

Groups

About Groups

If you want students to see all students and content for a course, but be a part of a group for a specific project or activity, use the **Groups** tool.

Note the following about groups:

- Groups have, as a property, a **Category** that is created within a course offering in the **Groups** tool. The category must be created first before groups are added.
- A **Group Category** can restrict enrollments to just those in that course offering's associated sections or groups, or allow enrollments for all students in the **Classlist**.
- **Discussions, Assignments, and Lockers** can be created within the Category that would be shared between those enrolled in that group.

Visual tour of the Groups tool

The screenshot shows the 'Manage Groups' interface. At the top right, there are links for 'Settings' (6) and 'Help'. Below the title, there are three buttons: 'New Category' (1), 'Recycle Bin' (2), and 'Export' (7). A dropdown menu for 'View Categories' shows 'Group Research Presentations' (3). Below this, there is a sub-header 'Group Research Presentations (4)' and two action buttons: 'Email' (4) and 'Delete'. The main content is a table with columns for 'Groups', 'Members', 'Assignment', 'Discussions', and 'Locker'. The table lists four groups, each with a checkbox (5) in the 'Groups' column, a 'Members' count of '0/3', an 'Assignment' labeled 'Group Research...' with a help icon, 'Discussions' count of '2', and a 'Locker' labeled 'Group Files'. At the bottom right, there is a '200 per page' dropdown menu.

Groups	Members	Assignment	Discussions	Locker
<input type="checkbox"/> Activity of solar wind during a sunpot cycle	0/3	Group Research... ?	2	Group Files
<input type="checkbox"/> Effects of space weather on Earth	0/3	Group Research... ?	2	Group Files
<input type="checkbox"/> History of magnetic fields research	0/3	Group Research... ?	2	Group Files
<input type="checkbox"/> How activity on the sun impacts Earth	0/3	Group Research... ?	2	Group Files

Figure: Use the **Groups** tool to categorize groups in your course, enroll students in the group, and email students in specific groups.

1. Create a new group **Category** to organize and manage related groups.
2. Restore deleted categories or groups from the **Recycle Bin**.
3. View specific group categories by selecting from the drop-down menu.
4. **Email** or **Delete** selected groups.
5. Review and edit groups in a category:
 - Select a group to edit the group and enroll students in the group.
 - Select a number of **Members** to review students already enrolled in a course.
 - Review any assignments, discussions, or locker items associated with specific groups.
6. Change group display **Settings** or learn more about groups by clicking **Help**.
7. **Export** group and enrollment details from a selected group category as a CSV file.

Best practices for setting up groups

You can create group work areas for users with the Groups tool. You can use groups to organize users' work on projects and assignments, or you can create special work areas for users with different learning needs.

Users can belong to multiple groups within the same course. For example, each user can simultaneously belong to a group for class projects, a group for special interest discussions, and a group for advanced users. Each group can have its own discussion forums, assignments, and locker area to work in. You can grade members of groups individually or as a team.

Users enrolled into a group can check all previously submitted assignments, discussion posts, and locker areas associated to that group, even if they were enrolled after those items were created.

Note the following:

- Groups have a maximum enrollment of 200 users. If there are more than 200 users in a course, you can create new group categories; there is no limit on the number of group categories in a course.

- If you want users to view all participants and content for a course while being assigned to a group for a specific project or activity, use the Groups tool. However, if you want users to access learning materials and interact with participants only within their own section, use the Sections tool.
- Users can belong to multiple groups within the same course, but cannot self-enroll in more than one group. Instructors can add users to other groups at any time.
- To make a group where students can self-enroll, create a self enrollment group as described in [Descriptions of enrollment type options](#) and ensure that your students are able to access the tool (this should be accessible to them through the navbar).
- For each group, create separate discussion forums, assignments, and locker areas to work in.
- Grade members of groups individually or as a team.
- Before setting up groups, determine how you want to organize them. Several factors can influence how users are enrolled in groups, including:
 - Whether you set up groups before or after enrolling users.
 - Enabling auto-enrollment for groups.
 - Randomizing users in group assignments.
 - Allowing users to self-enroll in groups.
 - The **Enrollment Type** you select.
- Set up groups after most users have enrolled in your course. This approach provides a clearer understanding of how many users you are organizing and how many groups are necessary. It also helps ensure a more balanced distribution of users across the groups.
- For users to enroll in groups automatically, when creating or editing a group, navigate to **Advanced Properties > Enrollment Options**, and select **Auto-enroll new users**.

