

AlphaCom Guidebook

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Version 5.0

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AlphaCom Discussions

Discussing groups are a convenient way for large groups to gather and share ideas, while reducing the need for face-to-face meetings. AlphaCom offers private discussion groups to literacy organizations free of charge. It provides registered users with moderated discussions, password-protection and the ability to attach files. The AlphaCom Guidebook aims to teach novice users how to register and participate in these discussions. The AlphaPlus Centre delivers and supports the AlphaCom web conferencing system.

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Problems? Need Help? Just Ask...

Contact the AlphaPlus Centre staff:
Phone: 1-800-788-1120
TTY: 1-800-788-1912
Fax: 1-800-788-1417

Contact the AlphaPlus Webmaster by email:
webmaster@alphaplus.ca

Find AlphaCom on the Internet

☞ *To find the AlphaPlus Centre website on the Internet:*

1. Dial-up your Internet Service Provider and establish a connection.
2. Start your web browser program.
3. Type <http://alphaplus.ca> in the location line and press enter.
4. The AlphaPlus Centre homepage will appear.
5. Choose either French or English.



6. Select **Talk to Others** from the left-hand menu.
7. Select **AlphaCom** at the top of the page.



☞ *The 'Welcome to the AlphaCom Discussions' window will appear.*



AlphaCom is a password-protected website. First-time users must register and receive a password before they can subscribe to any literacy discussions.

Register with AlphaCom

☞ *Every time a registrant visits AlphaCom they will be prompted for their user name and password. Login by typing in the required information and press OK.*



☞ *To register with the AlphaCom discussions:*

1. Click on the *registration link* at the 'Welcome to the AlphaCom Discussions' window.
2. Fill out the registration form *with* personal email address.
3. Create your own password by overwriting the random password given.
4. REMEMBER your new personal password! Submit your request.
5. Your personal 'resume' is then added to the AlphaCom database.

Main Menu

☞ *A main menu guides participants through the AlphaCom discussions.*



My Discussions is your list of subscribed discussions.

Help is a link to the AlphaCom Help Desk.

Webmaster is a link to the AlphaCom Webmaster.

All Discussions is a list of all literacy discussions. Discussions may be sorted by private, public, English, French etc. View discussion profiles. Subscribe or unsubscribe to any discussion.

All People is a list of all persons registered with AlphaCom. Search people by their last or first names. View their personal 'resumes'.

My Resume is your personal profile. Update your profile and personal password.

Subscribe to Literacy Discussions

Once registered with AlphaCom you may subscribe to several private or public discussions. Registrants automatically gain access to the public discussions upon request. Admission to a private discussion is dependent upon the discretion of that particular moderator.

☞ *To join a new discussion:*

1. Select All Discussions from the 'Main Menu'.
2. Choose the type of discussion you want to view from the drop-down box.
3. Browse through the list of discussions and their moderators.
4. View a discussion profile by clicking on the discussion name.
5. Click on 'Subscribe' to gain access to the discussions.
6. View All Discussions to make another selection.

☞ *Types of public discussion you may join:*

1. AlphaPlus Help
2. Literacy Forum
3. Ontario Café
4. Learners Clubhouse (for adult literacy students)
5. Info-MTCU (formerly know as Info-MET)

Users may unsubscribe themselves from any AlphaCom Discussion. Return to the [All Discussions](#) list. Select the discussion profile you wish to resign from. Click on **Unsubscribe** at the top of the page. Please confirm you want to be removed from the discussion. A message will say your request has been processed.

View Messages

Registrants may view messages in any subscribed discussion.

☞ *To view your list of subscribed discussions select [My Discussions](#) from the 'Main Menu'.*

1. Click on the subscribed discussion you wish to view.
2. Select a new discussion by returning to [My Discussions](#).

Subscribed Discussions for LLO Moderator

Discussion Name	Total Msg Count	Msg Since Last Login	Last Login Date
Laubach Board Forum 98	1043	32	11/20/98 10:05
Laubach Board Forum 99	295	295	12/30/99 0:00
Laubach Lit Bulletin	212	92	12/23/98 11:09
Learners Clubhouse	132	132	12/30/99 0:00

☞ *View a message by clicking on the subject title. A list of messages is shown below.*

