please Confirm' asks if the user is sure the selected post (lucas) isn't spam, with options 'Yes, continue' and 'No, get me outta here!'. Below the modal, a list of flagged posts is shown, with one entry from 'Akismet' highlighted. The text in the Akismet entry discusses proxying requests through Nginx to Apache. The list also includes entries from 'StopForumSpam' with details like email, name, and IP address.

Askimet and StopForumSpam are SPAM filters.

Example of the spam queue

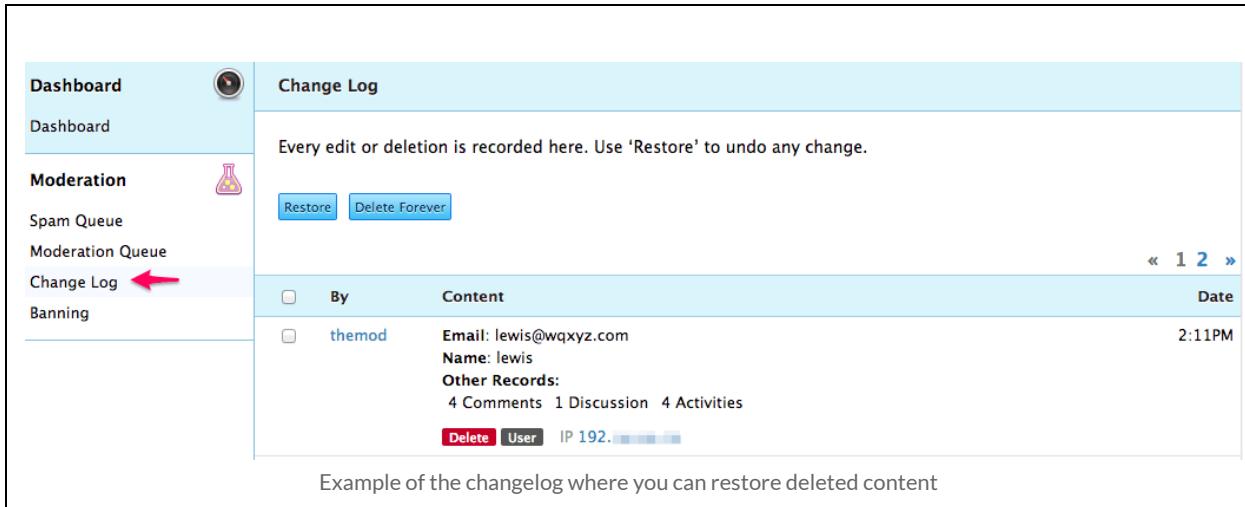
Spam is detected via the StopForumSpam and Akismet addons (when enabled) and can also be triggered by user reactions, if these are enabled. The spam filters may occasionally generate false positives, so it's worth it to check on occasion to make sure no legitimate user content gets stuck there.

Spammers should be banned and all content should be deleted. Some communities are victims of live spammers that create a real comment and then come back weeks later to edit the comment to contain spam links. This can be addressed with Ranks and by the admin limiting the ability that users have to delete or change content after they've posted.

Important note: All links in Vanilla comments are set to no follow so that search engines do not crawl them. This reduces the appeal of spamming the community.

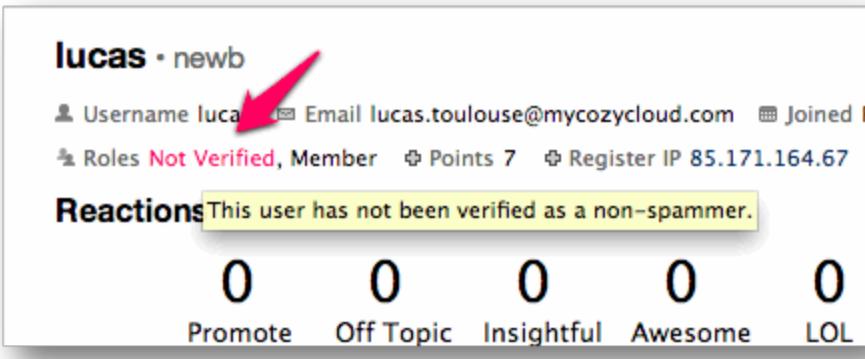
## Change Log

The Change Log is accessible when the moderator is in the backend working on the spam and moderation queue. From this queue, a moderator can restore accidentally deleted content or, if really sure, permanently delete content from the community.



Example of the changelog where you can restore deleted content

## Verifying Members



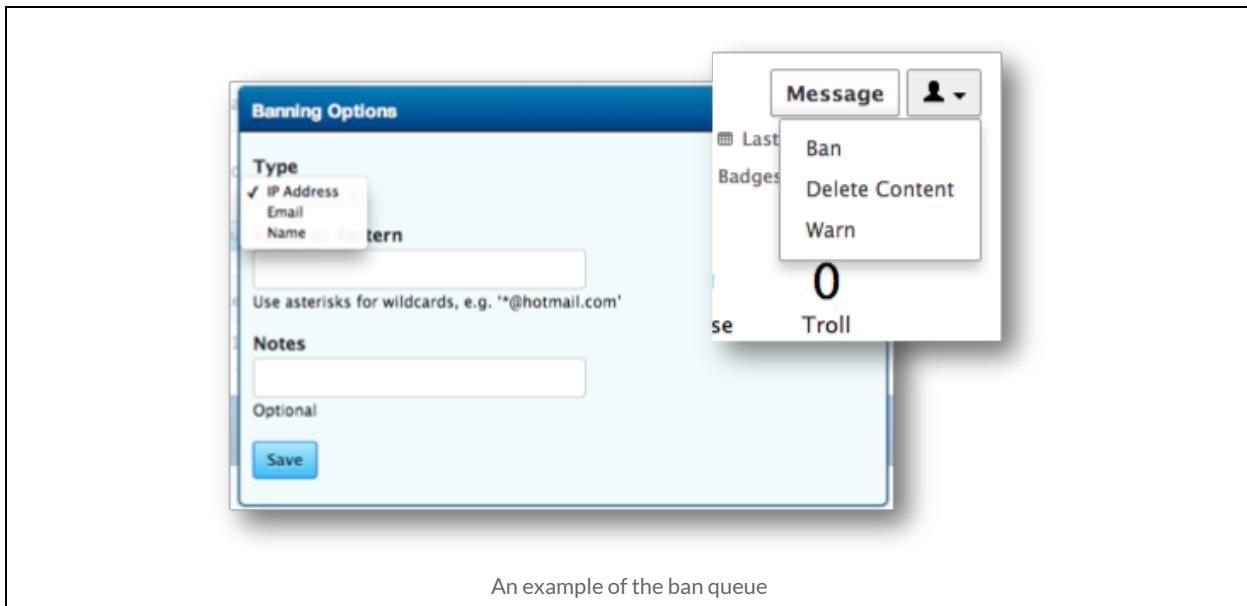
A screenshot of a user profile for "lucas • newb". The profile includes basic information like Username (luca), Email (lucas.toulouse@mycozycld.com), and Joined Date. It also shows Roles (Not Verified, Member), Points (7), and Register IP (85.171.164.67). A red arrow points to the "Not Verified" link under Roles. Below the profile, there's a "Reactions" section with a note: "This user has not been verified as a non-spammer." Underneath are five reaction counts: Promote (0), Off Topic (0), Insightful (0), Awesome (0), and LOL (0).

A user who is yet to be verified by mods or admins

Verifying a member will prevent their comments from being caught by the spam filters. It will also allow members to comment without pre-approval if pre-moderation is enabled in the community. You want to make sure to verify trusted users. You can also un-verify users should you need to do so.

To verify a member, click on the “Not Verified” link found on the member’s profile page. If you click on a user who is “Verified”, you can remove the verification. Admins can also verify members via the user list found in the Dashboard.

## Banning



The ban is a permanent way to take away access to the community by a member. You can ban members via the dashboard or from their profile page. You can also delete all their content.

You also have some other banning options from the Banning Queue. You can Ban users by IP, but this can be hard to do with internet cafes and proxy servers. There is also no way to permanently ban someone as cookies can be deleted and a new IP obtained which makes it easy for them to create a new account.

There is a troll addon; if enabled, it will allow moderators and admins to mark a members as a troll. This will cause a user to be invisible to everyone but himself. In this case a user will get bored when he elicits no response from others and will eventually quit.

## Moderation Best Practices

There is a considerable amount of literature on being a great moderator and this section is not intended to duplicate that information. Rather, we'd like to share some tips and resources that will assist you with the job of being a moderator.

Some tips that come in handy for moderation:

- Create rules for your community
- Be consistent in applying the rules
- Don't fall behind on "housekeeping" tasks
- Be authentic with your users

Here are some resources that can come in handy:

- Check out Vanilla's blog at <http://blog.vanillaforums.com>
- Read Richard Millington's [Feverbee Blog](#)
- Check out <http://cmxhub.com/>
- Follow the #CMGR hashtag on Twitter

## Managing a Migration

If you are coming from another platform, rest assured that we have successfully migrated a great number of our clients. Here are some tips to help you through the process.

### Make a migration checklist

When you are doing a migration, it's a good idea to follow a checklist to ensure you don't miss a step. Your sales rep and support can assist you with further questions, but this is a checklist for the final migration that will give you an idea of the steps involved:

- Place your legacy forum into read-only mode (you don't want more content added to the old system)
- Create a database dump and copy it to Vanilla's sFTP address provided to you.
- Data will be transformed and loaded into your instance of Vanilla Forums

Now that your forum is on Vanilla's system, you need to review the import. Here is a checklist of things to review after the migration:

- Ensure your forum content is properly imported
- Check that users have been set up with correct permissions
- DNS and links updated
- 301 redirects created
- Review errors (if any) in Google Webmaster Tools
- Make sure that all the addons you need are enabled
- Check that the Theme is correctly applied

### Keep the community in the loop

During the whole process, it's important to keep the community in the loop. Let them know you are switching. Ask for patience and time to work out any issues.

### Emphasize the new features that Vanilla brings

It's also a good time to remind users why you chose Vanilla as a new platform and why the

old platform no longer worked.

### Get Mods and influencers on board

Make sure the mods and key members of the community are aware of the switch. Having them on board will help prepare new users for the change.

### Do a soft launch

Before you re-open or announce your new forum, make sure to test things out and make sure things are working with your group of mods and trusted community members.

### Create a discussion or category for migration related questions

Allow for a spot in your forum to talk about the move. Many communities have a Meta category, which will be fine. The point is to keep forum feedback in one area of your community so you can address it easier.

### Get ready for the ‘this sucks, I’m leaving’ post.

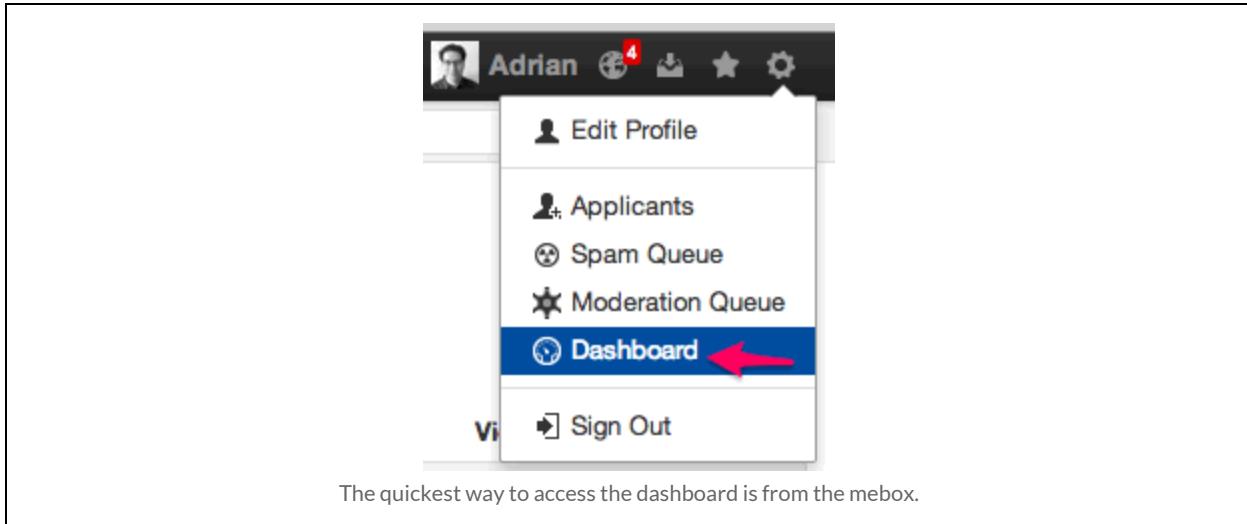
People hate change. It’s easier to write negative comments, so be prepared for it, as some people will be quick to do so. The only thing that should matter are the metrics. Are people engaging more in the community? Are you getting more sign-ups? What are your analytics telling you? This is not to say you should ignore complaints, but no website forum switch will ever go without someone adding their two cents on what they would have done. However, if you include the community in the process and keep them updated on the migration, it should lessen the shock.

## Administrator Features

The administrator or admin has a very important role. They are responsible for many aspects of how a forum will function. They have the ability to turn on addons and features. They also have full control over roles and permissions. To ensure a successful community with your team, it would make a sense to touch base with moderators about the features and get their opinions on the appearance. Nevertheless, at the end of the day, the final choices are yours.

In the following section we will describe the various settings and features you should be aware of as an admin. Please also make sure to explore the backend and get familiar with these different options. Should you need help, or get stuck, you can always contact our support team at <http://vanillaforums.com/help>.

## The Dashboard



This is the control panel or as in some software might be known as AdminCP. It's the area where you, as an admin of the board, can configure Vanilla. Below are just some of the things that can be done from the dashboard:

- View site stats
- Customize appearance
- Manage users
- Set permissions
- Create categories
- Enable addons

We will explore all of these features in the coming sections.

## Statistics and Advanced Statistics



All plans come with basic statistics that allows you to track pageviews, users as well as the numbers of discussions and comments. You can look at the daily stats or select the months tab. You can also click or unclick boxes to see how each of these areas are performing.

The statistics also include some data for monitoring which discussions are popular and which users are most active. There is also an advanced statistics package which is available to our Enterprise and VIP customers. Please ask your Customer Success Manager about how to enable these statistics.

Additionally, Topic and Sentiment Analytics are available with certain plans. More information is available in this blog post:

<http://blog.vanillaforums.com/news/bringing-topic-sentiment-analytics-forum/>

## Customize Appearance

You can customize your Vanilla Forums from the appearance area of the dashboard. We offer a separate guide for designers for theming, which is available [here](#), but for a forum administrator, here is an overview of what you can accomplish:

An example of overriding the HTML & CSS of the selected theme

- Select a theme: Pick a theme that will act as a base theme for your forum.
- Select forum homepage: you can choose the layout for categories and discussion pages. (Categories are recommended for larger, existing sites.)
- Add your logo, set a favicon, page title and more: Filling out all the fields in the banner section is good for SEO.
- Set a custom domain: also known as domain-masking, make your forum appear on your domain (i.e instead of showing your visitors [yourforum.vanillaforums.com](http://yourforum.vanillaforums.com), it can appear as [yourforum.yourdomain.com](http://yourforum.yourdomain.com)).
- Customize the theme: You can modify HTML and override CSS of the theme you have chosen.

## Manage users

As the admin of the board you have the ability to add members or edit the properties of any user in your community. You can access member data in the “Users” menu found in the dashboard.

Manage Users
Need More Help?

- [Video tutorial on finding & managing users](#)

Search for users by name or enter the name of a role to see all users with that role.

Go
10 user(s) found.

