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Building Forums with

# vBulletin

A practical guide to the web's favorite discussion system

Configure, manage and maintain your own vBulletin discussion forum

Adrian Kingsley-Hughes  
Kathie Kingsley-Hughes

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# Building Forums with vBulletin

Creating and Maintaining Online Discussion  
Forums

**Adrian Kingsley-Hughes**  
**Kathie Kingsley-Hughes**



BIRMINGHAM - MUMBAI

# Building Forums with vBulletin

## Creating and Maintaining Online Discussion Forums

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A big thanks to the people at Jelsoft Enterprises Limited for all their help during the writing of this book.

Also, a huge thanks to the amazing vBulletin community—there are a lot of talented people out there putting their valuable time and effort into creating templates, modifications, and hacks.

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# Preface

vBulletin is a very popular, commercial discussion forums application. Written in PHP, it is the system of choice for many of the biggest and most popular discussion forums on the Internet.

This book takes you step by step through setting up and running your own vBulletin website. In easy-to-follow language, it will show you how to select a vBulletin license, set up the site, and then customize and use it for maximum impact. You will learn how to use the powerful administration features of vBulletin, and even see how to alter the code to create your own 'hacks'.

## What This Book Covers

*Chapter 1* gives you a quick overview of vBulletin's key features and benefits and helps you choose the right vBulletin license for your community's needs.

*Chapter 2* shows you how to go about installing and configuring a vBulletin installation.

*Chapter 3* gives you a quick tour of vBulletin from both the user's perspective and the admin side.

*Chapter 4* shows you how to go about customizing almost every aspect of a vBulletin installation.

*Chapter 5* is a key chapter, which shows a vBulletin forum administrator how to go about administering every aspect of their forum.

*Chapter 6* looks at the vBulletin upgrade process and guides you through the successful migration of all the important settings and customizations.

*Chapter 7* shows you how to go about designing a new vBulletin template.

*Chapter 8* shows you how to create and then distribute new vBulletin forum hacks.

*Chapter 9* provides you with an important programmer's reference of information that will be handy to you when working with a vBulletin forum.

## Conventions

In this book, you will find a number of styles of text that distinguish between different kinds of information. Here are some examples of these styles, and an explanation of their meaning.

There are three styles for code. Code words in text are shown as follows: "On most installations the database server is located on the same computer as the web server, in which case the address should be set to localhost."

A block of code will be set as follows:

```
<meta http-equiv="Cache-Control" content="no-cache" />
<!-- end no cache headers -->
<title><phrase 1="$vboptions[bbtitle]">$vbphrase
[x_powered_by_vbulletin]</phrase></title>
$headinclude
```

When we wish to draw your attention to a particular part of a code block, the relevant lines or items will be made bold:

```
<meta http-equiv="Cache-Control" content="no-cache" />
<!-- end no cache headers -->
<title><phrase 1="$vboptions[bbtitle]">$vbphrase
[x_powered_by_vbulletin]</phrase></title>
$headinclude
```

Any command-line input and output is written as follows:

```
GRANT ALL ON vb_database.* TO vb_user@localhost IDENTIFIED BY 'password';
```

**New terms** and **important words** are introduced in a bold-type font. Words that you see on the screen, in menus or dialog boxes for example, appear in our text like this: "clicking the Next button moves you to the next screen".

Warnings or important notes appear in a box like this.

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Tips and tricks appear like this.

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# 1

## Introduction to the vBulletin Board

Before we see how to install vBulletin, and how to customize and hack the board, let's take a little time to look at the board, the company behind it, and a little of its history. We will also show you what other people have accomplished with this most versatile and powerful board.

### **What is vBulletin?**

This is a good place to start!

vBulletin is software that is loaded onto a web server to allow you to create and manage online forums or discussion boards. It is designed and developed by Jelsoft Enterprises Limited.

If you have spent a little time on the Web, you will undoubtedly have come across a variety of discussion areas on websites that allow visitors to interact with each other. These discussion areas are generally known as 'forums', 'boards', or 'communities', and they are becoming very popular.

### **Why Have a Discussion Board?**

But why have a discussion board? Well one good reason is that there is a tendency for a website to seem like a one-sided conversation with the webmaster talking to the visitors, but by adding a discussion area the webmaster can bring the benefits of two-way discussion to the website and in doing so create a community.

By spending the time, effort, and money needed to give this foundation to a community, the webmaster can make visitors to the website feel that they are part of something bigger. As a consequence they will visit the site more often, spending more time there, promoting it by word of mouth, and sharing links on their own websites, blog entries, and signature lines on other forums. Online communities take on a life of their own, and they can bring a whole new level of life and energy to an otherwise static, slowly evolving website.

All of this means the website has an advantage over similar sites that don't have a discussion area.

## Benefits of a Discussion Board

Here are just a few of the advantages of having a discussion forum on your site:

- A relatively quiet forum generates a steady stream of new content on your site—this means that people visit your site more regularly in order to read the new content. You can find out interests and preferences directly from your website visitors, enabling you to target content more specifically to their needs.
- A discussion forum allows people to become more than just passive observers of your site. It allows visitors to pose a question, post a comment or share a review. When someone posts something, they come back to see whether there's been an answer or comment posted in response. This is how a community begins and is a path to site growth.
- A discussion board quickly creates a pool of knowledge on your site, especially if you have a website that is devoted to a particular subject or topic.
- Due to the diverse nature of discussion forum posts, you end up with a lot on your website. This means that you get entries in search engines for a wide variety of topics and search criteria, which will very effectively improve your overall ranking.
- Each member on your forum is a pair of eyes—you can sell advertising space on popular forums based on good membership levels and revisiting statistics. The bigger the forum, the more you can charge!
- A forum is a great way to build a circle of friends with similar interests.
- A forum is a great way to support a commercial product or service—you find that other members answer questions for you! It's also a low cost solution, and you quickly develop a handy knowledge base of information.

## Why vBulletin?

Let's be clear from the start—vBulletin does far more than build a discussion area. vBulletin is a complete solution to the community needs of website owners. It's a commercial product (as opposed to a free product), which perhaps rules it out for the smaller, more low-key websites. (Although if they have an eye to future growth, then they might do well in choosing a product that will grow with them right from the start.)

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### The commercial advantage

One great feature of vBulletin is the exceptional level of support that the developers provide—if you run into trouble, you can expect to receive support in a matter of a few hours (sometimes minutes).

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Another big feature of vBulletin is that because of its popularity there are a huge number of add-ons and modifications available, some commercial but many available free. This means that you need not be stuck with a discussion board that looks, feels, and behaves like all the other discussion boards on the Web.

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## History

vBulletin has been a success story right from the start.

The vBulletin discussion board software was developed and marketed by Jelsoft Ltd., a UK-based new media company specializing in developing low-cost, high-performance web applications. Jelsoft has over six years experience in the online communities business and has been working with community-driven websites since the birth of the Internet as we know it today.

vBulletin is its flagship product—it is a product that has been designed with speed, security, and flexibility in mind. Jelsoft's goal with vBulletin was to create a product that would both give the site administrators the tools that they need to get the job done, and give the end user effective communication and an enjoyable experience. The end users have a variety of tools at their disposal that allow them to communicate effectively with others, while administrators and moderators have powerful tools that allow them to move, edit, or delete posts, threads, and users, as well as a powerful control panel to control the look, feel, and function of the discussion board.

## Development

In over six years of development a lot has changed in vBulletin, but at the same time a lot has stayed the same—speed, flexibility, and security have always been at the core of vBulletin.

vBulletin was originally developed and built to power the VB-World.net community forums, which were some of the world's largest and busiest communities of Microsoft Visual Basic programmers. At the time many products were tested, but none could be scaled up to meet the demands of these communities, so vBulletin had an instant niche. vBulletin has now attracted a large and diverse list of clients from small, special interest sites to big, broad discussion groups.

Another feature important to the vBulletin developers is stability and performance under load. Jelsoft is proud to have been able to test vBulletin under huge loads with over 1000 users taking part in discussions on the board at once. With vBulletin the site owner doesn't need worry about too many posts slowing the board down, as vBulletin has been tested and proved to run smoothly with over 30 million posts held in the database.