Laubach Board Forum 98

Messages by Date ● = unread message ✓ = read message

☞ Previous Page ☞ Next Page

- 1999/01/07 08:26 **training** (Lana Faessler)
- 1999/01/07 08:19 **Project updates - new and old** (Lana Faessler)
- ✓ 1999/01/05 17:47 **Board Forum 99** (Lana Faessler)
- ✓ 1998/12/23 09:03 **Business Plan Update** (Lana Faessler)
- ✓ 1998/12/10 20:53 **Business Plan** (Lana Faessler)
- ✓ 1998/12/07 21:21 **board meeting** (Jennifer De Alwis)

☞ *Select another message from the same discussion by one of the following methods:*

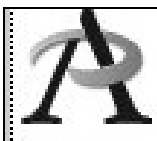
1. Press 'One Message Up' to read the next message.
2. Press 'One Message Down' to read the previous message.
3. Follow the message thread located at the bottom of the web page.
4. Click on the 'Back' icon in the web browser menu. The message list should reappear.

☞ *Messages can be sorted four different ways. By default the messages are sorted by date.*



Change the default view by selecting one of the following:

- Date** – messages are listed in ascending order
- Category** – messages are grouped by categories
- Author** – messages are grouped by author names
- Subject** – messages are group by subject



☞ *Click on the AlphaPlus symbol when you want to return the AlphaPlus Centre homepage. <http://alphaplus.ca>*

Post Messages

☞ *Posting a message is as simple as sending email. Write a new message or respond to an existing one in any subscribed discussion.*

1. View a single message in any subscribed discussion.
2. Select 'Write New Message' or 'Write Response'.



3. Select a 'Category' from the drop-down box.
4. Fill in the 'Subject' line.
5. Type a written message in the text box provided.
6. 'Add your Message' to the discussion.

Edit Messages

☞ *Authors may edit or delete their own messages.*

1. View the message you wish to edit or delete.
2. Select one of the following menu options.



3. Edit a message by typing in new words, changing the 'categories' or adding a file attachment. 'Add your Message' to the discussion again.
4. You may delete a message altogether and press OK.
5. Write a new message if you wish.

Print Messages

☞ *Any message posted to AlphaCom may be printed off.*

1. View the message you wish to print.
2. Click on the message form once with your mouse.
3. Select 'File' and 'Print' from the web browser menu.
4. Make sure the printer is turned on.

Copy & Paste

☞ *You may copy and paste an AlphaCom message to a word processing program.*

1. Open your word processing program.
2. Start a new blank document.
3. Minimize your word processing program.
4. Launch your web browser and go on to the AlphaCom website.
5. View the message you wish to copy.
6. Highlight the message manually with your mouse.
7. Click on 'Edit' in your browser menu. Select 'Copy'.
8. Maximize your word processing window.
9. Click on 'Edit' then 'Paste'. The message is copied.
10. Save the message under a new filename.
11. Print the file if you wish.

You may copy and paste text from an existing document and post it as a new message. Formatting such as bulleted lists, italics and bolded text are often lost during the transfer.

File Attachments

File attachments are typically used when the message is either too long or heavily formatted (i.e. a report or meeting minutes).

☞ *File attachments may be uploaded to any message posted on AlphaCom.*

1. Write a new message.
2. Mention the type of file being attached and its name (*i.e.* Word document).
3. Locate the text box labeled 'Attachment a File' at the bottom of your message form.

Attachment a File:

➤ [Tips on Attachments](#)

4. Select 'Browse' to find the filename.
5. Choose the filename and press 'Open'.
6. The filename will appear in the text box.
7. Click on 'Add your message'.

Caution: It is recommended filenames be only one word. For example, 'Report One' should read 'reportone' in lower case letters with no spaces.

☞ *File attachments can be downloaded from AlphaCom:*

1. Click on the file icon located at the bottom of a message.

Attached File:

➤ [Tips on Detaching a file](#)



2. Instruct the computer where you want the attachment saved (either a:\ or c:\ drive).
3. Write down the name of the attached file.
4. Find the downloaded file by using the FIND function in Windows.
5. Open the document by clicking on the filename.
6. Read the document *or* print it off.