Add member
click to filter on role
sort columns
edit profile

Username	Email	Roles	First Visit	Last Visit	Last IP	Options
Adrian	adrian@wqxyz.com	Administrator	November 2013	3:46PM		<span style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 3px; padding: 2px 5px; margin-right: 5px;">Edit</span> <span style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 3px; padding: 2px 5px;">Delete</span>
themod	themod@wqxyz.com	Moderator	April 15	3:11PM		<span style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 3px; padding: 2px 5px; margin-right: 5px;">Edit</span> <span style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 3px; padding: 2px 5px;">Delete</span>
tonto	tonto@wqxyz.com	Member	March 28	April 30		<span style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 3px; padding: 2px 5px; margin-right: 5px;">Edit</span> <span style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 3px; padding: 2px 5px;">Delete</span>
lewis	lewis@wqxyz.com	Member	March 28	April 25		<span style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 3px; padding: 2px 5px; margin-right: 5px;">Edit</span> <span style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 3px; padding: 2px 5px;">Delete</span>
zorro	zorro@wqxyz.com	Member	March 27	April 23		<span style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 3px; padding: 2px 5px; margin-right: 5px;">Edit</span> <span style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 3px; padding: 2px 5px;">Delete</span>

An example of how an administrator can modify user information

## Roles and Permissions

Conversations		Add	Manage
Conversations		<b>some plugins have their own permissions</b>	
Moderation			
Plugins		Add	Allow
Attachments	Download	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Attachments	Upload	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Flagging		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Pockets		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Polls		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Signatures		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Tagging		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

An example of permissions

Granular roles and permissions let you, as the admin, control who has access to certain abilities. The out-of-the-box default roles and permissions are usually sufficient, but you can add new roles as needed. Members may have multiple roles. They can also be set manually or synched via SSO. Each role can also have per-category permissions too.

Within your Dashboard, under Roles and Permissions, there are several different permissions you should know more about. Here is the breakdown of the standard permissions and some of the key ones of which you want to be aware:

**Garden:** These are the core permissions. Regular members should never be given “manage” permissions. The Curate permissions will allow the role you’re editing the ability to access the promote flag, if the Reactions addon is enabled.

**Vanilla:** This impacts the way discussions/comments get added. Checking off “Require” sends all new posts to the moderation queue for non-verified users. Comments.Me allows /me action in comments, if the MeAction addon is enabled.

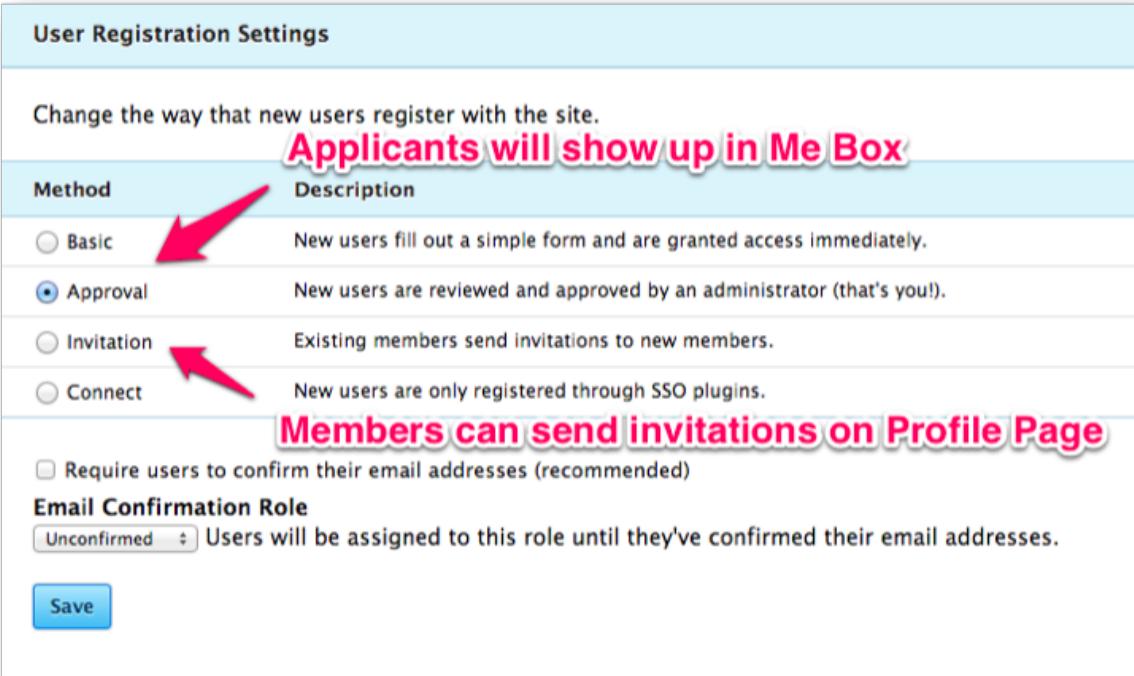
**Conversations:** Checking off “manage” moderation, will give that role access to the private conversation inboxes of other users.

Addons: You may wish to review this if you have the file upload addon or other addons enabled. Once again, never give regular members “manage” permissions.

Default Category Permissions: This controls what the default permissions are for newly-created categories. This only applies when you want to customize the permissions.

Note: Due to the power of the roles and permissions, always proceed with caution and be sure to test things out to make sure users have only the access you want them to have.

## Registration Options



User Registration Settings

Change the way that new users register with the site.

Method	Description
<input type="radio"/> Basic	New users fill out a simple form and are granted access immediately.
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Approval	New users are reviewed and approved by an administrator (that's you!).
<input type="radio"/> Invitation	Existing members send invitations to new members.
<input type="radio"/> Connect	New users are only registered through SSO plugins.

**Applicants will show up in Me Box**

**Members can send invitations on Profile Page**

Require users to confirm their email addresses (recommended)

Email Confirmation Role  
Unconfirmed

Save

Example of Registration options

Vanilla's forum software provides several registration options:

### Basic Registration

This allows a member to fill out a simple form and immediately be granted access. This method of registration requires that the user provide a username, email address and password. It's recommended to require email address confirmation to keep out spammers or users with bad intentions. The form also includes a CAPTCHA to prevent spam bots from registering.

### Approval

This option allows users to register by filling out a form, but their membership must be approved by an administrator before they are granted member status.

## Invitation

If you run an exclusive community, you can limit registration to people who have received an invitation from an existing member. You can set how many invitations a member can send out each month and how long those invitations last before they expire.

## Single-Sign-on (SSO)

If your website or web-app requires registration, it can be frustrating to have to register a second time to access the forum. SSO allows users to register and sign in using their existing login. SSO can be implemented to provide a seamless experience where the user doesn't notice that they are, in fact, leaving one site and logging into another. SSO allows you to pass all user profile information, including email and profile picture. It will even import the member's Rank and Role. SSO documentation can be found [here](#).

## Social Connect

**Social Integration**

**What's This?**

Here's a list of all your social addons. You can enable, disable, and configure them from this page.

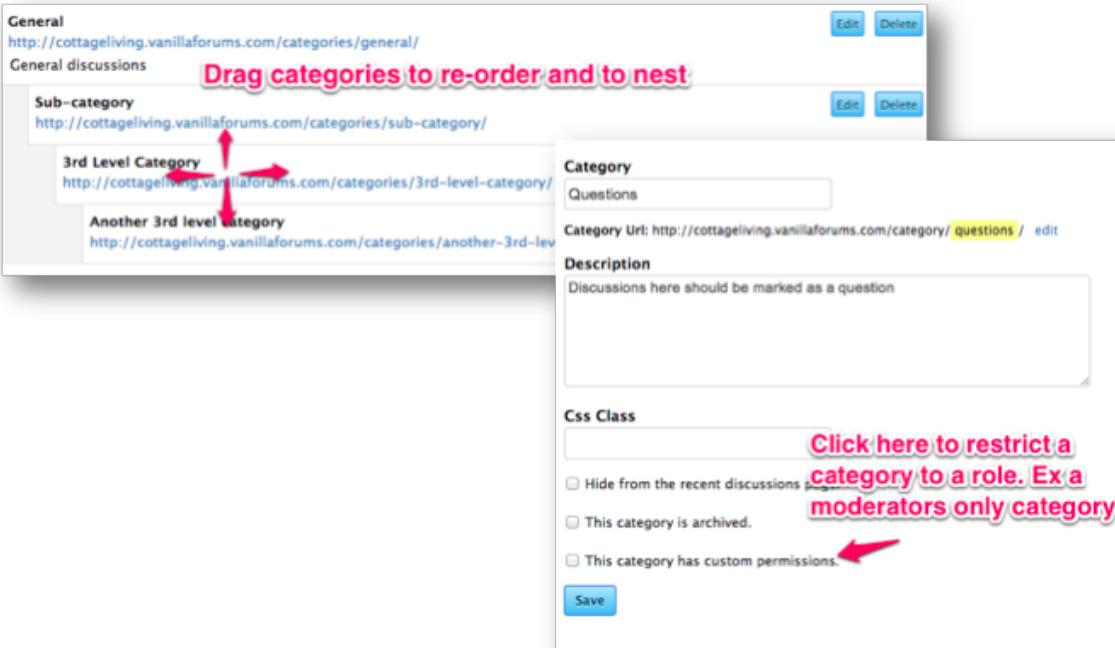
 <b>Facebook Social Connect</b> <small>not configured</small>	Users may sign into your site using their Facebook account.	<input type="button" value="Disabled"/>
 <b>Twitter Social Connect</b>	Users may sign into your site using their Twitter account.	<input checked="" type="button" value="Enabled"/>
 <b>Linked In Social Connect</b> <small>not configured</small>	Allow users to sign in via linked in.	<input type="button" value="Disabled"/>

Social Integration settings, to enable you will need to make an extra step with the appropriate social network.

Since most people already have a Facebook, Twitter or Google account, using those accounts to register can be a very convenient option. The downside is that these services are usually tied to a person's real identity and some people prefer to register to a forum using a pseudonym. Unless you want to enforce real identity, it's a good idea to also allow the basic registration method alongside the SSO method. Instructions on how to set up social sign-ins can be found in the backend under "forum settings" in social menu.

The social connect feature also allows members to register using Social IDs, display social reactions and automatically share when they post.

## Creating Categories



The screenshot shows the 'General' category structure. It includes:

- General** (<http://cottageliving.vanillaforums.com/categories/general/>)
- Sub-category** (<http://cottageliving.vanillaforums.com/categories/sub-category/>)
- 3rd Level Category** (<http://cottageliving.vanillaforums.com/categories/3rd-level-category/>)
- Another 3rd level category** (<http://cottageliving.vanillaforums.com/categories/another-3rd-level-category/>)

A red box highlights the 'Drag categories to re-order and to nest' instruction above the category tree.

**Category**: Questions

**Category Url:** <http://cottageliving.vanillaforums.com/category/questions/> / edit

**Description:** Discussions here should be marked as a question

**Css Class:**

- Hide from the recent discussions
- This category is archived.
- This category has custom permissions. (A red arrow points to this checkbox.)

**Save**

Example of categories being created

The category page allows you to create a category, add an image icon or class for modification with your CSS file. You can also create child-categories (or sub-categories). Category order is very simple to organize as you like. Simply drag and drop categories into the order that you prefer.

You may edit the category properties at any time. For example, you can archive a category. This will hide all content from users. You can also hide a category from recent discussions when you are using Vanilla for comments. This way blog comments won't show in the recent discussions.

Finally, from the category page, you can apply special permissions to a category so only certain roles have access.

## Messages

Messages are a great way to communicate with your community. Messages allow you to add a quick message, with HTML code, so you can link to a specific discussion or announce a promotion. You can determine which pages or categories of the forum the message will appear. You can also make it possible for the members of your community to “dismiss” the message once they have read it.

### Add Message

**Page**

**Category**

**Include Subcategories**

**Position**

**Message**

**Appearance**  
 **Casual**    **Information**    **Alert**    **Warning**

**Allow users to dismiss this message**

**Enable this message**

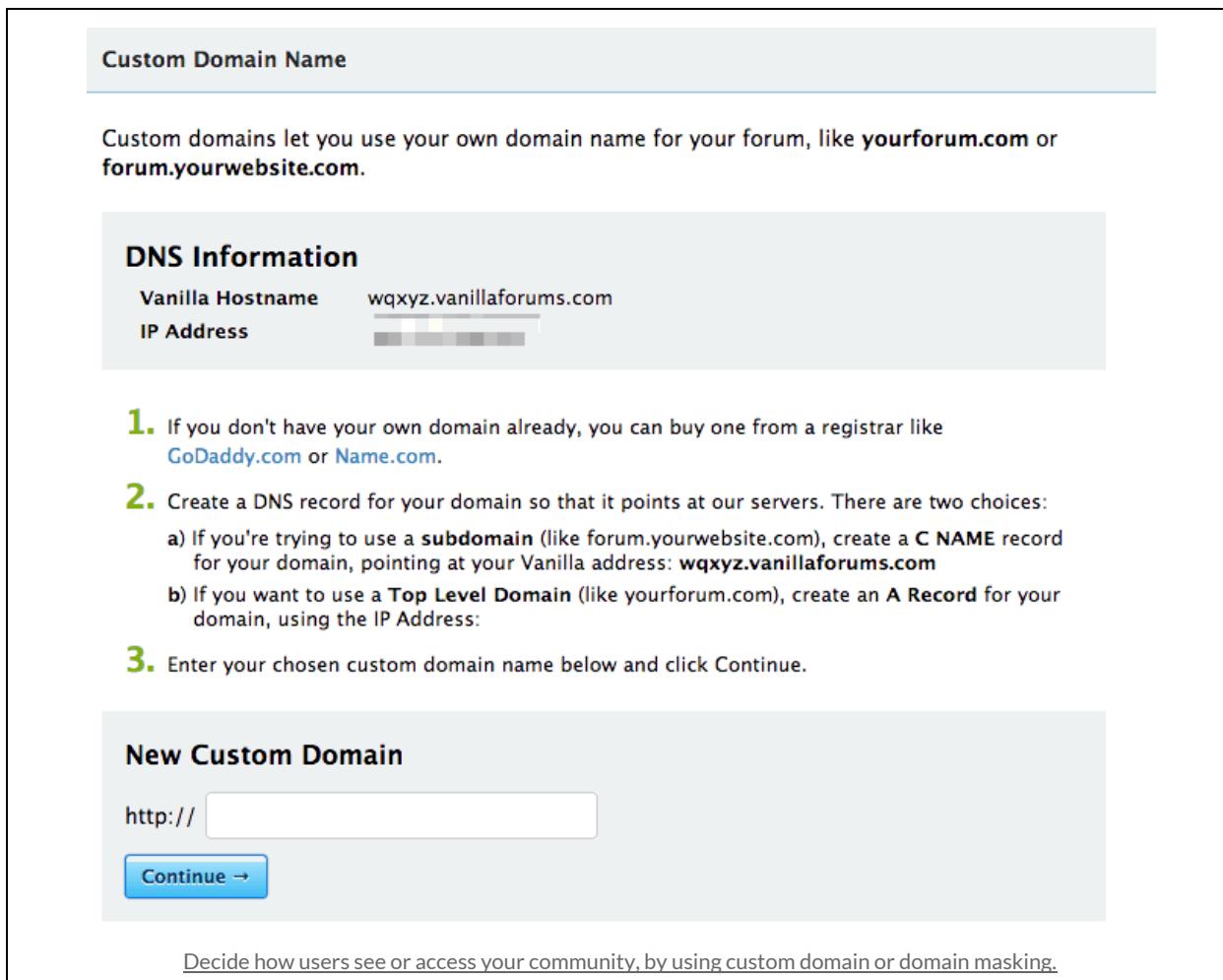
Setting up a message for the community

## Custom Domain

With Vanilla Forums, you have the ability to use domain masking or URL Masking. By using this free service for all plans, you can make it appear to your users that the forum is on your domain. If you don't have a domain, they are relatively inexpensive to get.

To set up custom domain is as quick as adding a CNAME to your DNS record to point your forum from **example.vanillaforums.com** to **subdomain.yourdomain.com**.