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### Big boards

Of course, the bigger the discussion board you have, the more power it will need. Big boards will require semi-dedicated or even dedicated servers (don't expect to run a popular board on cheap shared hosting), but you can be sure that, if you choose vBulletin, no matter how big your forum gets, you will be able to deal with it.

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## The vBulletin Advantage

What are the key benefits from choosing and running vBulletin? Here are the top reasons to base your community on vBulletin.

## Versatile

vBulletin is designed to be versatile and can be run on a variety of platforms.

- vBulletin is written in PHP, making it fast, efficient, and capable of running on a broad range of hosting platforms. Shared hosting provides the cheapest option, while semi-dedicated hosting solutions offer more power for a higher price. Fully dedicated servers offer the greatest speed, power, and flexibility, but at a substantially increased cost.
- vBulletin uses a MySQL database for storing data and settings. Avatars and CSS stylesheets (controlling the formatting of the discussion board) can be stored either in the database or in the file system. Similarly, attachments can be uploaded and stored in either the database or the server file system.
- vBulletin is fully scalable. For the ultimate in power and flexibility the database server and the web server can reside on separate computers.
- vBulletin can be run on any system that can support PHP and MySQL (which means that you have a wide choice, ranging from Linux and Windows to Solaris, BSD, and Macintosh).
- All client-side code is XHTML 1.0 Transitional compliant, giving consistent and dependable results in almost all modern web browsers.
- The import facility allows data from another forum to be converted into vBulletin format. This includes users, posts, avatars and private messages. The import facility supports, among others, the following boards: Infopop's Ultimate Bulletin Board, Invision, UBBThreads, OpenTopic, ezboard, phpBB, and Ikonboard.

## Performance

No matter whether your site is big or small, you don't want to be waiting around for things to happen. vBulletin is designed with speed in mind, so you and your users, whether on a dial-up modem or a broadband connection, won't be stuck waiting for pages to load.

vBulletin offers:

- Fast page loading
- Responsive interface
- Speedy searches (thanks to effective indexing of the content)
- New/edited posts available instantly—no delays!

## Customizable

vBulletin is easy and fast to customize. Thanks to a variety of in-built tools the interface can be changed with the minimum knowledge of web programming languages.

vBulletin offers:

- A templated system—all the code for the interface is conveniently stored as separate templates. Users can also pick and choose the style they want.

- A built-in template editing interface—no need to mess about with text editors and FTP.
- Full access to all the board settings through a custom interface.
- Most built-in text is stored as phrases, which makes customizing or adding multi-lingual support easy.
- The ability to create and store multiple styles, which can be applied to different forums and users.
- Conditionals are supported in all templates. This allows you to write powerful and versatile code.

## Easy to Maintain

Even the most stable discussion board needs maintenance every so often to keep it running properly. Also, since it is the data stored in the discussion board that forms the backbone of the community, data backup and restoration is vital.

Features offered by vBulletin include:

- Built-in database backups, style backup, and table repair functions.
- A Task Scheduler to allow the automated running of many administrative tools.
- Extensive board statistics (numbers of users, new users, new posts, new threads, and much more).
- Automatic post pruning to keep database size manageable.
- Extensive server settings and optimization options.

## Other Features

vBulletin offers a whole host of other features for both the end users and the forum administrators and moderators. Over the course of the book we will be looking at a number of them.

Here are some of the best and most compelling features:

- Private messaging feature
- Comprehensive smilies and avatars
- Separate and feature-rich administrator, moderator, and user control panels
- Printer-friendly versions of threads and posts
- Linear, threaded, and hybrid display views available for threads
- Built-in calendar
- Comprehensive permission system, based on user, usergroup, or forums
- Moderation queues for user registration and posting
- Attachments, complete with preview thumbnails
- Private forums
- User ranking and notes
- Paid Subscriptions (using PayPal, WorldPay, NOCHEX and Authorize.net)

- Banning feature
- Compliant with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) of 1998. For more information on COPPA see: <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/buspubs/coppa.htm>
- Editable FAQ system
- Search engine friendly—this means you get a better ranking in the search results!

For more information about vBulletin and for purchasing information visit the official vBulletin website at <http://www.vbulletin.com>.

## vBulletin Licensing Options

vBulletin is a commercial product, and you must therefore buy a license before you can use it. To offer site owners the greatest possible flexibility there are two licensing options to choose from:

- Leased license
- Owned license

### Leased License

Purchasing a leased license will allow you to run vBulletin on your server for one year. During this period you will be entitled to technical support and software upgrades.

After this period you will either need to purchase another license or discontinue using the software.

Currently a leased license cost \$85 a year. At the end of the lease period you can either renew the lease for another year or purchase an owned license.

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#### Second chance

If you choose a leased license option, you will be given a short opportunity to upgrade your license to a fully owned license with no additional financial penalty—you just pay the difference in price between the two license types!

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### Owned License

Purchasing an owned license will allow you to run a copy of vBulletin on your server for an unlimited amount of time and allows access to all updates released for one year. After the year you can purchase a renewal of this access.

Currently an owned license costs \$160, with yearly support and new version download access costing \$30 for subsequent years.

### Choosing a License

Choose carefully between the two—making the wrong choice can end up costing you money in the long run.



If you want a short-term forum or you want to try vBulletin out for size, then a leased license is the way to go. However, three years of running vBulletin at leased license prices costs more than an owned license with yearly support and upgrade options would have cost you (and you still won't own the software).

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### Leased versus owned

As a general rule, unless you are pretty sure that you aren't going to be running vBulletin for a third year, upgrade to a full license at the end of the first year.

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For further information about vBulletin pricing or to purchase, visit <http://www.vbulletin.com/order>.

## Example vBulletin Sites

By now, if you're not already using vBulletin, you're probably ready to see it in action! If you are reading this book because you're looking to be persuaded to purchase vBulletin or you're getting ready to buy a copy for a project soon, then in the meantime there are a number of good examples of vBulletin discussion boards in action on the Web. Here are a few of the most popular:

- <http://www.vbulletin.com>—Official vBulletin site. The support and discussion forums here use, not surprisingly, vBulletin. This site gives you a very good idea of what vBulletin looks like pretty much 'out of the box' from the end-user perspective. If you want to see and test-drive vBulletin from an administrator's perspective, then there is an 'Admin demo' available at <http://www.vbulletin.com/admindemo.php>.
- <http://www.vbulletin.org>—This is the main site for information on hacks and tweaks for vBulletin. This site is an excellent example of some of the things that it is possible to accomplish through modifying and tweaking (collectively known as hacking) the vBulletin code.
- <http://forums.offtopic.com>—This is a massive forum and serves as testament to just how big you can make a vBulletin forum. This forum is made up of nearly 2 million threads, which are made up of well over 30 million posts. As of present it has nearly 150,000 members (this is regularly pruned to keep it manageable) and usually has over 1000 members on the boards at any one time. This is a truly massive forum!
- <http://www.photopost.com>—This is a commercial add-on for vBulletin that adds a photo gallery to the forum.
- <http://www.vbadvanced.com>—On this site you will find a free product that adds a CMPS (Content Management and Portal System) to vBulletin. This will allow you to quickly and easily include different options from your vBulletin discussion board on your site's homepage. It also allows you to easily create and manage new pages in which you can use settings other than the default.

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### **More vBulletin boards**

If you want to see more vBulletin boards, then use your favorite search engine to search for `vbulletin`—you will find literally thousands of examples! Some will be basic while others will be highly customized.

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## **Summary**

This chapter has been a quick tour outlining some of the benefits of using the vBulletin discussion board software as well as providing the background to its development. For the many readers who are already making use of vBulletin or who have seen it in action, we have provided a brief glimpse of the hidden power of this widespread and popular software.

In the next chapter we're going to be shifting our focus to the installation and configuration of vBulletin.

# 2

## Installing and Configuring vBulletin

In this chapter we begin at the point where most people begin with vBulletin—with a copy of the software and somewhere to upload it to. If you have both of those, then you are probably eager to get going with the installation!

