
ASPPlayground.net Version 3.x

User FAQ's v1.0

These User FAQ's are written with the end users in mind who will be using the forum from a non-administrative perspective.

If you would like to learn more about the backend operation of the software, please download the [Admin Quick Start Guide](#) from our site.

Do NOT save password when you log onto the forum from a public machine.

Plus, it is best to log out when you are finished using the forum on a shared computer.

Throughout this User FAQ's, you will see textbox like the above. These are tips to remind you of some security and privacy best practices when using the forum, especially when you share the computer with others.

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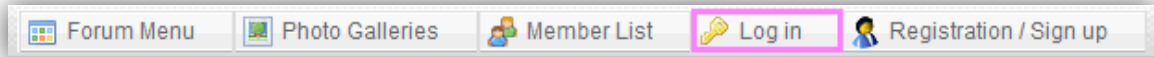
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1.0 Login and Registration Issues

If you are visiting the forum the first time, you will see the following navigational menu near the top of the forum page. As a visitor, you should see both “Log in” and “Registration / Sign up”.



Why can't I login?

The software will give accurate reasons why your login attempt fails. **Our software needs your browser's Cookies capability** to recognize you, so first of all, check to make sure it is enabled.

Here are several reasons the software will report when login fails:

- 1) Login name was not found in our db;
 - a. Make sure you have an account first, if not, **register an account** first;
 - b. You can request a **Login Name Reminder** to be sent to your email.
- 2) Password was incorrect;
 - a. Password is **case-sensitive**;
 - b. You can request **Password Reset**. An instructional email will be sent to you.
- 3) Captcha verification failed;
 - a. Ensure you type in the characters as shown in the graphic;
 - b. **Click on the graphic to refresh** the characters if they are not legible;
 - c. Make sure your browser has **Cookies enabled**.
- 4) User account has not been activated by verifying your email;
 - a. **Check your inbox and follow the instruction** the software sent;

- b. You can request the **Validation Email** to be sent to you again.
- 5) User account is banned.
- a. Check with the board administrators to verify

The following is the login interface:

The screenshot shows a web browser window with a login form. The form has three input fields: 'Username:', 'Password:', and 'Verification:'. To the right of the 'Verification:' field is a graphic of the letters 'P H L P' with a red arrow pointing to it and the text 'Click on it to refresh.' Below the input fields is a checkbox labeled 'Save my credential in a cookie?'. At the bottom right of the form is a 'Login' button. Below the form, there is a section titled 'Links to various features to help you with login problem.' containing four buttons: 'Forgot your password?', 'Forgot your Login?', 'New User?', and 'Request Validation E-mail'. The footer text at the bottom of the page is '© 2000-2009 ASPPlayground.NET Forum Commercial Version 3.5'.

If everything else fails, **try another browser**. It is recommended that you use the latest version of your browser choice.

What is this Verification box I see on the login page?

The Verification field is a feature called “CAPTCHA” to defeat malicious bots to hit the login page repeatedly in an attempt to brute-force crack users’ passwords. The login page verifies that you are indeed a human (not a computer bot) accessing the page by checking your input against the characters shown in the graphic.

If the characters are not legible, you may **click on the graphic to refresh**.

Why do I need to register first?

You may not have to. It depends on how the forum admin set up the software. There are 3 basic setups:

- 1) You need to have an account, otherwise you see nothing but a login box;
- 2) You can read / post on some forums, but not all. Some features (search, member profile) are disabled as well;
- 3) You can do whatever you want without an account.

Setup 3) is rare; and you seldom see 1) too. Most forums are set up to provide visitors incentives to join, which is 2) above.

Registration is easy as you just need to fill out a short form and that's it. The admin may require you to verify your email, or he may want to screen each registrant manually. If verification is required, you will be notified what to do once you have finished the registration process.

Why do I get logged off automatically?

If you do not check the **“Save my credential in a cookie”** box when you log in, you will be logged out after 20 ~ 30 min. of idle (admin configurable) automatically. This prevents other people from using your account in case you share computer with them.

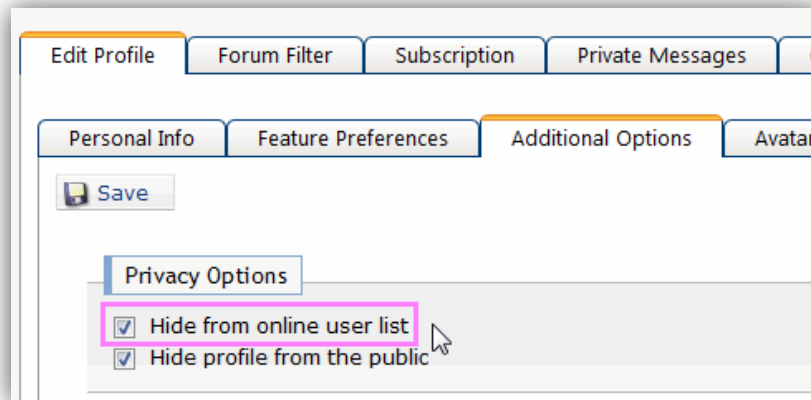
To stay logged in, check the box when you log in.

Do NOT save password when you log on to the forum from a public or shared computer.

Plus, it is best to log out when you are finished using the forum on a shared computer.

How do I prevent my login from appearing in the online user list?

You can prevent others from seeing you online by going to your Forum Profile -> Additional Options -> Privacy Options to check the box "Hide from online user list". See below:



You will only be visible by the admins after this option is set.

I've lost my password!

You can request to reset your password on the login page by clicking on the "**Forgot Your Password**" button at the bottom of the login page.

We do not store passwords in a retrievable format, so we cannot simply tell you what your password is by asking you some security questions (as implemented by some system).

This setup offers maximum protection for your password, and in the event that hackers gain access to the database, your password stays safe.

I used to be able to log in... but not anymore?

If you **recently changed your email**, you may need to verify the new email again. Our software sent an automatic email to your new address with instructions on verification when you changed your email.

In case you cannot locate this email, try the "**Request Validation Email**" feature on the login page.

It is also possible that **your account was recently banned**. See the “*Why Can't I Login?*” section above for more info.

Why do you ask for my Birthday when I register?

Some board administrators require you to be at least 13 years old to comply with the COPPA law (Child Online Privacy and Protection Act). If this is the case, simply input your birthday and see if you are allowed to register.

Why can't I register?

It is possible that the forum admin has disabled account registration. You will see the explanation on the registration page if this is the case.

The 2 other possible reasons are:

- 1) Your login name of choice was used by another person already;
- 2) Your email has already been used (could be an old account of yours).

You will be shown the reason immediately on the registration form.

2.0 User Preferences and Settings

If you have logged on to the server, you will find an additional item, User Control Panel (User CP), on the top navigational menu. This is where you can change the settings and preferences for your account in the software.

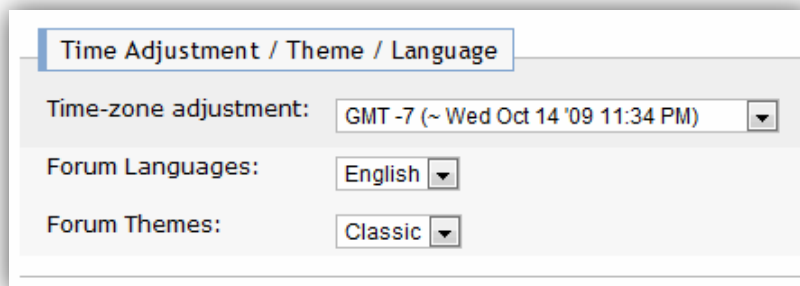


How do I change my settings?

Simply by clicking on the User Control Panel item, you will be taken to your profile editing page, where you can change your personal info, forum feature preferences, avatar / profile photo, and your message signature.

I am not seeing the correct times on the forum!

It is possible that the timezone you are in is different from that of the server. Simply go to the User Control Panel (User CP), click on the third tab (Additional Options), and you can change the time zone under "Time Adjustment / Theme / Language".



I am only seeing one language / theme available?

This simply means that the admin did not install additional language / theme on the forum.

How do I change the image below my username by my post?

The **image below your name is called the “Avatar”**, which you can change by going to the User CP, under the Avatar / Profile Photo tab. You will be able to upload or select a pre-defined image for your account (sometimes admin may disable avatar upload)

FYI, Profile Photo refers to the photo that shows on your public profile page.

How do I change the small title and graphic below my username?



The small title and the graphic represent your current Rank in the forum. Rank is determined by the number of posts you have made and / or the score you have earned (see the next question for score definition).

Also, if you belong to a user group, you will also see your Rank replaced by the title and graphic set for the user group.

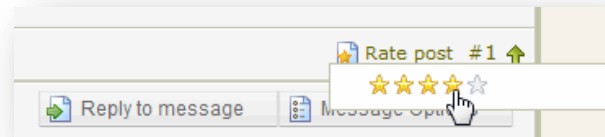
The image shows the 'Basic Information' tab in the User CP. It includes buttons for 'Update Password' and 'Update E-mail'. The fields are as follows:

- Username : Samuel
- E-mail : [Redacted]
- First Name : Samuel
- Last Name : Chou
- Birthday : [Empty field]
- hide age
- Custom Title : Software Developer

If you see a field named “Custom Title” in your User CP under the Personal Info tab, this tells you that the admin allows you to specify your own title to show below your username. It will replace the Rank title.

What is the Score field shown below my username?

Certain amount of score is earned when your post is rated by a fellow member. 1-2 stars will take away your score, so you may see a negative number for your score. The best way to avoid this situation is to make quality posts and do not violate the forum agreement.



What is the Reward Points field shown below my username?

Reward Points is a system that allows you to attach certain amount of points to your message, which can then be awarded to the author who provides the best response. You can earn Reward Points by

1. Earning points provided by your fellow forum members with a quality response to their posts; and
2. Visit the forum regularly (you accumulate points by simply coming back).

The amount of points you earn for every visit may vary. This is pre-set by the admin. Belonging to a user group may also earn you additional points, which may also have a different return point increment from that for regular members.

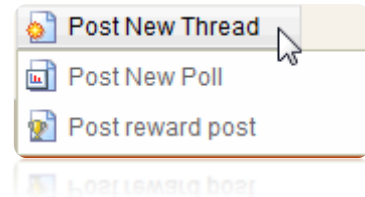
Why does it say my Signature exceeds the character limits?

The admin may set a limit on character count for signatures. You cannot exceed the limit or the signature will not be saved.

Sometimes it may look like your signature is shorter than the limit set, but you still get the warning. This is usually caused by text formatting applied to your signature as well as any links you add. Formatting and Links take up much more character space than plain texts due to the information they carry (invisible though). Cut down formatting and links will usually resolve such issue.

3.0 Message Posting Issues

You can begin posting messages by clicking on the “Post New Thread” in a forum to start a new discussion thread, or by clicking on the “Reply to message” button by a message to reply to an existing thread / message.



Why can't I post new / reply to messages in certain forums

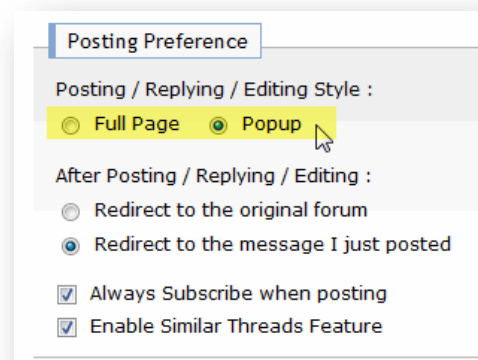
Some forums require you to log in before you can post, and some have permission settings that only allow certain user groups to post.

If in doubt, you can contact the forum admin to inquire about the posting requirements.

Why does a window pop up when I want to post?

You have 2 posting modes to choose from when composing your message – popup or full page. Popup mode allows you to still see the entire thread you are replying to without having to leave the existing page.

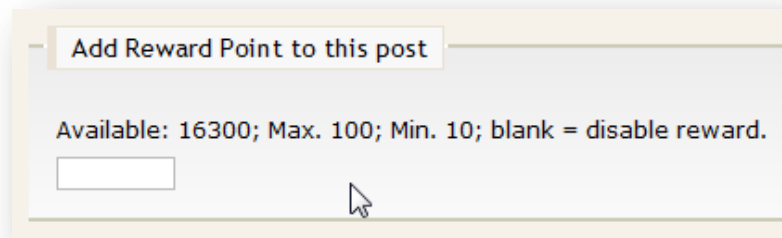
You can change your Posting Preference in the User CP, under the Feature Preferences tab.



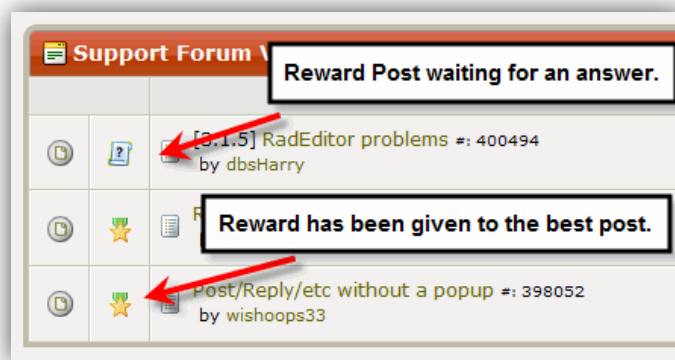
What is a “Reward Post”?

Reward post is a special type of message you can make in the forum. It allows you to attach certain amount of “Reward Points” to a question (or request) which you can later give to the member who provides the best answer / response.

When you make a Reward Post, you will see a section below the message editor that allows you to specify the amount you want to attach which you can later award the author of the best answer.



You can tell a message is a “reward post” when you see a special icon in front of the message subject.



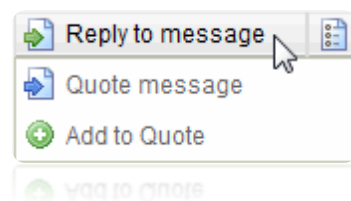
Why do I not see the “Post New Poll” or the “Post reward post” buttons?

If you don't see the options, they are simply disabled by the admin in the forum.

How does “Quote message” differ from “Reply to message”?

If you click on “Quote message”, you will see the message you are replying to quoted directly in the message editor.

Otherwise, you will need to manually press the “quote” button on the editor if you want to quote the message you are replying to.

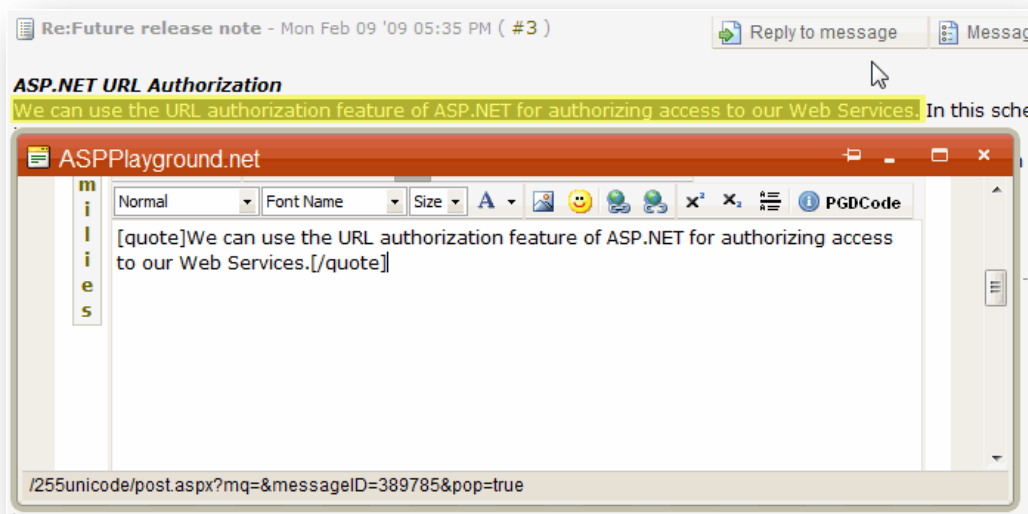


What does “Add to Quote” do?

In our software, you can automatically quote multiple messages when you reply. Simply click on the “Add to Quote” button beside the messages you wish to quote (up to 3 messages), and click on “Reply to message”. You will see all messages quoted automatically in the message editor for you.

Is there any other way to quote a message?

Yes, if you use the popup posting mode, you can simply highlight a portion of text using your mouse, and click on the “Reply to message” button to bring up the popup editor. You will see the highlighted text automatically inserted into the editor.



Can I make the message editor bigger to avoid scrolling?

Yes, when you see the editor loaded completely, you can press F11 on your keyboard to make the editor full screen. The editor will cover the entire viewport and this will give you large amount of area to work with.

Once you are ready to post, press F11 again to unhide the Post button.

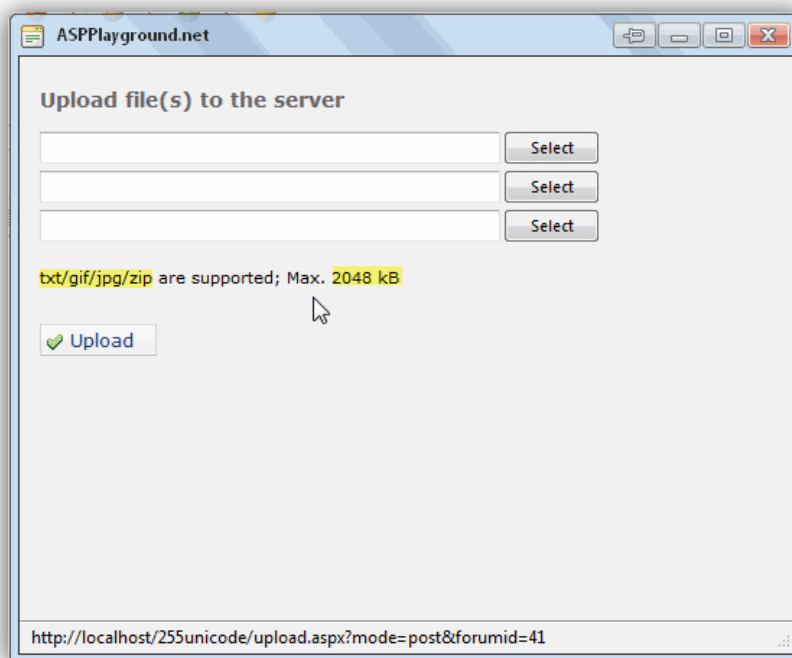
What is this “Similar Threads” feature when I post?

Similar Threads is a feature that will make an automatic search using words from your message subject as the keywords. You will see relevant messages listed to avoid duplicate post or asking the same question unnecessarily.

You can also refine the search result by changing the keywords taken by the software.

I cannot attach files to my message!

If you don't see the attachment button below the editor, it means the admin has specifically disabled file uploading in the forum. However, if you are able to bring up the file upload screen but at the end fail to upload the files, take note of 2 restrictions on the following screen:

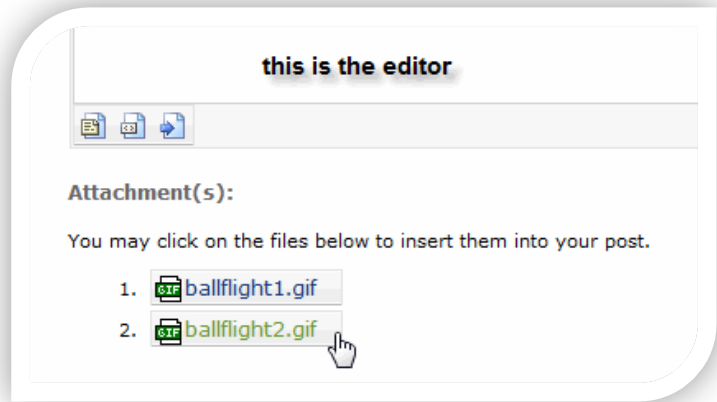


These are presets by the admin to restrict attachment type and size for the forum. Make sure your files are within these limits.

Can I insert attached files directly into the message?

Yes, you can do so at the end of file upload. Once the upload window closes, you will see your files listed as clickable buttons at the end of the editor.

You can click on the buttons to insert a link to the file for non-image attachments, or the image itself for image attachments (jpg, gif, png, etc.)



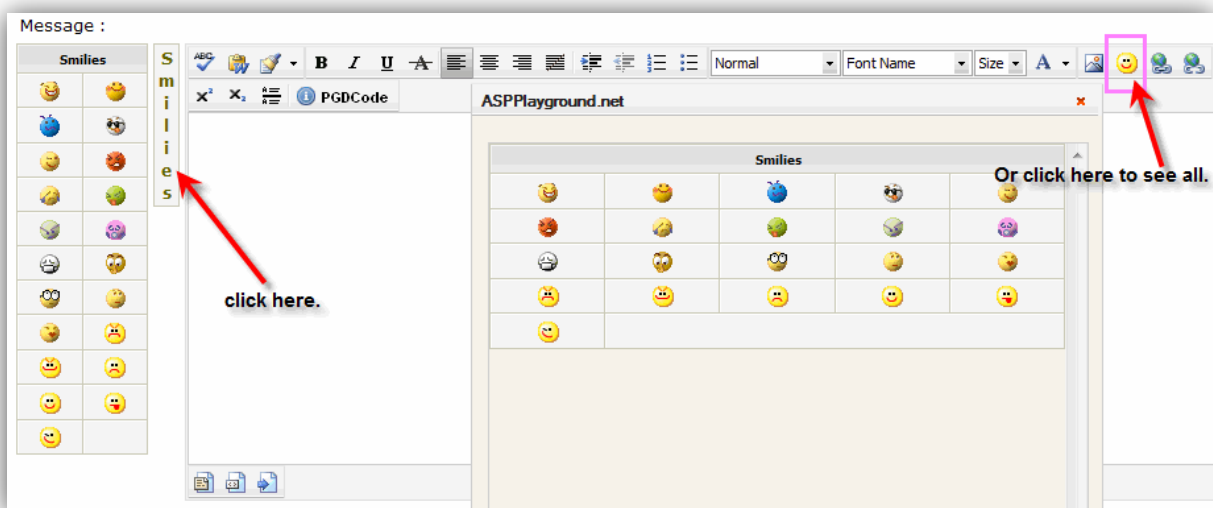
What does the Topic Type drop down do?

Topic Type is a list of special flags set up by the admin to allow you to indicate the nature of your discussion thread. This feature is not available when you reply to an existing message.

While it is not mandatory to make a selection, it is advisable to do so for others to easily identify the purpose of your post.

Where can I find the smiley faces to use?

There are 2 places where you can find the pre-configured smiley faces (or similes) on the editor:

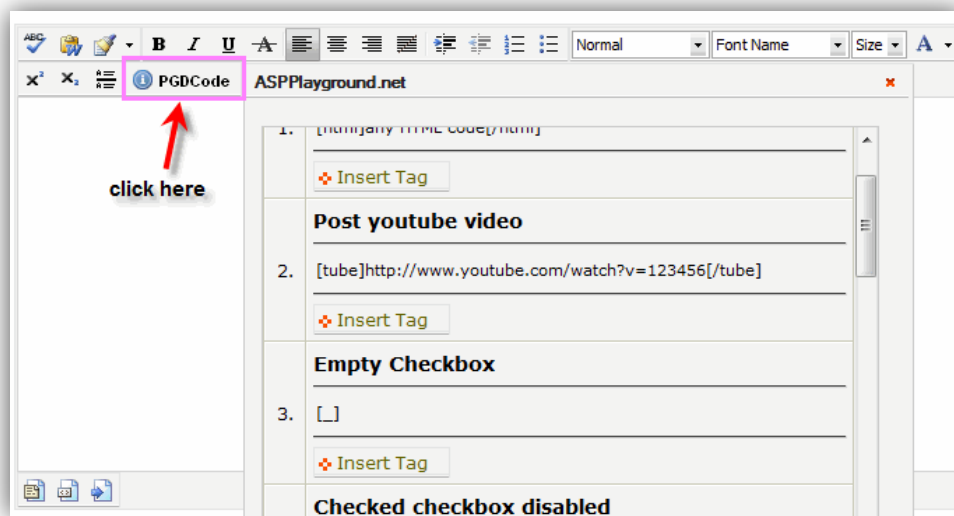


What is the PGDCode feature?

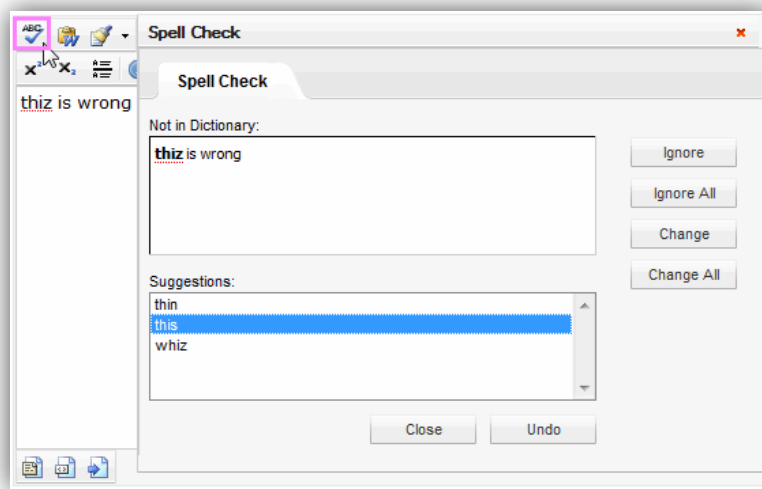
PGDCode are special formatting codes defined by the admin to allow you to embed special content (e.g. Youtube videos) directly into the message.

The reason we have such feature is that we do not allow HTML code directly in the message to protect forum users from getting attacked by malicious HTML / JavaScript in the message.

Simply clicking on the PGDCode button will reveal all pre-defined formatting codes, the purpose of the codes, and the usage for each one in a window.

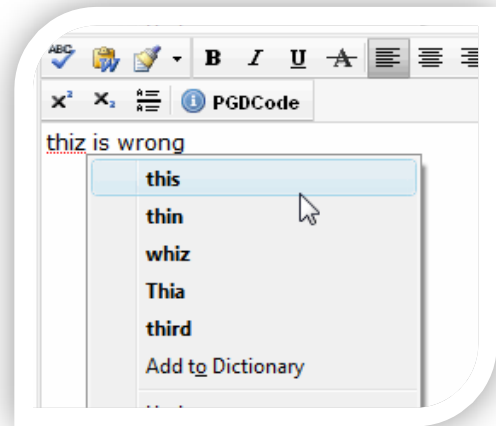


I need to spell check my message before posting.



We have built-in spell checker in the software to allow you to easily check the spelling. It is located the top left corner of the editor formatting buttons.

If you are using Firefox, you can also choose to use the built-in spellchecker. Simply right click on the words that have a red dotted underline, and choose from the suggestion list:



Whenever I paste content from a Word doc, the result comes out bad.

MS Word doc embeds many invisible “tags” on the texture content for styling and formatting.

When you copy a section of text, you bring over this extra baggage which causes display distortion on the message editor because it does not understand these tags.

There is a feature on the editor called “Paste from Word” that is right beside the Spell Checker button.

Use this feature and the extra tags will be stripped out.



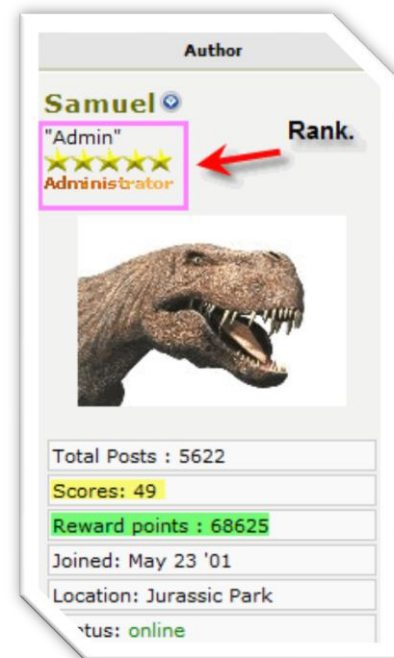
4.0 User Groups and Special User Types

What are Administrators?

Administrator (admin) is a special community-wide user type. Administrators have the ability to change all of the forum software preferences, forum permissions, and user data, etc. They are also able to edit / delete your messages, should they find it necessary.

There is also a head admin (member ID = 0) who can designate other users as administrators.

Because of the power this designation grant, it is uncommon to have more than a couple of administrators in a community. You can easily identify an admin if you look at the Rank of a user beside his posts.



What are Moderators?

Moderator is a special forum-wide user type, whose purpose is to keep the forum discussions within the rules set by the community leaders.

For this purpose, moderators can perform a variety of tasks within a forum, such as editing / deleting messages, locking / pinning threads, resolving reported abuses (discussed later), and moving /splitting off-topic threads to the correct forum.

You can also easily identify a moderator by looking at the Rank beside a user's message.

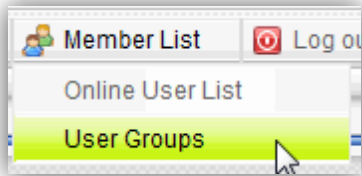
What are User Groups?

User groups are defined by the community admin to easily manage users with similar status, e.g. vocalists, guitarists, etc.

The reasons admin wants to set up such division may include: certain forums are designed to be visible only to certain user groups, to distinguish paying members from visitors in order to

enable more features for paying members, and to grant different permissions (attachment size difference, e.g.) on forums based on their community status.

How do I find out what user groups there are?



Simply go to the User Groups page by mouse over the Member List menu.

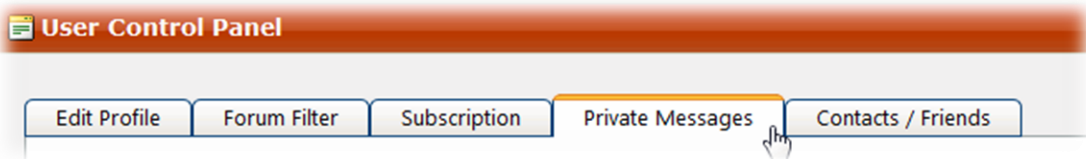
Once you are on the page, you will see all available User Groups, some of which you can apply to join.

There may be User Group Application Requirements set by the admin based on either the length of membership, number of posts, score, the reward points you have earned, or a combination of the above. You will only be able to see the join button if you have met the requirements.

Group Description	Group Manager (if assigned)	Membership
Forum Administrators		
This is the user group for all license holders of version 2.		Join Group

5.0 Private Messaging and Contact List

You can find both the Private Messaging and Contact List interface under your User Control Panel.



What are Private Messaging (PM) and Contact List?

Private messaging can be thought as an email system within the forum, where you can communicate with others privately outside the forum message system.

Also, you will get notified via email when someone sends you a private message but **it does not expose your email address** to others.

Moreover, the Contact List allows you to store members you frequently PMs, just like what a address book does for you when you email. Members in your contact list will appear in a drop down for you to choose when you compose a PM.

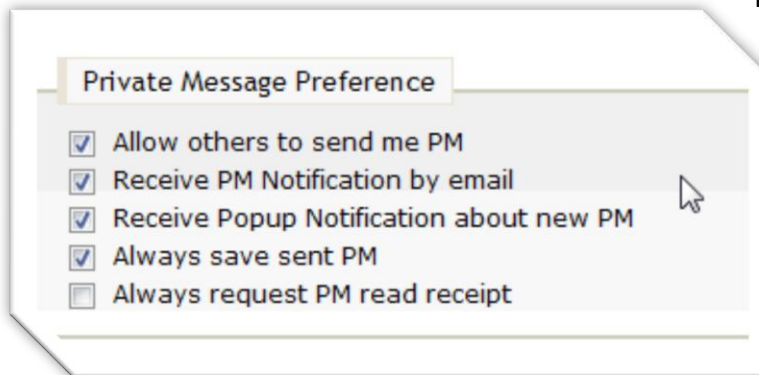
Why do I not see the Private Message tab?

The only reason that you don't see it under your User Control Panel is that the admin specifically disabled it. You also won't be able to PM if you are not registered and logged in.

Sometimes admin will not allow users to use the PM feature until a set amount of days after registration. If in doubt, contact the admin.

Can I choose not to receive the popup notification for PM?

Yes, you may do so under the "Edit Profile" tab in your User Control Panel. Once you are in the profile editing page, select the "Feature Preferences" tab, and scroll to the bottom.



You will see a list of configurable options for your private messages.

What is a PM read receipt?

PM read receipt is a way to notify you about your PM being read. Normally you can **check the read status by clicking on the name of the recipient** when you are in your Sent folder, but this involves an extra manual step to check.

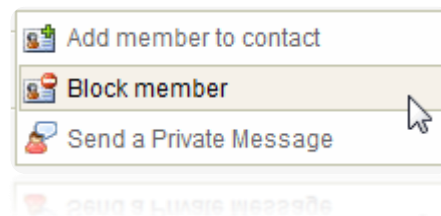
With PM read receipt turned on, you will receive **a PM with the date & time the PM is read**.

How do I prevent someone from sending me PM's?

You can use the **Block List** feature also found under your Contact List. Users in your block list will **not be able to PM you**, and you **will not see their messages in the forum** either.

To add a person to the block list, you can

- Mouse over his name beside any of his message, and click Block Member;
- Mouse over his name on the member list, and click Block Member (same as above);
- In his public profile page, mouse over the Profile Options button, and click Block Member.

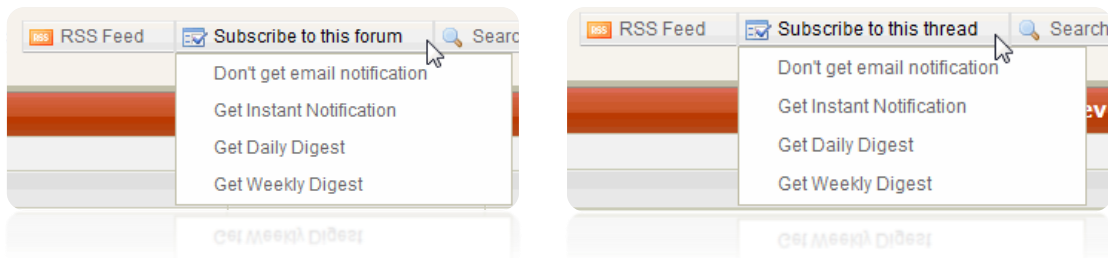


6.0 Topic Subscription and Notification

How do I get notified of new posts / replies?

You can get notified of new messages by **subscribing to a forum / thread**. By subscribing to a forum, you will receive email notifications about new posts / replies within that forum. And by subscribing to a thread, you will receive email notifications about new replies within the thread.

Subscribing is very easy, as you only have to use the “Subscribe to this Forum / Thread” menu located close to top of the forum / thread pages:



You will notice a few options under the drop down:

- **Don't get email notification** -> you will **basically bookmark the thread** without receiving any notification;
- **Get Instant Notification** -> as described, instant email notification;
- **Get Daily / Weekly Digest** -> receive one email daily / weekly for the forum / thread you subscribe.

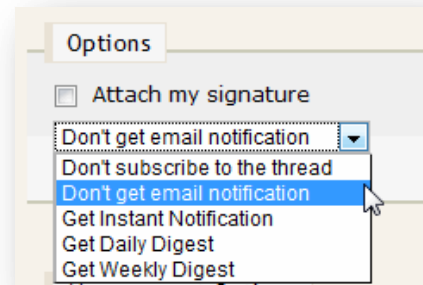
Why do I not see the “Subscribe to ...” menu?

If you do not see the menu as shown in the graphics above, it means the admin specifically disallow subscription for the forum / thread in question.

How do I automatically subscribe to my own thread?

If you wish to subscribe to your thread so that you get notified immediately about new replies, you can do so on the message posting page (without having to use the menu shown above).

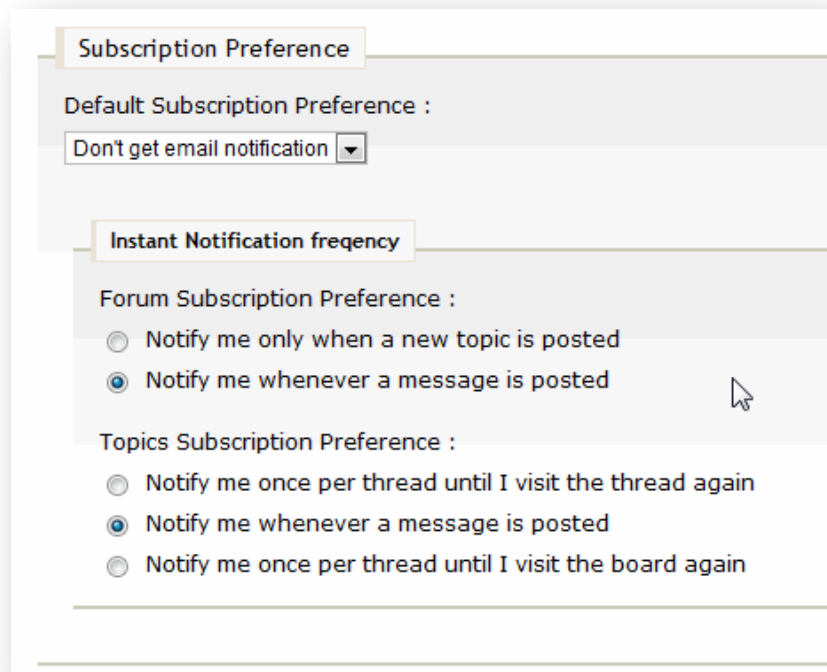
Scroll down on the message editor, and you will see under the Options section, a drop down with similar selections for subscription.



