3.0 Real-time Communication

You have learned about some of the course information and communication tools you can use to keep students informed and exchange messages with them. Now we look at how you can communicate with your students in real-time, using the Chat tool. We first explore the Chat tool from the student perspective.

Chat is a virtual meeting space, where you and your students can gather to communicate with each other using instant messaging. Chat can be used for a variety of applications:

- Online office hours
- Exam reviews and study groups
- Guest speakers or question and answer sessions
- Small group collaboration and brainstorming sessions

Together, the Virtual Classroom tool and the Chat tool form the Blackboard Learn Collaboration tool. The Virtual Classroom tool includes a whiteboard, chat panel, web browser, Course Map, and a question and answer area. It is ideal for course lectures, especially those in which you present visual material. We do not explore the Virtual Classroom tool in this workshop, but we take a close look at the Chat tool.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this section, you will be able to:

- Participate in a chat session.
- Send private messages.
- View session recordings.
- Create new sessions.
- Modify participant roles.
- Manage sessions.
- Create session recordings.

Participating in Chat Sessions

Chat within the Collaboration tool is a slimmed down version of the Virtual Classroom tool where only the chat room facility is available. This provides a large screen for the chat room.

Use the Chat tool when real-time discussion is required. Most students are familiar with using some form of chat and comfortable using this form of communication.

The Chat tool is designed to be ideal for low bandwidth situations, such as when your students are connecting to the course using a dial-up connection.

After joining a chat session, students can send messages. The message appears in the chat display panel of all participants who are currently in the room.

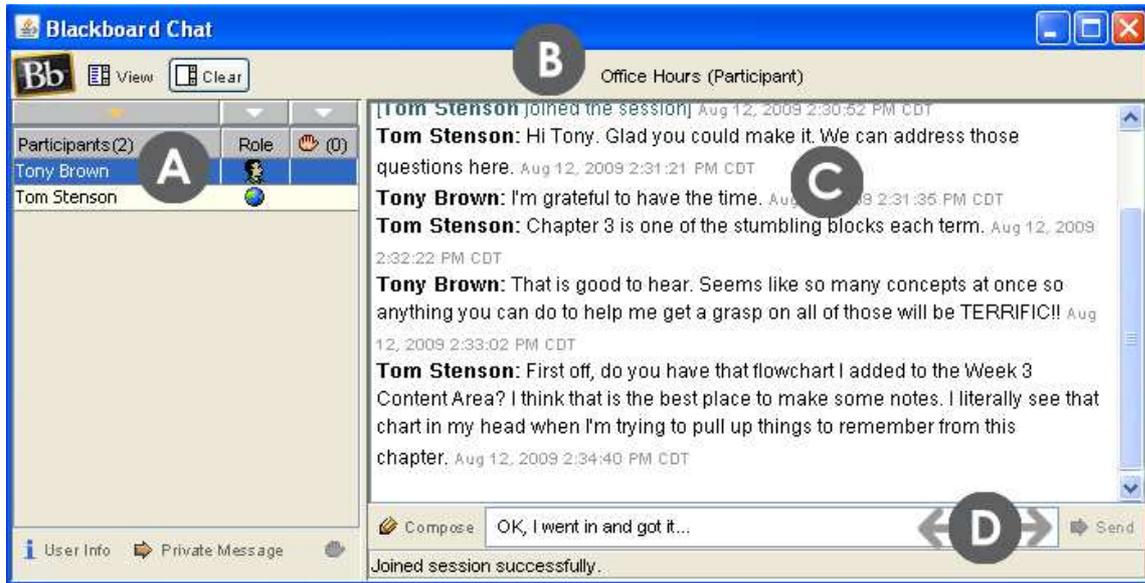**QUICK STEPS: Participating in a Chat Session**