To set up your forum as a top level domain, for example as **yourdomain.com**, add an A Record to your DNS using the IP Address you will find in the dashboard.



The screenshot shows the "Custom Domain Name" configuration page. It includes sections for "DNS Information" (Vanilla Hostname: wqxyz.vanillaforums.com, IP Address: [redacted]), instructions for getting a domain, and a "New Custom Domain" input field where "http:// [redacted]" is entered. A note at the bottom says "Decide how users see or access your community, by using custom domain or domain masking."

**Custom Domain Name**

Custom domains let you use your own domain name for your forum, like **yourforum.com** or **forum.yourwebsite.com**.

**DNS Information**

Vanilla Hostname: **wqxyz.vanillaforums.com**  
IP Address: [redacted]

- If you don't have your own domain already, you can buy one from a registrar like [GoDaddy.com](#) or [Name.com](#).
- Create a DNS record for your domain so that it points at our servers. There are two choices:
  - If you're trying to use a **subdomain** (like **forum.yourwebsite.com**), create a **C NAME** record for your domain, pointing at your Vanilla address: **wqxyz.vanillaforums.com**
  - If you want to use a **Top Level Domain** (like **yourforum.com**), create an **A Record** for your domain, using the IP Address:
- Enter your chosen custom domain name below and click Continue.

**New Custom Domain**

http:// [redacted]

Continue →

Decide how users see or access your community, by using custom domain or domain masking.

It can take up to 24 hours for the DNS settings to refresh (but it's usually quicker).

## Flood Control

Under the moderation panel, you will find “Flood Control”. By default, only the admin has access to modify these settings. These settings control how fast a user can add content to a forum. It’s a great way to prevent abuse from a member who adds many discussions or comments in rapid succession. It’s also a great way to prevent spam attacks.

**Flood Control**

Prevent spam on your forum by limiting the number of discussions & comments that users can post within a given period of time.

Only Allow Each User To Post	Within	Or Spamblock For
<input type="text" value="3"/> discussion(s)	<input type="text" value="60"/> seconds	<input type="text" value="2"/> minute(s)
<input type="text" value="5"/> comment(s)	<input type="text" value="60"/> seconds	<input type="text" value="2"/> minute(s)

It is a good idea to keep the maximum number of characters allowed in a comment down to a reasonable size.

**Max Comment Length**

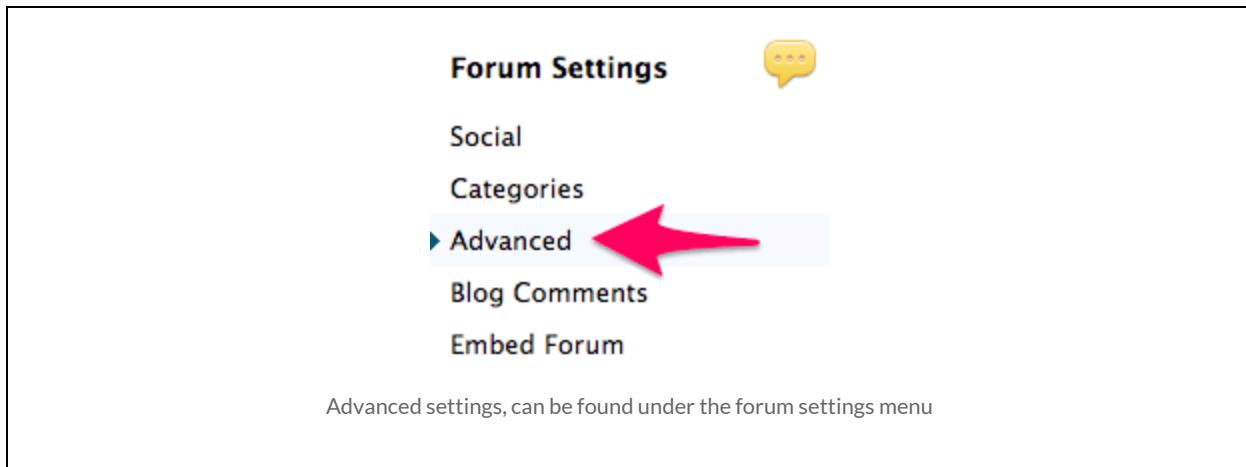
You can specify a minimum comment length to discourage short comments.

**Min Comment Length**

Example of flood control

Another setting you can control here is the character limit. By default, it is set to 8,000 characters. There is no minimum comment length set by default.

## Advanced Settings



In forums settings menu, there is a sub menu for advanced settings. For the most, part the default settings are fine, but you may wish to review some of them before you launch:

**Per Page Setting:** This is where you control both how many discussions and how many comments appears per page.

**Discussion Sorting:** By default, the most recent discussions are at the top, but you have the option to sort them by the date they were started. For a support community, you can even sort by ticket number.

**Author Editing:** By default, all authors of posts (except admins and moderators) can edit their posts only for one hour. The reason for this default setting is to reduce spam from users who may place an innocuous comment and come back later to modify it with spammy comments.

**Archive:** If you wish to hide content created before a certain date from all users, you can archive all content.

**Admin Checkboxes:** This allows you and your moderators to multi select discussion to allow for mass moves or deletes. It's not turned on by default, but it may come in handy. If you are using the split/merge addon, admin boxes will automatically be turned on.

## Outgoing Email Settings

### Outgoing Email

Email sent from the application will be addressed from the following name and address

**Name**

**Email**

**Save**

You will want to change to an appropriate name and email address before you launch the community.

Under the “settings” menu, you will find the “outgoing email” menu item. This setting is, by default, filled with the account name and email of the user who signed up for your Vanilla Forum. In this case it may be a personal email or a catch-all billing email. You will want to modify this to a more appropriate name and email for your community. We also recommend you do not use a web-based email (such as Yahoo, AOL) addresses to avoid potential issues where your member confirmation or notification email end up in your users’ spam folder.

## Blog Comments

**Blog Comments**

Vanilla can be used as a drop-in replacement for your blog's native commenting system. As a matter of fact, it can be used to add comments to any page on the web.

**Embedding is currently ENABLED.** ← **comments will not appear if this is disabled.**

[Disable Embedding](#)

Make sure embedding is enabled for comments to appear.

If you have a blog, you have the option to use Vanilla Forums as your commenting system. If you have a WordPress blog, we have a free addon to make it even easier. Download it [here](#). Make sure that you see the message “Embedding is currently Enabled” to ensure it works as intended.

## Embed Forum

**Embed Forum**

Your entire vanilla forum can be embedded into another page. This is typically done so you can insert your forum into another site with minimal theming effort. The preferred method is to [customize your theme](#) to match your existing website.

**Embedding is currently ENABLED.**

[Disable Embedding](#)

Use the WordPress plugin to embed your forum into a page on your blog, or use the universal code to embed your forum into any page on the web.

[WordPress Plugin](#) [Universal Code](#) [Advanced Settings](#) ← **set trusted domain and embed sign-in settings**

[Universal Forum Embed Code](#) ← **for use if you are not using the WordPress plugin**

To embed your Vanilla forum into your web site, use the following code.

```
<script type="text/javascript" src="http://...vanillaforums.com/js/embed.js"></script>
<noscript>Please enable JavaScript to view the <a href="http://vanillaforums.com/?ref_nojscript">discussions powered by Vanilla.</a></noscript>
<div class="vanilla-credit"><a class="vanilla-anchor" href="http://vanillaforums.com">Discussions by <span class="vanilla-logo">Vanilla</span></a></div>
```

↑ Copy and paste this code into the web page where you want the forum to appear.

An example of the embed settings for your community

Embed Forum allows your entire Vanilla forum to be embedded into another page. This is typically done so you can insert your forum into another site with minimal theming effort. The preferred method, though, is to customize your theme to match your existing website. This is so you can benefit from better SEO and performance. If you choose to embed your forum, make sure you review advanced settings, where you can set the trusted domains where your forum can appear.

## Social Groups

### New Group

**Name the Group**

**Description**  
 

You can use [Simple Html](#) in your post.

**Icon**  
 No file selected.

**Banner**  
 No file selected.

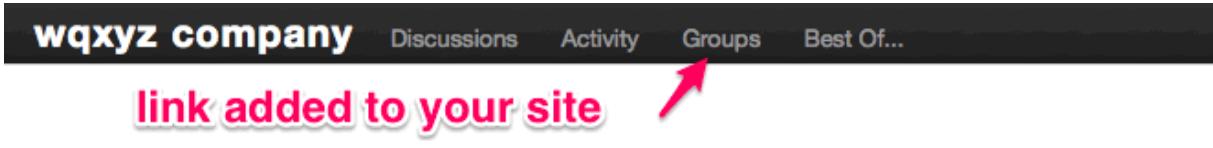
---

**Privacy**  
 **Public.** Anyone can see the group and its content. Anyone can join.  
 **Private.** Anyone can see the group, but only members can see its content. People must apply or be invited to join.

Screen to create a social groups

Social Groups are available on Advanced Plans (and above). For groups to be enabled, you need to contact our support team. Why use social groups? They are a great way for users in your community to organize around common interests. Using Groups, members can create private or public groups with their own discussions; allow anyone to join or control membership and schedule events for your group.

Once Social Groups are enabled by support, you and your members will see a “Groups” link on the top menu.



wqxyz company   [Discussions](#)   [Activity](#)   **Groups**   [Best Of...](#)

**link added to your site**

You can use roles and permissions to restrict who has the ability to create Social Groups.

Groups		Add	Manage
Group		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Moderation			<input type="checkbox"/>

An example of permissions for groups. By default all members can add social groups.

## Addons - Overview

With addons, you can extend the functionality of your Vanilla Forum. You can access the Addons menu in your dashboard. To enable an addon, just click the “enable button”.

**Vanilla Addons**

These are features you can add to your site by enabling them. We are always adding new features, so check back from time to time.

Plugin	Description
 Advanced Editor <small>Disable Settings</small>	Enables advanced editing of posts in several formats, including WYSIWYG, simple HTML, Markdown, and BBCode.
 Advanced Search <small>Disable</small>	Enables advanced search on sites.
 Akismet <small>Disable Settings</small>	Akismet spam protection integration for Vanilla.
 All Viewed <small>Enable</small>	Allows users to mark all discussions as viewed and mark category viewed.
 Auto Signout Timer <small>Enable</small>	Automatically signs people out if they have not been active for a period of time
 Badges <small>Enable</small>	Give badges to your users to reward them for contributing to your community.

An example of the addon section

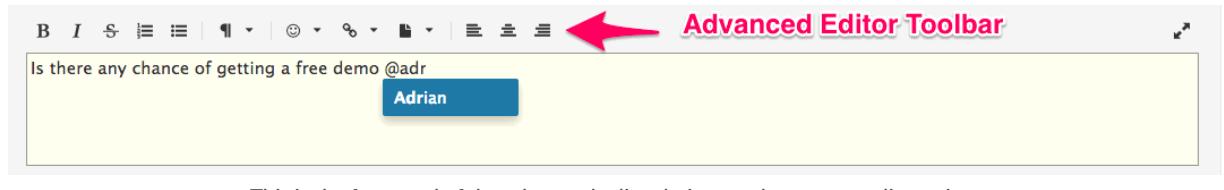
Many addons will have settings you may have to configure before they work as intended. Also, some addons may have permissions that will appear on the Roles and Permissions page.

Also, depending on your plan, you will have different addons available for your use. You can see a full list of all addons and plan types [here](#). If an addon in your plan is not visible, please contact support or your Customer Success Manager to have it enabled.

In the following pages, we will provide more information on some of the more popular addons available. As the admin, it is at your discretion which ones will be enabled for your mods and community to use.

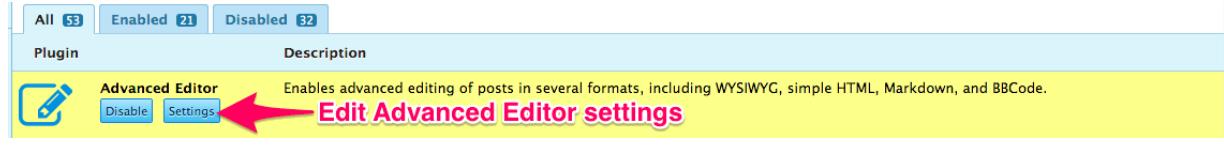
## List of Addons:

### Advanced Editor

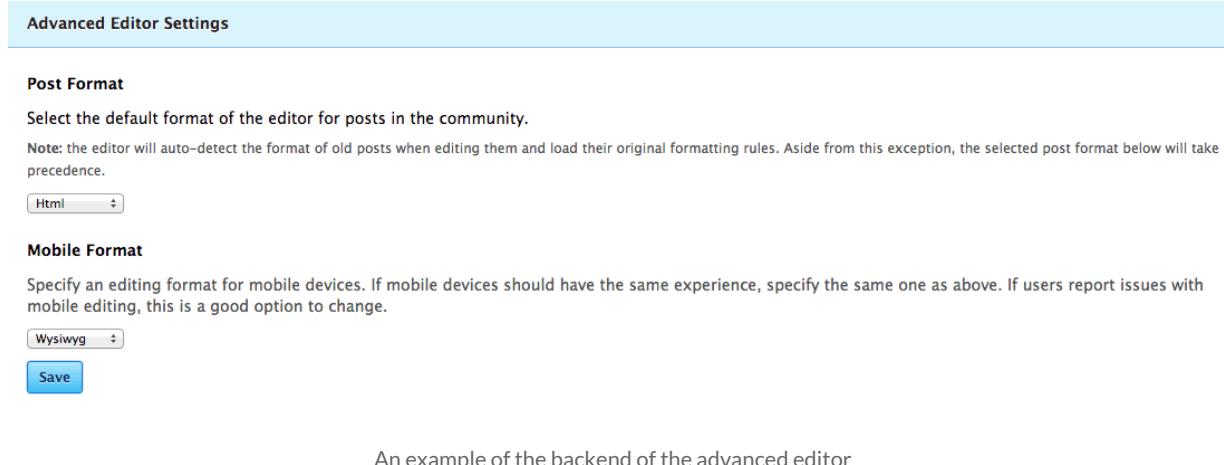


This is the front end of the advanced editor being used to create a discussion

The advanced editor is fully integrated into Vanilla Forums for users to start discussions or respond with comments. It makes it easy to add emoticons, upload pictures, spoiler tags and more. Once you enable the addon, you can also modify the format type for your posts by clicking on the settings button.