How do I prevent repeated notification for the same message?

If you choose “Instant Notification” for a forum / thread, you have a few choices regarding the frequency of such notifications. It is often desirable to only receive one email per forum / thread until you visit them again.

Under your Profile -> Feature Preferences, you will find a section for choosing the frequency:



Are there some other ways to subscribe / get notified?

Yes, if you wish not to use email notification of any kind, you can choose **RSS feed** notification.

RSS feed subscription capability is often built into your browser, and you will find the "RSS feed" button right beside the "Subscribe to ..." menu on every forum / message page.

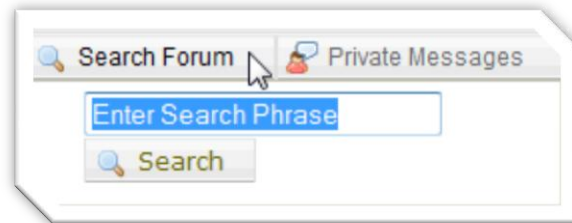
It is a convenient and effective alternative to email notifications.

7.0 Searching the Forum

How do I search messages in the forums?

To search for messages in a forum, the easiest way is to use the Search Forum menu item near the top of the page.

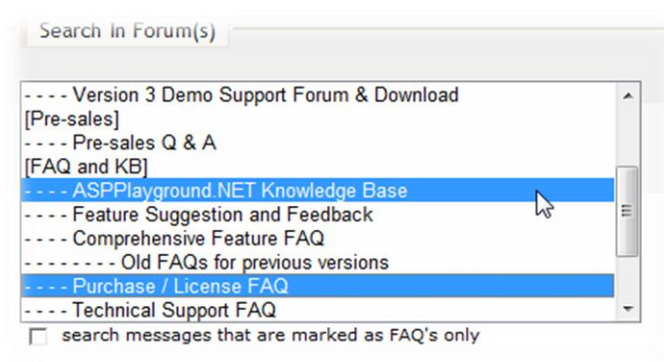
Simply type in the keywords and hit Enter to begin the search process.



I am not seeing the search box on my page?

This simply means the admin disabled the search feature either entirely or for your User Group. Search is a resource intensive process which admin will find necessary to turn off at times.

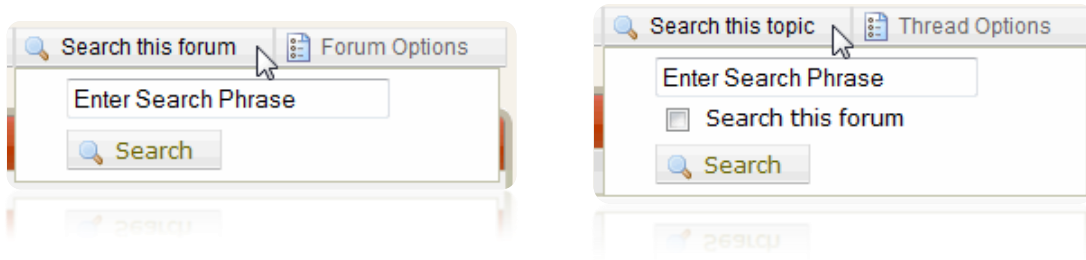
Can I search within a specific forum(s)?



If you wish to limit your search to a specific forum(s), you can click on the Search Forum menu to **use the full search interface**, where you will find a list box with all available forums for you to specify.

You can also make **multiple selections using the Ctrl key** on your keyboard.

Alternatively, when you are inside a forum, you can make use of the “Search this forum” feature above the message list. Use this box and the search result will be limited to the forum you are in. You will also find a similar search feature inside a message thread.



How do I search for an exact phrase only?

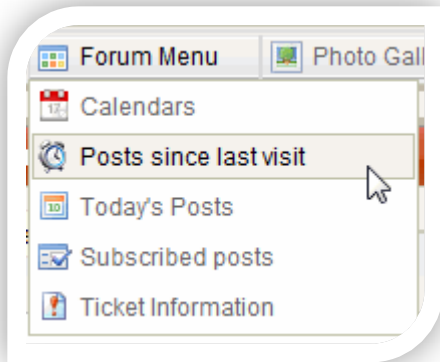
To search for an exact phrase, you will need to go to the **full search interface** by clicking on the Search Forum menu item on the navigational bar near the top, where you will find a **check box below the keyword textbox called “Exact Match”**.

By default, without this box checked, the software will search the phrase as entered PLUS all keywords combined.

Why does my search return no results?

There are 2 possible reasons: either there are indeed no results or you are searching using words which are listed as “noise words” by the server.

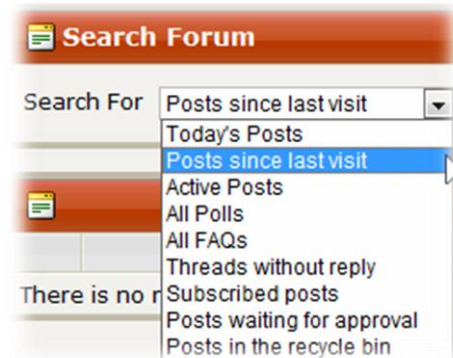
Examples of noise words in English are: we, you, I, them, etc. So if your phrase contains only these words, the search will not return any result.



How can I find all new posts since my last visit? And today's posts?

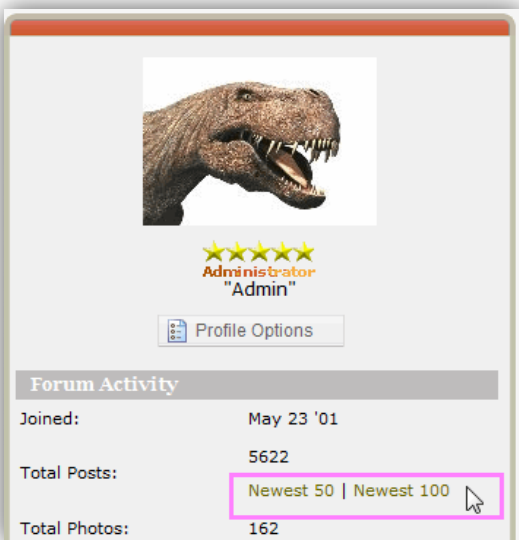
Under the Forum Menu item on the top navigation bar, you will see a list of selections where you will what you are looking for.

Once you are in the results page, you will even more options as shown. The last 2 options are only available to forum moderators.

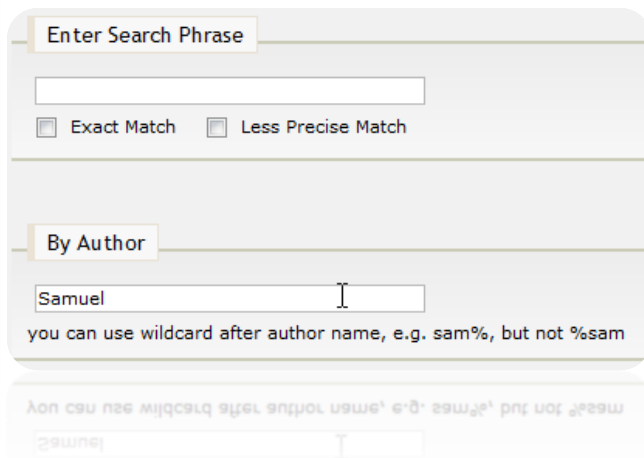


How can I find posts made by a member?

