9

Glossaries

Part of becoming an expert in any field is learning the vocabulary used by practitioners. Experts in an area of study develop new language and word usage to communicate new ideas or subtle variations of old ones. As communities develop within a field and experts communicate with each other over time, a new language emerges. Many experts find it increasingly difficult to communicate with novices as they become more immersed in the language of their field. For example, computer experts have developed an entirely new vocabulary of acronyms, names, and shorthand to help them rapidly communicate complex ideas to each other. As someone with a degree of expertise in computer technology, I know I need to be careful not to confuse others when I explain technical concepts. If you've ever been privy to a discussion among geeks, you know it can be nearly impossible for an outsider to follow the three- and four-letter alphabet soup that passes for geek-speak.

Fortunately, Moodle has a tool to help you and your students develop glossaries and embed them in your course. On the surface, the glossary tool doesn't seem to be more than a fancy word list. In practice, however, it's a powerful tool for learning. The glossary tool has a number of features that make it easy for you and your class to develop

shared vocabulary lists add comments to definitions, and even link every appearance of a word in a course to its' glossary entry.

Creating Glossaries

Each Moodle course has its own set of glossaries. The main glossary is editable only by teachers. The secondary glossaries can be configured to allow student entries and comments.

You can create the link to your glossaries anywhere in your course sections. I recommend adding the main glossary to the general section at the top of your course section list. Secondary glossaries can be added to the topic or week where they are relevant, or in a general glossaries section.

To create a glossary:

1. Click Turn Editing Mode On.
2. Select Glossary from the Add Activity menu in the appropriate topic or week section.
3. In the Editing Glossary page, shown in Figure 9-1, give your new glossary a descriptive name.
4. Write a description of the glossary and give directions to your students in the Description area.
5. Select the options you want to use:

    Entries shown per page
    > This sets the number of words and definitions your students will see when they view the glossary list.

    Is this glossary global?
    > System administrators can make a global glossary accessible to all courses.

    Glossary Type
    > You have two options here. The main glossary is editable only by teachers, and you can have only one per course. A secondary glossary can be imported into the main, and you can have multiple secondary glossaries.

    Students can add entries
    > This applies only to secondary glossaries. This option gives students the ability to add and edit glossary entries.

    Duplicated entries allowed
    > This allows the entry of more than one definition for a given word.

    Allow comments on entries
    > Students and teachers can leave comments on glossary definitions. The comments are available through a link at the bottom of the definition.

Automatically link glossary entries
> Moodle has a text-filter feature that automatically creates a link from a word in the course to its glossary definition. Linked words are highlighted.

Moodle 101

MoodleU » Moodle101 » Glossaries » Editing Glossary

📖 **Adding a new Glossary to week 2** ⑦

Name:

Description:

Description ⑦
Write carefully ⑦
How to write text ⑦

Entries shown per page: `10` ⑦

Is this glossary global?: ☐ ⑦

Glossary Type: `Secondary glossary` ⑦

Students can add entries: `Yes` ⑦
(Applies only if the glossary is not the main one)

Duplicated entries allowed: `No` ⑦

Allow comments on entries: `No` ⑦

Automatically link glossary entries: `Yes` ⑦

Approved by default: `Yes` ⑦

Figure 9-1. New glossary page

Approved by default
> If students are allowed to add entries, you can allow entries to be automatically approved and added to the glossary, or they can require your approval.

Display format

>   You can select how the glossary appears when students list the entries. There are
>   a number of different choices:

Show 'Special' link

>   >   When users browse the glossary, they can select the first character of a word
>   >   from a list. The Special link displays special characters such as @, #, $, etc.

Show alphabet

>   >   You can use this option to display the alphabet for easier glossary browsing.

Show 'All' link

>   >   If you want students to see all of the glossary entries at once, set this to Yes.

Allow entries to be rated

>   You can grade entries yourself or allow students to grade entries as well. Select
>   "Only teachers" or "Everyone" from the users menu. Then select a grading
>   scale. You can also restrict when entries can be graded to a specific date range.