We will look at:

- The requirements of vBulletin
- How to install the files
- How to create the database
- How to troubleshoot installation problems
- How to configure vBulletin
- How to administer the default usergroups
- How to secure vBulletin
- How to get help and support

### Requirements

The requirements to run vBulletin are pretty straightforward, and even the basic shared hosting available nowadays for a few dollars a month should allow you to upload, install, configure, and run vBulletin.

Basic requirements are:

- MySQL database support
- PHP support

If your host claims to support these, then you have a good chance of being able to run vBulletin. Now you need to look in a little more detail at what your host offers.

Detailed requirements for vBulletin are:

- PHP 4.0.6 (latest version recommended to reduce security loopholes, improve performance, and maintain best compatibility with future upgrades)
- MySQL 3.23.33 minimum (4.0.16 or later recommended)
- Operating system: BSD, Solaris, Linux, Windows

## Disk Space

Disk space is an important consideration. By 'disk space' I mean the amount of space you are given on the server to host your site and the associated databases.

Disk space is a requirement that is harder to predict. Initially, you will be able to get away with a small amount of space, say 50 Mb. However, over time, the posts in your forum will add significantly to this. All you can do is estimate how busy your forum will be and judge how much space you need from that.

For example, if you think that your forum will generate about 100 posts a day, then that's 36,500 posts a year. On average, this number of posts will take up about 75 Mb of room. If you think that your discussion board will generate 200 posts a day, then you'll need at least 150 Mb of space. 400 posts a day means 146,000 posts a year and an approximate disk consumption of around 300 Mb.

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### Points to note about disk space

Remember that these figures are average figures. If your site regularly has large posts (in terms of text content) or users are able to attach a lot of attachments to posts, then these figures could rise significantly.

Another point to note is that posts are stored in the database. Different hosts handle disk space versus database space differently, so make sure you know in advance how much disk space and database space you have.

---

## Bandwidth

**Bandwidth** is the amount of data transfer that your site has. Each time a page is called up by a browser, data extracted from a database or an image retrieved, this adds to your site's bandwidth usage.

For convenience, almost all hosts measure bandwidth over a period of a month in megabytes or gigabytes, so one hosting plan might give you 100 Mb of monthly bandwidth while another might give you 50 Gb. The more bandwidth you have, the more you usually pay and the more room your site has to expand.

Judging how much bandwidth a discussion board will need is tricky for a number of reasons. Yes, it depends on the number of users and the number of posts made, but it also depends on other, harder-to-measure factors. These include:

- How often posts are read. (Remember, a post can be read once or many times by the same person.)
- How often a post is re-read. (Re-reading a post contributes to the bandwidth used.)
- How many posts are displayed on a page.
- How many graphics are on the site.
- How often people carry out searches.

Even a small a forum can generate a lot of activity and therefore consume a lot of bandwidth. Shop around and you'll find some good deals.

As a general rule, it's probably better that you don't go for any plan that offers you less than 20 Gb a month. If you go over your allocated bandwidth, you'll end up paying over the odds for additional bandwidth, so it pays to have more than you need.

Many hosts also allow you to roll over unused bandwidth, which means that what you don't use this month you have available the next month.

---

### Flexibility

Try to find a host that is flexible—you might not know how your forum will develop over a year or two, so try to find a host that will allow you to upgrade in mid-contract.

---

## System Resources

The bigger your discussion board is, the more system resources it is going to need from the server that it is being hosted on. (By big, we mean how busy it is, which can be measured by how many people are on it at any one time and how many posts are being made over a period of time.)

There are three types of hosting solution available to you.

## Shared Hosting

Shared hosting is sometimes called **virtual hosting**.

If your board is small (say under 200 posts a day and about 20 people online simultaneously), then you should find that this forum could be run on hosting known as **shared hosting**, where your website lives on a computer with many other websites.

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### Shared hosting facts

On a shared hosting plan you can be sharing the server with over 200 other sites. This means that the server power available to you is only a fraction of what the server has to offer. If your site is big and busy, then this can affect others on the server. This is why shared hosting is only viable for small discussion boards.

---

Shared hosting is by far the cheapest option open to you because you share the cost of the server with others, but be aware that you get what you pay for. Don't expect a shared server solution that costs \$100 a year to offer you the same power and flexibility as a hosting solution costing \$100 a month would offer you.

## Semi-Dedicated Hosting

One rung up from shared hosting comes **semi-dedicated hosting**. This is similar to shared hosting, but you share the server with fewer other sites. This means that more server power is available to you and your site. The more power that you have, the more users can use your site at any given time and the faster your site appears to them (although ultimately the speed of their Internet connection also plays a big part).

There are benefits to semi-dedicated hosting—the main one being a lot more power for only a little more money—but be careful and make sure that you are clear about what you are getting. Find out up-front how many people will be sharing the server and what is the maximum allowed on a single semi-dedicated server. A good host will give you this information freely. If they don't, look elsewhere.

---

### Not all semi-dedicated servers were made equal

It's all in the numbers. Some hosting companies only allow a semi-dedicated server to host 4 or 5 sites, while others will allow 20 or more. What you are looking for is the best deal based on your budget.

---

## Dedicated Hosting

A **dedicated hosting** solution is where you get a server all to yourself. This gives you the best in terms of power and flexibility, but at a price. Remember too that dedicated hosting is a term not a standard—a package (or packages) offered by one company is likely to be different from what's on offer from another company.

There are many variables when it comes to dedicated hosting—connection speed, server specification, support packages, add-ons. Be careful and shop around for the best deals.

---

### Get advice!

If you are unsure about what you want, then you can get good advice, recommendations and feedback on good deals on the vBulletin community forums:

<http://www.vbulletin.com/forum>

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Also, you need to factor in issues like support and downtime. Check out the guarantees offered by the host.

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## Other Options

There are other options open to you. These include running your own server from your home over a leased line and collocation (where you lease space for your own server at the hosting company's server location). They are both similar to the dedicated hosting solution outlined above.

Both these are expensive solutions but allow you the very best in terms of performance and power. Choosing a collocation solution normally only makes sense if you want complete data privacy or want to handle your technical support and upgrades yourself.

Again, however, bear in mind that these terms aren't standards and that what one company offers you will differ from what another one will be offering. You will need to shop around to get the best deals.

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### Note of caution

Leaping straight into an expensive solution is folly—it will probably have far more power than most discussion forums will ever need.

Be careful about unnecessarily lumbering yourself and your community with a lot of expensive and ongoing bills to pay!

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## Installing vBulletin

Let's now look at how to install vBulletin. The process is pretty straightforward and installation should only take you about an hour the first time you do it. (Once you get used to it, it's an easy job, one that you can accomplish in a few minutes.)

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### Make sure you have your customer number handy!

You will need this number to carry out the installation of vBulletin, so make sure you have it handy. (You should have been sent this when you purchased vBulletin.) You won't be able to proceed with the installation without it.

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Let's begin by looking at the tools you will need to install vBulletin.

## Tools

There are a few tools that you need to have, but these you should be able to pick up for free.

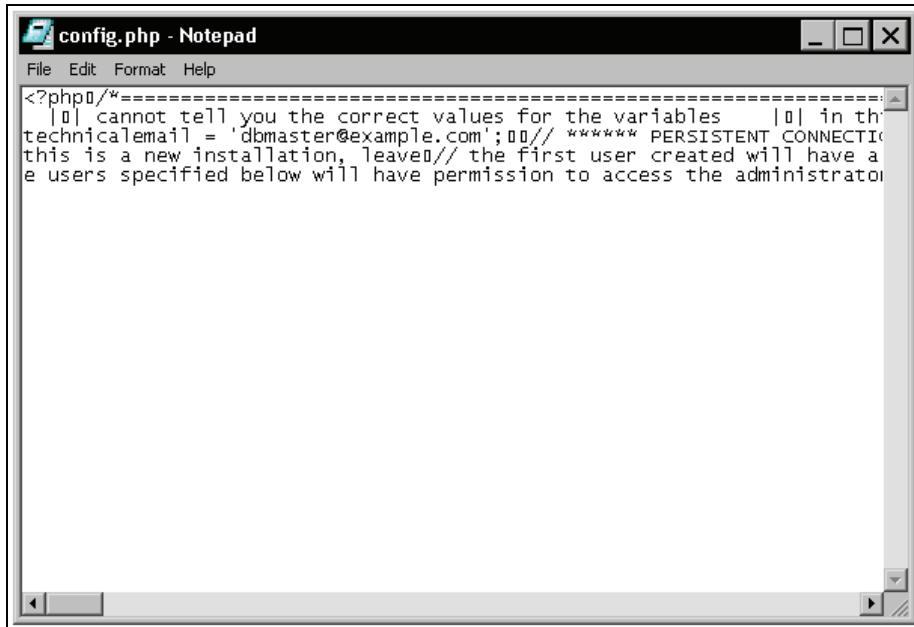
- Unzip tools: You will need one of these to expand the vBulletin installation files. You can choose to download a `.zip` zipped version or a `.tar.gz` tarball version of the vBulletin installation files. If you choose the zipped archive, you can download the Free Zip Wizard from <http://www.coffeecup.com>.