Advanced Properties

▼ [Hide Advanced Properties](#)

Groups Options

Auto-enroll new users [?](#)

Randomize users in groups [?](#)

Make category and group descriptions visible to group members

Figure: Select **Auto-enroll new users**.

- For information about copying any number of groups, refer to the [Import, export, or copy course components topic](#). The asynchronous creation process runs in the background and does not block other course copy items from completing. You can check the status of group creation in the Groups tool. The copy history log indicates when the group creation process has started, and the completion status is communicated via an update alert.
- When you create a new group category via API, you get a **202 Accepted** response code that indicates your request was submitted and is currently being processed. Any API that acts against the group category while it is processing gives a **409 Conflict** status to indicate that the action cannot be completed because the group category is not finished processing.

Groups enrollment types

The following descriptions explain the enrollment type options available when creating a new category and provide conceptual information on when you should use them.

Note: Groups have a maximum enrollment of 200 users. If there are more than 200 users in a course, you can create new group categories; there is no limit on the number of group categories in a course.

Enrollment type: # of Groups – No Auto Enrollments

Selecting this option creates a specified number of groups, for which you can add any number of users using the Enroll Users page.

Use this enrollment type when you know how many groups you want to create and which users you want in each group. Select this option when you have a teaching model that divides course participants into specific learning levels or when you want to divide users by skill or interests.

Enrollment Type: Groups of #

Selecting this option creates the minimum number of groups needed to place users in groups of a specified maximum size. More groups are created when they are needed to accommodate users. In the Members column of the Groups table, capacity markers display in the form x/y , where x is the number of enrolled students and y is the capacity.

Use this enrollment type when you know how many users you want in each group. Select this option when you have assignments that require work to be divided between a specific number of users, or when you can only accommodate a set number of users in a lab or work area at one time.

If users are enrolled before groups are set up and the **Can be auto enrolled into groups** option is enabled, users are added using a brick laying algorithm. For example, if a maximum group size of 5 users is chosen for a class of 23, then 5 groups are created. The first user is added to Group 1, the second to Group 2, and so on. The sixth user returns the enrollment sequence to Group 1. Groups 1, 2 and 3 have 5 users and Groups 4 and 5 have 4 users. If a new user enrolls later, they are put in Group 4.

If you also enable the **Auto-enroll new users** option and all of the existing groups reach their maximum size, new users are added to a new group. Because there is no way to know how many new users will join, all new users are added to the same group until it is full. This is called a bucket-filling algorithm because the limits of one group must be met before creating another group.

If users are enrolled after groups are set up, users are added to groups using a bucket-filling algorithm because there is no way for the system to determine how many groups in total are needed. For example, if a maximum group size of 5 users is chosen for a class in which 23 users eventually enroll, the first five users are added to Group 1, the sixth through tenth user to Group 2, and so on. After 23 users are enrolled, groups 1-4 have 5 users and Group 5 has 3 users.

If the **Can be auto enrolled into groups** option is cleared, the minimum number of groups needed to create groups under the specified size are created with no users enrolled in them. If no users are enrolled in the course, one group is created. You can enroll users using the Enroll Users page.

Note: If a student is unenrolled from a course, and new students enroll in the course, and the original student re-enrolls into the course, the group the original student was in will exceed the maximum number of students. This is done to ensure students are able to maintain the work they contributed to previously. If you would like to maintain a strict number of students per group, reorganization of groups after unenrollments and re-enrollments must be done manually.

