

# Serf<sup>®</sup> Teaching Assistant Guide



## Version 4.0

*by*

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## Introduction

Welcome to Serf! You are about to enter an educational environment that unleashes the power of the World Wide Web for delivering instruction and improving communications among instructors and students. As a teaching assistant, you will be helping your course instructor communicate with students, assign grades, and maintain the student roster.

The Serf system is arranged hierarchically. There are five kinds of users in the Serf hierarchy. At the top of the hierarchy is the Serf sysadmin, who is in charge of running the Serf server. Next in the hierarchy is the administrator, who creates courses and allocates resources to instructors and teaching assistants. Third is the Instructor, whom you will be assisting. As a teaching assistant, you are in the fourth position in the hierarchy. Last in the hierarchy, but certainly not the least important, are the students.

When a user logs on, Serf checks the database to determine what role the user plays in the Serf hierarchy. When a student logs on, for example, Serf displays a very simple screen containing the student options. When a system administrator logs on, on the other hand, Serf displays a more comprehensive screen consisting of many more options. You should be happy to know that when you log on as a teaching assistant, you will get a set of teaching assistant options that have been specifically designed to make the role of the assistant easy to learn and pleasurable to fulfill.

One of the first tasks that a Serf teaching assistant should perform, however, is to become familiar with the *Student Jumpstart Pamphlet* that is used to get students started in your course. Ask your instructor for a copy of the *Student Jumpstart Pamphlet*, and study it carefully.

## Serf Teaching Assistant Options

Your instructor or Serf administrator will have given you a Serf ticket or logon to use when you want to log on to Serf as a teaching assistant. When a teaching assistant logs on, Serf presents a screen similar to the one shown in Figure 1. Depending on the Serf style parameters in use at your institution, some of the icons and logos may differ. All teaching assistants get the same control panel, however, which has five columns: Syllabus, Student Records, Calendar, E-Mail, and System.

Syllabus	Student Records	Calendar	E-Mail	System
<a href="#">Current Class</a>		<a href="#">Daily</a>		<a href="#">Logon</a>
<a href="#">Brief Index</a>	<a href="#">Gradebook</a>	<a href="#">Weekly</a>	<a href="#">Instructor</a>	<a href="#">Logout</a>
<a href="#">Detailed Index</a>	<a href="#">View Roster</a>	<a href="#">Monthly</a>	<a href="#">Assistant</a>	<a href="#">Password</a>
<a href="#">Preamble</a>	<a href="#">Add to Roster</a>	<a href="#">Add Event</a>	<a href="#">Classmate</a>	<a href="#">CD-ROM Setup</a>
<a href="#">Search</a>	<a href="#">Drop from Roster</a>	<a href="#">Delete Event</a>	<a href="#">Register</a>	<a href="#">Switch Courses</a>
<a href="#">View Complete</a>		<a href="#">Change Event</a>		<a href="#">Discussion Forums</a>

Figure 1. When a teaching assistant logs on, Serf displays the Assistant panel, which contains five columns of options.

**Column 1: Syllabus Options**

Assistants use the options in column 1 of the control panel to view the course syllabus. There are options to view the current class, jump to specific classes or events via the indexes, or search the syllabus for keywords and phrases.

**Column 2: Student Records**

The student records options enable you to help the instructor handle administrative aspects of the class. These include the gradebook, with which you can inspect student work and assign grades, and the roster, to which you can add or drop students.

**Column 3: Calendar**

Every Serf user has a personal calendar that you can use to keep track of important dates and reminders. The Calendar options enable you to see daily, weekly, or monthly views of your personal calendar, and add events, change, or delete events from the calendar.

**Column 4: E-Mail**

The E-mail options enable you to send mail to your instructor, fellow teaching assistants, if any, and students. You should click the option to register your e-mail address so students will be able to send you messages as well.