To search posts by a specific person, you can either go to his public profile page where you will find the direct link to his messages, or you can go to the full search page by typing in his name.



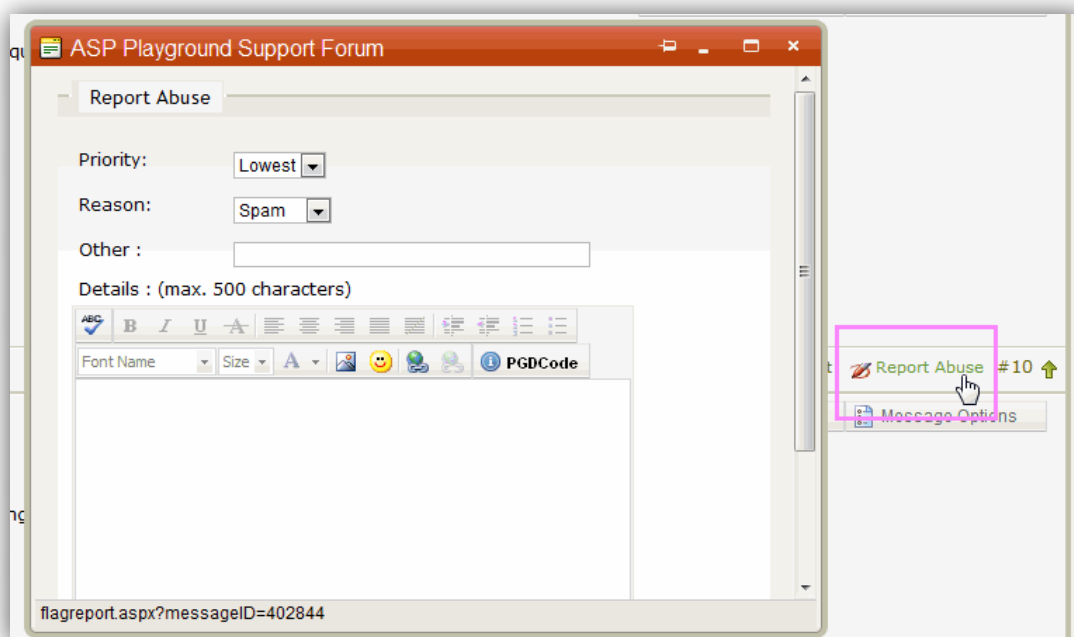
You do not have to type in any keywords when searching messages by a member.



8.0 Reporting Abuse and Spam

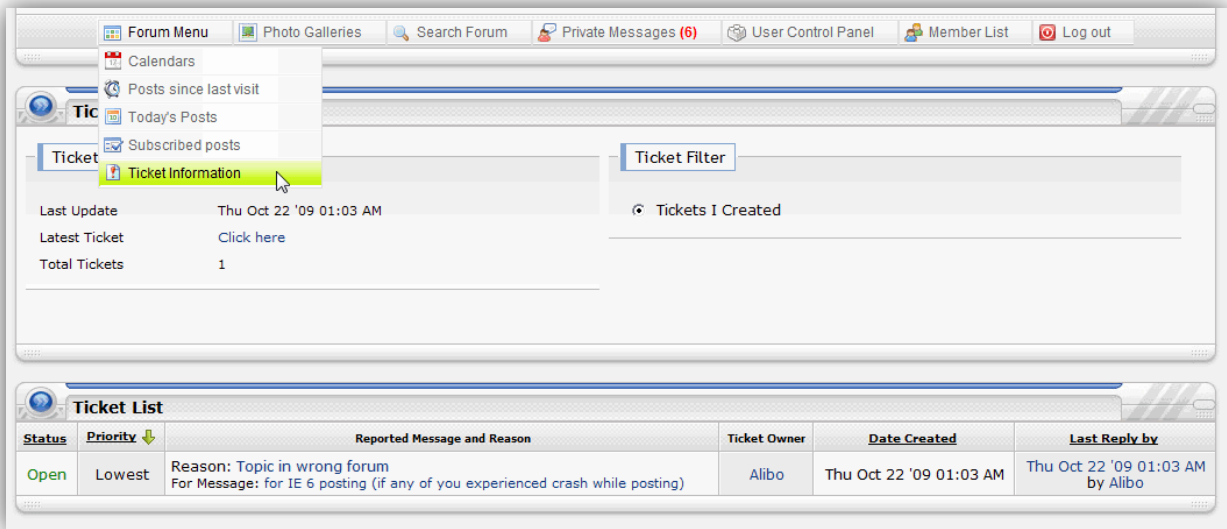
How do I report messages that violate the forum usage guidelines?

You can report such violation by clicking on the **Report Abuse** button at the bottom of each message. Once the button is clicked, you will be able to provide a brief reason why you think this message violates the rules.



What's gonna happen after submitting an abuse report?

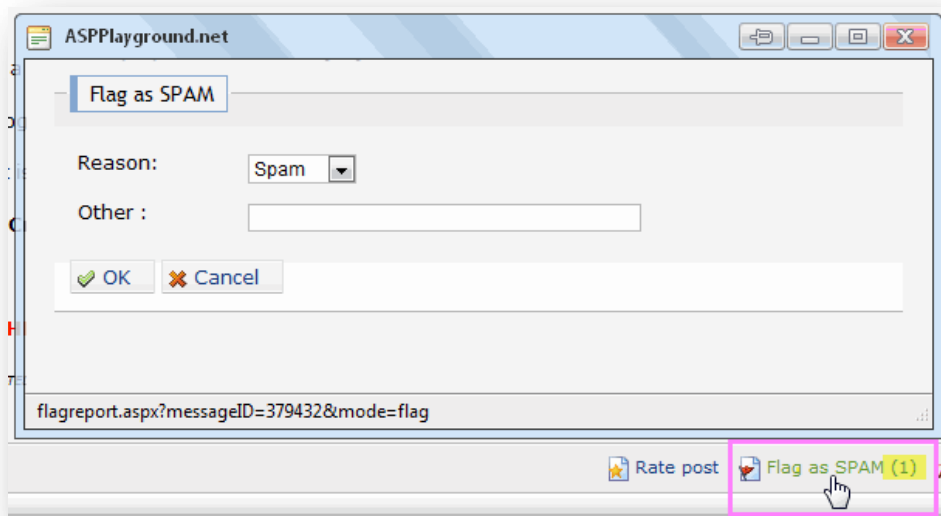
When an abuse report is submitted, **one of the forum moderators will be assigned** to handle this report. A ticket will then be created and you will be able to communicate with this moderator in a separate "Ticket" system outside the forum:



Once the problem is resolved, either you or the moderator can close / delete the ticket.

I flag a post as Spam. What is gonna happen to the flagged post?

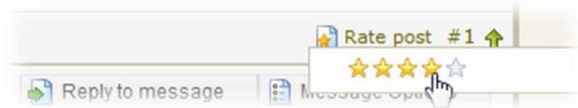
If you use Flagging instead of Reporting, **the SPAM counter for the message will increase** by one. There is a pre-set limit for the counter before the post is removed and author banned. So, community members will determine the fate of such posts using this flagging feature without involving the admins / moderators.



Is there any other way to show disagreement?

You can optionally use the Rating feature (described above) to show disagreement with others without flagging or reporting.