- Text editor: You will need one of these to make changes to some key vBulletin files. Windows WordPad, among others, is ideal for this. Be careful not to use a word processor (such as Word or Open Office), because these applications might try to reformat the code files and damage them. For power editing of text files (something that you will undoubtedly be doing if you plan on making modifications to your vBulletin board), we recommend the commercial editor UltraEdit, available from <http://www.ultraedit.com>.
- FTP program: To upload the vBulletin files, we will be using WS-FTP, but there are many other good (and free) FTP programs available. A good one is CoffeeCup Free FTP available from <http://www.coffeecup.com>.

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### Notepad problems

Oddly enough, Windows Notepad is not recommended for editing vBulletin files because it has difficulties handling line breaks in some files and can cause significant text corruption.



Notepad problems

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This is all you need to get started.

## Downloading the Installation Files

When you purchased vBulletin, you will have received an email giving you details of how to log into the member area on the vBulletin website. In this password protected area on the vBulletin site you will find your license details along with the latest vBulletin download files.



Follow the instructions on the site to download the latest version of vBulletin to your computer.

## File Extraction

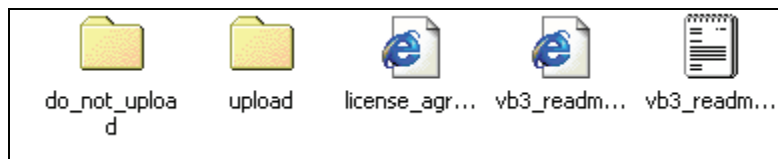
Using a suitable unzip tool, extract these files into a working folder on your system—your desktop is convenient for uploading later. For simplicity, we've called the folder vb 3.0.6 because we will be installing version 3.5.2 (which, at the time of writing, isn't the latest version, but we will show you how to upgrade later).

Inside this working folder you'll find another folder. The name of this folder follows the following convention:

xxxxxxx.yyy

Where xxxxxxx is your license number for vBulletin and yyy indicates the version number, in this case 352.

Inside this folder are two more folders and a few files (a readme file and license agreements). It might sound like we're hammering home the folders here, but you don't want to upload the wrong files to the Web!



More folders!

There's a folder called upload and one called do\_not\_upload. The files you want to upload are in the folder called upload. The other folder contains tools that we don't need to worry about right now.

## Upload Preparation

If you have chosen what to call the folder that you want to upload vBulletin to, you can rename the folder to that name now.



Renaming the upload folder

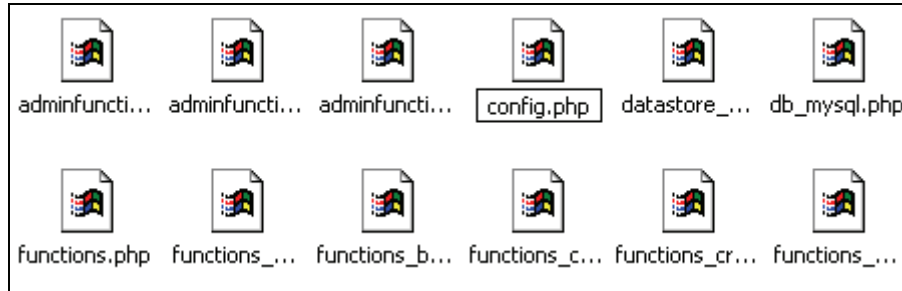
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### Root installation

If you are planning on installing vBulletin in the root of your website, then you don't need to do this—you will only need to upload the contents of the upload folder to the root directory of your website.

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The next thing you need to do is to find a file called `config.php.new` that resides inside the `includes` folder inside the `upload` folder (the folder we just renamed `vb`). Rename this file `config.php`.



Renaming `config.php.new` as `config.php`

Before you upload the vBulletin files to the web server, you will need to make some changes to the vBulletin configuration file `includes/config.php`.

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### File paths

From now on we will define the names and locations of vBulletin files relative to the vBulletin root folder, so `includes/config.php` means `config.php` in the `includes` folder.

---

Open this file up in a text editor. (We are using UltraEdit.)

If you plan on keeping your installation of vBulletin as close to 'out of the box' as possible and don't plan on making many customizations, then editing the `config.php` file is one of the few times where you will need to edit raw PHP code. Don't worry if you are unfamiliar with PHP as this file is heavily commented in order to help you fill in the necessary information.

Of the many settings in this file, only the first few need concern you, and very little of the file needs to be edited in order to create a working vBulletin configuration file.

## Creating the Database

Before you move to this stage, you need either to have a database already created on your web server or to create a new one. vBulletin can safely share a database with other software you might be running on your server, so if your host only allows you to have one database and you're already using that, you're still in luck!

Two of the easiest ways of creating a database are either via cPanel or using the command-line via SSH (Alternatively, you may be able to use Telnet access to your server—but not all hosts allow this.)

## Command-Line Database Creation

If your web host allows you to have root access to your web server, you can set up a new database for vBulletin to use via the MySQL command line.

1. Begin by logging in to your server via SSH or Telnet as the root user (or some other user with permission to control MySQL at the root level). Not all web hosts allow this, so check before trying.
2. Next, you need to start the MySQL command-line utility. This is done by typing the following (although the path you use might differ; again, if your host allows you to have access like this, then they will be able to provide you with the necessary details):  
`/usr/local/mysql/bin/mysql -uroot -p`

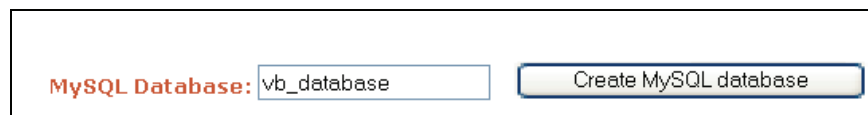
You will now be asked for the MySQL root password (usually your web server logon password).

3. Once logged in you should see the following prompt:  
`mysql>`
4. To see the list of databases that already exist, type the following command:  
`SHOW DATABASES;`
5. If you want to add a new database then the name you give that one must be different from all existing databases.  
To create a database called `vb_database` type the following:  
`CREATE DATABASE vb_database`
6. Once you have created the database, you need to create a MySQL user account with permission to access the new database. Doing this is a security precaution as you should never have PHP scripts communicating to MySQL with root privileges. In this example, we will name our new user `vb_user` and give the account a password of `password`. Replace those values as appropriate when you type the following:  
`GRANT ALL ON vb_database.* TO vb_user@localhost IDENTIFIED BY 'password';`
7. Job done!

## cPanel Database Creation

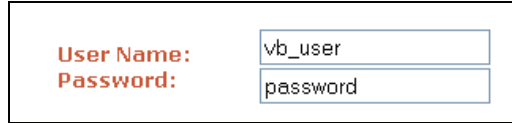
The interface you are presented with in cPanel will vary a lot from host to host, so the following should only be used as a guide.

1. First, click on the MySQL Databases icon.
2. From here you can create a new MySQL database. Here we are creating one called `vb_database`.



Creating a new MySQL database

- Next, you need to create a new user for the database and assign a password for them.