Enrollment type: # of Groups

Selecting this option creates a specified number of groups.

Use this enrollment type when you know how many groups you want to create, but want the system to place users in groups for you. Select this option when you want group membership to be indiscriminate, or when classroom, resource, or teaching assistant availability restricts the number of groups you can have.

If the **Can be auto enrolled into groups** option is enabled, users are added using a brick laying algorithm, regardless of whether they enrolled before or after the groups were created. For example, if a class has 23 users and 5 groups, the first user is added to Group 1, the second to Group 2, and so on. The sixth user returns the enrollment sequence to Group 1. Groups 1, 2, and 3 have 5 users and Groups 4 and 5 have 4 users. If a new user enrolls later, they are put in Group 4.

If the **Can be auto enrolled into groups** option is not enabled, the specified number of groups are created with no users enrolled in them. You can enroll users using the Enroll Users page.

Enrollment type: Groups of # – Self Enrollment

Selecting this option creates the minimum number of groups needed to accommodate users in groups of a specified maximum size automatically. Users choose the group they want to enroll in from the Groups page. In the Members column of the Groups grid list, capacity markers display in the form x/y , where x is the number of enrolled students and y is the capacity.

Use this enrollment type when you know how many users you want in each group, but you want to allow users to choose their own groups. By default, users cannot self-enroll in more than one group. Select this option when you want users to choose their groups based on friendship, learning style, schedules, or geographic location.

If there are no users enrolled in your course at the time of creation, then only one group is initially created. You can use the Edit Category page to add additional groups. Add additional groups if you want to ensure all users have options when forming groups.

Enrollment type: # of Groups – Self Enrollment

Selecting this option creates a specified number of groups, which users enroll in from the Groups page.

Use this enrollment type when you want to make a specific number of groups available for users to join. Select this option when you want to organize groups on specific topics, which users can join based on interest, or for creating groups that are responsible for specific aspects of a larger project, which users can join based on knowledge or task preferences. By default, users cannot self-enroll in more than one group at one time.

Enrollment Type: # of Groups, Capacity of # – Self Enrollment

Selecting this option creates a specified number of groups with a specified number of enrollments per group. Users choose the group they want to enroll in from the Groups page. In the Members column of the Groups table, capacity markers display in the form x/y , where x is the number of enrolled students and y is the capacity.

Note: You can increase or decrease the capacity for self-enrollment groups after they have been created, and prior to the group sign-up expiry date and time. Decreasing a group size to an amount smaller than has already signed up for a group will not re-allocate users to other groups, so you must assign those users manually to other groups. However, increasing or decreasing the group size affects all groups in the category. You cannot change the size of only one group.

Use this enrollment type when you know how many users you want in each group, you want to allow users to choose their own groups, and you want each group to have a maximum number of users. Select this option when you want users to choose their groups based on areas of interest or responsibility in larger projects, but you want to limit membership in each group to a certain number of users.

Enrollment Type: Single user, member-specific groups

Using this option creates a group with a single user where the first name and last name of the student is the name of the group. When a new student is enrolled in the course a group is automatically created for them.

Select this option when you want to create journal type groups with a single member.

Note: This enrollment type must be enabled by your administrator using configuration variables. If you are not able to use this option, contact your administrator.

Best practices for group enrollment

To illustrate best practices for group enrollment, the following scenario includes a class of 185 users.

Your latest assignment requires users to use a software program that is only available in certain labs which must be booked and supervised. You book 4 labs that can hold 50 users each and create 4 corresponding groups.

You select the following group options:

- For the **Enrollment Type**, you select **# of Groups** and set the **Number of Groups** to 4.
- You leave both **Auto-enroll new users** and **Randomize users in groups** cleared because new users will not be joining your course and you are not worried about having an unbiased distribution of users, since group membership will not influence users' grades.
- You select **Set up discussion areas** and create discussion forums where users can post and answer questions about the computer software.
- You leave **Set up lockers** and **Set up assignments** cleared because you do not want users collaborating on their projects and you already have your assignments organized.