**Column 5: System**

Every Serf user gets the system options displayed in column 5. These options enable you to log on and off and change your password. You can also set up your CD-ROM or DVD drive for use as a multimedia resource in support of a course. The CD-ROM feature is optional; you do not need to use CD-ROM in order to deliver courses with Serf. The Discussion Forums let you read and participate in online discussions with your students and course instructor. If you are assisting more than one Serf course, the Switch Courses option lets you switch courses. The control panel options always apply to the current course, which is identified in the line immediately above the control panel, where Serf says what course you are working on.

## Rostering Students

Depending on local customs at your institution, you may be given the power to add and drop students from the course roster. Before you add or drop a student from a roster, however, you should make sure that the student actually has enrolled in or withdrawn from your course.

### ***Adding a Student to the Roster***

To add a student to the roster for a course, follow these steps:

- Click the Roster option in the Administrative column of the control panel. Serf will display the Add a Student to the Roster form illustrated in Figure 2.
- In the First Name field, type the student's first name.
- In the Last Name field, enter the student's last name.
- In the Ticket field, enter the student's ticket. Every ticket used on your Serf system must be unique. Most institutions use social security numbers for tickets. Type the student's social security number without any spaces or hyphens. When cashing in a ticket, if a student enters hyphens but the instructor did not, Serf recognizes the problem, automatically corrects it, and lets the student proceed. E-mail addresses can also be used as tickets, since everyone has a unique e-mail address.
- Click the Add button to add the student to the roster.
- Serf will inform you of the results of adding the student to the roster.
- When you are done adding students to the roster, you can verify the results by clicking the option to view the roster.

Enter the real first name and last name of the student you want to add to the current course roster.

First Name  Last Name

Enter the student's ticket. If no student already has this ticket, Serf will use this ticket to create a new student for you. Otherwise, Serf will add to the roster the student who has this ticket.

Ticket

Click the Add button to add the student to your course roster.

You can also [view the roster](#) to see its members.

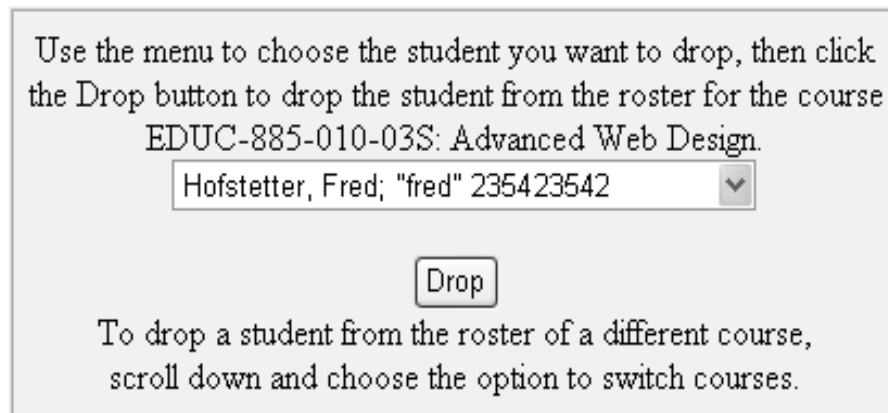
Figure 2. The Add a Student to the Roster form.

Tip: The Add a Student to the Roster form adds a student to the current course's roster. If you want to add a student to the roster for a different course, scroll down and choose the option to switch courses.

### ***Dropping a Student from the Roster***

To drop a student from a roster, follow these steps:

- Click the Roster option in the Administrative column of the control panel. Serf will display the Drop a Student from the Roster form illustrated in Figure 3.
- Use the menu to select the user you want dropped from the roster. If the user you want to drop does not appear in this menu, then that user does not belong to the roster.
- Click the Drop button to drop the user from the roster.
- After informing you of the results of dropping the user from the roster, Serf will reprint the Drop a Student from the Roster form, enabling you to drop another user from the roster if you want.



Use the menu to choose the student you want to drop, then click the Drop button to drop the student from the roster for the course  
EDUC-885-010-03S: Advanced Web Design.

Hofstetter, Fred; "fred" 235423542

Drop

To drop a student from the roster of a different course,  
scroll down and choose the option to switch courses.