User Name: vb\_user  
Password: password

Creating a new user

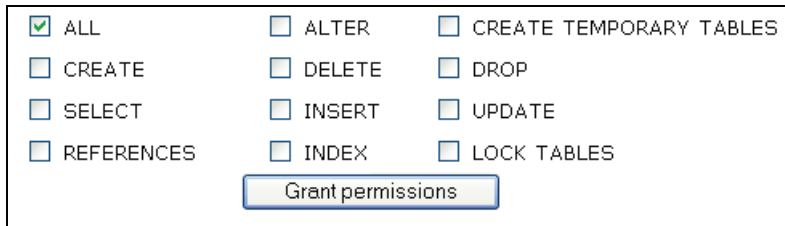
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### Prefixes

Some hosts have configured cPanel and phpMyAdmin to add a prefix to the database name and username.

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- Now you have to add the user to the database so they can have access and control. Give the user ALL permission privileges. (Not doing this is a common source of errors when installing vBulletin.)



ALL       ALTER       CREATE TEMPORARY TABLES  
 CREATE       DELETE       DROP  
 SELECT       INSERT       UPDATE  
 REFERENCES       INDEX       LOCK TABLES

Grant permissions

User permissions

- Job done!
- 

### Using phpMyAdmin

For information on using phpMyAdmin consult your web host or visit the phpMyAdmin site at <http://www.phpmyadmin.net>. Different hosts use different methods, but if the above methods don't seem to be available, then you can also create new databases through phpMyAdmin by accessing the main screen and clicking Create new database, and then filling in the name of the database, username, and password text boxes.

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## File Editing

You can now make the necessary changes to the `config.php` file.

The settings that need editing are (add the values into the " after the equals symbol on the appropriate lines):

- `$config['MasterServer']['servername']`—This sets the address of your database server. On most installations of vBulletin the database server is located on the same computer as the web server, in which case the address should be set to `localhost`. If this isn't the case, then you will need to use the address of the database server as supplied by your web host.
- `$config['MasterServer']['username']`—This is the username that was assigned to connect to the database on your web server. If you created a database yourself using phpMyAdmin, then use the username that you assigned there. Otherwise contact your web host. In our example this is `vb_user`.
- `$config['MasterServer']['password']`—This is the password that was assigned to connect to the database on your web server. In our example this is `password`.
- `$config['Database']['dbname']`—This is the name of the database that you want vBulletin to use. In our example this is `vb_user`.
- `$config['Database']['technicalemail']`—Here you need to enter an email address. All database error messages that are generated will be forwarded to this address.
- `$config['Database']['tableprefix']`—Here you need to enter a prefix for the tables that vBulletin will use. In our example this is `vb`.

## Uploading the vBulletin Files

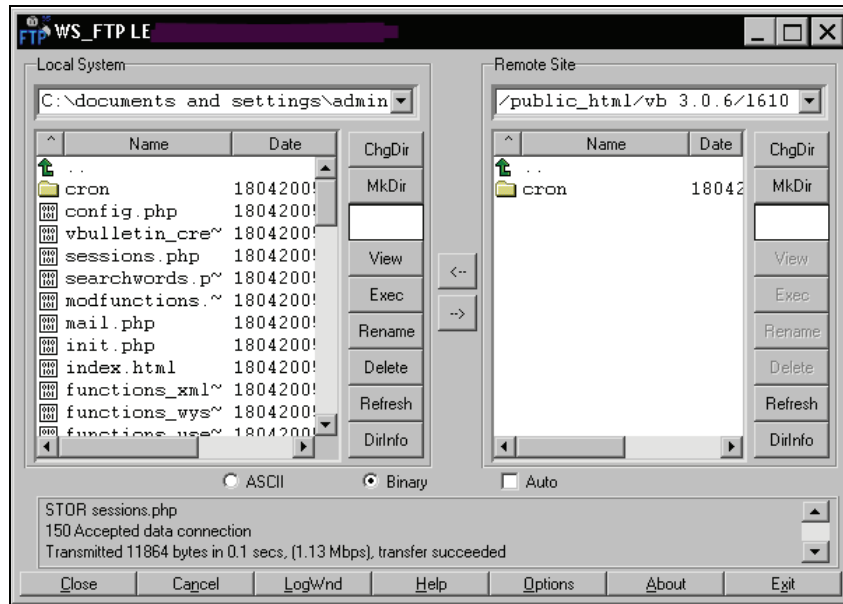
You are now ready to upload the files to the web server. Connect to your web server with your FTP program and upload the files and folders.

---

### Images

Some of the screenshots that follow show an earlier version of vBulletin (for example, it might show 3.0.6 as a version number)—this is purely a cosmetic difference and can be ignored.

---



Uploading the vBulletin files

Most FTP client applications will handle the file transfers automatically, but if for some reason your application does not, you should make a note of the following:

- Transfer all text files in ASCII mode.  
All files containing plain text from the vBulletin installation package should be transferred in ASCII mode.  
Text file types you will find in vBulletin are: .html, .php, .js, .xml, and .css.
- Transfer all non-text files in Binary mode  
The remaining files, which are mostly images, should be transferred to your web server in Binary mode.  
Binary file types used in vBulletin include: .gif, .png, .jpg, and .ico.

Upload of the files will take several minutes, even with a fast connection.

Once all the files are uploaded, you are ready for the next stage of the installation.

## Running the vBulletin Installation Script

Once all the vBulletin files have been successfully uploaded to your web server, you will need to run the vBulletin Installation Script in order to prepare your database to work with vBulletin.

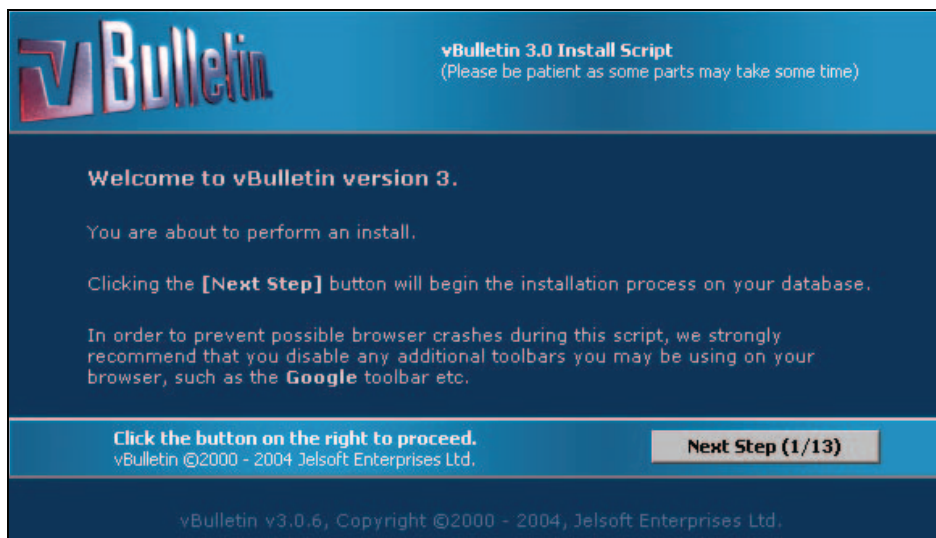
The Installer runs as a PHP script using your web browser. To start the installation process, open your browser and type the http address of your forum's directory, followed by /install/install.php, then hit the *Enter* key to begin the running of the script. For example, <http://www.example.com/vb/install/install.php>.

Before you can continue with the installation, you need to enter your customer number. (You will have been provided with this when you purchased vBulletin.)



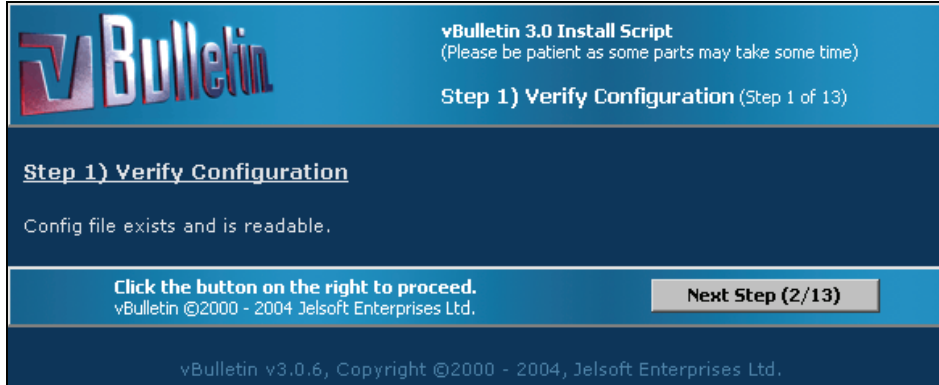
Running the Installation Script

After successfully entering your customer number, you are ready to proceed with the installation.