Note: On the Enroll Users page, if the option is configured, an **Advanced Search Options** link displays. Organizations can create their own custom search and enroll page using Brightspace APIs that opens in a new browser window via this link. Instructors can use this custom search and enroll page to filter students according to certain criteria, such as age or demographic data, to determine who to put into each group.

In the following scenario, you have a class of 29 users.

Your latest assignment requires that users research a particular topic, write a report on it, and hold a seminar for the class. You know that you want users to work in groups of 5, but you want to give them some flexibility in choosing both who they work with and what topic they work on.

You select the following group options:

- For the **Enrollment Type**, you select **Groups of # - Self Enrollment**. You set the **Number of Users** per group to 5 and rename each of the 6 groups after the topic the group will work on.
- You select **Set up discussion areas** and create discussion topics for each of the groups. You associate the topics with a grade item and tell users that you expect them to communicate with each other on their progress and concerns in the discussions topic for their group. They receive individual grades based on their participation.
- You select **Set up lockers** and encourage users to save their collaborative work in their group Locker area.
- You select **Set up assignments** and create separate assignments for each group's Research Notes, Report, and Seminar Notes. You associate the assignments with grade items and assign the same grade to all members of the group.

Create and manage categories and groups

Create a group category

To organize and manage related groups, use categories. For example, you can have a category for Assignment 1, Assignment 2, Seminars, Remedial Help, and Book Reviews.

Before you create a new set of groups, you must set up a category and create restricted work areas for the groups.

1. On the **Manage Groups** page, click **New Category**.
2. Enter a **Category Name** and **Description**.
3. Select an **Enrollment Type** from the drop-down list.
4. Depending on the chosen Enrollment Type, enter the **Number of Groups** to create, the **Number of Users** per group, or both.
5. To apply a distinctive prefix to each group name and code in the category, enter it in the **Group Prefix** field. If you do not fill in this field, the prefix defaults to "Group".
6. Depending on the chosen **Enrollment Type**, do one of the following:
 - To automatically enroll users to groups, select **Auto-enroll new users**.

- To randomly place users in groups, select **Randomize users in groups**. If you do not choose this option, users are placed alphabetically based on the Classlist.
 - To make the description of the groups visible to students from within their groups, select **Make category and group descriptions visible to group members**.
 - If you select an **Enrollment Type** that supports self-enrollment, to set enrollment availability times, select the **Set Self Enrollment Start Date** and/or **Set Self Enrollment Expiry Date** check boxes and select dates from the mini calendar field.
7. If you select **Self Enrollment Expiry Date**, but you want all students who do not enroll before the expiry date to be enrolled, you can select **Allocate unenrolled users after Self Enrollment Expiry Date** to automatically, randomly and evenly distribute them into the available groups. This option adds group members beyond the capacity of groups, if applicable. The automatic enrollment recurs at a set interval after the expiry date to ensure that all students are assigned to a group.
 8. Click **Save**.
 9. To customize individual group names, click the group and enter a new group name.
 10. Click **Save**.
 11. To set up discussion areas, locker areas, and assignments with the customized group name, from the category name's context menu, click **Edit Category**.
 12. In the **Create Workspace** area, select **Set up discussion areas**, **Set up lockers**, and/or **Set up assignments**.
 13. Click **Save**.
 14. On the **Create Restricted Topics** page, select the Forum in which you want to create restricted topics.
 15. If you have the new group topic creation feature enabled, do one of the following:
 - If you want instructors to manage each topic individually, select the **Create one topic per group** radio button. Students can only see topics assigned to their group.

- If you want to enable instructors to manage all activity and assessment from one topic, select the **Create one topic with threads separated by group** radio button. Students can only see threads from their own group.

16. Click **Create and Next**.

17. Enter a group discussion **Title** and **Description**.

18. Click **Create and Next**.

19. Click **Done**.