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**Radana Dvorak**



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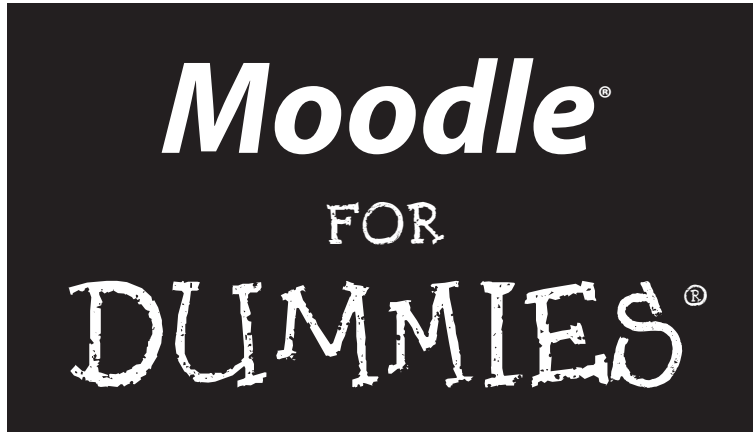
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## Moodle® For Dummies®

Published by  
**Wiley Publishing, Inc.**  
111 River Street  
Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774  
[www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com)

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Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2011924907

ISBN: 978-0-470-94942-9

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



## *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.

This book owes a great deal to the fabulous Indianapolis Dummies Tech group at Wiley Publishing. Thank you, Kyle Looper, for believing in Moodle and giving me the opportunity to write this book; Leah Cameron for initial feedback and editing instructions; and Nicole Sholly, the project editor, who spent hours ensuring this book is crafted in the *For Dummies* style. This group of people is professional, nice, and a sheer joy to work with.

Finally, I am grateful for my wonderful children, Anna and James, and indebted to them for putting up with my nocturnal working existence, blurry eyes, and disconnected nature while trying to meet deadlines.

## **Publisher's Acknowledgments**

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments at <http://dummies.custhelp.com>. For other comments, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002.

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# Introduction

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**I**f 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.

### *Part I: Getting Started with Moodle*

This part is a great place to find out everything there is to know about Moodle. Here you get a bird's-eye view that helps you understand the Moodle world and explain what's what to get started. You find many things you can do with Moodle, understand what it takes to design a great online course, and get clued in on terms like *Digital Native*, *Generation X*, and *Generation Z*. This part also gets you ready to begin building your very first Moodle front page, the first step in creating your online course. When you're through with this section, you can impress your friends and colleagues with your eLearning skills and Moodle knowledge.

The first and most important part of creating your online class is to not get carried away. Don't let the cool modules (such as RSS, embedded videos, and links to outside resources) compromise your teaching methods by trying to impress learners and colleagues. Identify your objectives and use Moodle to enhance your teaching methods, not alter or worse, hinder them.

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## ***Part II: Creating and Managing Course Content***

I know you want to start putting your content, your know-how, and your expertise online ASAP. This part shows you how. You'll have something up in no time. You find out how to add resources, such as uploading your files to your course, creating Web pages, and linking to resources on the Internet. I also shed light on adding video and sound files to create a multi-media-rich teaching environment, and show you how to embed YouTube or TeacherTube videos in your Moodle Web pages. You also figure out how to use the grade book and assessment tools to evaluate your learners' progress and knowledge.

## ***Part III: Adding Activities to Your Moodle Course***

Here's where the fun begins. You read how to use forums, chats, messages, and blogs to engage your learners in communicating and expressing themselves in Moodle. Moodlers believe that in a true collaborative environment, everyone is a learner and teacher. This is where you can set up activities and let your learners create projects, share them, and learn from each other. Wikis, glossaries, and database tools are ideal for creating and sharing knowledge. I also introduce you to the powerful Quiz module, which enables instructors to create any type of quiz, worksheet, or test using multiple choice, true/false, matching, short answer, and essay questions. You can add comments, and then Moodle automatically grades the questions and adds the score to the grade book. You also find out how to create assignments that learners can upload to Moodle for you to grade and record.