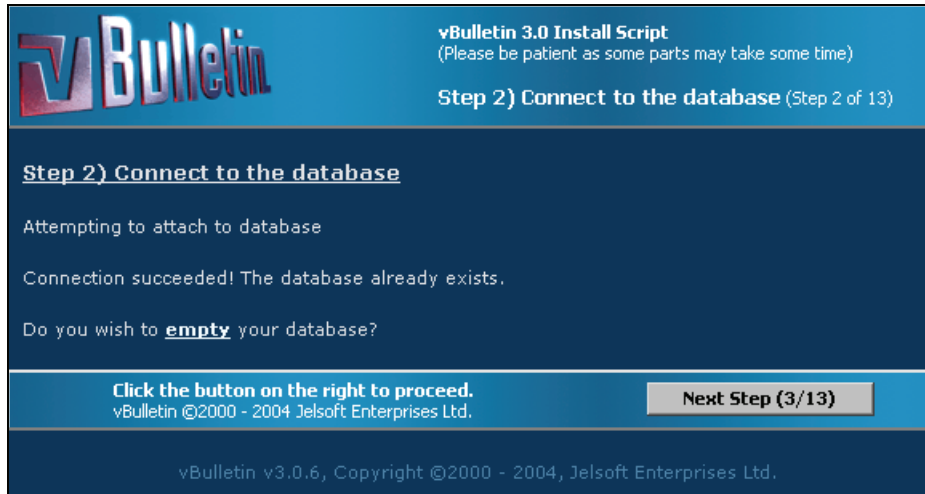
Installation continues

Step 1 of the installation only verifies that the configuration file is present and readable.



Configuration files OK

Step 2 connects the script to the database, which ensures that the username and password you enter is correct. At this stage you are also given the option to empty the database of any data. Here we are installing vBulletin into a database that contains the data for other applications running on the server, in which case we want to retain the information. Otherwise we could empty the database (but remember that this is one way and unrecoverable unless you have a backup).



Connecting to the database



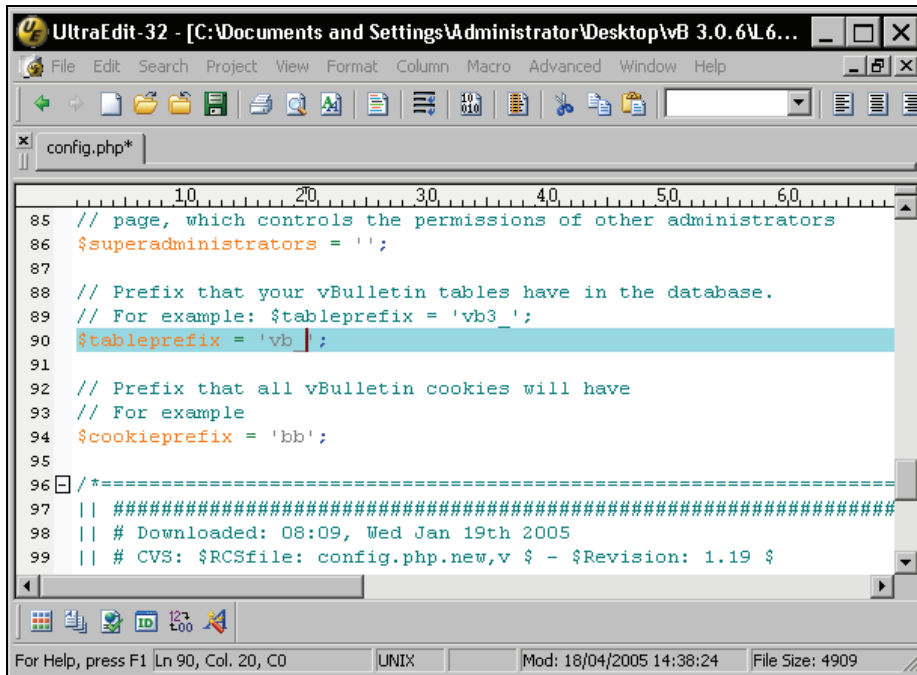
In step 3 vBulletin creates the tables that it requires to function.



Creating database tables

If you want these tables to be distinguishable from other tables in your database, you can assign them a table prefix in the `includes/config.php` file. In this case we have chosen not to do this to keep things 'standard', but this doesn't conflict with either the Wordpress blog software or phpBB discussion board software that we have installed into the same database that vBulletin will be using. In fact, vBulletin is quite happy to share a database with other applications and doesn't, as some people think, require a database to itself. (However, as the bulletin board gets bigger and busier, a dedicated database may become desirable, and you will be able to see to this when the need arises.)

To ensure that you don't have conflicts if you are sharing a database, it isn't a bad idea to assign a table prefix.



```
85 // page, which controls the permissions of other administrators
86 $superadministrators = '';
87
88 // Prefix that your vBulletin tables have in the database.
89 // For example: $tableprefix = 'vb3_';
90 $tableprefix = 'vb_';
91
92 // Prefix that all vBulletin cookies will have
93 // For example
94 $cookieprefix = 'bb';
95
96 /*=====
97 || #####
98 || # Downloaded: 08:09, Wed Jan 19th 2005
99 || # CVS: $RCSfile: config.php.new,v $ - $Revision: 1.19 $
```

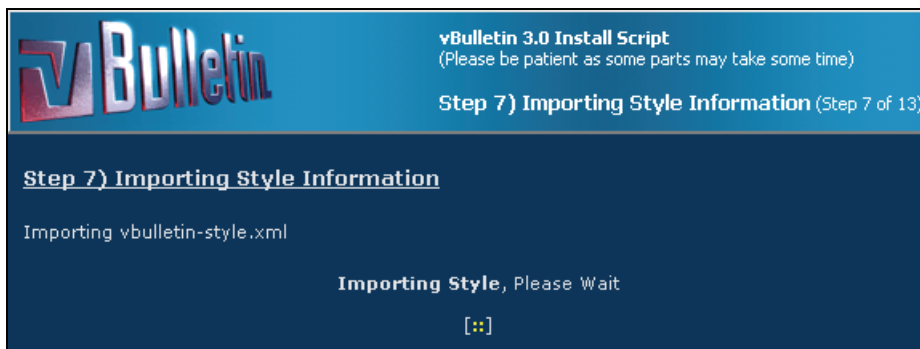
Assigning a database table prefix

Step 4 makes some necessary table configurations.

Step 5 inserts default data into the tables. This data is used as the default settings for the vBulletin installation. At this stage you don't need to do anything—only click the buttons to proceed from one installation screen to the next!

Step 6 configures the language settings for the discussion forum.

Step 7 imports the necessary style information into the vBulletin installation.



Importing style information

Step 8 installs the admin help files for the discussion board.

Step 9 asks you for some basic information about the discussion board you are setting up—title, name, contact details, and so on. If you are only running the one discussion board on your web site, then you can also leave the Cookie Path as /. The Cookie Domain settings box allows you to change the scope of the cookies on your site—as a rule you can leave this blank. Installation of other cookie-dependent software might mean that you have to revisit these settings and make changes later.

**vBulletin 3.0 Install Script**  
(Please be patient as some parts may take some time)

**Step 9) Obtain Some Default Settings** (Step 9 of 13)

**Step 9) Obtain Some Default Settings**

**General Settings**

<b>BB Title</b> Title of board. Appears in the title of every page.	<input type="text" value="The Example Forums Forum"/>
<b>Homepage Title</b> Name of your homepage. Appears at the bottom of every page.	<input type="text" value="The Example Forums"/>
<b>BB URL</b> URL (with no final "/") of the BB.	<input type="text" value="http://www.example.com/vb"/>
<b>Home URL</b> URL of your home page. Appears at the bottom of every page.	<input type="text" value="http://www.example.com"/>
<b>Webmaster email address</b> Email address of the webmaster.	<input type="text" value="webmaster@example.com"/>
<b>Cookie Path</b> The path that the cookie is saved to. If you run more than one board on the same	<input type="text" value="/"/>

Entering basic forum information

Step 10 confirms that the settings have been successfully stored.

