

*This chapter covers the following MTC skills: 5.8 Wiki*

A wiki is a collection of collaboratively authored web pages. A wiki starts with one front page. Students can edit the page or add more pages to the wiki by creating links to new pages that don't yet exist. Old versions of each page can be viewed by checking the page history.

Moodle's wiki is built on top of an older wiki system, called ErfurtWiki (<http://erfurt.wiki.sourceforge.net/>).

In Moodle, wikis can be a powerful tool for collaborative work. The entire class can edit a document together, or you can create group wikis which are only editable by group members.

## Creating Wikis

Creating a wiki is relatively simple and involves far fewer steps than the lesson module. Most of the work involved with creating wikis becomes easier once you start using them.

To create a wiki:

1. Click the "Turn editing on" button.
2. Select Wiki from the "Add an activity" drop-down menu in the course section where you would like to add the wiki.
3. On the "Adding a new wiki" page, as shown in Figure 10-1, give the wiki a descriptive name.
4. In the summary field, describe the purpose of the wiki and what you expect students to contribute.
5. Select the wiki type: groups, student, or teacher. The wiki type interacts with the groups setting for your course, resulting in nine options, as shown in Table 10-1.

Table 10-1. Wiki group permissions

	No groups	Separate groups	Visible groups
Teacher	Creates a single wiki that only the teacher can edit. Students can view the wiki but not make changes.	Each group has a wiki that only the teacher can edit. Other groups can't view the page.	Each group has a wiki that only the teacher can edit. Other groups can view the page.
Groups	There is one wiki for the class. All students can edit the wiki.	There is one wiki per group. Students in that group can edit the wiki. Other students can't view the page.	There is one wiki per group that group members can edit. Other groups can view the page.
Student	Each student has their own wiki that only the teacher and student can edit.	Each student has their own wiki that they can edit. Students in the same group can view the page as well.	Each student has their own wiki that they can edit. All the other students in the course can view the page as well.

6. Click the Show Advanced button to display the following additional options:

*Print wiki name on every page*

If you select this option, the top of each page will have the name of the wiki.

*HTML Mode*

There are three options: No HTML, safe HTML, or HTML only. No HTML will display all HTML tags as tags (for example, a bold tag will look like a <b> instead of making the word bold). Safe HTML will allow certain tags to be displayed. HTML only enables the HTML editor.

*Allow binary files*

Binary files are graphics, audio, video, and other nontext resources. If you want students to be able to add files as attachments, be sure to set this to Yes.

*Wiki autolinking options*

A new page can be created in the wiki by typing a word using CamelCase, i.e., with a capital letter at the beginning and a capital letter somewhere else in the word. It's called CamelCase because the two capital letters resemble a two-humped camel. CamelCase combines all the words for the link into one word. Each word in the link is capitalized. When a word is added in CamelCase, the wiki automatically creates a new page and makes the word a link. You can disable this feature if you wish, so that typing a word enclosed in square brackets is the only way of creating a new web page.

*Student admin options*

When students can edit a page, you can allow them certain administrative privileges in the wiki. We'll cover each of these options in more detail in the "Managing Wikis" section later in this chapter.

*Page name*

If you want the first page of the wiki to be different from the name of the wiki, then add a page name. Otherwise, leave the field empty.

Figure 10-1. Adding a new wiki

7. Select the common module options:

*Group mode*

This is another location in which to set the group mode for the activity. If group mode is forced in the course settings, then this setting will be ignored.

*Visible*

This determines whether students may view the activity or not.

8. Click the “Save changes” button. You will then be taken to the editing view of the wiki page you just created.

Once your wiki is up and running, you and your students can begin collaborating on creating content.

## Managing Wikis

After you’ve created your wiki, it’s available for editing. You and your students can create wiki pages, link them together, and collaboratively create a collection of web pages.