1. Access **Tools** and select **Collaboration**.
2. On the **Collaboration Sessions** page, click the **Session Name** link for the available Chat session you wish to join.
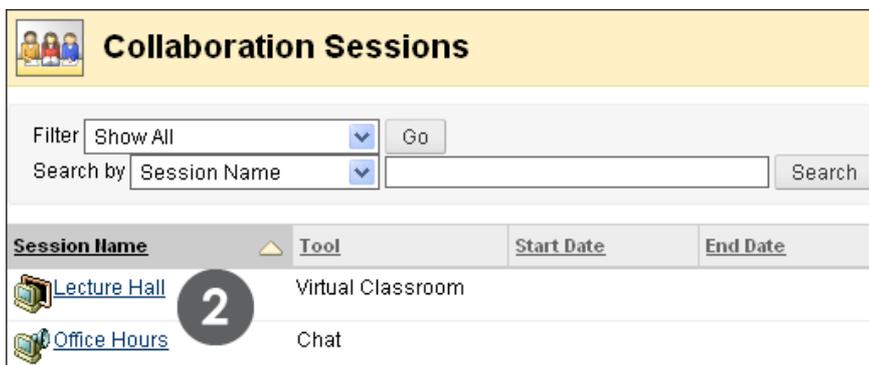
3. On the chat screen, compose a message.
4. Click **Send**.

NOTE: A Launching Chat Tool page appears. Do not leave this page until you are finished chatting. The chat session opens in a new browser window and may take a moment to load. Chat does not work if pop-up blockers are enabled. Either turn off your pop-up blocker or make your course site a trusted site.
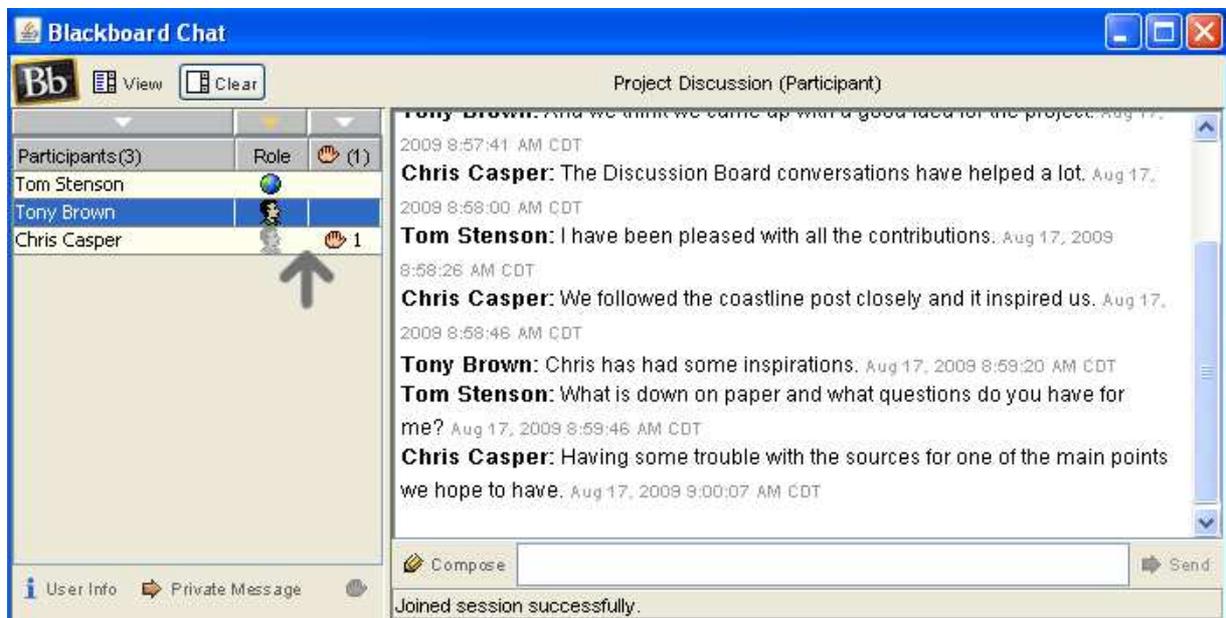
A. A list of participants and their roles appear in the first column.

B. The title of the Chat room appears at the top of the chat display panel.

C. All messages are shown in the chat display panel.

D. Type your message in the **Compose** box and click **Send**. Alternatively, the **Compose** icon can be clicked to open a new window, allowing for a bigger area for typing.