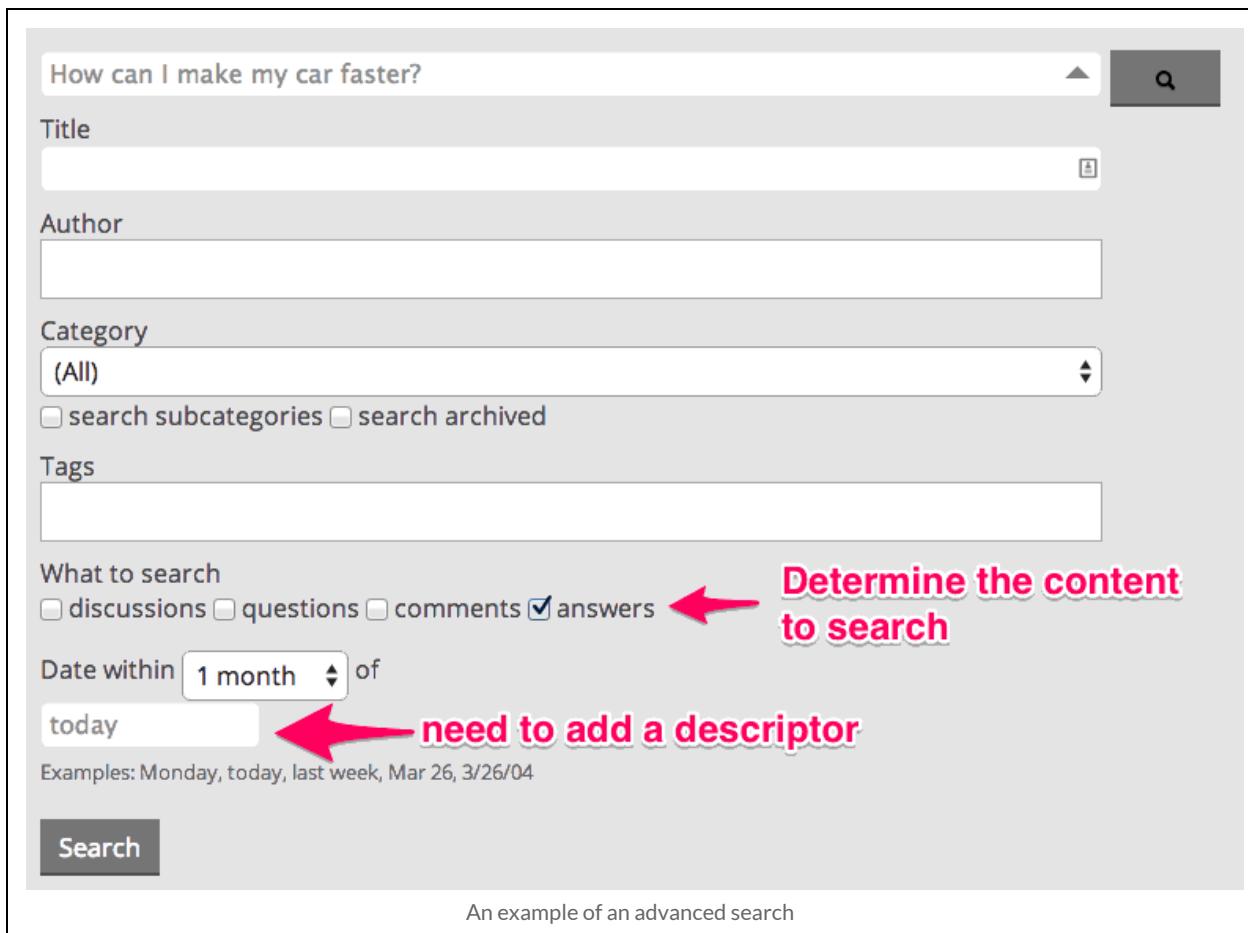


From the setting page, you can set the new format. Don't worry if your forum used an old format like BBCode! The editor will auto-detect the format of old posts and load the original formatting rules. You can also determine which editor mobile users will see.



An example of the backend of the advanced editor

## Advanced Search



How can I make my car faster?

Title

Author

Category  
(All)  
 search subcategories  search archived

Tags

What to search  
 discussions  questions  comments  answers

Date within 1 month of today

Examples: Monday, today, last week, Mar 26, 3/26/04

**Determine the content to search**

**need to add a descriptor**

An example of an advanced search

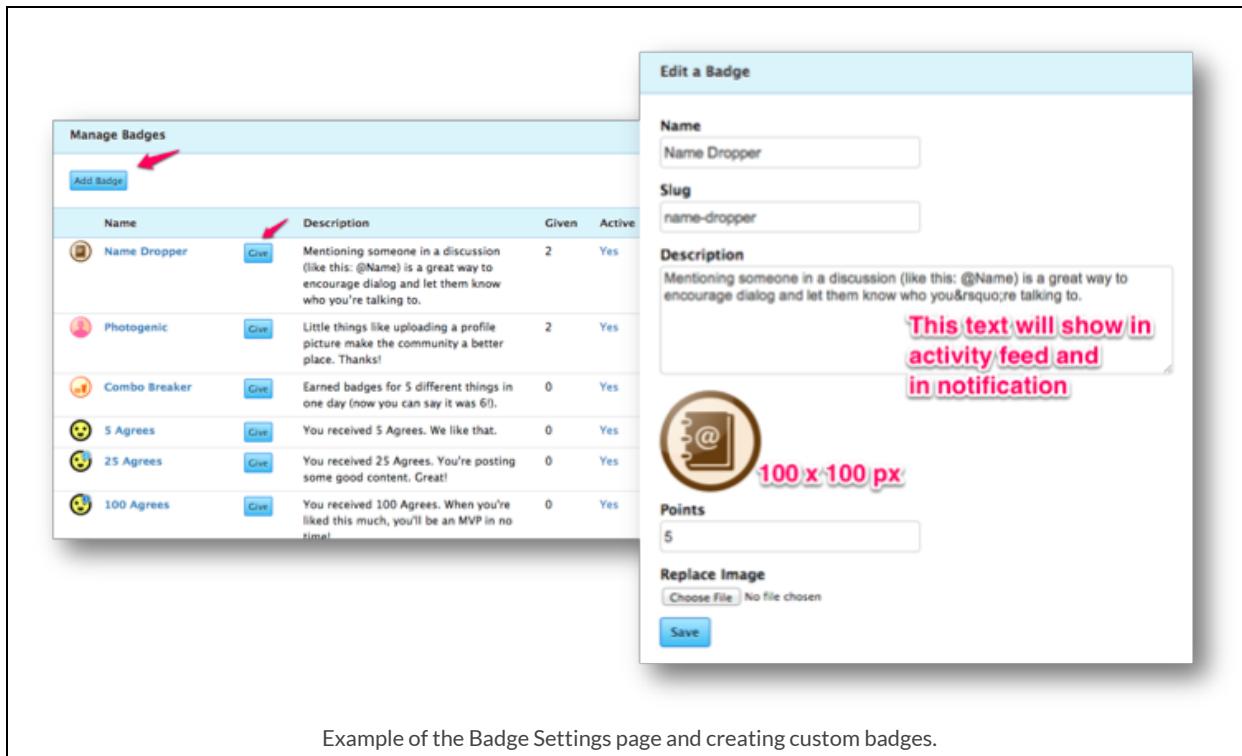
Advanced search adds another layer of search to your forum. Available on our Corporate, Enterprise and VIP plans, advanced search crawls your forum to make it easy for you and your members to search your community. Search has auto-complete, and allows you to filter on title, tags, authors, date and more.

## Akismet

# A·kis·met

Akismet is a dedicated spam-fighting server that will automatically filter all your forum content and user registration requests. Vanilla Forums hosted customers benefit from our volume license, so you don't need to provide your own key. To get it working, just enable it in the Addons section. If you want to use your own key, you can add it in settings.

## Badges



The screenshot shows the 'Manage Badges' section and a 'Edit a Badge' modal.

**Manage Badges:**

- Add Badge** button (highlighted with a red arrow).
- Badges List:**

Name	Description	Given	Active
Name Dropper	Mentioning someone in a discussion (like this: @Name) is a great way to encourage dialog and let them know who you're talking to.	2	Yes
Photogenic	Little things like uploading a profile picture make the community a better place. Thanks!	2	Yes
Combo Breaker	Earned badges for 5 different things in one day (now you can say it was 6!).	0	Yes
5 Agrees	You received 5 Agrees. We like that.	0	Yes
25 Agrees	You received 25 Agrees. You're posting some good content. Great!	0	Yes
100 Agrees	You received 100 Agrees. When you're liked this much, you'll be an MVP in no time!	0	Yes

**Edit a Badge:**

- Name:** Name Dropper
- Slug:** name-dropper
- Description:** Mentioning someone in a discussion (like this: @Name) is a great way to encourage dialog and let them know who you're talking to. **(This text will show in activity feed and in notification)**
- Image:** A circular icon with a book and a person, labeled **100x100 px**.
- Points:** 5
- Replace Image:** Choose File (No file chosen)
- Save** button

Example of the Badge Settings page and creating custom badges.

By enabling the Badges addon, members will receive Badges that reinforce positive participation in the community. Badges are awarded for uploading a profile photo, receiving positive Reactions, membership anniversary, etc. Once you enable the Badges addon, there will be a new category added to your sidebar called Reputation.

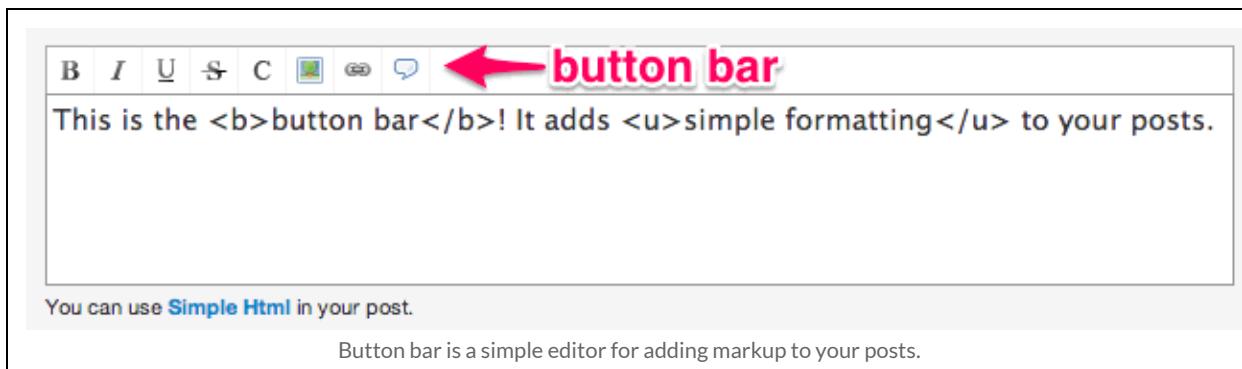


**Reputation** (highlighted with a red arrow)

- Badges**
- Badge Requests**

From the badges sub-menu, you can create new badges and edit existing badges. You can also activate or deactivate certain badges. You can also give them directly to users. Important note: Be certain about your decision to award badges, as once they are given, you will not be able to remove them without a support request.

## Button Bar



Earlier, we showed you the advanced editor. If you opt to go for a basic editor, you can choose the button bar for your community. Out of the box, it allows your members to mark up their posts with basic HTML. If you wish to change to markdown or BBCode, please contact support or your Customer Success Manager.

## File Upload

The File Upload feature (available to plans Advanced and above) enables uploading files and attaching them to discussions and comments. Once you have enabled the File Upload addon, here are the basics to be aware of:

- Out of the box, the following file types are accepted: txt, jpg, jpeg, gif, png, bmp, tiff, ico, zip, gz, tar.gz, tgz, psd, ai, fla, swf, pdf, doc, xls, ppt, docx, xlsx, log, rar, 7z.
- The maximum file size users will be able to upload is 50 mb.
- We can whitelist additional file extensions if you needed. ([Contact us.](#))

Plugins	Add	Allow	Edit	Manage	Notify
Attachments > Download		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Attachments > Upload		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Flagging			<input type="checkbox"/>		
Pockets			<input type="checkbox"/>		
Signatures			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Tagging		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Whispers		<input type="checkbox"/>			

Setting permissions of who can download and upload.

Once you enable the FileUpload addon, there are two options that will be added to your permissions table: Allow Attachment Download and Allow Attachment Upload. From the Roles & Permissions screen in the “Users” menu, you can determine which roles have the ability to upload/download attachments. For example, in the screenshot above, this role is allowed to upload and download files. If you decide, you can change this and only allow certain roles to upload or download files. Just uncheck the ability for that role so they cannot upload files. How file uploading works, and who has the ability in your community, is totally at your discretion.

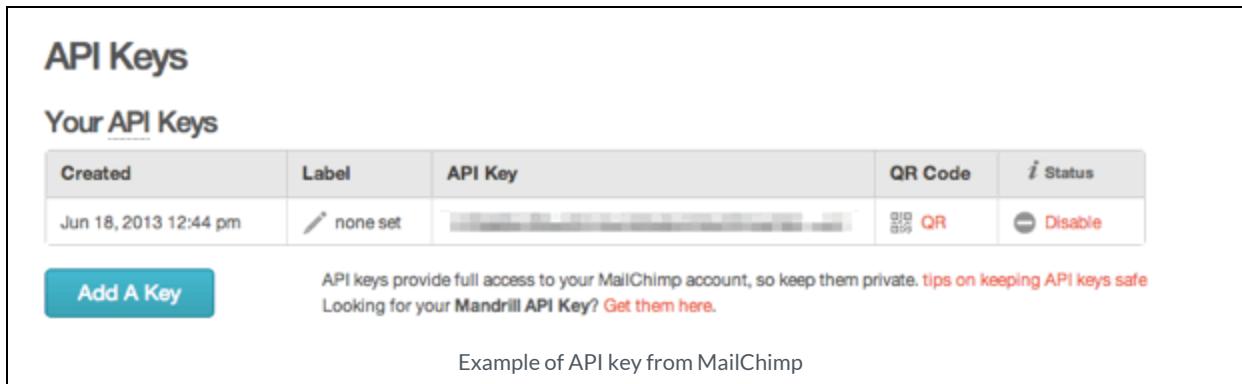
\*NOTE: You can assign these permissions to Member, Moderator, Administrator, and any custom roles you create.

## Gravatar

[Gravatar.com](#) is a third-party service which will check a user’s email address and will make use of user’s previously-set photo as an avatar, if one’s already been set up. If the member does not have a gravatar loaded, it will default to a Vanillicon. What’s a Vanillicon? It’s a unique avatar that’s created based on the user’s email. Vanillicons have been in use on our forums for a long time. In fact, over ten million have been created so far! Anyone (or any application) can create a Vanillicon at [Vanillicon.com](#). Users may also get a new one, if they don’t like their present one, just by heading over to the site and creating a new one.

## MailChimp

This integration lets you bulk export member email addresses and keep addresses synced up with MailChimp. Once you enable the addon, you will need to update the settings before it starts working. You will need an API key from your MailChimp account, which is obtainable for free from MailChimp.



The screenshot shows the 'Your API Keys' section of the MailChimp API Keys page. It displays a single key entry:

Created	Label	API Key	QR Code	Status
Jun 18, 2013 12:44 pm	<input type="text"/> none set	[REDACTED]	 QR	 Disable

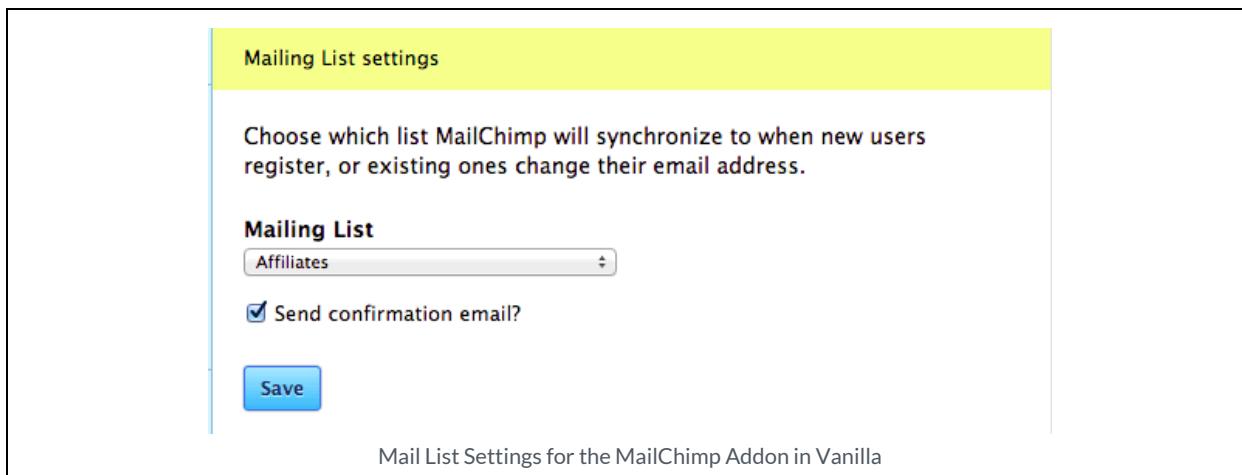
**Add A Key** button

API keys provide full access to your MailChimp account, so keep them private. [tips on keeping API keys safe](#)  
Looking for your **Mandrill API Key?** [Get them here.](#)

Example of API key from MailChimp

Some other notes about settings:

- **Mailing List Settings:** lets you choose which list in MailChimp you want to sync to. Selecting the 'Send email confirmation?' box enables double-opt in. The member will be sent an email from your MailChimp account and be asked to confirm subscription to the list.