Figure 3. The Drop a Student from the Roster form.

When you are done dropping students from the roster, you can verify the results by clicking the Roster→View the Roster option in the Administrative column of the control panel. When the roster appears, the students you dropped will no longer appear on it.

Note: If Serf does not permit you to add and drop students from a roster, your Serf system administrator did not assign you ownership of the roster. Depending on local customs, an institution may decide to retain control of student rosters at the administrative level. If you believe that a student needs to be added to or dropped from a roster, and Serf refuses to let you do so, contact your Serf system administrator.

## Using the Gradebook

The Serf gradebook makes it quick and easy for you to view the status of each student in the course with regard to the assignments your instructor has given and the work students have submitted. Assignments that you have not yet graded will display a *Grade Me* link that you can click to review the assignment and submit a grade. You can also leave a comment that the student will receive along with the grade you give.

### Viewing the Class Gradebook

You begin the grading process by viewing the gradebook. To view the gradebook, click the Gradebook option in the Student Records column of the control panel. Serf will display a summary of the grades in your course, as illustrated in Figure 4. The summary has six columns. Columns one and two identify the student's real name and Serf name. Column three is the Pending column; if the student has submitted assignments that are waiting for you to grade, a *Grade Me* link will appear in the Pending column. The last three columns provide some statistics, telling how many assignments have been graded for this student so far, the running average of the grades you assigned, and the student's final grade in the course. The final grade will show as an I, which stands for Incomplete, until all of the assignments have been graded.

Student Name	Serf Name	Pending	Graded	Average	Final
<u>Doe, John</u>	jdoe		6 of 6	B	B
<u>Jones, Benjamin</u>	Ben Jones	<u>Grade Me</u>	4 of 6	B+	I
<u>Smith, Mary</u>	mary		6 of 6	A	A

Figure 4. The Class Grades report.

### Viewing Individual Grades

To view the grades for any student in your course, follow these steps:

- If you are not already viewing the gradebook, click the Gradebook option in the Student Records column of the control panel.
- When the Class Grades report appears, click the name of the student whose grades you want to view.
- Serf will display the individual's grade report, as illustrated in Figure 5.

The grade report has five columns. Column 1 contains the name of the assignment. Column 2 contains the grade. Columns 3 and 4 show the weight of each assignment and the percentage of the final grade that weight comprises. Column 5 displays the date on which the student submitted the assignment.

Assignment	Grade	Weight	% of Final	Date
E-mail	<u>A+</u>	5	3.7	Thu 17 Sep 98
Listserv	<u>A+</u>	5	3.7	Mon 28 Sep 98
Discussion Forums	<u>A+</u>	5	3.7	Wed 16 Dec 98
Graduate Research Project	<u>A</u>	33	25	Wed 24 Feb 99
Home Page	<u>A</u>	18	13.6	Wed 18 Nov 98
Term Paper	<u>Grade Me</u>	33	25	Mon 3 May 99
Multimedia Project	<u>A</u>	33	25	Wed 16 Dec 98
	<b>Final Grade: I</b>			<b>Average: A</b>

Figure 5. The Individual Grades report.



## **Assigning Grades**

To assign a grade for a student assignment, follow the steps provided above in the section entitled “Viewing Individual Grades” to display the individual grade report for that student. If the student has submitted an assignment that is waiting to be graded, a *Grade Me* link will appear in the Grade column. If the assignment is a so-called “observational” assignment that does not require the student to submit anything over the Web, a blank underline will appear in the Grade column. If the assignment requires the student to submit something but the student has not done so, an underline with three dots will appear. If the assignment is an exam that the student has not yet completed, an underline with three dashes will appear; an underline with two dashes denotes an unanswered test item asked directly on the syllabus. Click either the *Grade Me* link or the underline to display the Grade Event form.

Depending on the type of assignment you are grading, the Grade Event form will provide you with an answer to read, a file to launch, or a URL to review. If the assignment is a Web Query, for example, Serf will print the question that was asked, followed by the answer the student wrote. For a Web Portfolio assignment, Serf will provide you with the URL of the student’s work, which you can click to peruse what the student submitted.