The following table describes the icons assigned to each participant role.

| ▼ Icon	▼ Role
	A globe icon represents the Moderator. The Moderator is typically an instructor. The Moderator can modify participant roles, grant passive users permission to participate, expel users, and record and end the session.
	A full color icon represents the Active User. An Active User is typically a student. By default, Active Users can send messages as often as they like during a chat session.
	A gray toned icon represents the Passive User. A Passive User is typically a student. Passive Users can observe the chat exchange, but must raise their hands to request permission to send messages. If more than one student raises their hands, numbers are assigned to the handraise icons to represent the order they raised their hands.

Sending Private Messages

Chat participants, including an instructor, can send private messages to one or more participants,

Private messages are not included in chat recordings and can be disallowed by the instructor.

QUICK STEPS: Sending Private Messages

1. On the **Participants** list, select the recipient or recipients of your private message.
2. Click **Private Message**.
3. In the **Compose Private Message** pop-up window, type your message.
4. Click **Send**.
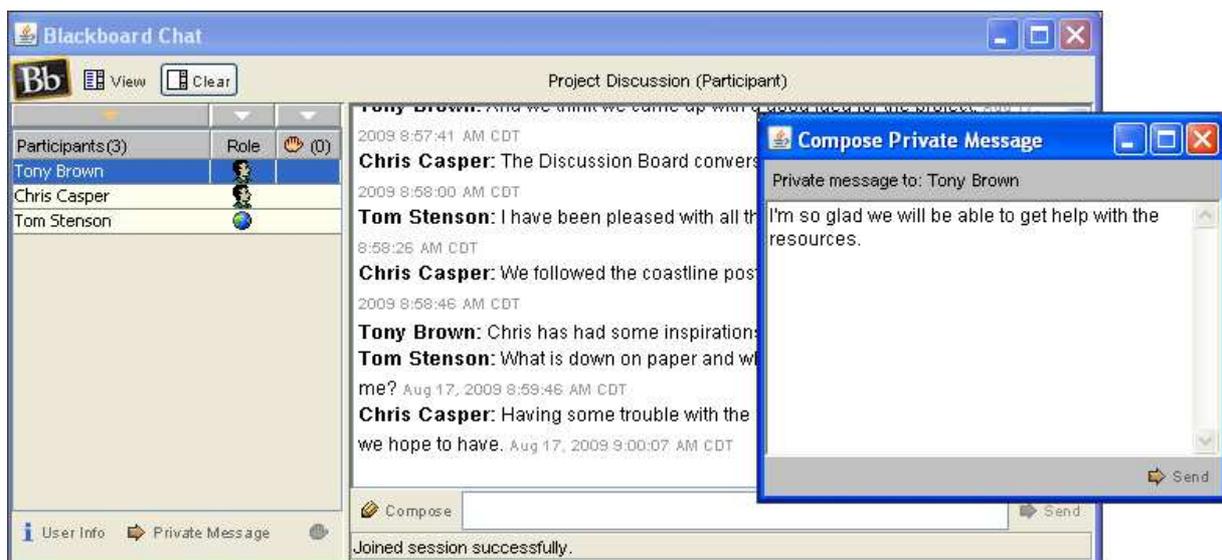
**TIP:** To send a private message to a single participant, double-click the participant's name.

Private messages can appear with all your other messages in the chat display panel or you can choose to display them in a separate panel. "Private Message from" always precedes private messages.

Click **View** on the Action Bar and select where private messages appear.

