Chat

Create a scheduled online chat where users can message one another during an instantaneous group text-based discussion. The whole group can take part and you can all see the string of messages flowing, one after the other in real time.

Chat features include:

- The chat module allows smooth, synchronous text interaction
- It can be limited to group members or roles, or be for anyone in the course
- Includes profile pictures in the chat window
- Supports URLs, smilies, embedded HTML, and images etc.
- All sessions are logged for later viewing, and these can also be made available to learners

(This video is taken from the Social tools course in the Totara Academy).

Creating a chat

To use the chat tool, you need to create a chat room for you and your learners and set a time when everyone logs in to meet. You can create one session for the entire course or set up repeating sessions for multiple meetings.

1. Click **Turn editing on**.
2. Select **Chat** from the **Add an activity** menu.
3. Customise the available settings as required.
4. Click **Save and display** (or **Save and return to course**).

Chat settings

Setting	Description	Notes
Next chat time	Time and date of the next scheduled chat session.	-
Repeat/publish sessions	There are four options here: - **Don't publish any chat times**: Creates a chat room that is always open and has no specified meeting times - **No repeats**: Creates a one-time chat room that will meet only during the time specified - **At the same time every day**: Creates an entry in the course calendar for a daily chat at the time specified - **At the same time every week**: Creates a weekly entry in the course calendar	-
Save past sessions	When a chat is complete, the transcript will be available for the amount of time specified here.	-
Everyone can view past sessions	This determines whether transcripts are available to trainees, or just the trainer.	-
Common module settings	See Common module settings to learn more.	-
Activity completion	See Activity completion to learn more.	-
Restrict access	See Restrict access to learn more.	-
Tags	See Tags to learn more.	-

Using chat

Once a chat session has been set up set up simply follow these steps:

1. Go to the course the chat has been set-up on.
2. Open the chat and click the **Click here to enter the chat now**.
3. Start typing into the chat window.

As well as typing in the chat there are some additional options:

- **Talk:** This will direct a message at a user but all users will be able to see the message
- **Beep:** This will alert a user that you have 'beeped' them but other users will not see this
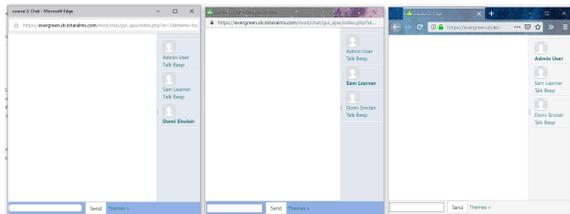
- **Themes:** Choose from Bubble, Compact, and Course theme.

Below is an example of chat in use. There are three different users, the first is using the **Bubble** theme, the second the **Compact** theme, and the third the **Course** theme. As they use the **Talk** and **Beep** features you can see how these appear to each user.

Plugin settings

There are some configurations that you can set at a site level, these will affect the defaults for all chats on the site. To change these select *Site administration > Plugins > Activity modules > Chats.*

Don't forget to click **Save changes** once you have adjusted these to your preferences.

Setting	Description	Notes
Chat method	Choose from: • **Ajax method:** Provide an ajax based chat interface, contacting the server regularly for updates • **Normal method:** Involves the clients regularly contacting the server for updates (requires no configuration and works everywhere, but it can create a large load on the server if chat is heavily used) • **Chat server daemon:** Requires shell access to Unix, but results in a fast scalable chat environment	-
Refresh user list	How often should the list of users be refreshed? (in seconds).	-
Disconnect timeout	What is the maximum time that may pass before we detect that a user has disconnected (in seconds)? This is just an upper limit, as usually disconnects are detected very quickly. Lower values will be more demanding on your server. If you are using the normal method, never set this lower than 2 * chat_refresh_room.	-
Refresh room	How often should the chat room itself be refreshed? (in seconds). Setting this low will make the chat room seem quicker, but it may place a higher load on your web server when many people are chatting. If you are using Stream updates, you can select higher refresh frequencies -- try with 2.	Only applies if **Chat method** is set to **Normal method**.
Update method	Chatroom updates are normally served efficiently using the Keep-Alive feature of HTTP 1.1, but this is still quite heavy on the server. A more advanced method is to use the Stream strategy to feed updates to the users. Using Stream scales much better (similar to the chatd method) but may not be supported by your server.	Only applies if **Chat method** is set to **Normal method**.
Server name	The hostname of the computer where the server daemon is.	Only applies if **Chat method** is set to **Chat server daemon**.
Server IP	The numerical IP address that matches the above hostname.	Only applies if **Chat method** is set to **Chat server daemon**.
Server port	Port to use on the server for the daemon.	Only applies if **Chat method** is set to **Chat server daemon**.

Max users	Max number of clients allowed.	Only applies if **Chat method** is set to **Chat server daemon**.