**Mailing List settings**

Choose which list MailChimp will synchronize to when new users register, or existing ones change their email address.

**Mailing List**  
 

Send confirmation email?

**Save**

Mail List Settings for the MailChimp Addon in Vanilla

- The Mass Synchronization options lets you do a bulk export to MailChimp. A progress bar will appear as contacts synchronize. \*\*Caution\*\* If you choose the double opt-in confirmation and have a large membership, the sync might take a very long time.

**Mass Synchronization**

By default, Vanilla only sends **changes** to MailChimp. Synchronization is a one-time action that allows an entire forum's worth of users email addresses to be pushed to MailChimp to populate a list.

**Sync to List**

Send confirmation email?

**User Selection**

Sync banned users  
 Sync deleted users  
 Sync users with unconfirmed email addresses

**Synchronize**

Example of mass synchronization settings

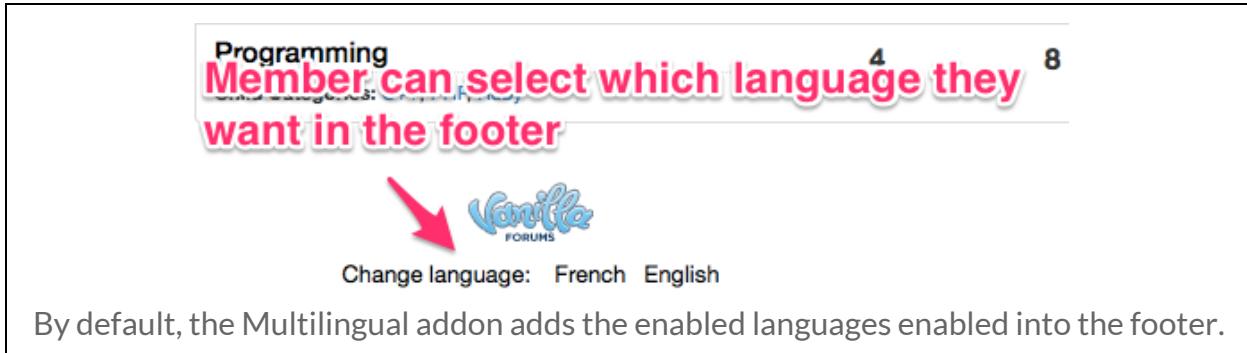
Something else to note; you can only export email addresses and no other fields at this time. It's also a one-way integration, therefore if an email is edited in Vanilla, it will update in MailChimp, provided the existing email is still in MailChimp. However, contacts added or edited in MailChimp will not get updated in your Vanilla Forum.

## Multilingual

With our Multilingual addon (available on the Advanced plans and up), the admin interface and the context menus can be changed to a member's preferred language. While we do not translate the posts, the interface menus will be translated into the native tongue selected.

To get a new language (or as we call them locales) loaded, contact our support team, and have them enable the language(s) you desire. You can also have them set the default language to something other than English, should you so desire.

Once installed, all one needs to do is select the preferred language in the footer and the interface text will display in that language.



The screenshot shows a forum post footer. At the top, there's a red box containing the text "Member can select which language they want in the footer". Below this, a red arrow points to the "Vanilla FORUMS" logo. Underneath the logo, there's a "Change language" button followed by "French English".

By default, the Multilingual addon adds the enabled languages enabled into the footer.

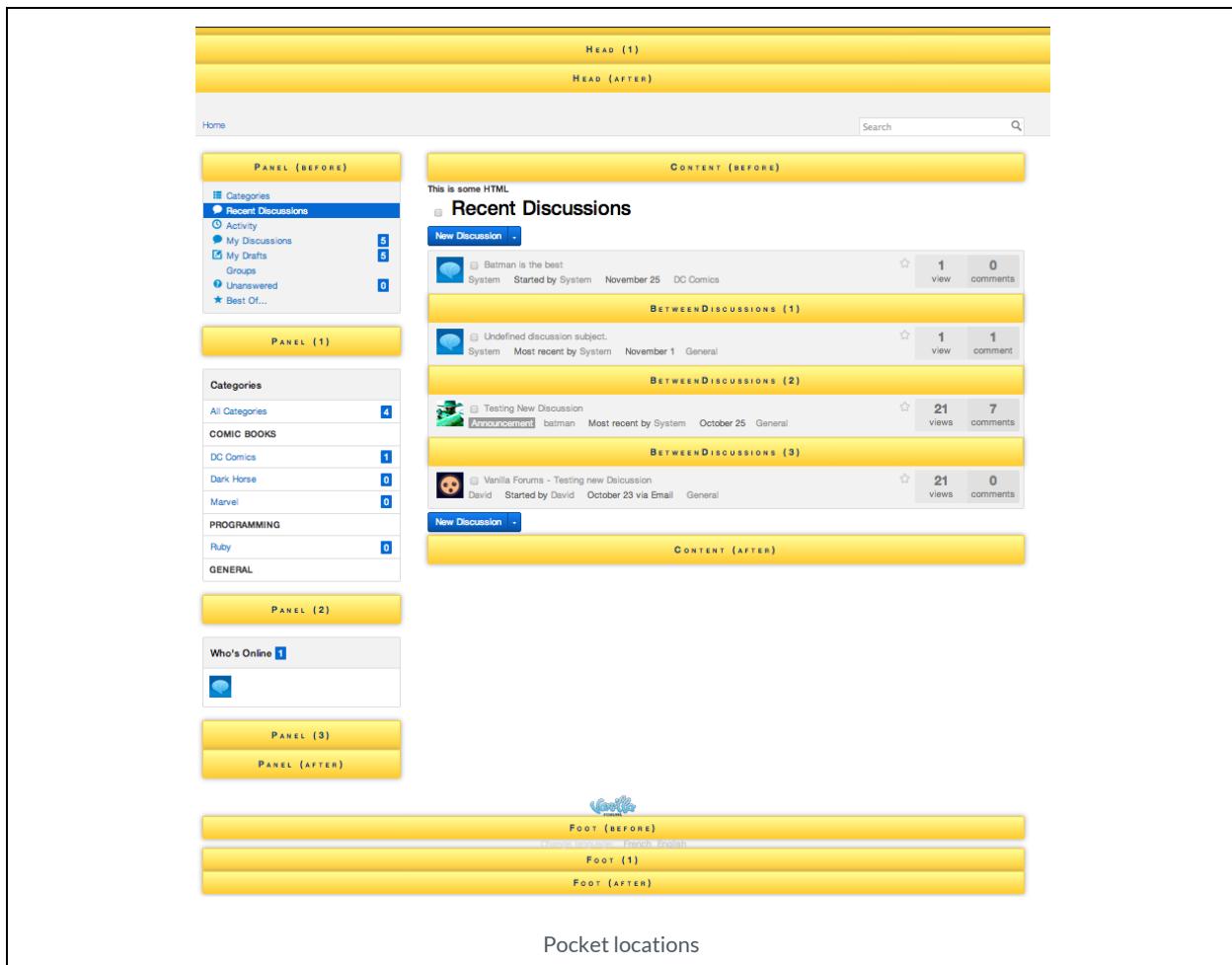
If you like, you can change the look and feel by overriding the class “LocaleOptions”, in your CSS. You can see the full list of languages supported [here](#). We always welcome community contributions to help expand and update our language coverage.

## Pockets

Pockets are placeholder slots available throughout your forum. They are a great way to add little bits of HTML or JavaScript to your site. If you don't have Pockets enabled, and you are on the Advanced plan (or higher), please send a request to support or your Customer Success Manager to have it turned on.

Word of caution: Pockets are extremely powerful, so they should be used with caution. The wrong code can break your forum, so always make sure to try things first in "Test Mode".

Once you have Pockets enabled, you will have a new menu item in your dashboard under appearance. Once on the pockets' setting page you can turn on "Show Pocket Locations" to see all the slots available on your forum. Only Administrators can see these hints, so it's a great way to see where you want to add a pocket.



Once you know where you want a pocket to appear you are ready to add a pocket. Once you click the “Add Pocket” button, you will be presented with some fields to fill in before your pocket can appear.

Here is some information about each part of the “Add Pocket” form:

**Name:** This is the name for your pocket. Give it a descriptive name to distinguish different pockets.

**Body:** Here is where you can add snippets of HTML or Javascript. This is where you are able to add the code for any ad networks to which you may belong, such as AdSense or Doubleclick.

**Page:** Use this to control on which page your pocket will appear.

**Location:** This is the location of the actual pocket. So for example, discussion page or the footer.

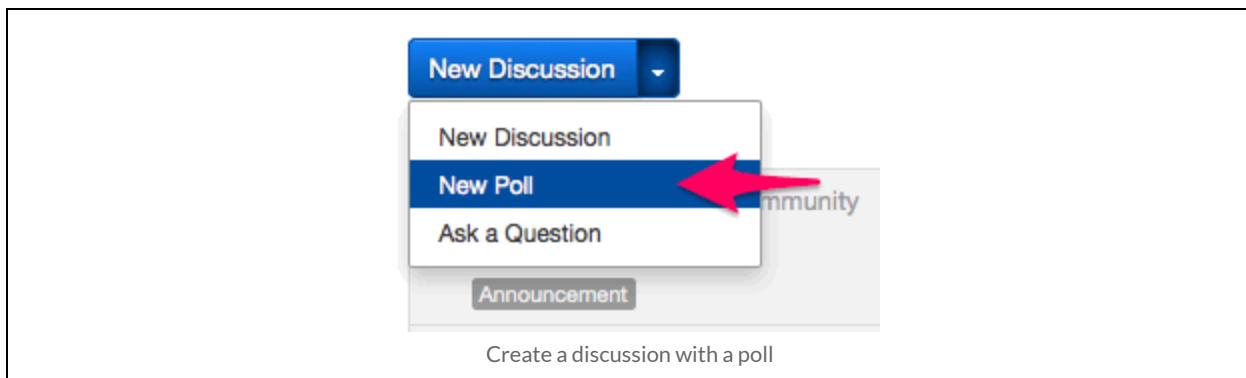
**Repeat:** This is how you can decide to have your ad show every third comment in a discussion or just have an ad just before the footer.

**Conditions:** With conditions, you control pocket behaviour. For example, you can create a pocket with an ad that will only be seen on mobile devices.

**Enable/Disable:** You should always enable the pocket in “Test Mode” until you are happy with the way it looks. When a pocket is in test mode, only those with Pocket Admin rights will be able to see your content.

**ProTip:** Pockets can add another level of customization to your site and the HTML template too. You can learn more in our [theme guide](#).

## Polls



To turn on polls, simply enable the Polls addon page (This feature is available on all of our hosted plans.) This will add a ‘New Poll’ option that will let your users create a discussion with a poll.

**Poll Question**

What grade of gasoline do you put in your car?

**Optional Description**

Make this poll anonymous (user votes are not made public). **option to make poll votes anonymous** ←

**Poll Options**

Regular

Mid-grade

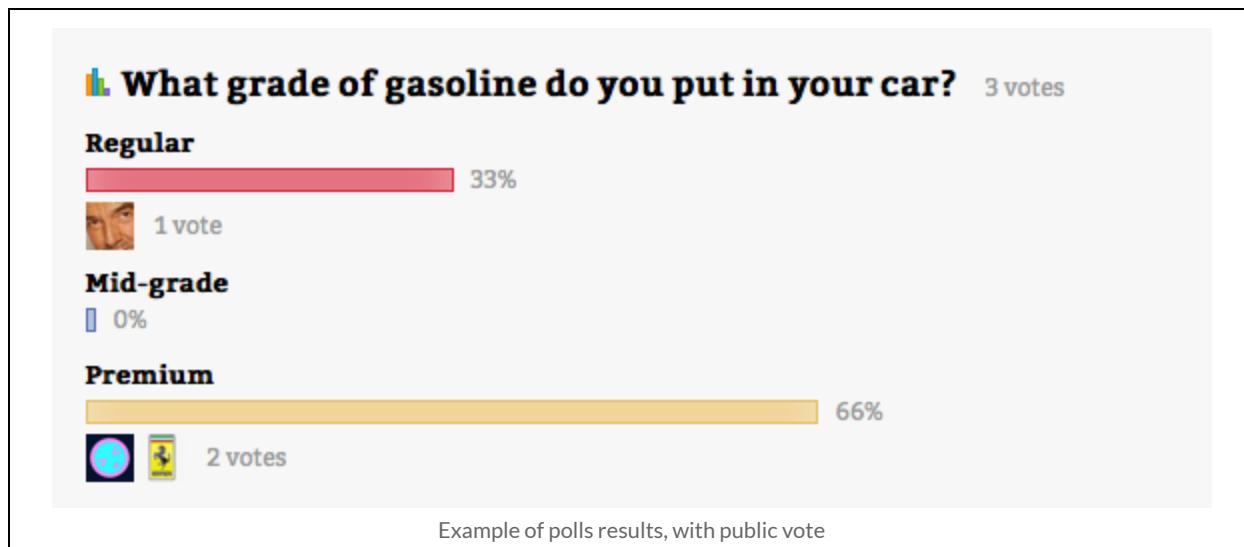
Premium

Add another poll option ...

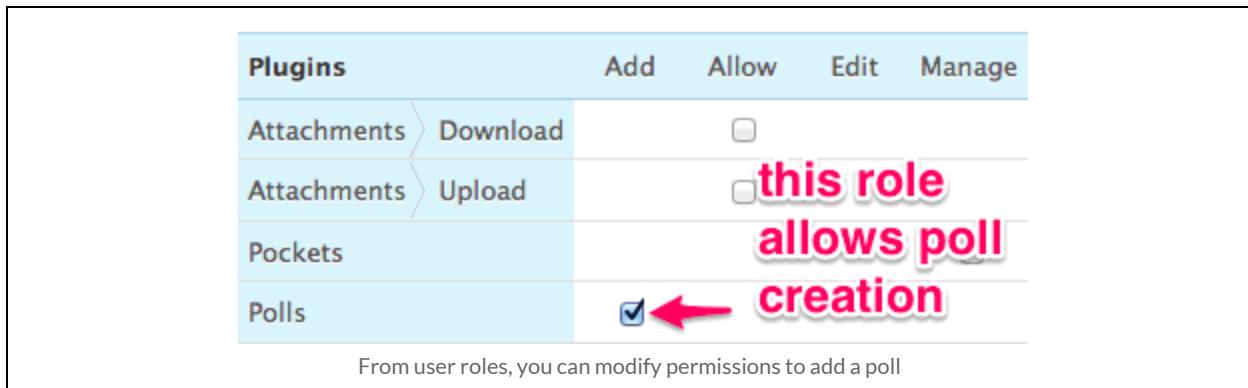
**Save Poll** **Cancel**

Create a new poll, and you an option to hide who voted for which choice.

You can choose to decide if users can see who voted for what choice. A public poll will show the participant's avatars below each bar, and there is also a mention of what each user voted for on their comments in public polls.