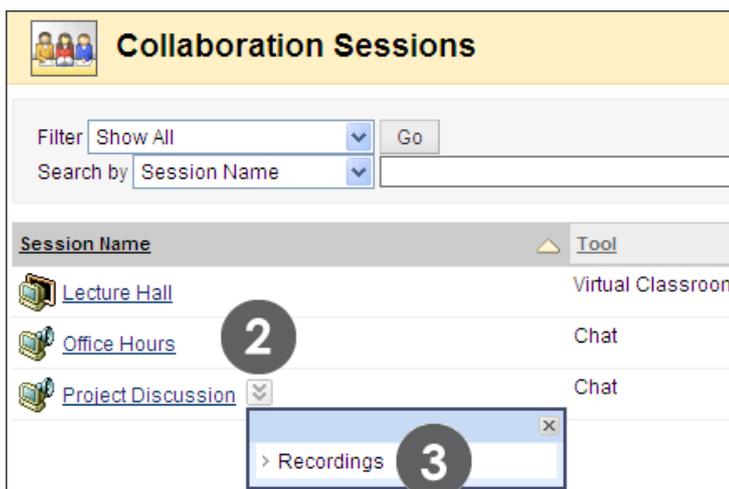# Real Time Communication: Sending Private Messages
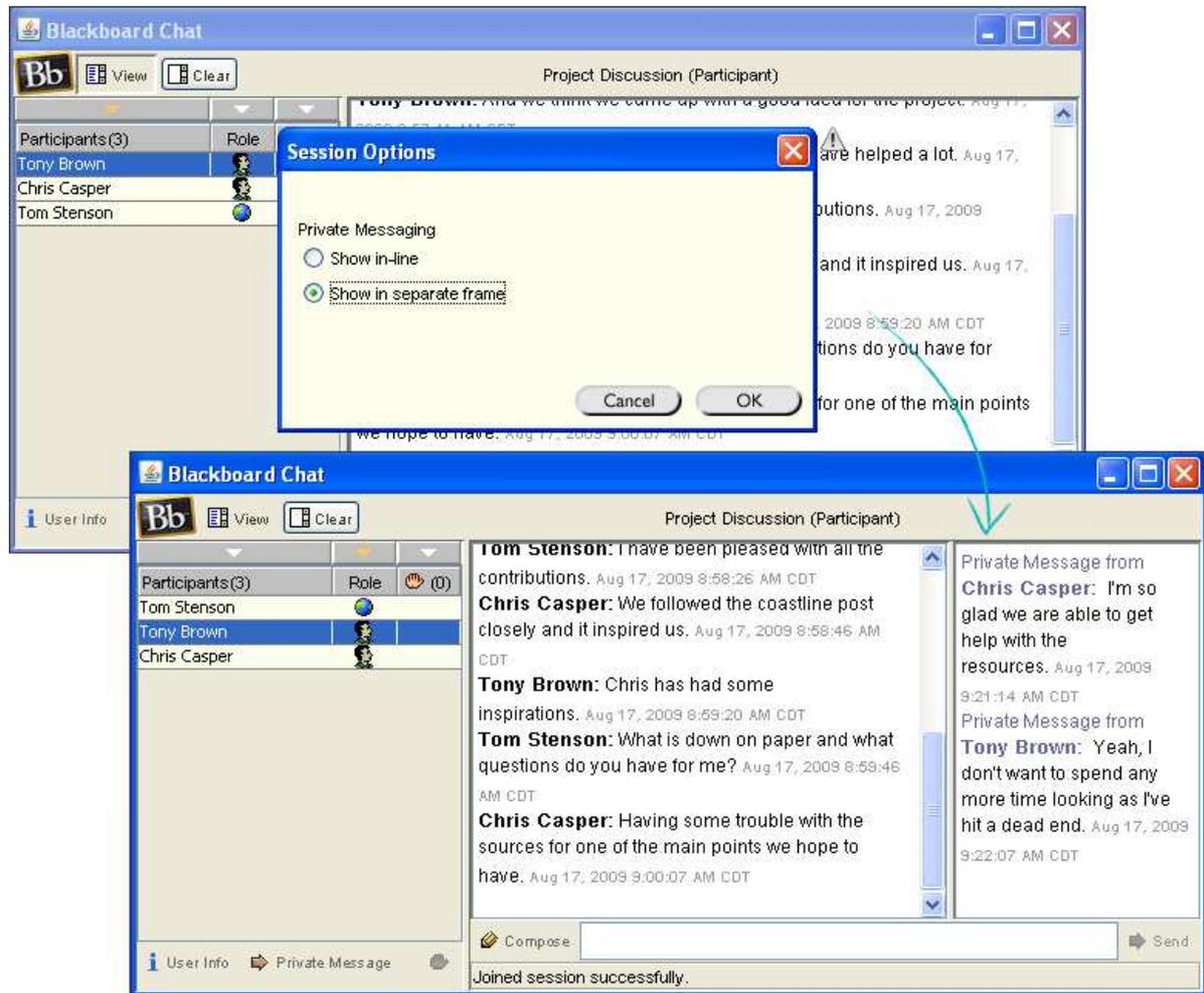
Viewing Chat Recordings

If you have recorded any portion of a chat session, students can access the recordings. For example, students can access recordings if they missed the session or if they want to review the ideas discussed.