Caution: A file attachment can be opened if you have the appropriate software to read the attached file. For example, if someone sends you word-perfect document, you need Word Perfect in order to open and read the file. Files saved in RTF (rich-text format) can be open in either Word Perfect or MS Word. All file attachments must be in text-only format *if* they are to be compatible with all word processing programs.

☞ *File attachments can be deleted from a message.*

1. View the message you wish to edit.
2. Select 'Edit' from the menu above.



3. Look at the bottom of the message to discover 'Mark Attachments for Deletion'.
4. Mark the file to be deleted.
5. 'Add your Message' to the discussion.

Edit Resume & Change Password

Persons registered with AlphaCom may update and edit their personal resume. Registrants may also change their password whenever they wish.

Sample Resume of Maia Shapley

EditChange My Password

Maia Shapley

Last Discussion Login Date: 05/11/99 08:32 PM
Last updated by user: 01/17/99 11:47 PM

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TTY:

Comments:

☞ *You may edit your personal resume:*

1. Click on My Resume.
2. Select 'Edit'.
3. Type in your new information.
4. 'Submit Changes'.
5. Your resume is automatically updated.

☞ *You may change your personal password.*

1. Click on My Resume.
2. Select 'Change My Password'.
3. Type over the random password provided.
4. 'Submit Changes'.
5. Your new password is sent to you by email.

Anyone registered with AlphaCom may browse your 'resume' from the list of All People.

Email AlphaCom Participants

☞ *Send personal email to anyone registered with AlphaCom.*

1. Select All People from the 'Main Menu'.
2. Click on the name of the person you wish to contact.
3. View their personal resume.
4. Click on their email address. Your Email application will be launched.
5. Compose and send your message.

☞ *Send email to the author of any message.*

1. View the message you wish to read.

Author: **Maia Shapley**

Date: 12/05/98 03:03 PM
Category: Discussion
Subject: Maia's Feedback

2. Click on the author's name. Their personal resume will appear.
3. Click on the person's email address. Your email application will be launched.
4. Compose and send your message.

☞ *Send email to any discussion moderator.*

1. Select All Discussions from the 'Main Menu'.
2. Scroll down the list of discussion names and associated moderators.
3. Click on the individual's name. Locate an email address in their resume.
4. Compose and send your message.

☞ *Send email to the moderators on your subscribed list.*



1. Select My Discussions from the 'Main Menu'.
2. Click on the subscribed discussion of your choice.
3. The moderator's name will be located on the left-hand side.
4. Click on the moderator's name. Locate an email address in their resume. Compose and send your message.

*Select View Participants to see a list of discussion participants.
Click on the individual's names to view their personal resumes.*

Create a Literacy Discussion

To create discussions on AlphaCom contact the Webmaster *or* staff at the AlphaPlus Centre (see page 1 of the guide). Be prepared to answer the following questions about your new discussion:

1. What is the purpose of the discussion?
2. Whose going to moderate the discussion?
3. What is the name of the discussion?
4. Is it a private or public discussion?
5. Is your preferred language French or English?

Discussion Moderators

AlphaCom moderators act both as discussion facilitators and administrators. You must be a registered user in order to become a discussion moderator.

Discussion facilitation includes:

- Welcome new discussion participants.
- Demonstrate patience and courtesy toward all users.
- Promote clear writing standards on AlphaCom.
- Post new information and updates when necessary.
- Caution users *not to post any* confidential information.
- Report any technical difficulties to the Webmaster.
- Teach novice users how to use the AlphaCom system.

Administrative functions include:

- Add and remove subscribers from the participants' list.
- Edit Discussion Preferences.
- Edit the Discussion Profile.
- Delete and/or edit messages *if necessary*.

☞ *View the discussion profile to access the administrative functions of a moderator. Locate the following menu bar at the top of the web page:*



Edit – moderators may edit or update the discussion profile

Unsubscribe – moderators may unsubscribe themselves from the discussion

Add/remove Subscribers – moderators may add or remove subscribers from the participants' list

Edit Preferences – moderators may modify discussion preferences and options

Open Discussion – the *message list* is launched

Add Discussion Subscribers

Moderators *of* private discussions must manually add subscribers to their participants' list. Moderators will be notified by email *if* someone wishes to join a private discussion. Users will automatically be added to public discussions upon request.