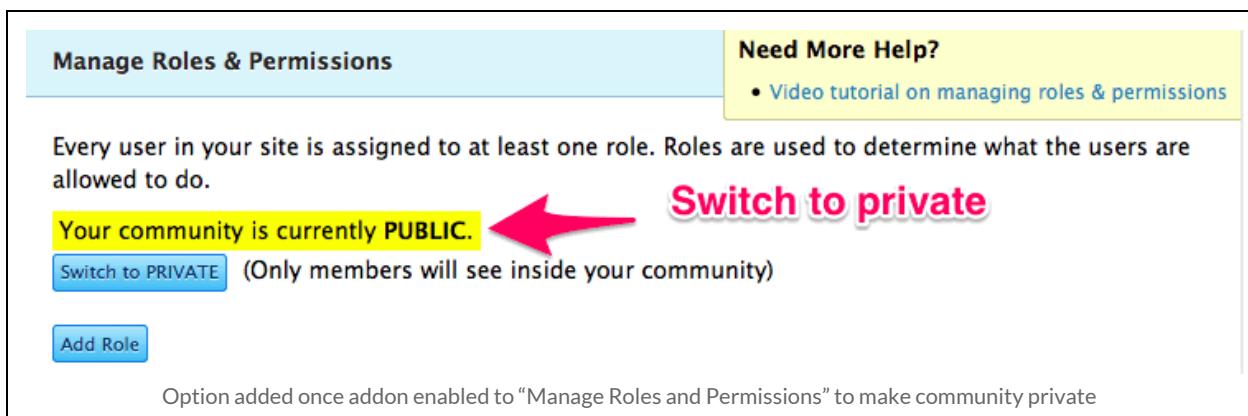
Important note: a poll cannot be edited once created. Also, as an admin, you can control which users can start a poll from within your Dashboard. Within the Users menu, click on Roles & Permissions.



The screenshot shows the 'Plugins' section of the Vanilla CMS admin interface. At the top, there are tabs for 'Add', 'Allow', 'Edit', and 'Manage'. Below these are four items: 'Attachments Download' (unchecked), 'Attachments Upload' (unchecked), 'Pockets' (unchecked), and 'Polls' (checked). A large red arrow points from the text 'this role allows poll creation' to the checked checkbox for 'Polls'. Below the table, a note says 'From user roles, you can modify permissions to add a poll'.

## Private Community

With the addon enabled and set to private, only members can see inside your community. Once enabled, it will add a setting to manage Roles and Permissions, that will allow you to toggle visibility.



The screenshot shows the 'Manage Roles & Permissions' page. At the top, it says 'Manage Roles & Permissions' and 'Need More Help? • Video tutorial on managing roles & permissions'. Below this, a note states 'Every user in your site is assigned to at least one role. Roles are used to determine what the users are allowed to do.' A yellow box highlights the text 'Your community is currently PUBLIC.' A red arrow points from this text to a blue button labeled 'Switch to private'. Below the button, it says '(Only members will see inside your community)'. At the bottom left is a blue 'Add Role' button, and at the bottom right is the note 'Option added once addon enabled to "Manage Roles and Permissions" to make community private'.

This addon is also helpful as you build your community. You can use it to allow your beta testers or early adopters to sneak a peek inside your community before you launch. You can change the registration method to “Approval” to control who else gets access in this phase. Just make sure to change it before launch.

### User Registration Settings

Change the way that new users register with the site.

Method	Description
<input type="radio"/> Basic	New users fill out a simple form and are granted access immediately.
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Approval	New users are reviewed and approved by an administrator (that's you!).
<input type="radio"/> Invitation	Existing members send invitations to new members.
<input type="radio"/> Connect	New users are only registered through SSO plugins.

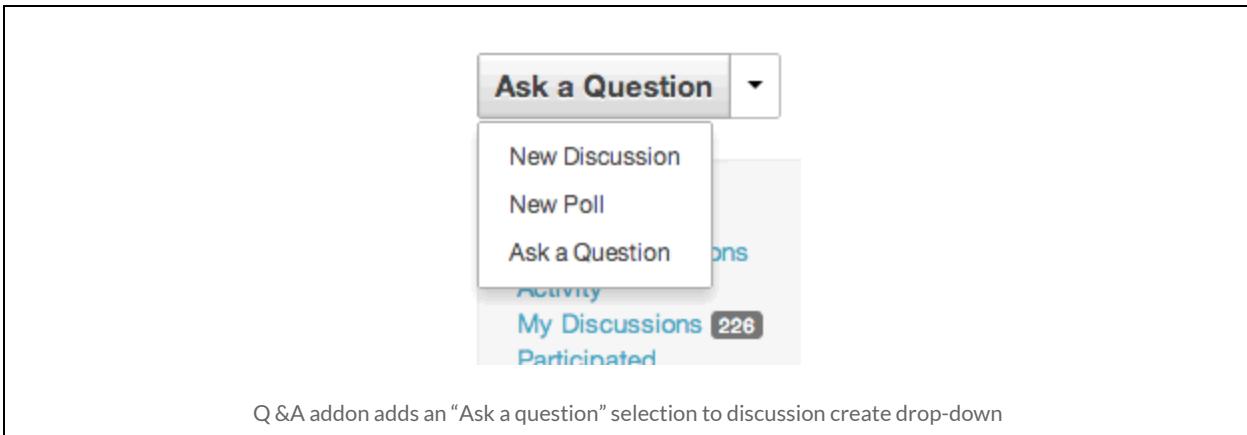
Require users to confirm their email addresses (recommended)

**Email Confirmation Role**  
Confirm Email  Users will be assigned to this role until they've confirmed their email addresses.

Registration setting to approve applicants before they become members.

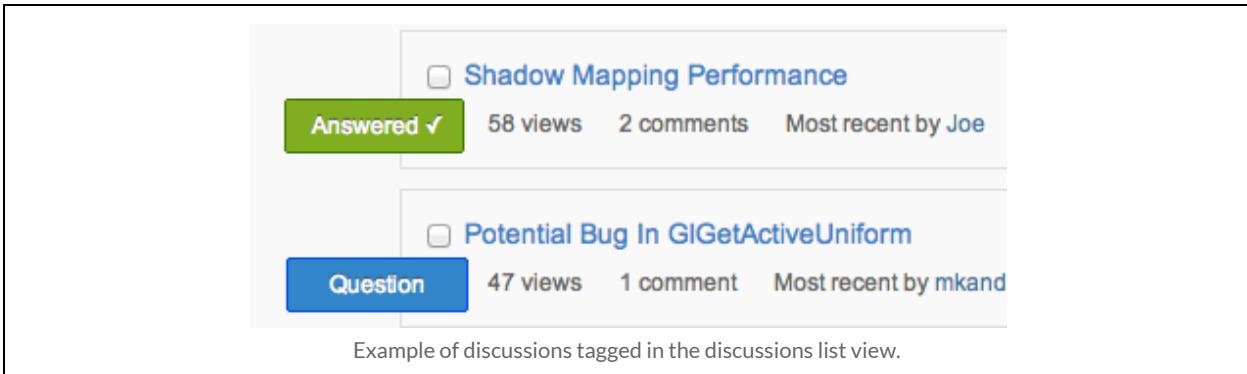
## Q & A

If the objective of your community is to enable social customer support, then setting up the Q&A addon will be a great idea. Once enabled it will add the ability for users to create a an “Ask A Question” -type discussion. Contact support or your Customer Success Manager if you want this to be the default setting for your community.



Q & A addon adds an “Ask a question” selection to discussion create drop-down

The questions are tagged so as to allow you and your community to see those which are answered and which remain open.



Example of discussions tagged in the discussions list view.

Users will be notified when their questions have been answered and will be prompted to indicate if the reply answered the question.

You've asked questions that now have answers. Make sure you accept/reject the answers.

Users can indicate if a reply answers the question or not. They will also see these options below any reply their question receives.

## Answers



**carguy** • ★

3:04PM

These floats are black and heat and bulge under the sun. They won't be a problem when they are under the dock in the water

*Did this answer the question? Yes • No*

▶ Flag

Member who asked the question can decide if the answers were helpful

Accepted answers are displayed at the top of the thread. Rejected or unmarked replies will be displayed below. Best Answers can be styled with CSS to stand out.

## Best Answer



**Johan\_Dahlberg** Posts: 23 ★

November 9 **Answer ✓** 130.238.178.43

The problem is that you are calling `QScriptUtils`, not as complete as I would like it to be) this causes `createSeqFromFile` with null, as this variable is only you should be fine. :) There is a minimal example c

```
package org.broadinstitute.sting.queue.qs
```

Best answer formatted with CSS to stand out.

A menu link helps users find unanswered questions.

**My Discussions** 226

Participated

Unanswered 30

Best of...

Menu item to help users help others with unanswered questions

If the Badges addon is enabled, users who answer questions are rewarded with Badges and earn reputation points.



**carguy** earned the **5 Answers badge**.  
 Your willingness to share knowledge has definitely been noticed.  
 2:22PM    [Comment](#)

Example of activity notice of a badge being awarded for correct answers given.

To change the styling of the accepted answers, you can edit the CSS with something like this:

```
ul.AcceptedAnswers .Item {  
  background: transparent;  
}  
  
ul.AcceptedAnswers {  
  border: solid thick blue;  
  background-color: #eeeeee;  
  border-radius: 15px;  
  -webkit-border-radius: 15px;  
  -moz-border-radius: 15px;  
}
```

This is, of course, optional. To get the Q&A functionality, simply visit your Dashboard and enable the addon.

## Quotes



**Ronnie**  
 May 2    edited May 2    in New Products Lab

I really love Pace cars. Any news on when you get a really good software so I can design a 3D model for my shelf?

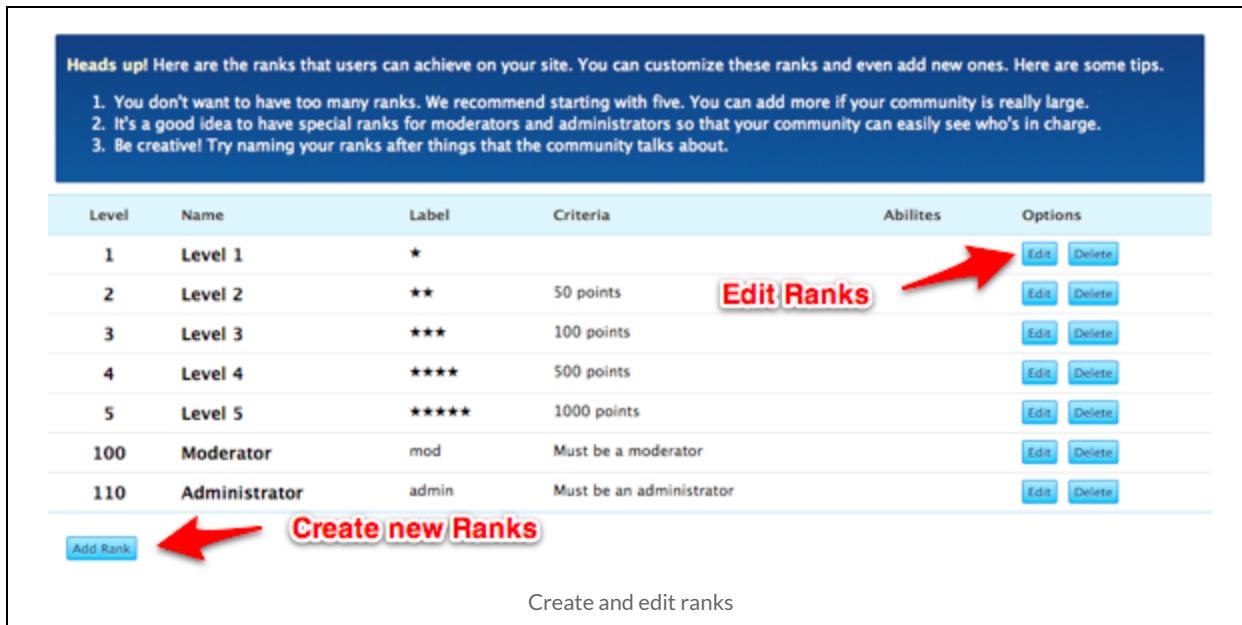
|▶ Flag 🔍 Quote ← **Add quote button to discussion and comments**

"Quote" button added to each discussion and comment to make "Quoting" easier.

With this addon enabled, an option is added to each discussion and comment to make it easy to quote another user.

## Ranks

With Reactions and Badges enabled, members earn a reputation score based on their contributions to your community and the reactions to their content by other members. The Ranks feature lets you assign a publicly visible rank to members for having accumulated a specific score. It can also allow you to give special abilities to members based on rank. A rank is not Roles & Permissions, which govern content access, moderation abilities, and administrator access.



**Heads up!** Here are the ranks that users can achieve on your site. You can customize these ranks and even add new ones. Here are some tips.

1. You don't want to have too many ranks. We recommend starting with five. You can add more if your community is really large.
2. It's a good idea to have special ranks for moderators and administrators so that your community can easily see who's in charge.
3. Be creative! Try naming your ranks after things that the community talks about.

Level	Name	Label	Criteria	Abilities	Options
1	Level 1	★			<a href="#">Edit</a> <a href="#">Delete</a>
2	Level 2	★★	50 points	<a href="#">Edit Ranks</a>	<a href="#">Edit</a> <a href="#">Delete</a>
3	Level 3	★★★	100 points		<a href="#">Edit</a> <a href="#">Delete</a>
4	Level 4	★★★★	500 points		<a href="#">Edit</a> <a href="#">Delete</a>
5	Level 5	★★★★★	1000 points		<a href="#">Edit</a> <a href="#">Delete</a>
100	Moderator	mod	Must be a moderator		<a href="#">Edit</a> <a href="#">Delete</a>
110	Administrator	admin	Must be an administrator		<a href="#">Edit</a> <a href="#">Delete</a>

[Add Rank](#) [Create new Ranks](#)

Create and edit ranks

A user can only have one rank at a time. Typically, the user's rank is displayed on their discussions and comments just after their name. If a user has a Title, that is displayed separately, after their Rank. As forum admin, you may manually give a rank to a member. Moderators can be given this ability as well.

Ranks come with 7 default ranks. The default ranks are "Level 1" through "Level 5", "Moderator", and "Administrator". The order of the list matters. In this case, "Administrator" is the highest rank because it has the highest number for "Level" and is, therefore, last in the list. "Level 1" is the lowest rank.

If you are not happy with these, you can create or edit Ranks to be set as you choose. You have the ability to determine the level, label, criteria, and abilities. You can also add some custom CSS to the Rank which lets you do things like display an image next to a user with a

certain rank. Abilities include starting a discussion, editing posts, creating a poll, having a signature and having a user title.

## Reactions

**best steak in the city?**

 **superman** Krypton Administrator Level 0  
March 4 edited 5:03PM in Food Flag

Who makes the best  joker

▶ Flag " Quote · Promote Like Vote Down Vote Up WTF LOL · Log

An example of reactions.

Reactions are a 1-click response to discussions and comments. Using Reactions enables community members to indicate an emotional ("Awesome", "LOL") or empirical ("Agree", "Vote Down") response without typing a comment. This introduces feedback that is otherwise missing from a community when members don't have anything to add to a discussion via a comment.

As the admin when you enable the Reactions addon, you determine which reactions are available to the community. You can toggle them on or off depending on what reactions are appropriate to your community. To enable or disable a reaction on your forum, click the "Active/Inactive" toggle next to each reaction in the Dashboard under "Reactions". Generally, we recommend using one to four reactions.

Reactions are universal to all categories on your site. You can use CSS rules to hide certain reactions in certain categories, but they cannot be disabled selectively.

Reaction	Description	Active
 Promote	Moderators can promote the absolute best posts in the community. This way they can be remembered or read by new visitors that weren't here when they were originally posted.  Only moderators can use this reaction. This reaction adds 5 to a post's score. Users that get this reaction get +3 points.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Active
 Off Topic	Off topic posts are not relevant to the topic being discussed. If a post gets enough off-topic votes then it will be buried so it won't derail the discussion.  This reaction subtracts 1 from a post's score. Users that get this reaction get -1 point.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Active
 Disagree	Users that disagree with a post can give their opinion with this reaction. Since a disagreement is highly subjective, this reaction doesn't promote or bury the post or give any points.	<input type="checkbox"/> InActive
 Agree	Users that agree with a post can give their option with this reaction.  This reaction adds 1 to a post's score. Users that get this reaction get +1 point.	<input type="checkbox"/> InActive
 Dislike	A dislike is a general disapproval of a post. Enough dislikes will bury a post.  This reaction subtracts 1 from a post's score. Users that get this reaction get -1 point.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Active
 Like	A like is a general approval of a post. Enough likes will promote a post.  This reaction adds 1 to a post's score. Users that get this reaction get +1 point.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Active

Example of some reactions which can be turned off or on.

