
MOODLE

How to Create a Course Category in Moodle

Learn how to organise your Moodle site by creating categories to group courses effectively. This guide walks you through the steps to set up categories, making it easier for learners to find courses based on department or subject area.

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How to Create a Course Category in Moodle

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Moodle version: 4.5 **Estimated time:** 3 minutes **Difficulty:** Beginner

Why you'd use this

Course categories are the folders that organise your Moodle site's course list. Without categories, all courses appear in a single undifferentiated list. Creating categories lets you group courses by department, subject area, year group, or any structure that makes sense for your organisation making it easier for learners to find what they need.

Before you start

Permissions required:

- Site administrator role, or a Manager role with the capability moodle/category:manage

You'll need:

- A name for the new category
- A decision on where it sits at the top level of the site, or nested inside an existing category as a subcategory
- **Optionally:** a short description of the category (useful for larger sites where learners browse the course list)

Not sure if you have the right permissions? Go to **Site administration** in the primary navigation if you can see it, you likely have the access needed. If not, ask your **Moodle administrator**.

Step-by-step

Step 1: Open Site Administration

From any page in Moodle, click Site administration in the primary navigation at the top of the page, or in the left-hand drawer if your theme places it there.

Site administration

GeneralUsersCoursesGradesPluginsAppearanceServerReportsDevelopment

Don't miss out on important updates and security alerts. Register your site

NotificationsRegistrationFeedback settingsAdvanced featuresSite admin presets

AI

AI providersAI placements

Analytics

Site informationAnalytics settingsAnalytics models

Step 2: Navigate to Course Categories

Click the Courses tab inside Site administration. From the options that appear beneath it, click Manage courses and categories.

Site administration

General Users **Courses** Grades Plugins Appearance Server Reports Development

Don't miss out on important updates and security alerts. [Register your site](#)

Courses

[Manage courses and categories](#)

[Add a category](#)

[Add a new course](#)

[Restore course](#)

[Download course content](#)

[Course request](#)

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[Upload courses](#)

[MCBA - Archive Browser](#)

Default settings

[Course default settings](#)

[Default activity completion](#)

[Course custom fields](#)

Step 3: Review the existing category structure

The Course and category management page shows your current category tree on the left, with courses on the right. Take a moment to confirm where you want the new category to sit before proceeding. If you want a top-level category, no selection is needed. If you want a subcategory, identify its parent category here.

Tip: Categories can be nested several levels deep in Moodle. A common approach is one top level per department or faculty, with subcategories for subject areas or course types beneath them.

Category
Settings
Upload courses
More

Course categories and courses
Search courses

Manage course categories and courses

Course categories

Create new category

☐	Health & Safety				5
☐	Cyber Security				5
☐	HR & Compliance				5
☐	Leadership & Management				5
☐	Data Protection & GDPR				5
☐	EssingtonITS				1

Sorting

Selected categories
Sort by Category name ascending
Sort by Course full name ascending
Sort

Move selected categories to
Choose...
Move

Step 4: Select the parent category (subcategories only)

If you are creating a subcategory, click the name of the category you want it to sit inside it will become highlighted, and the right-hand panel will update to show its contents.

If you are creating a top-level category, skip this step and leave the focus on the top-level System view.

Step 5: Click "Create new category"

On the right-hand side of the Course and category management page, click the Create new category button. This opens the new category form.

Tip: The Create new category button appears in context if you've selected a parent category in Step 4, Moodle will pre-fill the Parent category field on the form accordingly.

Manage course categories and courses

Course categories

Create new category

☐	Health & Safety				5
☐	Cyber Security				

Step 6: Set the parent category on the form

On the Create new category form, check the Parent category field:

- For a top-level category, it should show Top leave it as-is.
- For a subcategory, it should show the parent category you selected. If it doesn't, click the dropdown and select the correct parent.

Add new category

Parent category

Category name

Category ID number

Description

You must supply a value here.

