

RSS and Moodle

RSS stands for Rich Site summary or **Real Simple Syndication** both of these names is correct and both can be used. It is a mean to retrieve the content of a webpage that is regularly updated rather than continuously going to that page and checking it for updates.

When you want to be updated of web content you should have a system that will retrieve the updates. This system is called "**aggregator**". After having an aggregator you should set a connection between the website and the aggregator. A connection is set by feeding the aggregator with data from the webpage. This data is called "**feed**". A feed is a file document, usually in XML format, associated with an updated website.

Configuring RSS feeds block inside Moodle

First, you need to add an RSS feed block. You can do that within your course by clicking on **Turn Editing On**, then on the right, under Blocks, click on "Add ..." and select **Remote RSS feeds**. You'll get a new block called Remote News Feed, click on the edit icon of this block. The default tab that will open is the **Configure this block** tab, which contains:

Display each link's description?

Choose yes or no from the drop-down menu to determine whether the block will display a description of each article, or just the title of the article. Both the title and description are generated by the external feed.

Max number of entries to show per block

Determines how many articles will be displayed. The most recent will be displayed first.

Choose the feeds to make available

Check the box next to each feed you would like to display in this block. You can have more than one instance of the RSS feed block if you would like to break them up.

Title

Enter a title for the block. If you leave this blank a title will be taken from the RSS feeds, which can be confusing if there are multiple feeds in one block.

Display a link?

Each article headline should link to the full article, but you can also display a link to the original site where available.

Show channel image?

Some feeds supply an image or logo from the original site which you can choose to display when available.

Manage all RSS feeds in Moodle

All the Moodle site's RSS feeds can be added and managed on the *Manage all my feeds* tab in the RSS News Feed edit menu. The site administrator may give other roles permission to use this tab. This tab creates a list of RSS feeds that can be selected for display in every course on the Moodle site.

Copy and paste (or type) the URL address of the RSS feed in the space provided. This is the generating site's actual RSS page address. For example here is a Moodle RSS feed address:

<http://moodle.org/rss/file.php/1/1/forum/1/rss.xml>

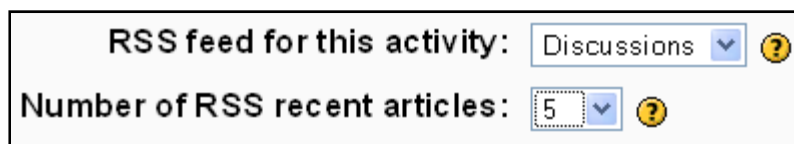
Adding a custom title will take the place of the one supplied by the generating site. There is a validation tool included to confirm the feed URL is accurate. Click the *Add* button to submit the feed.

RSS in Forums

RSS in Forums allows users with special software (ie. an RSS aggregator program like Omea Reader) to be notified of new forum discussions in a similar manner to the emails sent as a result of forum subscriptions. When RSS is enabled, two new properties in forum module setup appear.

RSS feed for this activity

This turns RSS on or off for this forum. When set to "None," RSS is disabled. When set to "Discussions," the RSS feed will send out new discussions to subscribers. When set to "Posts," the RSS feed will send out any new posts to subscribers.

A screenshot of the Moodle forum RSS settings interface. It shows two rows of controls. The first row is labeled "RSS feed for this activity:" and contains a dropdown menu with "Discussions" selected and a yellow question mark icon to its right. The second row is labeled "Number of RSS recent articles:" and contains a text input field with the number "5" and a dropdown arrow to its right, followed by a yellow question mark icon.

Number of RSS recent articles

This number sets the number of articles that go out via RSS. If this number is set to 5, then the 5 most recent articles will be sent to subscribers. As new posts (or discussions) get added, the oldest post/discussion gets replaced on the RSS feed. If your forum gets a lot of posts every day, you will want to set this number high.

Reminder: In **forums**, you must understand well the difference between the "Subscribe" option and the "RSS" option.

Forum Subscription:

When a person is subscribed to a forum it means that they will be sent email copies of every post in that forum (posts are sent about 15 minutes after the post was first written).

People can usually choose whether or not they want to be subscribed to each forum.

However, if you choose to force subscription on a particular forum then all course users will be subscribed automatically. **This is especially useful in the News forum and in forums towards the beginning of the course** (before everyone has worked out that they can subscribe to these emails themselves).

If you choose the option "Yes, initially" then all current and future course users will be subscribed initially but they can unsubscribe themselves at any time. If you choose "Yes, forever" then they will not be able to unsubscribe themselves.

Note how the "Yes, initially" option behaves when you update an existing forum: Changing from "Yes, initially" to "No" will not unsubscribe existing users, it will only affect future course users. Similarly changing later to "Yes, initially" will not subscribe existing course users but only those enrolling later.