KNOWLEDGE BASE ARTICLE

Permissions in Discussions: Who Can Read, Post and Moderate

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Overview

Discussions has no permission model of its own. Every board lives in SharePoint lists on the site where the web part runs, and every read and write is performed by the signed-in user through the SharePoint REST API. Who can read a board, who can post in it and who can moderate it therefore follows from the **SharePoint permissions of the site** — the same groups and permission levels you already manage in **Site permissions**.

This article explains how the web part derives its three roles from those permissions, what each role can do action by action, what guests and read-only visitors see, and what to keep in mind if you want to give the Discussions lists permissions of their own.

Note

The solution requests no API permissions and never calls Microsoft Graph; nothing has to be approved in the SharePoint admin center. See KB10413. API Permissions and Admin Consent for Discussions.

Summary for administrators

Question	Answer
Where are permissions managed?	In SharePoint **Site permissions** (site groups and permission levels); the web part has no role settings
Who can read a board?	Everybody with **Read** on the site (and on the page)
Who can post, reply, like, follow and report?	Users whose site permission level includes **Add Items** — **Contribute**, **Edit**, **Design**, **Full Control**
Who can moderate?	Users whose site permission level includes **Manage Lists** — **Edit**, **Design**, **Full Control**
Do guests work?	Yes, by their site permissions, with no extra setup

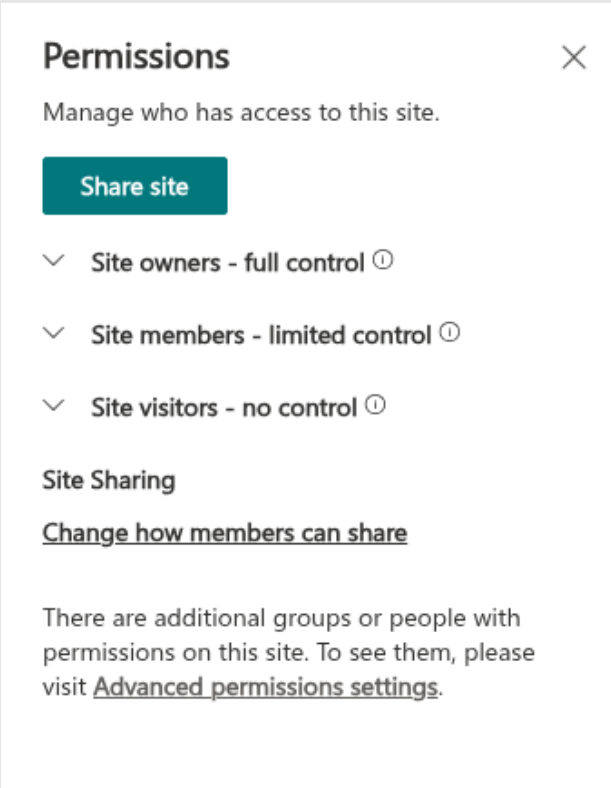
Question	Answer
Who can create a board and the lists?	A user with **Manage Lists** on the site; the lists inherit the site permissions
Who sees posts waiting for approval?	Their author and the moderators

How the web part decides what you can do

When the page loads, the web part reads the effective permissions of the current user on the **site** and sets two flags:

- **can write** — the user has the **Add Items** base permission on the site;
- **can moderate** — the user has the **Manage Lists** base permission on the site.

The flags decide which commands and buttons are rendered: **New topic**, **Reply**, **Follow** and **Report** for writers; **Moderation**, **Approve**, **Pinned**, **Featured** and **Locked** for moderators. Everything the user then does is an ordinary request to the `Discussions Topics`, `Discussions Posts`, `Discussions Subscriptions` and `Discussions Assets` lists, and SharePoint applies the list permissions to each request. On a site with inherited permissions the two always agree.



Site groups and permission levels that drive the Discussions roles

The three roles

Role	Needs on the site	Can
Reader	**Read** (the *Site visitors* group)	Open the board, switch the **Recent**, **Unanswered**, **Answered**, **Featured** and **My topics** views, filter by category, search, open topics and replies, download attachments, follow deep links
Member	**Add Items** — included in **Contribute**, **Edit**, **Design** and **Full Control**	Everything a reader can, plus **New topic**, **Reply**, **Like**, **Follow** a board or a topic, **Report** other people's posts, **Edit** and **Delete** own replies, attach and remove files on own posts, **Mark as answer** in own questions
Moderator	**Manage Lists** — included in **Edit**, **Design** and **Full Control**	Everything a member can, plus the **Moderation** queue (approve, reject, dismiss reports, delete), inline **Approve**, **Pinned**, **Featured** and **Locked** on any topic, **Edit** and **Delete** any reply, remove any attachment, **Mark as answer** in any question, see **Awaiting approval** and **Rejected** items, create boards and run **Import classic board**

A moderator's own topics and replies are published immediately even on a board that requires approval; posts of members wait in the queue.