6. Click Save Changes at the bottom of the screen. Your glossary name will now appear
    in the course section menu.

There are a lot of options to choose from in the glossary setup. They open up some
interesting possibilities that we'll explore later in the chapter. For now, let's take a look at
how to add glossary entries and use some of the more advanced features.

> *Warning: The automatic link feature will work only if your system
> administrator has enabled it in the Filters configuration area of the
> Administration panel. Autolinking can be very processor-intensive, so if
> it doesn't seem to be working for you, your sys admin may have turned
> it off to speed up the system.*

Using the Glossaries

Once you've created your glossary, it's time to start adding words and definitions. Even
if you want to have a student-built glossary, it's a good idea to seed it with a couple of
definitions so students have a model to work from.

The main view of the glossary can be a bit confusing at first, as you can see from Figure
9-2. Under the main Moodle navigation bar, you'll find the glossary name. Directly
below the name, you'll see the glossary description. Almost lost beneath the description,
you'll see the search bar. If you select the full-text option, you and your students can use
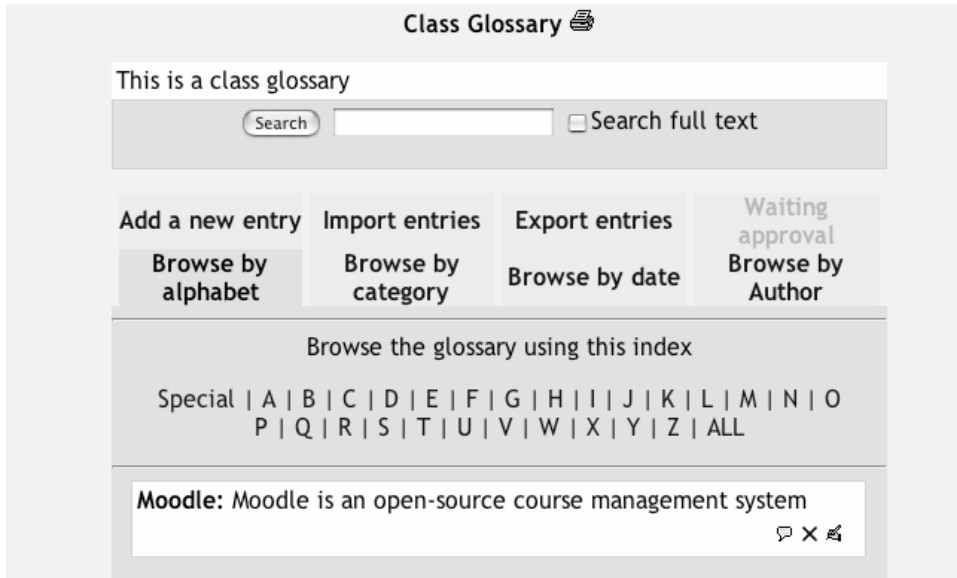this to search for glossary terms or definitions.

Figure 9-2. Main glossary page

Adding Entries

Below the search bar are eight tabs detailing the glossary functions:

Add a new entry
> Clicking this gives you access to the definition entry page.

Import entries
> You can import glossaries from within this course or from other courses.

Export entries
> You can use this to export your course glossary to an export file stored in the course files area. You can then download it to your computer and upload it to another class.

Waiting approval
> If your default approval is set to No, all entries awaiting your approval will be listed under this tab.

Browse by alphabet
> Students can look for glossary entries by the first letter of a word when they select this tab.

Browse by category
> You can create word categories and make them available for students to use when they are searching the glossary

Browse by date
> You can view entries based on the date they were last edited.

Browse by author
> If you want students to add entries, this is a useful way to keep track of who has entered what.

Once you've oriented yourself to the page, you can add an entry to the glossary.

To add a glossary entry:

1. Go to your main course page and click on the glossary name.

2. From the glossary page, click "Add a new entry." It's the upper-left tab in the default view.

3. Enter the word you want to define in the Concept text field, as shown in Figure 9-3.

Figure 9-3. New glossary entry

4. If there are synonyms you want to include with the entry, add them to the Keyword(s) text area. Enter one word per line.

5. If you've defined categories in the "Browse by category" tab, you can categorize your entry here. We'll cover how to add a category in the next section.