In all cases, Serf displays a Letter Grade menu and a Percent menu, as illustrated in Figure 6. To assign a grade, pull down either the Letter Grade menu and choose a letter grade, or use the Percent menu to choose a percent. In addition to assigning a grade, you may also leave a comment about the assignment by typing a message into the comment box. When the student inspects the grade, any comment you type into the comment box will appear onscreen along with the grade.

After you have completed the Grade Event form, click the Grade button to submit the grade. The grade will take effect immediately. The student’s running average in the course will be updated, for example, as soon as you click the Grade button. Both your grade and any comment you provided will be available for student view immediately. Students can only view their own grades in the course; an individual student is unable to see the grades of other students in the course.

This form will assign a grade to the student named Benjamin Jones,  
whose Serf name is Ben Jones,  
for the *Term Paper* assignment:

A major part of your grade in this course is determined by a term paper that you write on a topic of your choosing related to an educational or communications issue on the Internet. You may elaborate on one of the topics discussed in the text, or you can choose an original topic. Your paper must contain at least six bibliographic references. Make sure the title of your paper, your name, and the date you completed it appear at the top. Follow precisely the bibliographic style guidelines for the style you use (APA, MLA, or CMS--see chapter 14 for details). After you've transferred your paper to your Web site and tested all of the links in it to make sure they work properly, you may submit it for a grade by pressing the Submit button provided below.

The URL submitted by the student is:

<http://www.udel.edu/~BenJones/mpeg.html>

If you want to leave a comment for the student regarding this assignment,  
you may do so in the box below.

You could improve this paper by visiting <http://www.mpeg.org> and searching the MPEG FAQ for information on the scalability of digital video recordings.

In what format do you want your comment to flow onto the screen?

Plain text (preserves carriage returns)  
 Preformatted (preserves all formatting)  
 HTML (ignores carriage returns)

Use either the Letter Grade menu or the Percent menu to select the grade you want to assign.

If you're giving a low grade, do you want to grant the student a chance to revise the assignment and try for a higher grade?

Give the student another try

Click the Grade button to record the student's grade.

[Return to the gradebook](#)

Figure 6. The Grade Assignment form.

### ***Giving the Student Another Try***

Serf provides you with the opportunity to give the student another chance if the student performs poorly on an assignment. If you give the student a bad grade and also want to give the student another chance, click the option to “Give the student another try” on the grade form shown in figure 6.

When the student tries again, another *Grade Me* link will appear in your gradebook for that student. When you follow the *Grade Me* link to grade the assignment, the grade form will display the former grade(s) and comment(s) you gave the student for this assignment. The form will also display grade menus for you to assign a new letter grade or percentage grade for the revised assignment. If the student’s performance is still low, you can once again click the option to give the student another try, if you want to let the student try again for a higher grade.

### ***Rescheduling an Assignment***

If a student misses the deadline for an assignment or a scheduled exam, and you want to allow that student to take the exam at another time, you can set a special time by (1) going into the gradebook, (2) clicking to see that student’s grades, (3) clicking the assignment you want to reschedule, and (4) clicking that assignment’s Scheduling option.

### ***QuickGrades***

The gradebook provides you with a QuickGrades option, which is intended primarily for the end of a course when you want to give grades quickly to students who may not have handed in all of their assignments. To use QuickGrades, you click the Gradebook option in the control panel, pull down the QuickGrades menu, and select the assignment for which you want to give quick grades. Serf will list all of the students in your course, and alongside each student’s name, you will get grade controls that let you assign letter grades or percentages quickly. As the onscreen instructions will tell you, after you assign the quick grades, you must click the Submit button to record the grades.

### ***Grading Students in a Virtual Room***

If you are teaching several sections of a course, your Serf system administrator may have grouped your sections into a virtual room. If so, when you click the Gradebook option, you will see grades for all of the students in all of the sections assigned to that room. The virtual room makes it quicker for you to assign grades if you are teaching many sections of a course, because you do not have to switch courses to enter the gradebook for each section.