To edit a reaction, go to Reactions in the Dashboard and click the name of the Reaction you wish to edit. Editing an existing reaction is the best way to tweak your list to fit the culture of your community. We recommend selecting the default reaction that most closely matches your desired reaction and simply changing its name. To add a new reaction, contact support, your Customer Success Manager or your account executive.

You can also change the "Points" field to modify how many points it give to the user receiving each reaction of that type. The number of points assigned to the discussion or comment is not currently editable via the Dashboard. This can only be done as a service, so speak to your sales executive if this is something you need.

Reactions are also a way to curate content. "Promote" is a special reaction for this purpose and is assigned by the "Curation" permission. Users whose ranks include that ability are also able to use it. It assigns five points to the discussion or comment. The user that made the post receives the number of points specified under that reaction in your Dashboard.

Discussions or comments with five or more points assigned to it will be added to the Best Of page and will get the "promoted" CSS class added to them. These points can come from any type of reaction.

After content is added to the Best Of page, it is never removed, no matter what its future point total is. The "promoted" CSS class is reevaluated as point totals change. You can use this special class to style promoted content different (like highlighting it with a special background color).

Discussions and comments that reach a score of -5 or lower will be "buried". Buried content appears collapsed by default and requires a user to click on the content before it can be read. You can style buried content using the "Buried" CSS class.

Abuse and Spam reactions are available to all users when enabled but have special actions attached to them. Five or more Abuse reactions will add the content to the Moderation Queue for moderator review. Ten or more will remove it. Five or more Spam reactions will move the content to the Spam Queue.

A user with the "Curation" permission counts as 5 of either of these reactions when they use it.

The current default for negative reactions in new installations of Vanilla is for them to remove 1 point from the discussion or comment, but to have no effect on the point total of the user who made the post. This discourages abuse of negative reactions beyond simple voting scenarios.

There is always the potential for abuse when you open up avenues of self-curation in a community. In general, we discourage the use of any negative reactions unless there are established guidelines for their use in your community.

Finally, you might want to review the Advanced settings to make changes to reaction visibility, as well as control the Best Of style and more.

**Reaction Types**

**Need More Help?**

- Introducing Vanilla Reactions and Badges

**Heads up!** Here are all of the reactions you can use on your site. Which reactions you use really depends on your community, but we recommend keeping a couple of points in mind.

1. Don't use too many reactions. You don't want to give your users information overload.
2. We recommend mostly positive reactions to encourage participation.

**Advanced Settings**  **Access Advanced Settings for Reactions**

Reaction	Description	Actions Based on Votes	Active
 Promote	Moderators have the ability to promote the best posts in the community. This way they can be featured for new visitors.	This reaction adds 5 to a post's score. Users that get this reaction get +5 points.	 Active

Access advanced settings to reactions and Best of

**Reaction Settings**

**Show Who Reacted to Posts**

In a popup  As avatars  Don't show

**Best of Style**

Tiles  List

**Order Comments By**

You can order your comments based on reactions. We recommend ordering the comments by date.

Date  Score

**Order Embedded Comments By**

Ordering your embedded comments by reaction will show just the best comments. Then users can head into the community to see the full discussion.

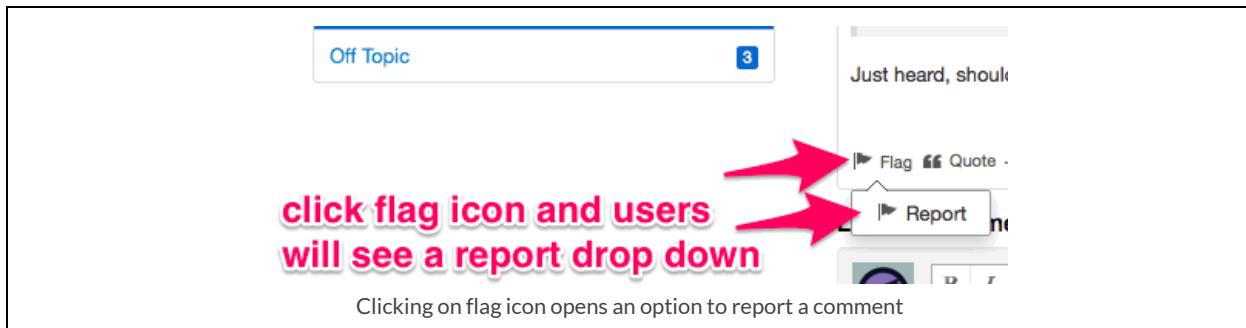
Date  Score

**Save**

Some of the settings you can change.

Important note: Reactions assign points to users and content independently. This allows you to keep any automated badges associated with that reaction, which you can then rename appropriately as well.

## Reporting



When enabled, Reporting is a way for members to bring moderators' attention to content that they believe is inappropriate. "Report" is an option under "Flag" in the Reactions available under each post.

If a member reports content, a popup box will prompt them to add a "Reason" both to explain the report and discourage useless reports. Any member may use this function.

Reported content creates a new discussion in a special moderator-only forum entitled "Reported Posts". Additional reports of the same content (the exact same post) add new comments to the special discussion. The discussion starter is whoever reported the content first. Only moderators may see reports and receive notifications about them.

If different posts in the same discussion are reported, each will get its own special discussion. Moderators can comment in the special discussion normally to coordinate a response. If you give Moderators Advanced Notifications permission in the Roles & Permissions table, they may subscribe to receive popups and/or emails of all new discussions and/or comments in the Reported Posts category.

## Signatures

**Signature Settings**

Hide signatures for guests  
 Hide signatures on embedded comments  
 Allow images

**Save**

Default signature settings

If this addon is enabled, users can add signatures to their profile. As Forum admin you control some important global settings. By default, signatures are hidden from guests and images are allowed, but you can change the global settings. Users also have the opportunity to change how they view signatures as well (for example, hide images).

**Signature Settings** [Back to Profile](#)

**Settings**

Hide signatures always  
 Hide signatures on my mobile device  
 Strip images out of signatures

**Signature Code**

You can use [Simple Html](#) in your post.

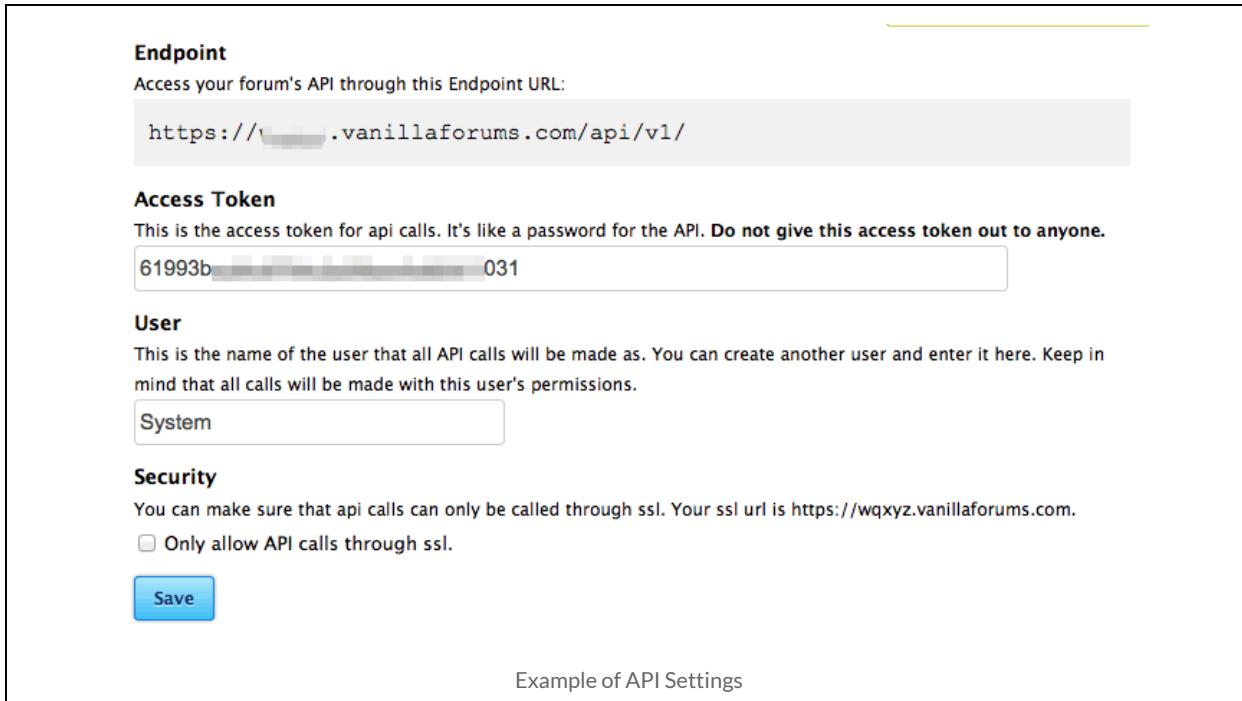
**Save**

A user can edit their own signature settings

## Salesforce (BETA)

Salesforce integration is new and currently in BETA. Please contact your account executive to learn more.

## Simple API



**Endpoint**  
Access your forum's API through this Endpoint URL:  
`https://[REDACTED].vanillaforums.com/api/v1/`

**Access Token**  
This is the access token for api calls. It's like a password for the API. **Do not give this access token out to anyone.**  
61993b[REDACTED]031

**User**  
This is the name of the user that all API calls will be made as. You can create another user and enter it here. Keep in mind that all calls will be made with this user's permissions.  
System

**Security**  
You can make sure that api calls can only be called through ssl. Your ssl url is `https://wqxyz.vanillaforums.com`.  
 Only allow API calls through ssl.

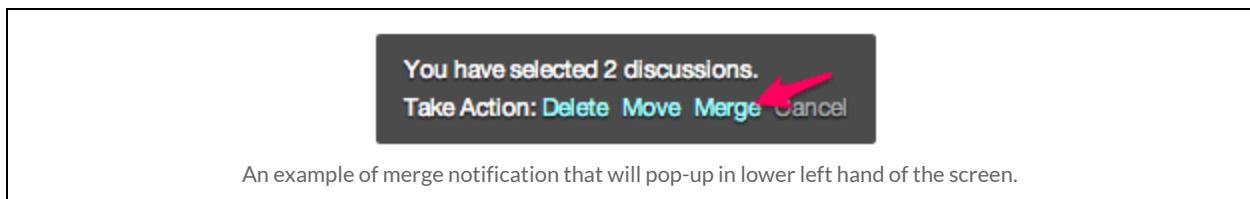
**Save**

Example of API Settings

Once you've enabled the SimpleAPI addon (available for Advanced and above users) you will see a new link in your dashboard called "API" under settings. Clicking on the link will bring you to a page that gives you the information needed to connect to the API including the access token, defining a user account for API access, and whether API calls are sent over HTTPS (SSL).

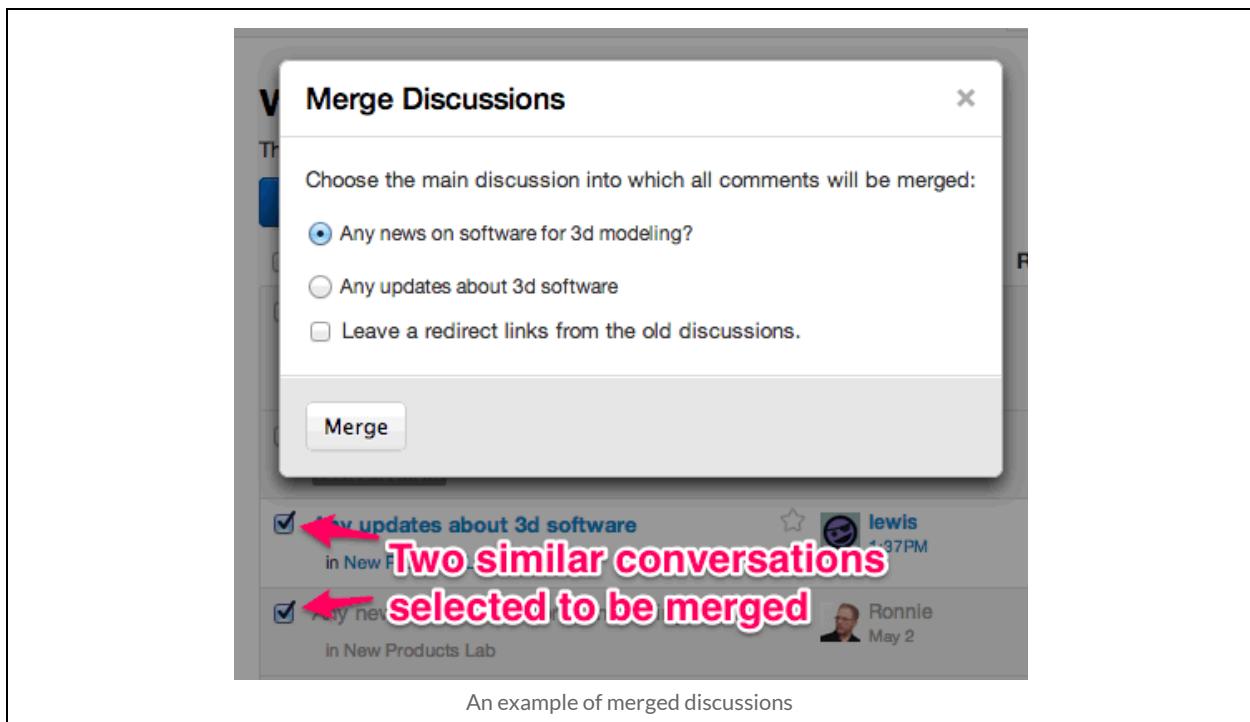
If you or your developers plan to use the API we want to ensure you have the latest information about our SimpleAPI. For this reason, please see our detailed [online API documentation](#).

## Split and Merge



When this addon is enabled, moderators with permission to edit discussions are able to split and merge discussions. Splitting a discussion would come in handy when, for example, a comment is off-topic to the current discussion and should be made into its own discussion. The merge discussion feature makes it easy to merge two discussions that might be similar enough that they should only be in one discussion.

Mods and admins can select the two (or more discussions) they would like to merge, then select “merge” to take action via a pop-up menu.



## Stop Forum Spam

**Stop Forum Spam Settings**

**IP Threshold 1**  
IP addresses reported this many times will be flagged as spam.

**Email Threshold 1**  
Email addresses reported this many times will be flagged as spam.

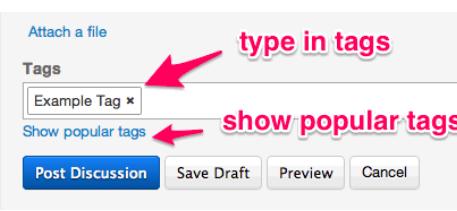
**IP Threshold 2**  
IP addresses reported this many times will be completely rejected.

**Email Threshold 2**  
Email addresses reported this many times will be completely rejected.

Default setting for StopForumSpam

This is a free, third-party service that compares IP addresses and email addresses against a list of known spammers. You can adjust its sensitivity in its settings page.