No selection

Search

▼

Top

Health & Safety

Cyber Security

HR & Compliance

Leadership & Management

Data Protection & GDPR

EssingtonITS

Tools Table Help

Step 7: Enter the category name

In the Category name field, type the name of your new category exactly as you want it to appear to users on the site. Category names appear on the course list page and in breadcrumb navigation, so use clear, meaningful names.

Add new category

Parent category

Category name

Category ID number

Description

The screenshot shows the 'Add new category' form. The 'Parent category' dropdown is set to 'x Top'. The 'Category name' field is highlighted with a blue border and contains the text 'My New Category'. The 'Category ID number' field is empty. The 'Description' field is a rich text editor with a menu bar (Edit, View, Insert, Format, Tools, Table, Help) and a toolbar with icons for undo, redo, bold, italic, link, unlink, image, video, audio, and text alignment.

Step 8: Enter a category ID number (optional)

The Category ID number field is optional and not shown to learners. It is used for administrative reference or for matching with external systems such as an MIS or HR platform. If you don't need it, leave it blank.

Add new category

Parent category

Category name

Category ID number

Description

The screenshot shows the 'Add new category' form. The 'Parent category' dropdown is set to 'x Top'. The 'Category name' field is empty. The 'Category ID number' field is highlighted with a blue border. A tooltip is displayed over this field, stating: 'The ID number of a course category is only used when matching the category against external systems and is not displayed anywhere on the site. If the category has an official code name it may be entered, otherwise the field can be left blank.' The 'Description' field is a rich text editor with a menu bar (Edit, View, Insert, Format, Tools, Table, Help) and a toolbar with icons for undo, redo, bold, italic, link, unlink, image, video, audio, and text alignment.

Step 9: Add a description (optional)

The Description field accepts formatted text. If your site displays a public course catalogue and learners browse by category, a one- or two-sentence description helps them confirm they're in the right place. If your site is internal and navigation is straightforward, you can leave this blank.

Add new category

Parent category

Category name

Category ID number

Description

1 **x Top**

Search

2 My New Category

3

Edit View Insert Format Tools Table Help

↶ ↷ B I          

This is my new category for Moodle Courses.

p

Create category Cancel

1 Required

Step 10: Save the category

Click the Create category button at the bottom of the form. Moodle saves the category and returns you to the Course and category management page.

p

Create category Cancel

Check it worked

After saving, you should be returned to the Course and category management page, where your new category should now appear in the category tree on the left. Click its name to

confirm it is in the correct position either at the top level or nested inside the intended parent.

To see how it looks to users, go to the site's course list by clicking Home or My courses and then browsing to the course catalogue. Your new category should be visible there, currently showing as empty.

Manage course categories and courses

Course categories

Create new category

☐	Health & Safety				5	
☐	Cyber Security					5
☐	HR & Compliance					5
☐	Leadership & Management					5
☐	Data Protection & GDPR					5
☐	EssingtonITS					1
☐	My New Category				0	

Sorting

Selected categories

Sort by Category name ascending

Common problems

- **The "Create new category" button isn't visible:** You may not have the required permissions, or you may be viewing an individual course rather than the category management page. Make sure you have navigated to Site administration > Courses > Manage courses and categories and that your role includes moodle/category:manage.
- **The new category appears in the wrong place:** It was likely created under the wrong parent. You can move it: on the Course and category management page, find the category, click the Edit link beside it (or the cog icon), and change the Parent category field.
- **The category isn't visible to learners:** A new category with no courses in it may be hidden depending on your site's settings. Check that the category is not set to Hidden

by clicking its name on the management page and reviewing its visibility setting. Also note that some Moodle themes only show categories that contain at least one visible course.

- **I can't find the category in the list after saving:** If your site has many categories, it may not be visible in the default view. Use the search or scroll the tree. The category is almost certainly there Moodle does not silently discard saved categories.

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