**vBulletin 3.0 Install Script**  
(Please be patient as some parts may take some time)

**Step 10) Import Default Settings** (Step 10 of 13)

**Step 10) Import Default Settings**

Importing vbulletin-settings.xml

**Importing Setting, Please Wait**

[::]

Okay

Click the button on the right to proceed.  
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**Next Step (11/13)**

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Confirmations that the settings have been successfully saved

Step 11 asks you to enter the login details of the administrator of the forum. Make a careful note of these settings—you don't want to forget them!

Make sure that the password is a good one too. A poor password will mean that others might be able to guess it and gain access to the site. Make sure that the password is at least eight characters long and contains both upper and lower case characters and a few numbers thrown in for good measure.



**vBulletin** vBulletin 3.0 Install Script  
(Please be patient as some parts may take some time)  
Step 11) Obtain User Data (Step 11 of 13)

Step 11) Obtain User Data

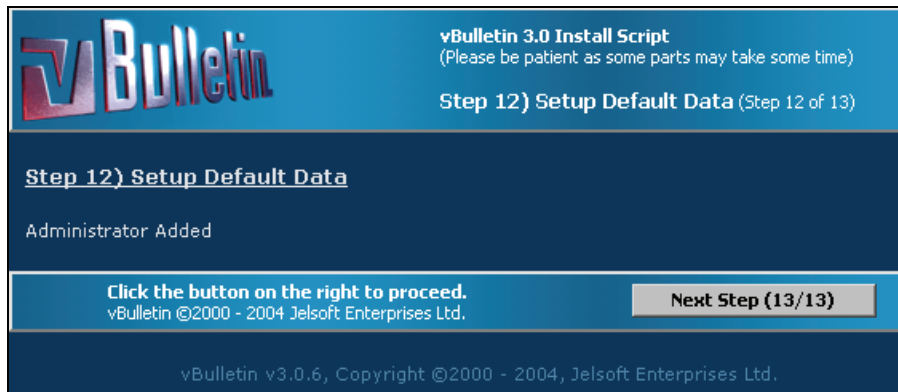
Please fill in the form below to setup an administrator account

User Name	<input type="text" value="Administrator"/>
Password	<input type="password" value="*****"/>
Confirm Password	<input type="password" value="*****"/>
Email Address	<input type="text" value="admin@example.com"/>

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Administrator login details

Step 12 confirms that the administrator details have been successfully saved.



**vBulletin** vBulletin 3.0 Install Script  
(Please be patient as some parts may take some time)  
Step 12) Setup Default Data (Step 12 of 13)

Step 12) Setup Default Data

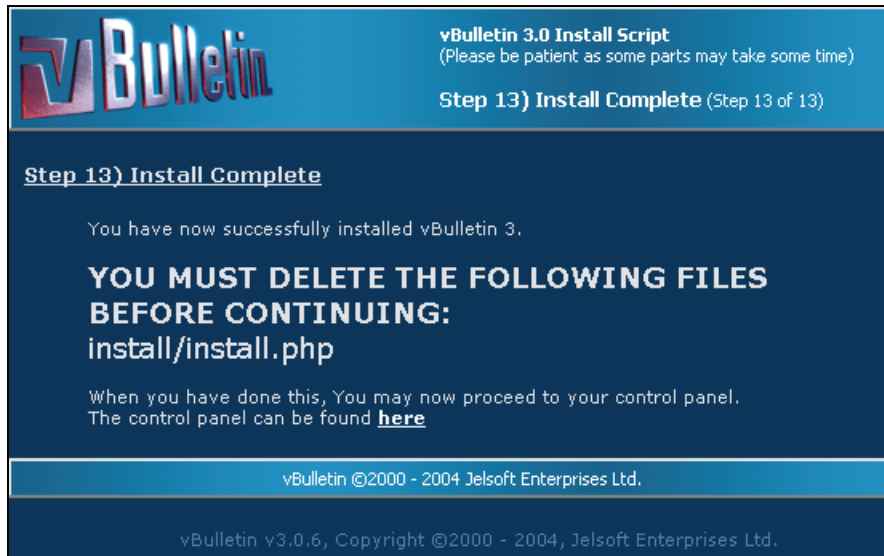
Administrator Added

Click the button on the right to proceed.  
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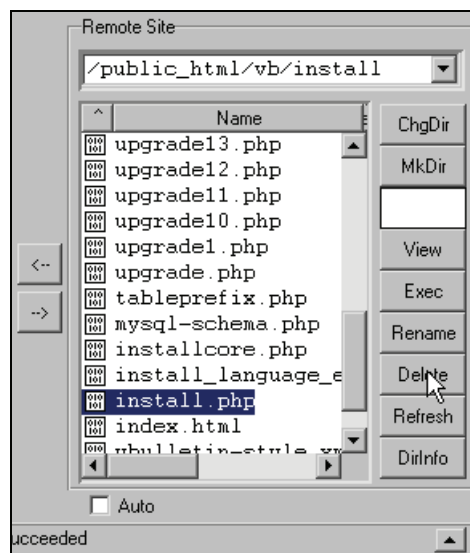
Confirmation that the administrator details have been saved

Step 13 tells you to do something important—and that is to delete the `install/install.php` file from the web server. This is required because others could use it to alter your site or delete the data from the database.



Important security advice

Use your FTP application to delete the file. Once you have done this you can enter the control panel by clicking the link on the screen.



Deleting the `install/install.php` file

## Troubleshooting

If you have managed to get this far without problems, then that's great. Chances are that you won't have any problems at all because vBulletin has been designed to make installation quick and easy.

However, it would be unwise to discount the possibility that things could go wrong.

Here are some of the most commonly occurring problems that you might encounter during the installation of vBulletin

### Database Access Issues

This is the commonest issue that you are likely to encounter and isn't really a vBulletin problem—it just means that you haven't made all the necessary configuration changes.

If vBulletin cannot access the database, check the following:

- You are using the correct database username. (Remember that a prefix may have been added automatically.)
- The password is correct.
- The database name is correct. (Again, a prefix may have been added automatically to the database name.)
- You have granted the database user full privileges for the database.

If problems still persist, then the problem may be that your FTP client didn't upload the files properly (especially the text files, which are uploaded as ASCII). Upload all the files again and try to run the installation script again.

### Images/Styling Not Showing

This is another common problem, and it can make the site look very odd—no graphics will show, and the text will be unformatted.

The problem here is that your web server is sensitive to capitalization but your FTP program uploaded the files all lowercase.

To solve this problem navigate to the `cpstyles` folder and rename the following folders:

```
vbulletin_3_default -> vBulletin_3_Default
vbulletin_3_frontend -> vBulletin_3_Frontend
vbulletin_3_manual -> vBulletin_3_Manual
vbulletin_3_silver -> vBulletin_3_Silver
vbulletin_2_default -> vBulletin_2_Default
```

### PHP Errors

The most common reason for a PHP error is having white space at the end of a PHP file after the closing `?>` tag. Check for this in any of the files that you have recently edited and remove it. Then resave the file, upload it and try again.

If the problems continue, then upload all the files again and try to run the installation script once more.

## The vBulletin Control Panel

Now that you have come this far, you are probably eager to access the Control Panel and get started.