Title recordings with meaningful names so students can locate them easily. For example, use either the topic discussed or the date of the session as the name. Multiple recordings can be made within one chat session.

QUICK STEPS: Viewing a Recorded Chat Session

1. Access the **Collaboration Sessions** page.
2. Click a session's Action Link (⊻) to access the contextual menu.
3. Select **Recordings**.
4. On the **Session Recordings** page, click the name of the recording.

NOTE: In the **Recording Duration** column, the length of the session is listed. If several recordings exist, use the **Search** function on the Action Bar.

Hands-on Activity

For this activity, use your Student Course.

Send chat messages

- Join the **Student Lounge** session and send a message to the participants.
- Choose to view private messages in a separate frame.
- Choose a participant and send a private message.
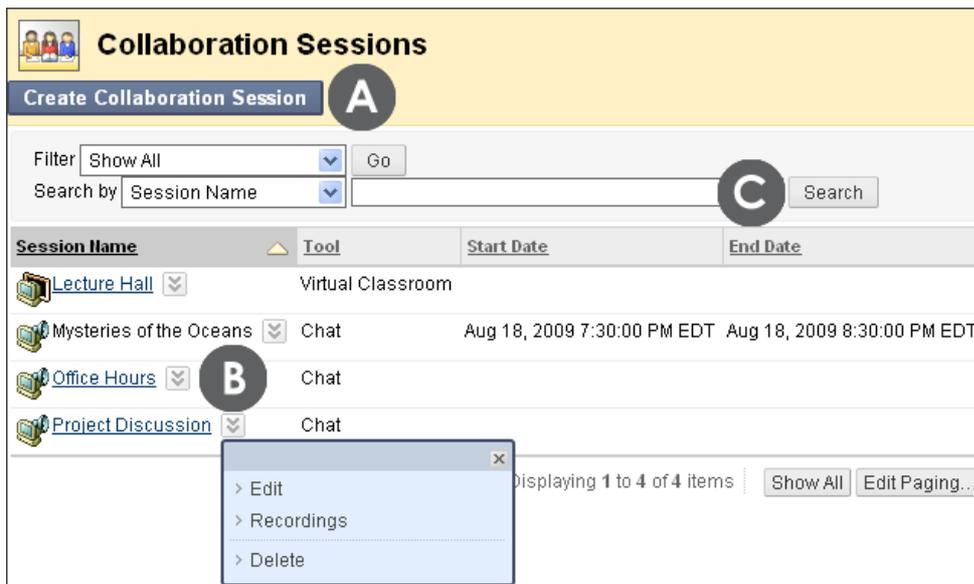
View a session recording

- View the **Culture and Identity** session recording. **NOTE:** You may see **anonymous** instead of an instructor name in the transcript, which can happen when a course is archived and restored.

About the Instructor Interface

Now we turn to an instructor perspective. In this section, you create and manage chat sessions in the Practice Course. Ensure **Edit Mode** is **ON** to access the instructor functions.

As an instructor, you have access to the same features as students. In addition, you can do the following:

- Create sessions
- Modify participant roles
- Manage sessions
- Record sessions

A. Click **Create Collaboration Session** on the Action Bar to create a chat session.

B. Click a session's Action Link (⊗) to edit session settings, delete a session, and view and manage session recordings, if they exist.

C. Search for sessions using the **Search** function on the Action Bar.

Any session with a start date in the future does not become a link until the start date has arrived.