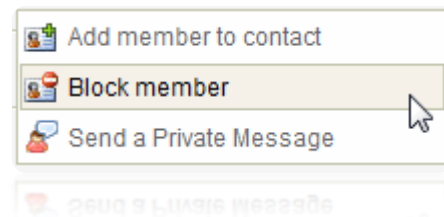
A bad rating will take away a person's "score" which can be useful when the situation is appropriate.



Do not abuse this feature either, as forum moderators will be able to see who rated a message.

What should I do if I just do not wish to read any post made by a member?

You can block a person and hide all his posts from your view. This blocking feature is described above in the **PM / Contact list section** and is a peaceful way to enjoy the forum by filtering out all the noises.

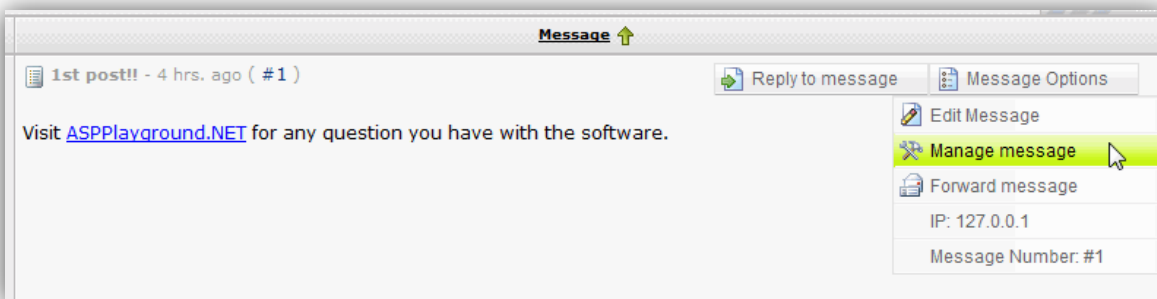
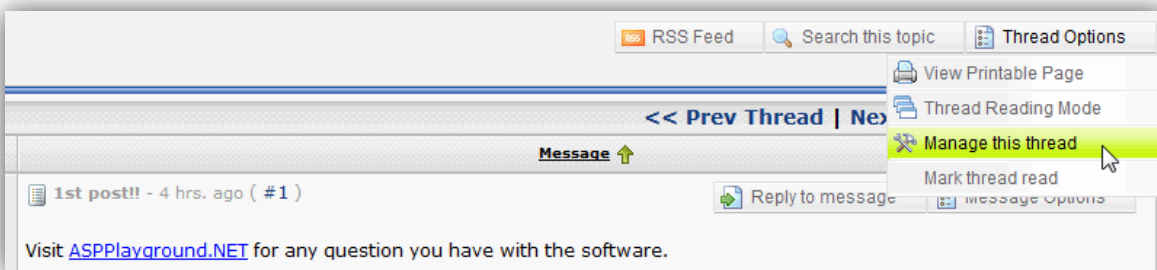
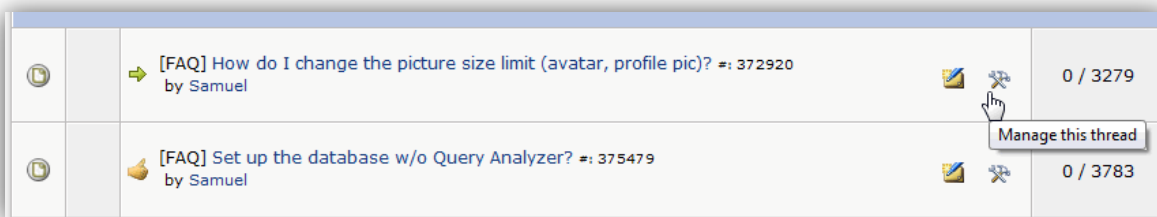


9.0 Moderator Capability

Moderators are a forum-specific group of users whose job is to keep the conversations clean and within the acceptable usage rules.

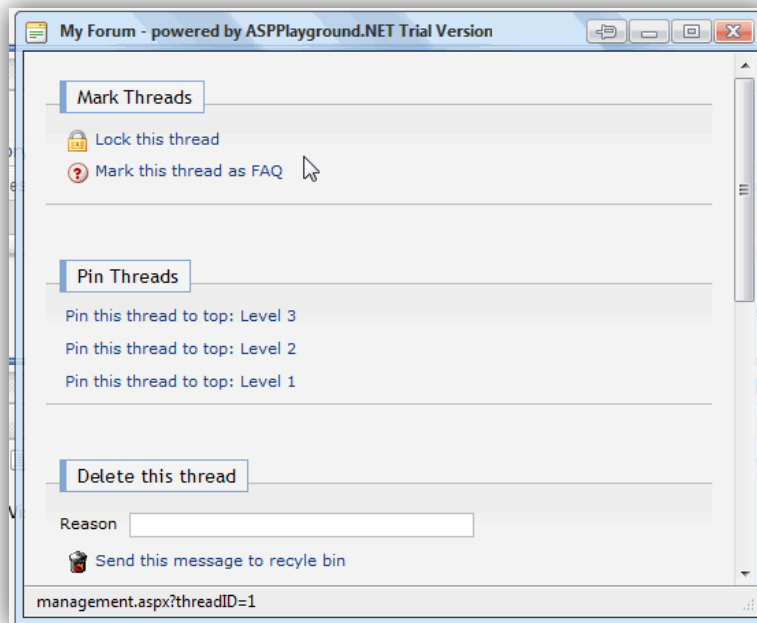
In addition, the administrators are moderators for all forums, too.

If you are a moderator, you can gain access to the message management interface at:



The first 2 screens show where to get to the **thread** (entire thread) management interface, while the 3rd screen shows the location of the **message** (replies) management interface.

Once you click on the link shown in the screen shots above, a small window will pop up:



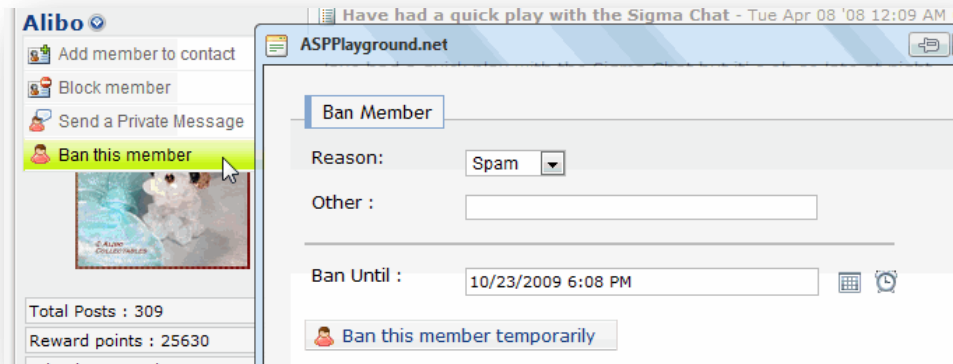
Managing threads / messages is as easy as a few mouse clicks. Here is a list of actions you can perform against a thread / message:

1. Locking a thread (thread only)
2. Mark thread as FAQ (thread only)
3. Pin / un-pin a thread to top (3 levels; thread only)
4. Recycle bin / Restore
5. Delete permanently
6. Move to another forum (thread only)
7. Join with another thread (thread only)
8. Split a thread (message / reply only)

In addition to this management interface, you also have the additional power to edit other users' messages to remove any controversial content.

Moreover, as mentioned in one of the questions above regarding abuse report, you will occasionally be assigned to handle disputes on the forums using the dedicated Ticket system.

If you find it necessary as part of the dispute handling, you can also **temporarily ban a user** by hovering over a user's name beside his message:



Moderators however do not have access to the admin CP to change forum-wide preferences.