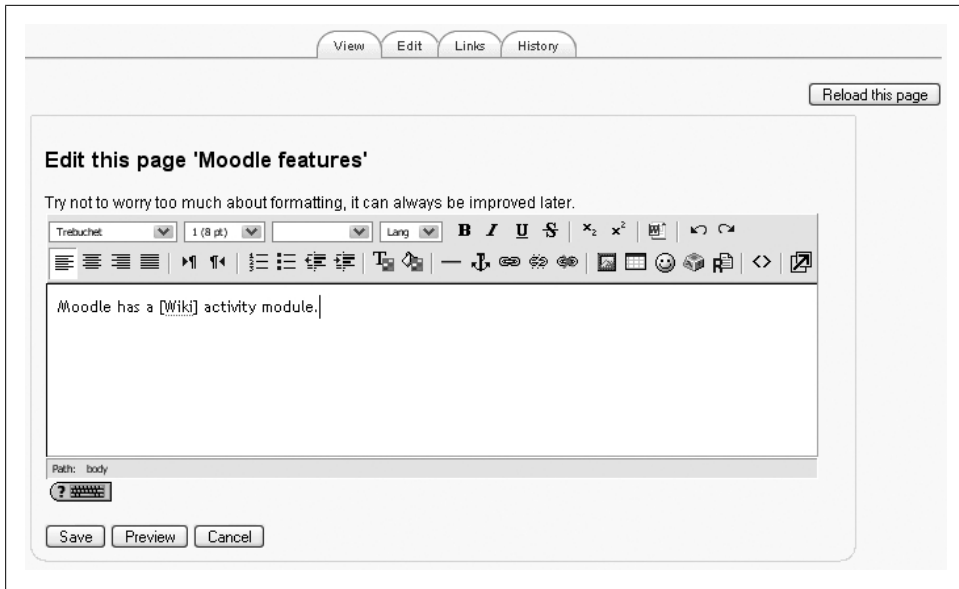


Figure 10-2. Editing a wiki page

## Creating Wiki Pages

After you create the wiki itself, Moodle will take you to the first page, as shown in Figure 10-2.

In the center of the page, you'll see the editing area for your wiki page. If you've chosen the HTML only mode, you'll be able to use the HTML editor as you would for any other document. You can add images, tables, and any formatting you need.

To add other pages to your wiki, simply type a word enclosed in square brackets. If you haven't created a page with that name already, Moodle will put a question mark next to the word.

For example, if you type the word “[Wiki]” in the page, Moodle will look to see if a page with the name “Wiki” has already been created. If it hasn't, when you view the page you'll see the word in bold with a question mark after it, as shown in Figure 10-3.

If you click on the question mark, you'll be taken to the editing view of the new wiki page. Once you add some content and save the page, it becomes active. Whenever you type the same word in square brackets, Moodle will automatically create a link to the page.

There are four tabs above the editing area: View, Edit, Links, and History, as shown in Figure 10-2. When you browse a wiki, every page is displayed in view mode. If you want to edit a page, click the Edit tab and you'll see the editing area for that page. The Links tab will display the pages that have links pointing to the page you are viewing.



Figure 10-3. Viewing a wiki page

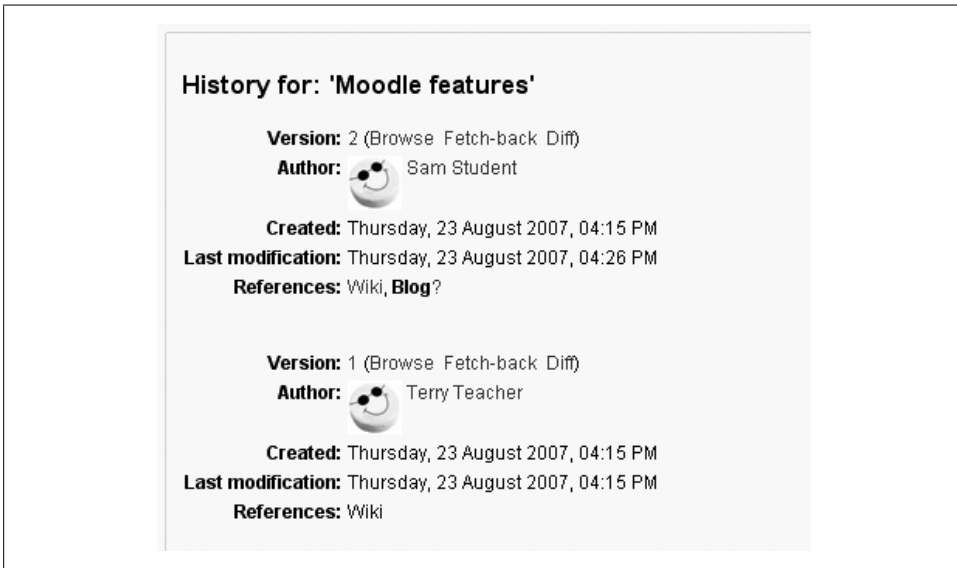


Figure 10-4. A wiki history page

You can use this to backtrack and see where this page is referenced elsewhere in the wiki.