☞ *To add subscribers to the participants' list:*

1. Select the appropriate discussion from the All Discussion list.
2. Click on 'Add/remove Subscribers' in the menu bar.
3. Select the person's name from the drop-down box. *Example below.*

Add and/or Remove Discussion Subscribers

Select a discussion from the list of **private** and **public** forums that you moderate.

Laubach Lit Ont Playroom
 Learners Clubhouse

Select Person

Maia Shapley

What do you wish to do?

Add Remove

4. Click on 'Submit' to add the person to the participants' list.
5. Send email to the individual notifying them they have been added.

Review a person's resume before subscribing them to a private discussion. Moderators act as gatekeepers. It is your duty to ensure all subscribers understand the intended purpose of the discussion. You may decline a person's request to join *with* just reasoning. Send a polite email explaining why their request to join is declined.

Moderators may also remove subscribers from both private and public discussions. Exercise this option judiciously. Most AlphaCom participants will unsubscribe themselves *whenever* they wish too.

The AlphaPlus Webmaster will assist moderators *if* they have a long list of people who need to be added to a discussion.

Edit Discussion Profile

Moderators must ensure their discussion profiles are kept both current and accurate. The majority of users decide to join a discussion based on *its* name and description.

To edit a discussion profile:

1. Select the appropriate discussion from the [All Discussion](#) list.
2. Click on 'Edit' in the menu bar. The discussion profile will appear. *Example below.*



The screenshot shows a web form for editing a discussion profile. At the top, the title "Laubach Lit Ont Playroom" is displayed in a bold, sans-serif font. Below the title is a horizontal line. Underneath the line, the text "Private/English" is shown. A large text area contains the following text: "An informal conference for Laubach directors, staff, trainers, tutors and member councils. Socialize, chat and forget your working woes! Email: mshapley@home.com to join the discussion." Below the text area, there are two labels: "Default Message" and "View:". The "View:" label is followed by a dropdown menu currently set to "By Date".

3. Edit the discussion's description within the text box.
4. Change the 'Default Message' View' *if* necessary.
5. Click on 'Save Profile'.

Note: Contact the AlphaPlus Webmaster if you need to change *or* edit the discussion name.

Edit Discussion Preferences

Moderators may edit any discussion preferences by activating *or* deactivating various options.

☞ *To edit discussion preferences:*

1. Select the appropriate discussion from the All Discussion list.
2. Click on ‘Edit Preferences’ in the menu bar.
3. Edit the preferences you wish to modify.

Discussion Type:	<input type="radio"/> Public <input checked="" type="radio"/> Private
Custom Options:	<input type="checkbox"/> Archive Module/Module d'archives <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Email Links to Moderator/Liens de courrier électr. avec modérateurs <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mail Notification/Avis de courrier <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Web Attachments/Pièces jointes du web

Mail Notification Options

- Email participants to notify them of new discussion messages.
- Notify all subscribers of all messages.
- Notify all subscribers of selected messages.

Category Preferences

- Edit message categories in the text boxes provided.

4. Click on ‘Save’ to complete the transaction.

Caution: Participants expect certain options *will always* be made available to them. Modify discussion preferences *only* when you feel it will benefit the majority of participants.

Delete and/or edit messages

The majority of AlphaCom users do not expect moderators to edit and delete their personal messages. Moderators have the authority to edit *or* delete discussion messages *if* they feel it is warranted. Exercise this authority judiciously. *Always* post a message explaining why you changed, edited or deleted *any* message.



LAUBACH LITERACY ONTARIO

Evaluation Form

Please take a few minutes to fill out this evaluation form. Your comments and suggestions are greatly appreciated. Please fax the completed form to (519) 743-7520. Thank-you in advance!

1. How did you discover the 'AlphaCom Guidebook'?

- Advertisement
- Word of mouth
- AlphaPlus Centre
- Other

2. Do you feel the instructions were written in a clear and concise manner?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

3. Overall, I found the 'AlphaCom Guidebook' to be:

- Excellent
- Good
- Satisfactory
- Fair
- Poor

4. In the future, what type of information would you like to see added?

5. Additional comments: