This overview will cover the basics of using the discussion tool.

First, some terminology: Discussions consist of three distinct parts -- Forums, Topics, and Posts—which exist in a specific relationship to each other.

The forum is used to organize discussion topics. Users communicate by posting messages to the discussion topic. The hierarchy is Forum, Topic, and Post.

A forum organizes the discussion topics within it. Think of the forum as a heading or a category. Topics for discussion are created within the forum. Students do not respond to a forum, they respond to the Discussion topics under that forum. The forum may contain background information for its topics, a case study, or generic instructions about posting to the discussion board.

To select the discussion tool choose the More dropdown then Discussions then you are taken to the discussions list. Here you have several options; you can create a new forum or topic. You can also Copy, Reorder, and Delete forums and topics.
To create a new forum, click on new, and then forum. Enter a name for the forum. Enter any directions or background information in the description box. Select options, if desired. You may allow anonymous messages or require that messages be approved before posting.

You may also limit the availability of a forum by choosing from the offered availability and locking options. By default a forum is always visible. You may opt to hide the forum until you are ready or select a specific date range when you would like the forum to be visible. When a forum is hidden, students will not see it on their discussion lists. By contrast, locking a forum prevents students from posting or replying to a message after a specific date but allows them to view the forum and its topics outside posting dates. It is useful if you have a specific time frame in which you want the discussions to take place, but you want students to be able to refer back to the discussion conversations after the forum closes.
Under the restrictions tab you can set release conditions and group restrictions. Release conditions allow you to require that certain actions within D2L are completed before students can access the discussion forum. Examples include reading an article in Content or submitting an assignment to the drop box. Group restrictions are beneficial when small group discussions or project work is required. After selecting the desired settings, remember to select save.

To return to the list of forums and topics, click close.

The new forum will display in the list.

To edit a previously created forum click the dropdown next to the title and select Edit Forum.
Remember to save any changes. Click close to return to the list of forums and topics.

Note that a forum will not be visible to students until you create a topic within it.

A topic is where students are able to post and respond with their discussion messages. To create a new topic, click New and select Topic.
Each topic must be created under a forum. Select an existing forum or create a new forum. Enter topic name and description here. Select desired options. For a topic you may also require that a user compose an original message before viewing classmates’ comments. Similar to forums, you may control the visibility of by setting start and/or end dates, or setting lock restrictions.
As with forums you can set release conditions for topics, or restrict a topic so that only students enrolled in a specific group can view it.

Remember: restrictive settings for a forum will override settings for a discussion topic. For example, if a forum is hidden, students will not be able to see any discussion topic under that forum regardless of the settings of that topic. However, if a forum is visible, individual topics within that forum may be hidden or locked as needed.

The assessment tab allows you to associate the topic with a grade item, so you can assess posts and enter grades directly from the discussion tool. You may also add a rubric here. Remember to Save. Click close to return to the forum and topics list.

Once forums and topics have been created, you may need to delete an item or reorder the items to suit your needs. For these tasks, go to the More Actions menu. Select the desired task, make your changes, and hit Save.
To access a discussion board, simply click on the title of the topic from the list.

The date and time, subject and first and last name will display under the discussion topics. Use the search function to find a particular student or response. To read a post, click the subject line hyperlink and view the message.

To reply click the reply button. Note that by default the original message is included in your reply, and your reply appears at the top of the message. Click the post button to post your reply.
To post an original message to a discussion topic click the topic link and click compose. Type in the subject line and the message box. You may also record an audio or video message by clicking on the record audio or record video button below. When you are finished, click the post button.
By default posts will appear in threaded view. In this view you will see the messages as a conversation with all replies to an original post listed in chronological order after the original post. This is useful for following a lengthy conversation.

You can change the view to display all messages by clicking the view menu in the upper right and selecting All Messages. Original posts and replies will appear in the order received rather than threaded together. In this view you can click on any heading to sort the messages by date, authored by, or subject.

Note that you can also filter to display only messages that you have not yet read or only flagged messages. Note that unread messages display a bold faced subject line.
To navigate back to the full list of forums and discussions select “Forums & topics list” from the navigation on the left.

This completes the overview of the Discussions tool.