The History tab gives you access to the version history of the page. Whenever someone clicks the Save button, they create a new version of the wiki page. Moodle tracks all these versions until you strip them out (see the strip tool in the administration menu in the next section). Figure 10-4 shows the history page for our wiki's first page.

Each version has three tools you can use:

#### *Browse*

You can view every version of a page.



Figure 10-5. A version diff

### *Fetch-back*

This brings back an old version of the page for editing. Once you save your changes, it becomes the newest version of the page.

### *Diff*

This highlights the differences between two consecutive versions of a page. Additions have a + symbol next to them. Deletions have a – symbol next to them. A simple diff page is shown in Figure 10-5.

As you build your wiki, you and your students can use these very simple tools to create a very sophisticated information space.

## **Administering a Wiki**

Under the Moodle navigation bar, there are three tools: search, links, and administration. The Search Wiki button allows you to search the wiki for key terms. Moodle will return all the pages containing your search term.

The Choose Wiki Links drop-down menu provides you with tools to view your wiki in different ways. The tools include:

### *Site map*

A hierarchical view of the pages and links in the wiki, starting with the first page.

### *Page index*

An alphabetical list of all the pages in the wiki.

### *Newest pages*

A list of the most recently created pages.

### *Most visited pages*

A list of pages with the most views.

### *Most often changed pages*

A list of most frequently edited pages.

### *Updated pages*

Lists all the pages in the wiki by date and time of last edit.

### *Orphaned pages*

A list of pages that were created and had all the links to them deleted.

### *Wanted pages*

A wiki page where people can list pages they want to see in the collection.

### *Export pages*

You can wrap up all your wiki pages and export them as regular HTML to a ZIP file for download or to a Moodle directory.

### *File download*

Download binary files attached to wiki pages.

The Administration drop-down menu gives you tools that keep your wiki running smoothly. As you and your class generate the wiki, pages may become orphaned or you may need to manage a student's contributions.

### *Set page flags*

Page flags are properties you can set on a per-page basis. Every page can be set with different permissions:

#### *TXT*

Indicates whether the page can contain text.

#### *BIN*

Flag for allowing binary (graphics) content.

#### *OFF*

Stands for "offline." The page is still there; it just can't be read by someone who doesn't have editing permissions.

#### *HTM*

Allows HTML content instead of wiki text.

#### *RO*

Stands for "read-only." You and your students can only read the file, not make changes.

#### *WR*

The writable flag allows anyone in the course to make changes to the document.

### *Remove pages*

The wiki engine automatically tracks pages that aren't linked from anywhere else (they were created and then the link was deleted) and empty pages. This tool allows you to remove these orphaned wiki pages, which can't be reached through the ordinary wiki interface.

### *Strip pages*

While the wiki engine tracks changes, it stores old versions in the database. To declutter the data, you may occasionally want to delete all the old versions and just keep the new one.

### *Revert mass changes*

Use this tool to roll back changes to all pages if a particular author makes a mess of many pages in the wiki.

## **Wiki Capabilities**

Wiki capabilities enable you to allow your users to engage with the wiki in very different ways. There are three wiki-specific capabilities:

### *Edit wiki pages*

This allows a user to add or delete content from pages within the wiki. Students have this capability allowed by default, but you could use it to restrict editing after a certain date.

### *Manage wiki settings*

This allows a user to edit the settings for the wiki (all the options we've described above).

