

Inside a discussion group

The ALARA website discussion groups allow people with a common specific interest to talk together. This is an introduction to how to the facilities in discussion groups.



Joining a group

Go to the LH (left hand) nav bar, open <Members Groups>, and scroll down to the group you want. If there is a <join> option on the right, you can join right away. Otherwise, open the group and ask the group manager to become a member.

Locating a group of which you are already a member

If you are already a member of a group, you may well see the group under <My groups> in the RH (right hand) nav bar. But if drupal, the site software, is cantankerous, you may not. Go to the LH nav bar, open <Members Groups>, and scroll down to the group you want. Open it.

Commenting in discussions

In a discussion group, you can:

1) <comment> on a topic. With the topic open, and all the previous comments visible, just scroll to the bottom of the page and add you comment.

2) <reply> to another person's comment. This let's that person (and others) know you are responding to what they have said. Your reply will be indented below their comment.

Make sure that after <preview> of your comment, you then <submit> it. Otherwise it will be lost!!

You enter your comment in an editing box. Notice the editing options at the foot of the editing box. In general, leave the formatting as it appears in the editing box - it is small in the editing box, but will be a larger font when you see it displayed on the web page.

If you are writing a long comment, consider writing it in a program like Word, where you are familiar with editing controls, and then importing this text into the comment box. To import without all the Word formatting, choose the small "W" icon from the toolbar at the bottom of the editing box and insert in the special text box that appears. Preview and submit.

To import text from any other source, I strongly suggest using the icon with a "T." This will strip out any superfluous line breaks, so you text fits nicely on the page. For example, I find that even pasting text from another comment on the ALARA sit will leave line breaks in awkward places, so I always use the "T" icon to insert text from another location.

If you want to change the text of your comment after you have submitted it, go to the comment and select the <edit> tab.

Preview and submit

At the bottom of the comment form, 1. **Preview** the text you just wrote, 2. **Submit** the topic. **You must <submit> the entry for it to appear.**

Adding files, audio or video

Each discussion group has a menu for actions you can take in that group. Look at the menu on the RH nav bar.

<Create Discussion Topic> lets you do just that. But don't create a new topic when you could say what you want to say within an existing topic. Use new topics to initiate distinctly different lines of discussion.

<Create Resource> lets you add a document. Give a name for the resource and write a description, then below that form, browse for the file on your computer and attach it.

<Create Media Asset> lets you add an audio or video file in the same way.

Creating links

In all kinds of content, links to other pages (and sites) can be made. At the bottom of the editing box, you'll find formatting buttons. One of these, the chain link, allows you to insert a link. Just highlight the relevant text, hit the "link" button, then insert the page address of the page you want the link to go to - <copy> the address from the relevant page, then <paste> it. You are given an option to have the browser open that page in the same window (replacing the current page) or in a new window (leaving the current page open).

Finding out more about members

If you hit a person's name in their comment, you will be taken to their profile. If they have filled in their profile, you'll find out a bit about them. Take the time to set up your own profile, so that people will understand some of the experience from which you speak.

Keeping track of new posts

Rather than having to look in to see what's happening in a group, you can be notified of new posts by email. From the LH nav bar, go to <My account> and <edit> it. Down the page you will see three options:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Never send email notifications. Useful when tracking activity via RSS feed instead.	You will never be emailed about new content. Note, however, the RSS feed option. It's at the bottom of the RH nav bar on every page.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Always send email notifications	This will send email you anytime anyone posts anything to the site.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Selectively send email notification based on the checkbox for each of my group's <i>My Membership</i> page.	If you check this, you can choose to switch on notification of new content in a specific discussion group. When you are in a discussion group, in the RH nav bar, you'll see <My subscription> (not <i>My Membership</i> , but it's the one you want). Open it and choose to <enable> email notification. <Submit> this. Then re-open the groups from the RH nav bar. You can switch notification off at a later date, or simply unsubscribe from the group.

Telling me about a problem

The website has excellent facilities for discussion. But there will be glitches. Tell me about them, but give me the URLs!!

If you strike a problem, send me an email (colliver@mpx.com.au) saying what you did and what happened, step by step. Cut and paste the URLs of the relevant pages into you email as you go. As John Saward, our behind-the-scenes drupal specialist reminds me, this means I will understand what is happening for you and can reproduce the problem. That helps solve the problem.

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