

Making Everything Easier!™

Moodle®

FOR

DUMMIES®

Learn to:

- Set up Moodle, add learners, and manage your online courses
- Develop your own custom courses and use Moodle's collaboration features
- Create assessment tools and add media
- Add forums and wikis for group projects

Radana Dvorak



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Moodle For Dummies®

Visit www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/moodle to view this book's cheat sheet.

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by Radana Dvorak



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About the Author

Radana Dvorak holds a PhD in computer science from the Queen Mary, University of London, a master's degree in knowledge-based systems (AI) from the University of Sussex, and a BA from the University of Michigan. Radana has been involved in eLearning since 1989, when her research in human computer interaction focused on computer-based training (CBT). She has been a researcher and a university instructor who taught in the United Kingdom, Cayman Islands, and the United States. She has also spent some time in the software industry. Currently, she is an adjunct professor at Portland State

University and owner of eLT Solutions LLC. Her focus is to help organizations with the development of learning courses using learning content management systems and integrating Web 2.0 technology to meet the changing needs of educators, trainers, and learners.

Dedication

To my children, James and Anna, and my parents for their ongoing encouragement and support.

Author's Acknowledgments

I want to go back a number of years and thank three professors: Professor Mike Sharples who supervised my master's degree at the University of Sussex and was instrumental in introducing me to the area of eLearning (dubbed CBT in 1989). His vision and dedication inspired and excited me about the possibilities in education. Mike Sharples is currently Professor of Learning Sciences and Director of the Learning Sciences Research Institute at the University of Nottingham. I want to thank Professor Peter Johnson for accepting me to the computer science PhD program at Queen Mary, University of London, and Professor Stephen Summerville, who was instrumental in my research interests and supervised my Ph.D. His vision, enthusiasm, and dedication to his students are admirable. Our discussions about AI, communicative structures transferring to online communication, the future of online books and education, all pre-Web, were vital in my research and love for the field.

I want to thank my Portland State University graduate students; it has been an absolute pleasure and privilege to teach them. They are the most dedicated and hardworking bunch of students I have ever taught. Martin Dougiamas, the original developer of Moodle, believes that in a true collaborative online teaching environment, everyone is both a teacher and a learner — this has proved to be true with my students.

That brings me to thank Martin Dougiamas for developing Moodle and the wonderful Moodle community around the world. The developers, the dedicated forum helpers, and the teachers, many of whom wear all three hats, are integral to Moodle's success.

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Introduction

If you've been thinking about putting your class online, this book takes you from thinking to doing. *Moodle* (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) is an open source eLearning software platform that was originally developed by Martin Dougiamas. Moodle enables educators to create online courses supporting rich interactions between educators and their learners. Moodle enables instructors to add content and combine activities into sequences that guide learners through structured learning paths.

Moodle also has also another meaning besides Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment. The second meaning is more interesting: It means a slow-paced process of enjoyable tinkering, fiddling, and experimenting that can lead to insight, creativity, and innovation.

Moodle continues to evolve and improve because the developers, instructors, and learners find creative and novel ways to use it. Moodle is freely distributed under the terms of the GPL. You can redistribute it and/or modify it under the terms of the GNU General Public License as published by the Free Software Foundation. See <http://docs.moodle.org/en/License>. Join the 39.5 million Moodle users; you'll have fun.

About Moodle For Dummies

This book is useful for instructors and trainers working in educational organizations or the business world who want to put their teaching content online. I provide step-by-step processes starting with the most useful tools and activities in Moodle. I use screen shots to illustrate steps, including creative and helpful hints how various activities have been used in the eLearning environment. By the end of this book, you'll have gained the skills and confidence to design complete interactive courses to deliver completely online or to supplement your face-to-face classes.

