



Teaching with Technology Tip

USING GROUPS IN MOODLE

In Moodle, teachers can create groups so that students can work together and communicate with specific classmates. Creating groups also allows teachers to restrict course content to specific groups. For different course sections combined into one Moodle shell, groups can support faculty sorting student work and grades by section.

Group Modes

Moodle establishes three different ways that topics, activities, and resources interact with groups:

- When **Separate Groups** is assigned to an activity/resource, only students in the same group can interact with each other and see each other's work.
- When **Visible Groups** is assigned to an activity/resource, students can only interact with students in their own group, but they can view and read the work of other groups.
- When **No Groups** is assigned to an activity/resource, students can see and interact with everyone in the course.

The assignment of a group setting can happen at several levels within Moodle. The default course-wide setting is **No Groups**, giving each new activity/resource will be assigned that group setting unless you change that setting on an individual item.

*Note: If you have requested combined sections for a course, for FERPA reasons, the default group assignment for the course will be set to **Separate Groups**. However, this setting still permits teachers to override group settings for individual activities and resources if the purpose for combining the sections is to facilitate large group collaboration concurrently happening in a face-to-face environment (e.g., student teaching or Hogsback Journal).*

Establishing Group Collaboration Settings

Any collaboration tool (Forums, Wikis, and, Databases) in Moodle can be set so that students can work with the entire class (the **No groups** setting) or with just their group. Using **Separate groups** means that groups will only see their own work; using **Visible groups** means that student can view other groups' work but only participate with their groupmates.

Adding a Group Setting to an Activity

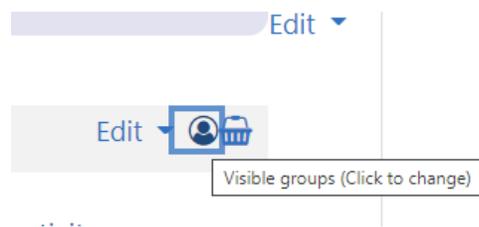
Teachers can add a group setting at the time an activity is created or alter it quickly after the activity has been added.

To establish a group activity when creating it, open the **Common module settings** menu before saving the activity. From the **Group mode** dropdown menu select whether you want students to work as separate or visible groups. When the activity is set how you wish, click **Save**.

▼ Common module settings

Availability	?	Show on course page ⇅
ID number	?	
Group mode	?	Separate groups ⇅
Grouping	?	None ⇅

If you wish to change the group settings of an already created activity, look for the **Groups** icon next to the **Edit** menu for that activity. Hovering over the icon will display the activity's current group mode; you can then click on the icon to select the mode you want.



Creating Group Assignments

If you are creating a group assignment submission folder, first create the student groups then make sure that all of those groups are organized into a Grouping. While creating the **Assignment** folder, open the **Group submission settings**.

1. Change the **Students submit in groups** setting to **Yes**.
2. If **Require group to make submission** setting is changed to **Yes**, only students who are group members will be able to make a submission.
3. If you have organized your groups into **Groupings**, you can then select all of the groups in that set with the **Grouping for student groups** setting.

▼ Group submission settings

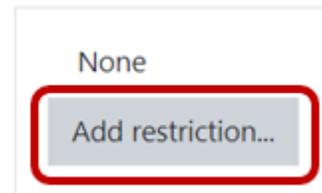
Students submit in groups	?	Yes ⇅
Require group to make submission	?	Yes ⇅
Require all group members submit	?	No ⇅
Grouping for student groups	?	Group Lab Reports ⇅

Restricting a Topic, Activity, or Resource by Group

For many reasons, instructors may want to limit access to any Moodle item to an established group of students. If an item is already established in the course, simply open the **Edit settings** menu for the item. Whether creating or editing the item, locate and open the **Restrict access** menu and click on the **Add restriction** button.

▼ Restrict access

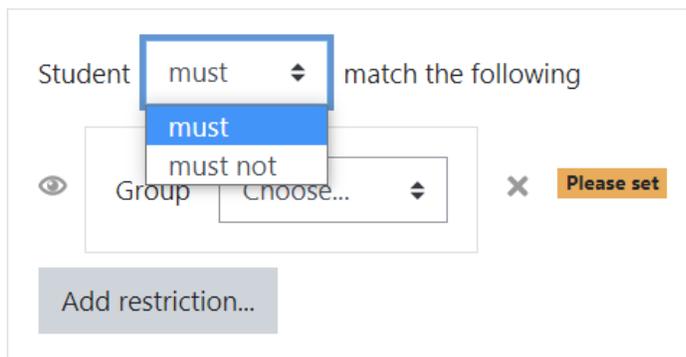
Access restrictions



From the menu that appears, click the **Group** button to restrict or provide access to a single group. If you wish to restrict or provide access to several groups, it's probably easiest to first add those groups to a **Grouping**; that way, you can just click the **Grouping** button here rather than adding a restriction for each single group.

Now you must determine how the restriction will behave:

- If you want only students who belong a specific group to access the item, select **must** from the first dropdown menu.
- If you want to students who do not belong to specific group to access the item, select **must not** from the first drop down menu.



From the second dropdown menu, select the group or grouping the restriction should apply to. When you have the restriction set as you wish, click **Save**.

Sorting Student Submissions and Work

On any graded item—and the gradebook itself—teachers can sort students by group. This is especially helpful for sections combined into one Moodle shell. To do so, individual items must be set to either **Visible groups** or **Separate groups** mode.

To sort by group in the gradebook, the overall course **Group** settings (from the main page **Edit settings** menu) must be set to either **Visible groups** or **Separate groups** mode.

In the gradebook or individual items, look for the dropdown menu near the top, indicating which groups you can sort by. Then just simply select the group's grade you wish to view.



Special Note: Maintaining FERPA Guidelines

Under FERPA, enrollment is a protected status. Therefore, when two or more sections are combined into one Moodle shell, faculty should protect the enrollment status of students (unless the express purpose is combining classes that are already meeting or collaborating in a face-to-face environment).

Here are some tips to establish group settings and restrictions in situations where faculty need to protect enrollment status:

- In collaborative spaces where you want students to interact with everyone in their class, always use **Separate groups** mode.
- In collaborative spaces where you want students to interact in small groups, create two copies of the same activity. *Note: Creating to separate activities will create two items in the Moodle gradebook. To resolve this issue, you can either tell Moodle NOT to create a grade item for these activities (then add a single grade item in manually) or simply “exclude” student grades for items from the other section.*
 - Restrict access to each item by section (section groups have been established for you when sections were combined into one shell).
 - Establish the desired group mode for each section's activity.
 - Make sure to place students into groups only with others from their section.