Creating Chat Sessions

As an instructor, you can create chat sessions for real-time communication. You can create sessions that are available

- For the duration of the course; students can schedule meetings and use the session at any time.
- At a specific time; student attendance at these sessions may be mandatory.
- To group members only; students in a group can schedule sessions to discuss projects, divide up tasks, and brainstorm.

QUICK STEPS: Creating a Chat Session

1. On the **Control Panel**, expand the **Course Tools** section, and select **Collaboration**.

2. On the **Collaboration Sessions** page, click **Create Collaboration Session** on the Action Bar.

3. On the **Create Collaboration Session** page, type a **Session Name**.

4. In the **Schedule Availability** section, you can set a Chat session to display on a specific date and time and to stop displaying on a specific date and time. Select the **Display After** and **Display Until** check boxes to enable the date and time selections. Type dates and times in the boxes or use the pop-up **Date Selection Calendar** and **Time Selection Menu** to select dates and times. Display restrictions do not affect the Chat session's availability, only when it appears.

5. Next to **Available**, select the **Yes** option.

6. Under **Collaboration Tool**, select **Chat** from the drop-down list.

7. Click **Submit**.

Real Time Communication: Creating Chat Sessions

Each course contains a default Chat session titled **Office Hours**. You can rename or delete this default session.

Hands-on Activity

For this activity, use your Practice Course.

Create chat sessions

- Create a chat session students can enter at any time to discuss questions and concerns, or socialize.
- Create a chat session where students meet for a specific time period about a specific topic.

Modifying Participant Roles

By default, participants are Active Users when they enter a chat session. At any time, you can change the role to Passive. Passive Users can view the chat exchange, but can only contribute if they raise their hands and are granted permission by the Moderator.

You control chat sessions to a greater degree when users are passive. For example, if each student must first ask for permission to participate, you are less likely to have 15 questions to respond to at once. You can also make only certain users passive if they are dominating the conversation or responding inappropriately.

QUICK STEPS: Modifying Participant Roles

1. From the chat session, click the participant's name to select it.

2. Click an icon to activate or deactivate a user's permission to chat. The icon in the **Participants** list is updated.
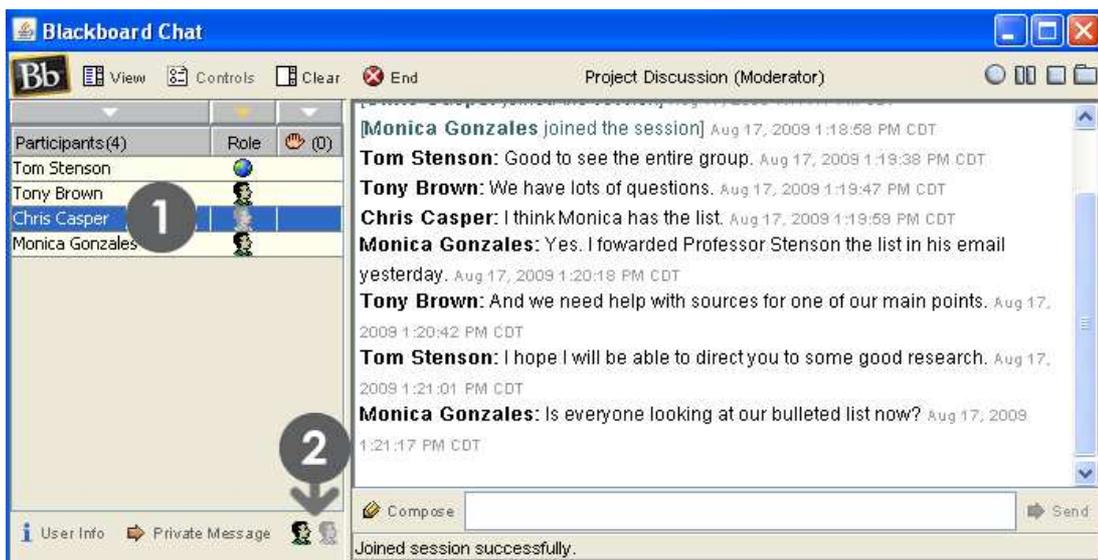
In the **Participants** list, one participant has been changed to a passive user. This user can select the handraise icon to ask for permission to contribute to the chat.