6. If you want this particular entry to be linked automatically within the course, click the checkbox next to "This entry should be automatically linked" below the Keyword(s) box. If you select automatic linking, the two options below the checkbox determine whether the links are case-sensitive.

7. Add the definition of the word or concept.

8. If you want to add an attachment, such as a picture or an article, you can attach it below the definition.

9. Click Save Changes to add your word to the glossary.

Glossary Categories

You can create categories to help organize your glossary entries. If you've enabled autolinking, the category names can be linked along with individual entries.

To create a glossary category:

1. Click on "Browse by category" in the main page of the glossary.

2. Click "Edit categories" on the left side of the screen.

3. Click the "Add category" button on the resulting Category page.

4. Give the category a name.

5. Choose whether you want the category name autolinked as well.

6. Click Save Changes.

If you autolink the category name, any occurrence of those words will be linked. When a student clicks on the link, she will be taken to the "Browse by category" page of the glossary.

Autolinking

Once you've added an entry to the glossary and enabled autolinking, any instance of a glossary term anywhere in Moodle will have a link to its definition. For example, if you create an entry for the word "Moodle" in the glossary, whenever someone uses the word in a forum, assignment, HTML, or text page, or even in a description field, it will be clickable, as shown in Figure 9-4.
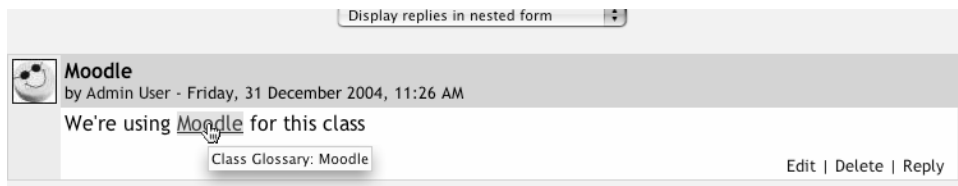

Figure 9-4. An autolinked word in a forum

Once you click on the word, a new window with the glossary entry will pop-up.

Importing and Exporting Glossaries

As you build your glossaries, you may want to share them between classes or with other instructors. Fortunately, there's a way to export and import specific glossaries without needing to share the entire course structure.

Exporting your glossary is easy. When you click the "Export entries" tab, the system automatically generates a file you can save to your computer. At the bottom of the export entries screen, you'll see a link labeled "Exported file" (see Figure 9-5). You'll need to right-click or Control-click on the link and save the file to your desktop. Otherwise, your browser may display the raw XML file, which isn't a pretty sight at all.

Figure 9-5. Export glossary

Once you've saved the file to your desktop, you can import it using the "Import entries" tab. To import glossary definitions into your class:

1. Click the "Import entries" tab on the main page of your glossary.

2. Browse for the exported glossary file you have saved on your computer.

3. Select the destination for the new entries, either the current glossary or a new one.

4. If you want to import category information, select the checkbox.

5. Click Save Changes. You'll then see a report of the entries and categories added to the glossary. If you enabled duplicate entries when you created the glossary, the import process will add all of the new definitions. Otherwise, it will not allow you to import duplicate entries.

Commenting on Entries

If you enabled comments on the glossary entries, users can annotate the definitions in the word list. When you look at a word in the glossary list, you'll see a little cartoon speech balloon in the lower righthand corner of the definition block, as shown in Figure 9-6.
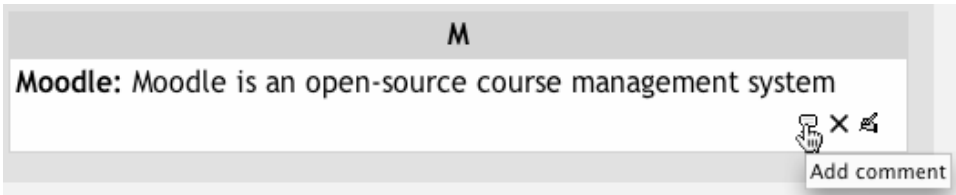

Figure 9-6. Glossary comment link

When you click on the balloon, you'll be taken to the comment entry page. From here, you can add a comment to the definition and then click Save Changes.

Once you've saved your comment, Moodle will display all of the comments for the term. When you return to the main glossary page, you'll see a new message next to the speech balloon telling you how many comments there are for the entry.

Printing a Glossary

There is also an easy tool for printing a glossary. At the top of the glossary list, you'll see a little printer icon. If you click the icon, Moodle will open a new browser window and present all the words and definitions in a printer-friendly format.

To print the glossary:

1. Click the printer icon at the top of the main glossary word list.
2. From the newly opened window, choose Print from the File menu of your browser.
3. Once the word list has printed, close the glossary window.

Effective Glossary Practices

A glossary can be an important part of your course. As we discussed earlier, learning vocabulary in a new field can be one of the biggest challenges to new learners. As an expert in your field, you are comfortable using the important terms and concepts in your area of expertise. Your students, however, are not experts. They may be just starting to learn new words representing new ideas and concepts. More advanced students will need to refine their learned definitions with subtle improvements to make the definitions more useful.

Tip: As an experiment, go to the library and randomly choose a journal article in an area outside your field. As you read the article, does it make sense to you? Notice the number of unfamiliar terms, or familiar terms that seem to be used in a different way than you are used to.

Glossary Basics

At it's most basic, Moodle's glossary can be used like a regular word list for a class. You can develop a list of terms you know students find difficult or confusing and make the list and definitions available for your class.

If you want to get more in-depth, I recommend creating either a weekly or chapter-based word list. Students can use it as they do weekly readings and assignments. A weekly glossary can make it easier for students to organize their learning process.

Creative Glossary Strategies

While a basic glossary is important, creatively applying the glossary can really make an impact on your class.

Collaborative glossaries

Instead of creating a glossary on your own, why not have the students create them as they encounter unfamiliar terms? A collaborative glossary can serve as a focal point for collaboration in a course. Each member of the class could be assigned to contribute a term, a definition, or comments on submitted definitions. Multiple definitions can be rated by you and by the students, with the highest-rated definitions accepted for the final class glossary.

When students are responsible for creating the definitions, they are much more likely to remember the word and the correct definition. Engaging in the process of learning, debating, and refining a glossary can go a long way toward helping students begin using new terms.

You can also structure multiple glossaries over the course of a semester. Break them up by unit, chapter, week, or any other organizational structure.

If you have a large class, assign student teams to come up with definitions and answers. One strategy for managing large courses is to make each team responsible for one week's worth of definitions, while all the other teams must rate and comment. Alternatively, each team could be responsible for one definition per chapter and then rate and comment on the other teams' work.

To set up a collaborative glossary, create a new glossary for each unit with the following options:

- Glossary type: Secondary glossary.
- Students can add entries: Yes.

- Duplicate Entries Allowed: If you want teams to be able to submit multiple definitions for rating, select Yes.

- Allow comments on entries: Yes.

- Default approval status: Yes.

- Allow entries to be rated: Yes – By Everyone.

The other options are up to you. Once you've selected the above options, students can add their own definitions, rate each other's, and add comments.

Credit for word use

This is a combination strategy using the forum and the autolink feature of the glossary. After you and your students have defined the glossary terms, it's important for students to begin practicing using the words in realistic contexts. Students, however, are usually reluctant to experiment with new terms. With the autolinking feature, it's easy to spot when a glossary word has been used in a forum or in a posting on the web site.

To encourage word use, assign a portion of the credit students receive for their forum postings for correct use of glossary terms. As you or other students rate posts, you can quickly scan for highlighted glossary words and award points for usage. You may even want to break the score down further. Perhaps award one point for using the word and two points for using it correctly.

Summary

At first glance, the glossary doesn't seem to be a very interesting tool. You could simply create a word list in a word processor and upload it. The power of the glossary tool in Moodle comes from its ability to automatically create links in your course for every word in the list, and to easily build collaborative glossaries.

Use the glossary tool to help your students learn the vocabulary of your field and encourage them to experiment with new terms. Collaborative glossaries give your students even more practice using the new words and negotiating their meaning.

In the next chapter, we'll take a look at a tool for developing linear lessons that combines multiple resources and little quizzes to help students progress through the course materials.