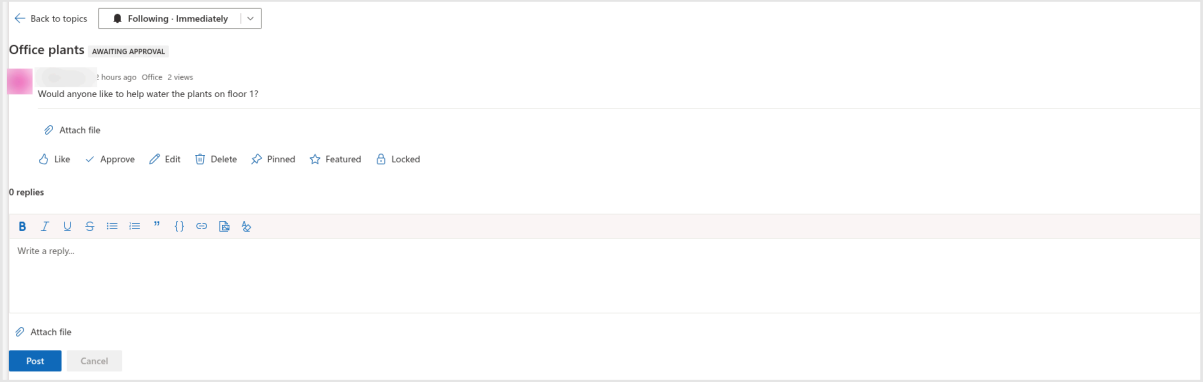
Warning

On modern team and communication sites the default **Site members** group has the **Edit** permission level, and **Edit** includes **Manage Lists**. With the defaults, therefore, *every member is a moderator*. To separate members from moderators, open **Site permissions** → **Advanced permissions settings**, change the permission level of the members group to **Contribute**, and keep the moderators in **Site owners** or in a group with **Edit**.

Action by action

Action	Required	Notes
Read topics and replies	Read	Approved items only, plus the user's own items
View counter	—	Incremented on behalf of the visitor; the attempt silently fails for readers, so views by read-only users are not counted
New topic, Reply	Add Items	Goes to the moderation queue when the board requires approval and the user is not a moderator
Like a topic or reply	Add Items	The button is shown to readers but disabled
Follow / Unfollow	Add Items	Needs the `Discussions Subscriptions` list; see KB10404. Following Boards and Topics: Subscriptions and Digest Frequency
Report / Reported	Add Items	Not shown on the user's own posts; one report per user and item

Action	Required	Notes
Edit a reply	Author or Manage Lists	
Delete a reply	Author or Manage Lists	Only a reply without nested replies can be deleted from the thread
Attach a file, remove an attachment	Author or Manage Lists	
Mark as answer, Unmark answer	Topic author or Manage Lists	Top-level replies of a question topic
Approve, Reject, Dismiss reports	Manage Lists	In the **Moderation** queue or inline in the topic
Pinned, Featured, Locked	Manage Lists	See KB10410. Pinning, Featuring and Locking Topics
Delete a topic	Manage Lists	From the **Moderation** queue
Create a board, provision the lists	Manage Lists	The first-run screen shows *You do not have permission to create lists on this site* otherwise
Import classic board	Manage Lists + page edit rights	The command appears only while the page is in edit mode
Configure the web part	Page edit rights	Board, default view, page size, switches in the property pane



Topic actions available to a moderator

Visibility of pending and rejected posts

On a board with **Require approval of new posts** the web part applies one rule to topics and replies alike: a member sees **approved** items and **their own** items in any state, a moderator sees everything. A member's own pending topic carries the **Awaiting approval** badge, a rejected topic the **Rejected** badge; nobody else sees them. The **Discussions Activity** web part shows approved topics only, whoever is looking. Details and troubleshooting are in KB10430. Why a Post Is Not Visible: Approval, Rejection and Visibility Rules.

Guests and read-only visitors

Guest users (Microsoft Entra B2B) take part according to their site permissions: a guest in *Site visitors* reads, a guest in a group with **Contribute** posts and replies. No additional configuration is needed. A reader without **Add Items** sees the full board — including the **Like** counts and the attachments — but no reply box, no **New topic** and a disabled **Like** button; the **Follow** button is not shown.

The same rules apply in Microsoft Teams: the tab runs in the context of the team site, so a team member's SharePoint permission level decides the role, not the Teams role.

Note

A user must have access both to the **page** and to the **lists**. If a page is shared with people who have no access to the site's lists, they see an error in the web part instead of the board.

Unique permissions on the Discussions lists

The lists are ordinary site lists in **Site contents** and inherit the site permissions. You

may break the inheritance, but keep three points in mind:

- **The buttons follow the site, the result follows the list.** The web part reads the user's permissions on the site, not on the lists. A user with **Contribute** on the site and only **Read** on `Discussions Posts` still sees the **Reply** button and gets an error on posting. Keep the lists' permissions at least as generous as the site's for the same people, or change the site permissions instead.
- **Do not use item-level permissions.** Liking, reporting, the view counter and the reply counters write to items created by *other* users. The advanced list setting *Create items and edit items that were created by the user* breaks all of them.
- **All lists together.** `Discussions Boards`, `Discussions Topics`, `Discussions Posts`, `Discussions Subscriptions` and the `Discussions Assets` library are used in one operation; give the same audience the same level on all five.

Because the lists are shared by every board on the site, a board cannot have an audience of its own. For a forum that only part of the organization may see, create it on a site with that audience.

Tip

To check what a particular user can do, open **Site permissions** → **Advanced permissions settings** → **Check Permissions** and look for *Add Items* and *Manage Lists* in the result. The same two base permissions are the whole of the Discussions role model.