Another advantage of the virtual room is that when students click the class e-mail option that lets them address mail to any student in the class, all of the students taking courses assigned to the virtual room will appear in the point-and-click directory of student e-mail addresses.

## Communication Options

An important duty of a Serf Teaching Assistant is to help the instructor communicate with students enrolled in the course. Depending on how your course has been configured, this is done via e-mail, a chatroom, a listserv, a newsgroup, or a discussion forum. Many Serf courses use all five ways of communicating.

### ***Electronic Mail***

Serf makes it easy for students and instructors to communicate via electronic mail. Every user has a Register E-mail option in their Serf control panel. When users tell Serf that they want to send e-mail to their instructor or to a classmate, Serf makes their Web browser launch an e-mail window pre-addressed to the targeted user's e-mail address. To enable this powerful mode of communication over the Internet, every user should register their e-mail address. It is doubly important for you, the assistant, to register your e-mail address. If you do not register your e-mail address, nothing will happen when the student clicks the option to send you mail. To register your e-mail address, follow these steps:

- Click the Register option in the E-mail column of the control panel.
- The Register Your E-mail Address form will appear as shown in Figure 7.
- Enter your e-mail address in the blank provided.
- Click the Register button to register your e-mail address.

Should your e-mail address change in the midst of a course, simply repeat these steps, and enter the revised e-mail address.



Enter your e-mail address in the blank provided.

Then click the Register button to record your e-mail address.

Figure 7. The Register Your E-mail Address form.

***ParaChat Chatrooms***

Serf has special support for the ParaChat network, which provides real-time communication options for students in Serf courses. If your instructor has provided a chatroom for your course, a chatroom icon will appear at the top of your Teaching Assistant screen. You should enter the chatroom periodically to help students who may be chatting in it. Students will probably ask you to set up specific times when you will be in the chatroom, available to dialog online.

***Listserv***

If your instructor has linked a listserv to your course, a listserv icon will appear at the top of your Teaching Assistant screen. You should join the listserv so you will receive in your e-mail copies of the messages that your students and the instructor send the listserv.

***Newsgroup***

If your instructor has linked a newsgroup to your course, a newsgroup icon will appear at the top of your Teaching Assistant screen. You should participate in the newsgroup on a regular basis, ideally every day, to help students with topics under discussion. Try to set a good example by maintaining threads of discussion in the newsgroup. Instead of beginning a new topic with every message you write, respond to an existing topic if your message fits the discussion going on in it. Begin a new topic only when your message really is on a new topic.

## Discussion Forums

Serf Discussion Forums enable you to create private discussion areas for use by students enrolled in your course. You can create your own forums and control which students have access to them. To make the Discussion Forums easy and intuitive to use, all of the instructions are provided onscreen. To go into the Discussion Forums, click the Discussion Forums option in the System column of the control panel. Since you are a teaching assistant, you get the Discussion Forum options shown in Figure 8.

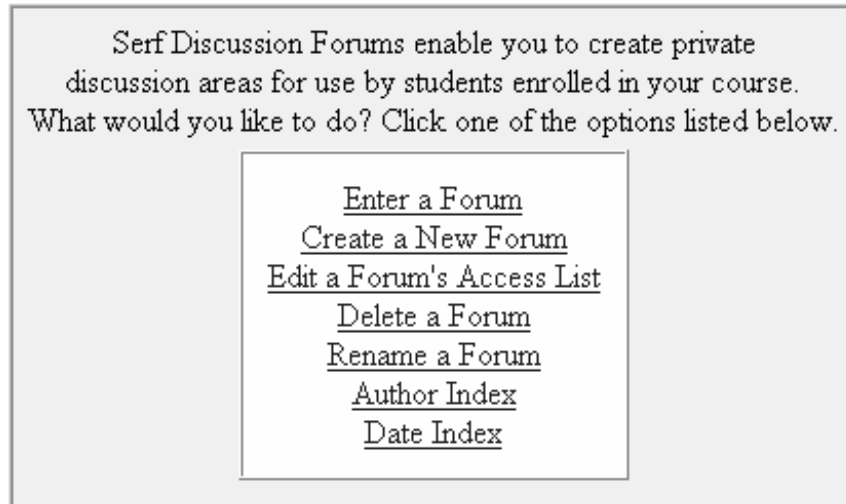


Figure 8. Discussion Forum Options for Instructors and Teaching Assistants.

## Creating a New Forum

Unless your course instructor has already created a forum, your course will not have any forums at first. To create a discussion forum, click the option to Create a New Forum. The Create a New Forum screen appears as shown in Figure 9. Enter the title of the forum you want to create, and click the Create button to create the forum.



Figure 9. The Create a New Forum screen.

## Editing a Forum's Access List

As soon as the new forum gets created, you will get the option to edit its access list. By default, all of the students enrolled in your course have access to the newly created discussion forum. If you want to make the forum more private, click the option to edit the access list, and the Discussion Forum Access Controller will appear, as shown in Figure 10.

This form enables you to control access to the discussion forum entitled:

**Societal Implications of the Internet**

You may provide access to everyone in the course, and if this course meets in a virtual room, to everyone enrolled in that room, or you can control access by selecting individuals. What would you like to do?

Provide access to everyone in the course  
 Restrict access to selected individuals

You may deny access to the instructor, or to any teaching assistants who may be assigned to this course, by checking the boxes below.

Deny Access to the Instructor  
 Deny Access to Teaching Assistants

Click the Register button when you're ready to record your changes to the forum's access list.

**Register**

If you chose to provide access to individuals, click Yes or No to provide or deny access to each student listed below.

**COMM-467-197-98S: Internet Literacy**

<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	Doe, John--"jdoe"
<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	Jones, Benjamin--"Ben Jones"
<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	Smith, Mary--"mary"

Click the Register button to make the settings take effect.

**Register**

[Create a New Forum](#) | [Enter a Forum](#) | [Edit a Forum's Access List](#)

Figure 10. The Discussion Forum Access Controller.

The access controller gives you the ability to:

- Restrict access to selected individuals
- Deny access to the instructor
- Deny access to teaching assistants
- Turn access on or off for any individual in your class

If the course meets in a virtual room, the student rosters of other courses meeting in the same room will also appear on the access controller form, enabling you to provide or deny access to any student in the room.

## Deleting a Forum

The Discussion Forum Options provide you with the ability to delete a forum. Before you delete a forum, however, please realize that all of the topics, messages, and responses that students may have entered in that forum also will be deleted. If you really want to delete a forum, follow these steps:

- Click the Discussion Forum option in the Instructor panel; the Discussion Forum Options will appear.
- Choose the option to Delete a Forum; the Delete a Forum screen shown in Figure 11 will appear.
- Pull down the menu to select the forum you want to delete.
- Click the Delete button to delete the forum.

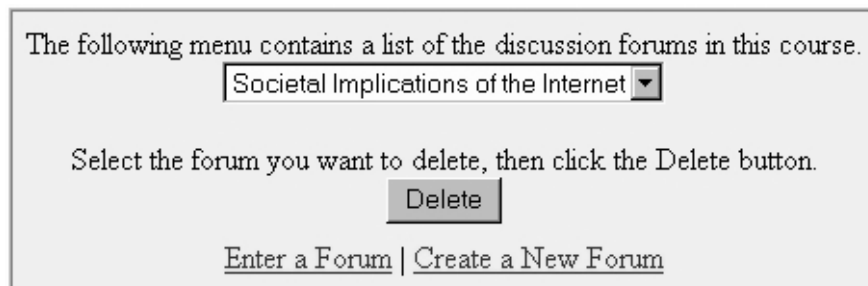


Figure 11. The Delete a Forum Screen.

## Renaming a Forum

If you make a typographical error when you create the name of a forum, and you want to correct the error, or if you decide to rename a forum altogether, you can do so. To rename a forum, follow these steps:

- Click the Discussion Forum option in the Instructor panel; the Discussion Forum Options will appear.
- Choose the option to Rename a Forum; the Rename a Forum screen will prompt you to pull down a menu and select the name of the forum you want to rename.
- Pull down the menu to select the forum you want to rename, and click the Rename button.
- The Rename a Discussion Forum screen appears as shown in Figure 12.
- In the title field, edit or retype the name of the discussion forum.
- Click the Rename button to register the change.

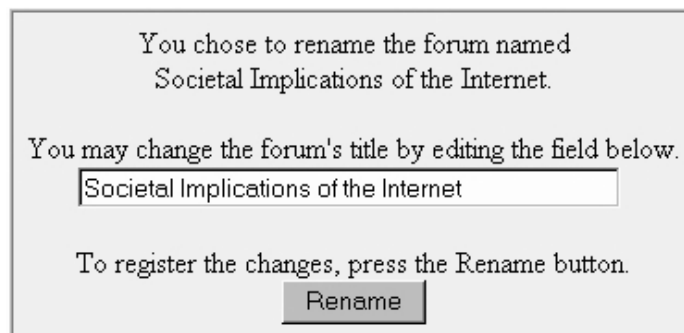


Figure 12. The Rename a Discussion Forum Screen.



## Entering a Forum

To create new topics, and to read and respond to messages in a forum, you must enter the forum. To enter a forum, click the Discussion Forum option on the Instructor Panel, and choose the option to Enter a Forum. Serf will respond by printing a list of the discussion forums that exist in your course. To enter a forum, simply click on its name. Once you enter a forum, you can create new topics, read messages and responses to existing topics, and participate in the discussion by entering responses and comments of your own.

## Creating a New Topic

To create a new topic, follow these steps:

- Click the option to Start a New Topic; the Begin a New Discussion Topic form will appear as shown in Figure 13.
- In the title field, enter the title of the topic you want to create.
- In the text box, write the message that will introduce the topic to get the discussion started.
- Click the Create button to create the topic.

In the following field, enter the title of the topic you want to create.

Since you are creating a new discussion topic, you get to write the first message. Enter the text of the message in the box below. The text may contain HTML tags.

In what format do you want your message to flow onto the screen?

Plain text (preserves carriage returns)

Preformatted (preserves all formatting)

HTML (ignores carriage returns)

Click the Create button to create this topic, or scroll down for other options.

[Read a Discussion Topic](#) | [Enter a Different Forum](#)

Figure 13. The Begin a New Discussion Topic form.

## Reading Existing Topics

To read the ongoing discussion of topics in a forum, follow these steps:

- If you are not already in the discussion forum you want to read, click the Discussion Forum option on the control panel, choose the option to Enter a Forum, and enter the forum of your choice.
- Serf will list the topics that have been created in the forum so far; click the topic you want to read.
- Figure 14 shows how Serf will display the topic. First comes the introductory message that began the topic, followed by all of the responses that users have made. Use your browser's scrollbar to scroll down and peruse the messages.

Halloran, Beth--"bhalloran"
 03-Apr-98 2:31:23 PM

Consulting On The Web

Topic #4

I was just writing to get the opinion of others on the topic of "consulting on the web". I am a Registered Dietitian and I was thinking that a great way to market Nutrition Education Services on the web would be to provide a web site in which people could subscribe (for an hourly fee, in a chat-room format) and receive one-on-one nutrition counseling. They would receive highly individualized attention without the threat or embarrassment of meeting face-to-face. In addition, potentially, you could have clients from around the world. Teachers could also benefit by providing one-one-one tutoring in the same manner (again, possibly for a fee as a tutor). I don't know what the logistics of something like this would be, but I would be interested in receiving the input of others...

Hofstetter, Fred--"fth"
 05-Apr-98 9:46:52 PM

Response #1

Consulting On The Web

Beth, I think your idea has merit. I'm going to do some checking for you with some friends of mine on the Net and get back to you with more info on setting up this kind of a business on the net. I'll write more soon.... Fred

[Respond to This Topic](#) | [Start a New Topic](#) | [Read a Different Topic](#) | [Enter a Different Forum](#)

[Author Index](#) | [Date Index](#)

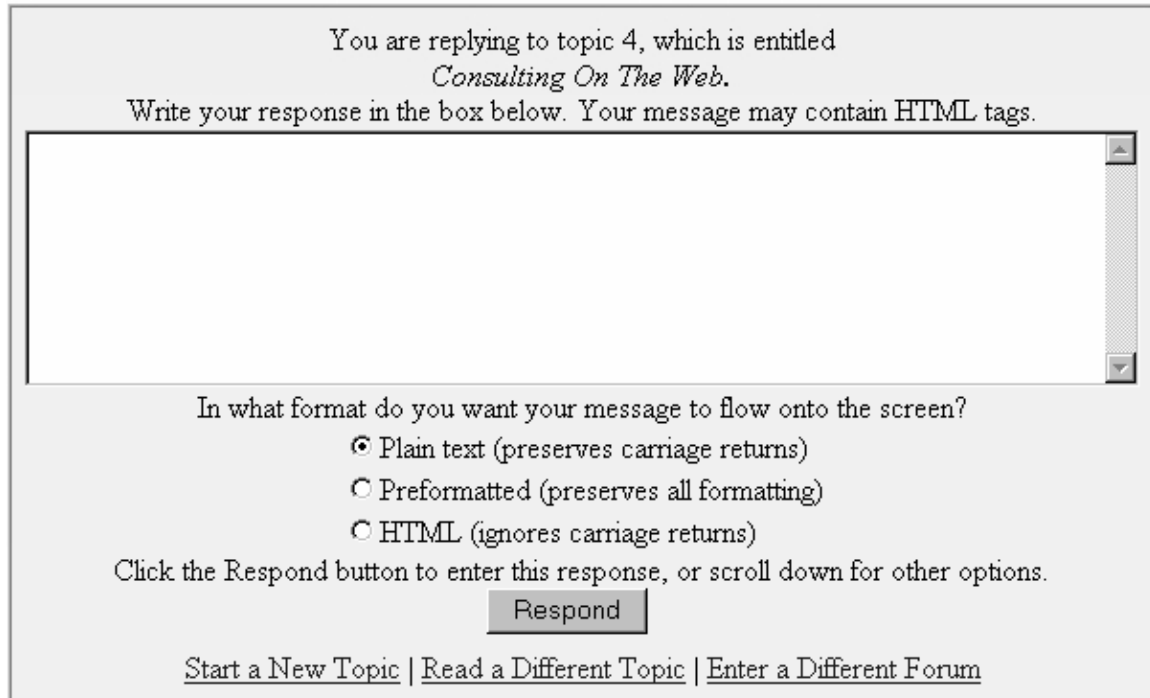
You may also [edit the last message](#) you wrote.

Since you are an instructor, you may also [delete this Topic](#).

Figure 14. The View Discussion Topic screen.

## Responding to a Topic

To respond to a topic in a discussion forum, click the Respond to This Topic button at the bottom of the View Discussion Topic screen shown in Figure 14. Serf will display the Respond to a Discussion Topic form shown in Figure 15. Write your response in the message box, and click the Respond button. Serf will redisplay the topic, and you will see your newly written response at the bottom of the list of messages.



You are replying to topic 4, which is entitled  
*Consulting On The Web.*  
Write your response in the box below. Your message may contain HTML tags.

In what format do you want your message to flow onto the screen?

- Plain text (preserves carriage returns)
- Preformatted (preserves all formatting)
- HTML (ignores carriage returns)

Click the Respond button to enter this response, or scroll down for other options.

[Start a New Topic](#) | [Read a Different Topic](#) | [Enter a Different Forum](#)

Figure 15. The Respond to a Discussion Topic form.