## Tagging



**Totally off topic tags**

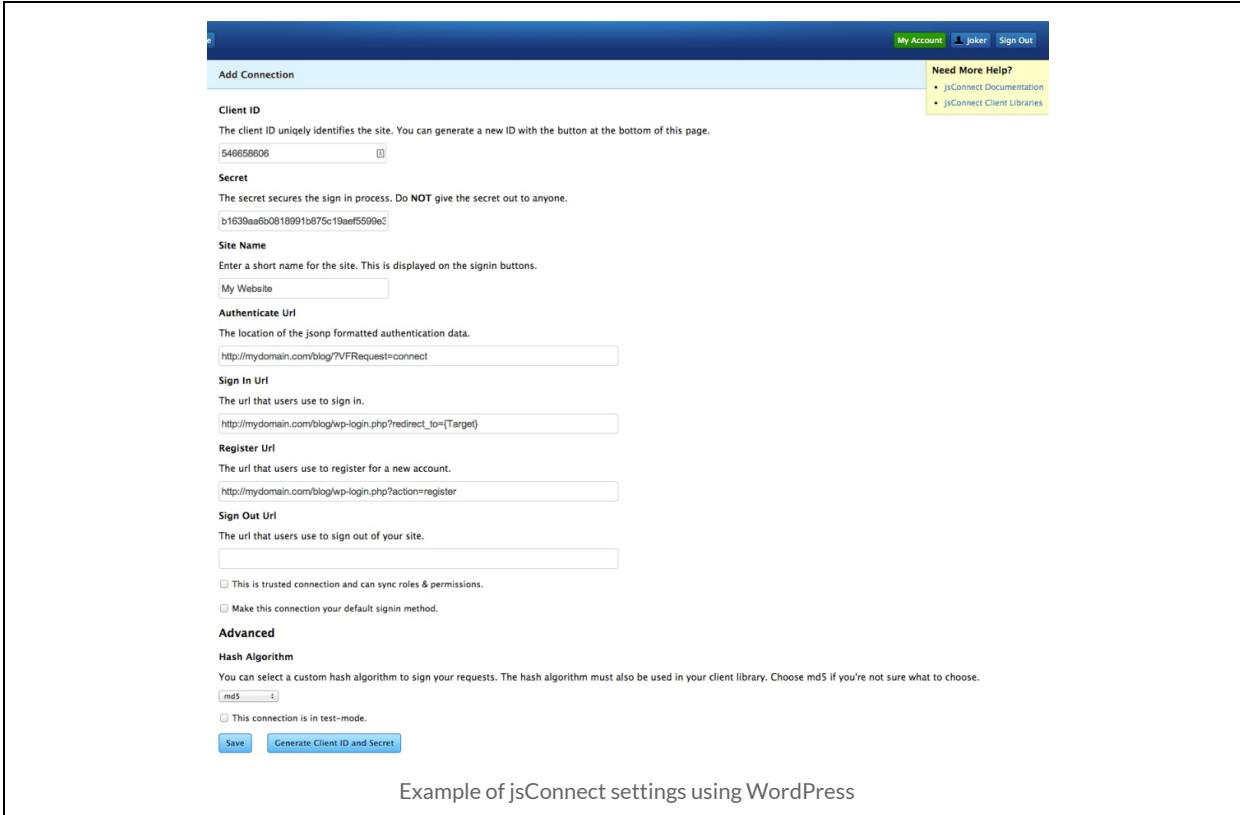


On the left an example of a user adding tags to discussion. On the right how they show on the front end.

When enabled, users may add tags to each discussion they create. Existing tags are shown in the sidebar for navigation by tag. From the settings page, you can edit, remove, add or

search tags.

## Vanilla Js Connect



The screenshot shows the 'Add Connection' page for Vanilla Js Connect. The form fields include:

- Client ID:** 546658606
- Secret:** b1639aa80d018991b8f5c19aeff559e6
- Site Name:** My Website
- Authenticate Url:** http://mydomain.com/blog/?VFRquest=connect
- Sign In Url:** http://mydomain.com/blog/wp-login.php?redirect\_to={Target}
- Register Url:** http://mydomain.com/blog/wp-login.php?action=register
- Sign Out Url:** (empty field)
- Advanced:**
  - This is trusted connection and can sync roles & permissions.
  - Make this connection your default signin method.
- Hash Algorithm:** md5
- Test Mode:** (checkbox checked)

At the bottom are 'Save' and 'Generate Client ID and Secret' buttons. A note below the form says: "Example of jsConnect settings using WordPress".

Enabling Vanilla jsConnect will add a “jsConnect” item to your user menu. jsConnect uses JavaScript to allow cross-domain single-signon with another site. This is useful if you have members registered on your site and you don’t want them to have to re-register in Vanilla. In order for jsConnect to work, you’ll have to put some code on your site that identifies your users in a way that Vanilla can understand. Vanilla then requests this information when the user wants to sign in and synchronizes the user with Vanilla. In order to make this request for information, Vanilla uses technology called jsonp. This allows us to send your cookies from your site to you and obtain login information.

Those are the basics of jsConnect. Depending on the actual implementation, it can get a

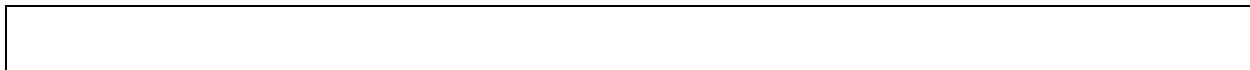
bit more complicated. Please read the full online documentation for jsConnect [here](#).

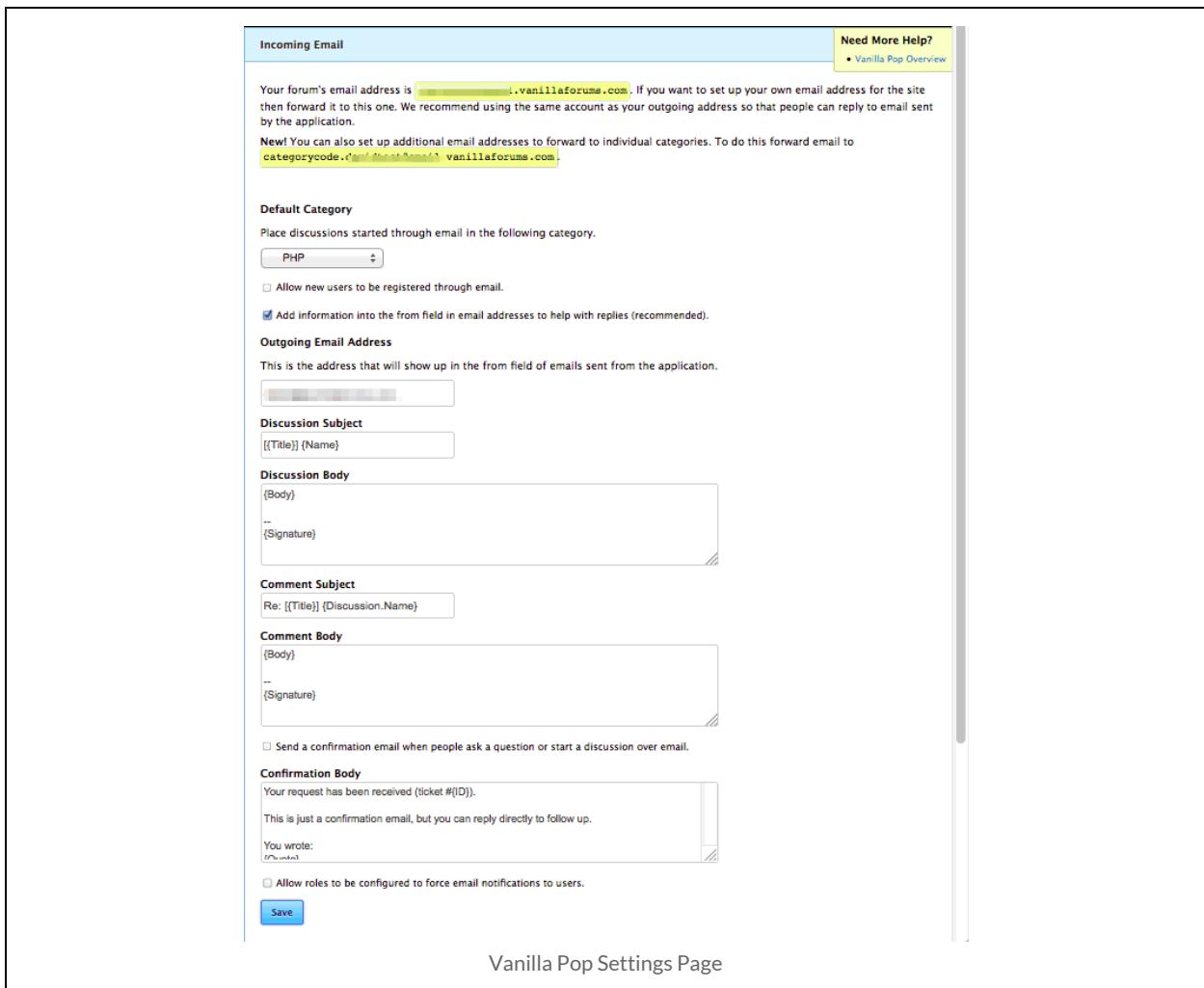
## Vanilla Pop

Vanilla Pop is a feature available for clients on at least a Corporate plans. It allows you to interact with your forum content through email. With Vanilla Pop you can:

- Send an email to create a discussion.
- Reply to an emailed discussion on the forum or through email.
- Have conversations through email, but keep a record on Vanilla.

When you have Vanilla Pop enabled, you will see an Incoming Email item in your dashboard under Site Settings. The page looks like this:





The screenshot shows the 'Incoming Email' settings page. At the top right is a 'Need More Help?' link with a 'Vanilla Pop Overview' option. The main area contains several configuration sections:

- Incoming Email:** Your forum's email address is [REDACTED].vanillaforums.com. It recommends using the same account for outgoing and incoming emails. A note says you can also set up additional email addresses to forward to individual categories.
- Default Category:** Place discussions started through email in the following category. A dropdown menu is set to 'PHP'.
- Outgoing Email Address:** This is the address that will show up in the from field of emails sent from the application. A text input field contains [REDACTED].
- Discussion Subject:** A template field containing [{Title}] {Name}.
- Discussion Body:** A large text area with placeholder text: {Body} and -- {Signature}.
- Comment Subject:** A template field containing Re: [{Title}] {Discussion.Name}.
- Comment Body:** A large text area with placeholder text: {Body} and -- {Signature}.
- Confirmation Body:** A text area containing 'Your request has been received (ticket #ID)' and 'This is just a confirmation email, but you can reply directly to follow up.'
- Other Options:** Checkboxes for 'Allow new users to be registered through email.' (unchecked), 'Add information into the from field in email addresses to help with replies (recommended)' (checked), 'Send a confirmation email when people ask a question or start a discussion over email.' (unchecked), and 'Allow roles to be configured to force email notifications to users.' (unchecked). A 'Save' button is at the bottom.

Vanilla Pop Settings Page

Let's run down the settings individually:

### Your Forum's Email Address

This is the address that the application will send emails to, in order to interact with your forum. This email may not be the email address you want to show your users, so you should forward all emails from the address that you want to share. Important: Make sure your outgoing email address is the same as the one that forwards to your forum's email address or else email replies will not work.

### Email Directly into a category

You can also set up additional email addresses to forward to individual categories. To do this, forward email to the appropriate categorycode, using the following syntax: `categorycode.yourincomingemail.com`. The "categorycode", is the URL slug used for the

category.

### Default Category

Emails that are sent to your forum will start a new discussion. These discussions will be put into the category you specify here. We recommend using roles and permissions to limit the visibility of this category to just moderators and administrators. (Usually people that email you don't expect their email to be publicly viewable to the world.) The choice is up to you, though.

### Allow Users to be Registered through Email

When a user emails your forum, we check their email address to see what user to post as. If there is no user associated with that email address then a new user is created. This is fine in cases where you are handling support requests through email, but it may not be fine in more tightly-knit communities. Use this setting to control whether or not new users can be registered by sending their first email.

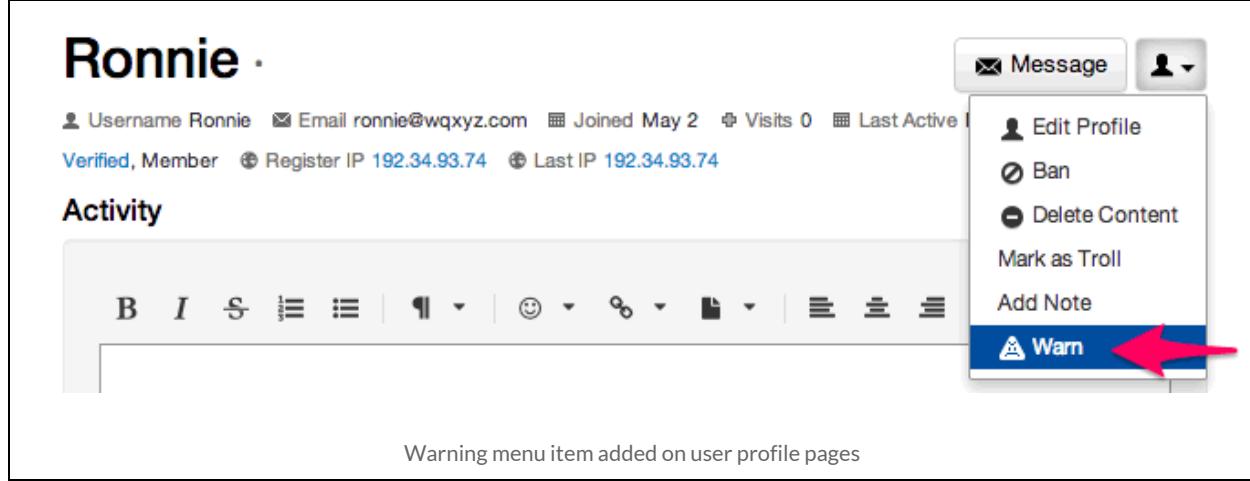
### Add Information to the From Field in Email Addresses to Help with Replies

If you enable this setting, information is added to the from field of email sent from the forum. This is done by adding a plus (+) sign and code before the @ symbol in the email address. We recommend this option because some devices, such as Blackberry, don't send correct header information with their emails. Disable this option if your email server doesn't allow the plus signs.

### Outgoing Email Address

This is the email address that shows up in the from field of email sent from the forum. This is also the email address that people will reply to.

## Warnings &amp; Notes



The screenshot shows a user profile for "Ronnie". At the top, there are buttons for "Message" and a user icon. Below that, the user's information is listed: Username Ronnie, Email ronnie@wqxyz.com, Joined May 2, Visits 0, Last Active 1 day ago, Verified Member, Register IP 192.34.93.74, and Last IP 192.34.93.74. A "Activity" section follows, featuring a toolbar with various icons. To the right of the toolbar is a context menu with several options: Edit Profile, Ban, Delete Content, Mark as Troll, Add Note, and Warn. A red arrow points to the "Warn" button, which is highlighted with a blue background. Below the toolbar, the text "Warning menu item added on user profile pages" is displayed.

Once enabled, warnings can be given to users by moderators for behavior that is not appropriate in the community. Warnings use a points system that increases a user's warning level with successive warnings until the warnings expire. Once users reach certain points thresholds they can be jailed or banned. As an admin, you do not need to make any setting changes for this to function, but you can also warn users.

## Admin Tips

There are considerable amount of resources and forums on owning a community, so we thought it best to compile some tips so you get the most out of owning your Vanilla Forums:

- Test changes on your staging account (this is available for Corporate, Enterprise and VIP customers only)
- Use the Pockets addon to display ads instead of editing your template
- Don't create too many categories
- Don't create too many Roles
- Choose Moderators with care; they are your representatives
- Look for new features (especially addons) every 3-4 months. Follow us on Twitter ([@vanilla](https://twitter.com/vanilla)) or on our blog (<http://blog.vanillaforums.com/>) for release information.

We also recommend [Managing Communities](#), a book by Richard Millington.

## Conclusion

Once again, congratulations on your new community! If you get stuck or need help, don't be shy to use our free support forum located at <http://vanillaforums.com/help>. You can also check out our [online documentation](#) which is another source of helpful tips.