Here are just some of the things that you — as an instructor or trainer — can do with this book:

- ✔ Find out what eLearning is all about and how to design and develop great Moodle courses.
- ✔ Discover all the things Moodle allows you to do, such as linking and embedding Web pages as well as uploading your files in most industry-standard formats. (You can upload the create class notes, for instance.)
- ✔ Add collaborative tools, such as wikis, forums, glossaries, RSS feeds, chat sessions, lessons, and multimedia content to create a rich learning environment.
- ✔ Quickly create assignments and quizzes to evaluate learners' progress and use the powerful Quiz module to take grading off your hands and push results to the grade book.
- ✔ Discover online grading and the grade book to simplify your classroom life.

- ✓ Discover the Moodle community to share ideas, tools, and expertise to help you succeed — all for free!

IT staff and troubleshooters will also find this book useful because it can

- ✓ Help you set up Moodle training sessions (in plain English) for personnel.
- ✓ Help you understand what teachers are up against. If you're a system administrator, knowing what teachers need can help you better serve those needs.
- ✓ Assist you with the installation and administrative tasks to get Moodle going.

Students of all education levels use Moodle, and because this book covers tools and features that students use in Moodle — such as blogs, profiles, wikis, glossaries, databases, and forums — this book is also helpful to them.

Foolish Assumptions

For starters, I assume you've heard how online education, or *eLearning*, is changing education. You've heard about Web academies, credit recovery, and completing college and university courses to gain diplomas, certificates, and degrees online. You may have possibly taken a class online. Right now, you may be thinking, "Yes, this must be something important, and I better get involved." Here are some other assumptions I make:

- ✓ **You're somehow involved in education and/or training but don't have any previous experience with Moodle or other similar software.**
- ✓ **You have an inquisitive nature and aren't afraid of trying new technologies.** You have an appetite to learn and share your knowledge.
- ✓ **You have a computer and an Internet connection and possess the basic skills to use them.** These skills include (but are not limited to)
 - Sending/receiving e-mail messages and attaching documents to and downloading them from e-mail messages
 - Manipulating word processing documents, such as Word, PDF, and Open Docs files.
 - Navigating your computer hard drive or USB drive to find files
 - Organizing files and folders, creating new files, and saving files in correct places on your computer
- ✓ **You have access to Moodle or can download it.** Moodle is free, but you may need a Moodle partner or Internet service provider (ISP) to host your Moodle site.
- ✓ **You (or your system administrator) are willing to read parts of this book to get your Moodle course up and running.** Doing so doesn't really take too long, and you don't need much experience with learning content management systems to work with Moodle.

Conventions Used in This Book

To help you navigate this book efficiently, I use a few style conventions:

- ✓ Terms or words that I want to emphasize or define are *italicized*.
- ✓ Web site addresses, or URLs, are shown in a special monofont typeface, like this.
- ✓ When I refer to a Moodle *site*, I mean the LCMS that contains all the courses. A site can have many courses, and a site is managed by the system administrator, or in Moodle terms, the person in the Administrator role.

When I refer to a *course* that means one course, or class, contained on the Moodle site.

- ✓ When I refer to *learners*, I mean students and trainees. Although we are all students when we're learning, often this concept is misinterpreted to refer to students in an educational organization only. Training programs in businesses prefer to use different terms. Trainee, test/exam taker, and team participant are examples of a few terms frequently used.

Moodle user accounts have a Student role, and I use this term when I explain a process or procedure involving the Student user account.

- ✓ Numbered steps that you need to follow and characters you need to type are set in **bold**.

What You Don't Have to Read

The rule of thumb for this book is that you don't need to read what isn't relevant to your task at hand. Whether you have experience with Moodle or are absolutely clueless, it doesn't matter. Browse this book, and you'll find just the right starting point. Isn't that what the *For Dummies* books are all about? This book is structured modularly, so you don't have to read the Technical Stuff icons. If you work for an organization that has a system administrator looking after Moodle, you don't need to worry about the technical stuff or anything that says Administrating Moodle. If you're an IT guru, you can avoid the sections on how to develop the eLearning course and how to structure great online courses.

How This Book Is Organized

Moodle For Dummies is split into five parts and has a companion Web site. You don't have to read the book sequentially, and you don't even have to read all the sections in any particular chapter. You can use the Table of Contents and the index to find the information you need and quickly get your answer. In this section, I briefly describe what you find in each part.