Managing Sessions

As an instructor, you can use the functions on the Action Bar to manage the chat session.

The following table explains the functions on the left side of the Action Bar.

If you want to	Function on Action Bar
Select which features each role can use	**Click Controls.** By default, only active users can send messages and private messages.
Clear the screen	**Click Clear.** You can choose to clear your chat panel or the chat panel of all session participants.
End a session	**Click End.** The session is ended and all users are expelled. If you are recording the session, the recording is also ended and it is no longer possible to add bookmarks to the recording.

Recording Sessions

Create a transcript of a chat session by recording a session using the recording functions on the right side of the Action Bar.

Session recordings can be beneficial if student participation is graded. Students can use the recordings for review purposes, or if a chat session was missed.

You can type a name for the recording or use the default name of the start date and time of the recording. You can create single or multiple recordings for a session.

QUICK STEPS: Recording a Session

1. After joining a chat session, click the **Begins recording** button (⬜).
2. Type a name for the chat recording or use the default.
3. Click **OK**.

The following table explains the recording functions on the right side of the Action Bar.

▼ Icon	▼ Function on Action Bar
⭘	Click **Begins recording** to create the transcript. Information is recorded as participants exchange messages. More than one recording can be created per session. **NOTE:** Clicking the **Begins recording** function again when recording is already in progress will stop the recording.
⏸	Click **Pauses Recording** to temporarily stop the recording. The chat display panel and the transcript indicate the recording has been paused. Click it again to resume recording.
⏹	Click **Stops Recording** to end the recording. Once a chat session has been stopped, it is not possible to add to the recording. **TIP:** If you end a recording in error, simply click the **Begins recording** function to start another transcript. Title the next recording "Part Two" or "Continued."
🗀	Click **Bookmark** to add comments to the recording. For instance, make a note that you are about to introduce a new topic. When adding bookmark comments, remember students can view recordings. Bookmarks will appear in a different color than the chat text.

Ask Dr. C

In the following table, Dr. C discusses recording chat sessions.

Your question	Dr. C's reply
Why are chat logs important?	Making chat recordings available allow students to review the discussions that transpired and gives those who were not present a chance to find out what took place. It also means students become active participants in creating the course content. This personal contribution can create greater interest in the course, which may lead to more active participation and a greater sense of community among learners.
Can students record a group chat session? If so, how?	Yes, within group collaboration sessions, students have the same abilities to start and stop the recording of the session as the instructor does. All group members have the Moderator role. One of the group members can start recording the session at any time by clicking the **Begins recording** function.

Hands-on Activity

For this activity, use your Practice Course.

Chat recordings

- Access the **Group Saturn** recording, change the name of the recording, and permit participants to view it. **Reminder:** You cannot edit the recording properties if you did not access the **Collaboration** tool through the **Control Panel**. You may see **anonymous** instead of the instructor name in the transcript, which can happen when a course is archived and restored.

- Delete one of the recordings in the **Group Jupiter** session.

Best Practice: Chat for Academic Purposes

Students are often familiar with real-time chat tools, such as AIM, but are accustomed to using them for social correspondence. In the social setting, messages can be composed quickly and without reflection.

Using chat for academic purposes requires planning, structure, and moderation of the discussion. Here are some tips for effectively using chat for academic purposes:

- Decide what your objectives are for using chat. How can it assist learners in achieving the overall goals of the course?

- Inform learners of your expectations for how to use the tool.

- Outline the rules in your syllabus, such as use of appropriate language, respect for their fellow classmates, and comments relevant to the topic.

- Consider the number of students who can be meaningfully involved in the chat session. The class can be broken into smaller groups to meet separately.

- Prepare a focused topic in advance for each chat session.

- Monitor the dialogue to keep it on topic.

- Establish a protocol so learners know when another has completed a message. For example, ask learners to add an asterisk (*) to the end of their last sentences.

- Be aware of users who tend not to participate. Is it due to a technological problem or lack of experience? Some learners can type quickly while others type quite slowly. This may affect the frequency of a learner's participation. Is there a way to draw a student into the discussion?

- Summarize the major points at the end of the chat session.