This section also shows you how to set up news feeds to push Web content to your Moodle class. For example, you can bring up top stories on any topic from the BBC or CNN, or you can push any journal or e-zine publications right to your course front page, wiki, glossary, or database. Only your imagination can stop the possibilities.

## ***Part IV: Moodle Management***

This part is all about managing your content, optimizing your files for smooth running, and backing up your data. The chapters show you how to replicate your course, rename it, and use it again. Put in the work once and replicate

from then on. I know how important it is to collect user reports to keep on top of your learners or show impressive statistics to your department head, so I reveal all this knowledge. This part also covers all the techie administrative aspects of Moodle and how to keep it running smoothly. Not for the faint hearted, but with fabulous hand-holding explanations and direct references to Moodle online documentation and links to wealth of information in Moodle forums, you find your way even if you don't have a technical background.

## *Part V: The Part of Tens*

People love *For Dummies* books for all the extra tips, hints, and advice the authors share. This part gives you things to think about before you jump into building your first Moodle course, and it gives you useful, creative ways to keep your learners involved in your Moodle course.

## *The companion Web site*

Although I get very excited about the companion Web site (located at [www.dummies.com/go/moodlefd](http://www.dummies.com/go/moodlefd)), you aren't required to visit it to be able to create a Moodle course — everything you need is contained in this lovely book. On the site, however, I include a few extras that you may find useful. So, if you're feeling adventurous, you can browse for templates, an online course checklist, good practice and Moodle chat, forum, and blog etiquette tips, and more.

I encourage you to visit the companion site and to contact me ([radana@eltsolutions.com](mailto:radana@eltsolutions.com)) if I need to add anything else to make your life just a bit easier. Of course, if you think it is absolutely brilliant just as it is, let me know that, too. I will pass on credit where it's due.

## *The Moodle For Dummies Cheat Sheet*

The *For Dummies* Cheat Sheets live online at [Dummies.com](http://Dummies.com). To find this book's Cheat Sheet, go to [www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/moodle](http://www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/moodle).

The Cheat Sheet takes you on a tour of the Moodle interface, explaining modules and tools along the way. You also find a list of resources (with links) that can help get you started Moodling, provide you with support and community, and deliver news to you about all things Moodle. Finally, I provide shortcut keys particular to Moodle.

## Icons Used in This Book

What's a *For Dummies* book without icons pointing you in the direction of really great information that's sure to help you along your way? In this section, I briefly describe each icon I use in this book.



This icon points out helpful information that's likely to make your job easier.



This icon marks a general interesting and useful fact — something that you may want to remember for later use.



This icon highlights lurking danger. Pay attention to this icon and proceed with caution. But don't worry, you really can't destroy or mess up too much.



When you see this icon, you know that there's techie stuff nearby. If you're not feeling very techie, you can skip this info.

## Where to Go from Here

You picked up the book off the shelf or ordered it online, so don't marvel at the attractive black and gold cover, get started! If you've never used Moodle, start with Chapter 1 and then read about creating successful eLearning courses followed by creating your first front page.

If you've used learning content management systems similar to Moodle or have experience with Moodle, browse the contents and then jump in where you feel most comfortable. If you have Moodle available in your organization, get on the phone or e-mail your system administrator and tell him you're ready — get him to set up a Teacher account so that you can name your course and jump right in.



Don't be afraid to make mistakes. There's no such thing as a mistake when you experiment and try something new because no matter what you do, you learn from it. Moodle software is robust and backed up, so you can't really corrupt it. Now jump in and start Moodling.



# Part I

# Getting Started with Moodle

## The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave

By Rich Tennant



## *In this part . . .*

**T**his part hopefully inspires and excites you so much that you won't be able to contain yourself and will want to digest the whole book and start creating Moodle courses immediately. The part begins with an overview of Moodle and briefly explains its conventions, terminology, and tools. After that, I discuss methods of online learning, how to develop great Moodle courses, and how to use Moodle to support your teaching goals. The last two chapters of this part contain nuts and bolts information that gets you started building your course front page and creating your first Moodle course.