

# Moodle: Student Journals

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Tags: [Moodle](#)

Moodle does not have a purpose-built journal activity. This article describes **techniques** **instructors have found for creating student journaling assignments** using other Moodle tools as well as each technique's advantages and disadvantages.

**Before You Start**, you will need access to the following:

- an **Instructor of record** or **Other editing teacher** role in a Moodle course to **create** a journal activity
- an **Instructor of record**, **Other editing teacher** or **Non-editing teacher** role to **view and grade** student work

## Create journals using the Database activity

Moodle's **Database** activity is a flexible tool for collecting text, images, files, links or data from course participants. It has a **Journal preset** that makes set-up easy, and instructors can require instructor approval before entries are published and leave them unapproved to create a private journal option. **Database** activities do not have **Grading** settings, but you can include grades for private journal entries in comments and/or create **Grade Items** for individual entries or the entire journal activity [within the Moodle Gradebook](#).

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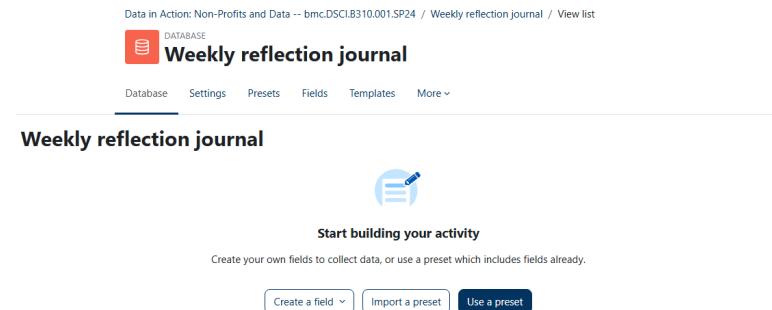
1. Toggle **Edit mode** on.
2. Click **+Add activity or resource** in the section where you want to place the journal activity.
3. In the **Activity** menu, choose **Database**.
4. Enter an **Name** and **Description** for the activity.

**Tips:** Include questions or guidelines to consider when writing in the **Description** if you don't plan to create a custom template. If you are creating private journals, explain the **Pending approval** flags students will see on their entries (see next step).

5. Click **Entries** to expand it, and change the following settings if needed:
  - If you want to create **private journals**, change **Approval** to **Yes**. When students submit entries they will be flagged **Pending approval**. Leave them unapproved and they will be visible only to the author and course participants whose roles permit them see and view student work.
  - Change **Allow comments on entries** to **Yes** if you want to be able to provide feedback on

individual journal entries. For entries **Pending approval**, only roles that view and grade student work can comment; otherwise any course participant can.

6. Click **Save and display**.
7. Create the form that students will use to create entries:
  - For easiest set-up, click **Use a preset**, select **Journal** and click **Use this preset**. This creates a simple form with fields to enter a title and body text; the author's name and a timestamp are automatically added when the entry is saved.
  - To create a custom entry form, see Moodle's documentation on [Building a Database](#) and [Database templates](#).



The screenshot shows the Moodle Database interface. At the top, it says 'Data in Action: Non-Profits and Data -- bmc.DSCI.B310.001.SP24 / Weekly reflection journal / View list'. Below this is a header with a 'DATABASE' icon and the title 'Weekly reflection journal'. A navigation bar includes 'Database', 'Settings', 'Presets', 'Fields', 'Templates', and 'More'. The main content area is titled 'Weekly reflection journal' and features a 'Start building your activity' button with a pencil icon. Below it, text says 'Create your own fields to collect data, or use a preset which includes fields already.' Three buttons are at the bottom: 'Create a field', 'Import a preset', and 'Use a preset' (which is highlighted in blue).

## Create journals using the Forum Activity

Forum is Moodle's built-in activity for facilitating discussions. Forums can be displayed in a few different ways, some of which work well for student journals.

1. Toggle **Edit mode** on.
2. Click **+Add activity or resource** in the section where you want to place the journal activity.
3. In the **Activity** menu, choose **Forum**.
4. Provide a **Forum Name** and select a **Forum Type**. For the latter, we recommend selecting **Standard Forum for general use**. This will make it easiest to keep individual students' journals separate.
5. Configure other settings depending on your goals and requirements for the assignment. If you are planning to grade this activity, go the **Whole Forum Grading** section. We recommend using **Point for Grade > Type**. From there, you can use **Simple direct grading** or **Marking Guide** for Grading Method. Marking guides can be created and edited in the **Advanced Grading** section of this assignment.
6. Select **Save and display**.

## Create journals using Microsoft Word or Google Docs

If you would prefer to have students do their journaling outside of Moodle before submitting that is also possible. [Bryn Mawr students](#) and [Swarthmore students](#) can use their college emails to access Microsoft OneDrive services, including [Microsoft Word](#). Haverford students can use their emails to access Google Drive, including [Google Docs](#).

1. Follow our instructions for [creating an Assignment activity](#). Under **Submission settings**, make sure to select **Online Text**. In the **Description** or **Activity Instructions**, make sure to specify that student will need to include the URL for their journal. Direct students to [Microsoft's directions for sharing Word documents](#) and [Google's instructions for sharing from Google Drive \(including Google Docs\)](#) if necessary.
2. Click **Save and display**.

**Warning:** This option may not be the best to use if you have Haverford students in your class and you want them responding to journals written by students from other institutions, as Haverford students do not have automatic access to Microsoft services. This means they cannot do things like add comments to a Microsoft Word document created by a Bryn Mawr student, although they would be able to view it as long as [anyone with a link](#) is selected under [sharing permissions](#).

## Questions?

If you have any additional questions or problems, don't hesitate to reach out to the [Help Desk](#)!

**Phone:** [610-526-7440](#) | [Library and Help Desk hours](#)

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