### *Override locked pages*

When a page is edited by someone, the wiki locks the page so multiple people can't edit the same page at the same time (which would mean the last person to save their changes would overwrite the first person's work). Sometimes, however, a student will open a page for editing, but forget to save his changes. This will keep the page locked for other students for an unreasonable amount of time. A user with this capability can override the lock, freeing the page for editing by someone else.



If you have group wiki projects, consider assigning the “Override locked pages” capability to the students so they can manage their own wikis.

## **Effective Wiki Practices**

Wikis are gaining popularity as a collaborative tool in many environments. There are now several commercial vendors offering wikis for group collaboration in corporate settings. Many social web sites also have wikis to allow their members to collaborate on documents. Effective management practices are the key to a wiki's success. You'll need to think about your wiki's editorial policy, as well as its educational objectives.



## Wiki Basics

Wikis are a simple, flexible tool for collaboration. They can be used for everything from simple lists of web links to building entire encyclopedias. Wikipedia is the largest wiki in the world (<http://www.wikipedia.org>). As of August 2007, Wikipedia contained over 2,000,000 articles in English alone, on everything from general topology to split infinitives. The entire Wikipedia site is written by volunteers from around the world. An article is started by someone with an interest in the subject, and then anyone in the community can add content, edit other people's work, or add another page elaborating on a sub-topic. It has become so large and so frequently used that there is a lively debate about how authoritative a collaborative work without a central editor can be.

Of course, wikis in your own class won't be that extensive. But it's important to have a plan for your wiki before you release it to the class. Students need to know the purpose of the wiki and how it fits in with the class. If it's a personal wiki, will they be graded? Is it simply a staging area for group work that will be submitted later? Students need to know so they can submit appropriate work. A brainstorming wiki is very different from one that will be submitted for a grade.

You'll also need to decide on an editing policy. Will you be a central editor? Or will you let the students be completely responsible for the work? How will you deal with offensive content?

In most circumstances, you'll find that you can trust students. But on the rare occasion a student does do something offensive, you will need to have a policy to deal with it. Will you roll back the changes by that author? Or will you create a new version by deleting her content? Creating a new version leaves a trail you can use for evidence later, but it also makes it easier for the perpetrator to restore her comments.

## Creative Wiki Practices

The free-form, collaborative nature of wikis makes them easy to apply in creative ways. Any sort of group process can be facilitated using a wiki.

### Group lecture notes

Usually, lecture notes are a solitary activity. But one person can easily miss an important point during a lecture, whether by daydreaming or by trying to understand a prior point.

Students also have difficulty deciding what information is important and what is elaboration or example. Creating a wiki for group lecture notes after a lecture gives students a chance to combine all their notes. Those who missed information can get it from their peers. The group can also decide what information is critical and give it proper emphasis.

Group lecture notes could be done with the entire class, if it is small enough, or with small working groups. Groups can also compare notes for further discussion and refinement.

### **Group project management**

The most straightforward use of a wiki is as a tool for group collaboration for creating group projects. If you assign a group project, give your students a place to work by creating a wiki with the group mode enabled. This will give each group their own space to record their research, create outlines, and even create the final product. You may even want to create a submission date where you turn off editing capabilities for students and then grade the final projects. Afterward, consider enabling visible groups so everyone can see each other's work.

### **Brainstorming**

Brainstorming is a creative process in which ideas are elicited from a group of people. In a face-to-face meeting, a brainstorming facilitator will usually stand in front of a big piece of paper and elicit ideas from the participants in the room. You can use a wiki to create an online version of this process. Set up a wiki for the entire class, or for student groups, and ask people to submit ideas around a brainstorming topic. People can add ideas as they occur and link to other pages for elaboration.

### **Contribute to other wikis**

Consider assigning your class the task of contributing to Wikipedia, or to another wiki on the Web, on a topic in your class. Assign your students to groups (or make it a class project if the class is small enough and the topic broad enough) and challenge them to collaboratively create an article they would feel confident posting to a public-information space. Your students will use the course wiki to create drafts of the article they will publish to the community at the end of the semester.

This type of assignment has a number of benefits:

- It gives students additional motivation to do their best, since they know their work will be viewed and critiqued by the public instead of just their instructor.
- It can act as a summarizing activity for an entire semester's worth of material.
- Students will know their work will be used by other people, not just graded and filed away.