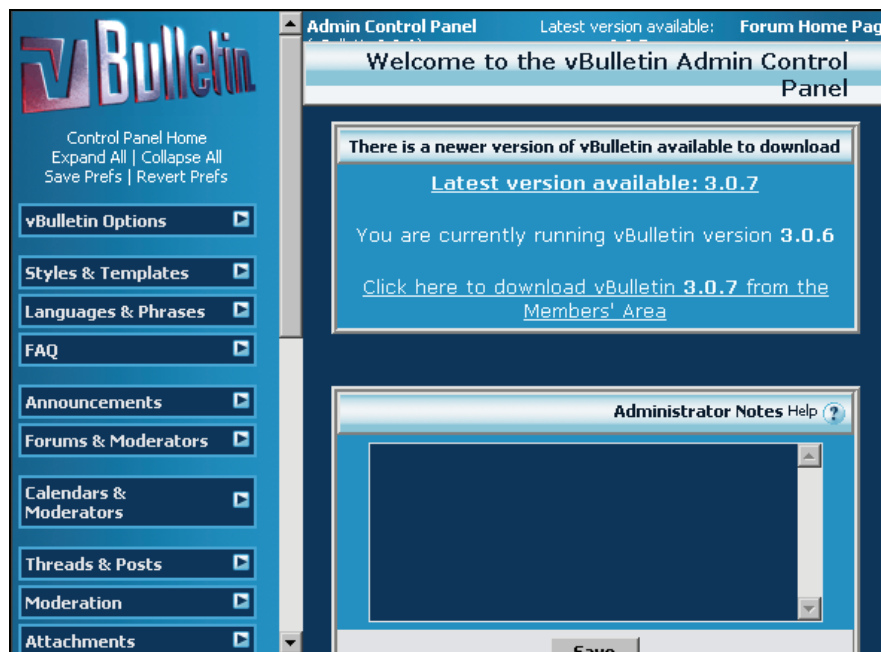
Click on the link on the Step 13 page to access the Control Panel. (You will need to have deleted the `install/install.php` file before being able to continue.)

After clicking on the link you will then need to enter the username and password you assigned to the administrator during the installation of vBulletin.



Logging into the control panel

Once you log into the Control Panel, you are faced with a lot of information! Don't worry though—it is well organized, and you will quickly learn where everything is.



The vBulletin Control Panel

Down the left hand side you have a menu that allows you access to all the important features of vBulletin.

Here they are organized into categories and sub-categories.

- vBulletin Options
  - vBulletin Options
  - Search Type
- Styles & Templates
  - Style Manager
  - Search in Templates
  - Replacement Variable Manager
  - Download / Upload Styles
  - Find Updated Templates
- Languages & Phrases
  - Language Manager
  - Phrase Manager
  - Search in Phrases
  - Download / Upload Languages
- FAQ
  - FAQ Manager
  - Add New FAQ Item
- Announcements
  - Announcement Manager
  - Add New Announcement
- Forums & Moderators
  - Forum Manager
  - Add New Forum
  - Forum Permissions
  - Show All Moderators
  - View Permissions
- Calendars & Moderators
  - Calendar Manager
  - Add New Calendar
- Calendar Permissions
  - Holiday Manager
- Threads & Posts
  - Prune
  - Move
  - Unsubscribe
  - Strip Poll
  - Who Voted
- Moderation
  - Moderate Threads
  - Moderate Posts
  - Moderate Attachments
  - Moderate Events
  - Moderate Users
- Attachments
  - Search
  - Moderate Attachments
  - Attachment Statistics
  - Attachment Storage Type
  - Extensions & Sizes
- Users
  - Add New User
  - Search for Users
  - Merge Users
  - Ban User
  - Prune / Move Users
  - Private Message Statistics
  - Referrals
  - Search IP Addresses
  - View Banned Users
  - Send Email to Users



- 
- Generate Mailing List
  - Access Masks
  - Usergroups
    - Usergroup Manager
    - Add New Usergroup
    - Join Requests
    - Promotions
    - Forum Permissions
    - Administrator Permissions
  - User Titles
    - User Title Manager
    - Add New User Title
  - User Ranks
    - User Rank Manager
    - Add New User Rank
  - User Reputations
    - User Reputation Manager
    - Add New User Reputation
    - View Reputation Comments
  - User Profile Fields
    - User Profile Field Manager
    - Add New User Profile Field
  - Paid Subscriptions
    - Subscription Manager
    - Add New Subscription
    - Payment API Manager
    - Test Communication
  - Avatars
    - Avatar Manager
    - Add New Avatars
    - Upload Avatar
    - Avatar Storage Type
  - Post Icons
    - Post Icon Manager
    - Add New Post Icon
    - Upload Post Icon
  - Smilies
    - Smilie Manager
    - Add New Smilie
    - Upload Smilie
  - Custom BB Codes
    - BB Code Manager
    - Add New BB Code
  - Scheduled Tasks
    - Scheduled Task Manager
    - Add New Scheduled Task
    - Scheduled Task Log
  - Plugin System
    - Manage Products
    - Plugin Manager
    - Add New Plugin
    - Download / Upload Plugins
  - Statistics & Logs
    - Statistics
    - Control Panel Log
    - Moderator Log
    - Scheduled Task Log
    - Log Manager
  - Import & Maintenance
    - Database Backup
    - Repair / Optimize Tables
    - Update Counters
    - Diagnostics
    - Execute SQL Query
    - View PHP info

In the right-hand pane you get information about the version—notice how we are being told that there is a newer version of vBulletin available. That's a really handy feature, and later on we'll show you how to upgrade the forum software quickly and easily.

We suggest that you spend some going through the menus and familiarizing yourself with the options and settings available—especially if this is your first installation of vBulletin. We will pick up the tour of the vBulletin Control Panel in Chapter 3. Now we need to go and look at importing data from another discussion board into vBulletin.

## Importing Data into vBulletin

If you are moving to vBulletin from another type of discussion board, then there is a good chance that you won't want to lose all the posts that you already have and start again with nothing. And it's not just the posts that are important—what about all your member information—usernames, passwords, profile data? You don't want to lose all that and start with a blank forum!

To make migration easier, the vBulletin development team has created a Import/Export script (called the ImpEx script).

## Downloading the ImpEx Script

The ImpEx script is available from the Member Area on the vBulletin site. This means that you need a valid license to be able to download it.

After downloading the script, you will need to extract the files into a convenient location (just as you did with the vBulletin installation files).

## Compatibility

The following boards are supported in the ImpEx script:

- IPB (version 2)
- phpBB (version 2.0.4 - 2.0.11 MySQL and MSSQL)
- Infopop eve (EVE: version 1.2.6, UBB.x forum module: version 4.0.3)
- IPB (version 1.1 - 1.3)
- wBB (version 2)
- Ubb\_classic (version 6.3 - 6.7)
- Open Topic & Ubb.x
- DCFm (DCForum+ MySQL backend)
- YaBB SE (version 1.5.5)
- Ubb\_threads (version 6.4)
- vBulletin 3 (version 3.0.x -> vB 3.0.x)
- Snitz (version 3.4.x MySQL and MSSQL)
- Ikonboard MySQL (version 3.x)

- XMB (version 1.9)
- CuteCast (version 2.0)
- vBulletin (version 2)
- ThwBoard (version 3)
- SMF (version 1.0)
- DiscusWare (version 4.00.x)
- vB (version 1.0 RC 1)
- YaBB - Gold (version 1.3.1)
- openBB (version 1.0.7)
- deluxeportal (version 2.0)
- Digiposts (version 2.0)
- Phorum (version 3)
- Fusetalk
- WebWiz (version 7.9)
- Maxportalweb
- Jiveforums
- Xoops—Newbb
- Siteframe
- PNphpBB2
- TruBB
- bbBoard2
- MyBB
- tritaniumbb2
- ASPPlayground (MSSQL)
- Geeklog
- PunBB
- e107.org
- phpBB1
- Oyxgen
- megaBBS (version 1.69-2.1 MySQL & MSSQL)
- yahoogroups\_text
- wowBB
- vB lite (version 1.0)
- Encore II

- Freethreads
- W-agera
- ttCMS
- Simpleboard—mambo server
- Allaire
- dotnetBB
- Beta support for vBzoom

## Preparing for Upload

When the unzipping progress is complete, you will find that the process has created a new folder called `xxxxxxx.impex` (where `xxxxxxx` is the license number of your vBulletin license).

Within this folder you will find another folder called `upload`. This folder contains the `IMPEx` files that need to be uploaded to your web server.

## Editing the Configuration File

However, you're not ready to upload just yet. First you must make some changes to the `IMPEx` configuration file. This file is located in the `impex` subfolder of the `upload` folder and is called `IMPExConfig.php.new`.

As before, the first thing you must do is rename this file from `IMPExConfig.php.new` to `IMPExConfig.php` (removing the `.new` extension). This step is in place to make sure that you remember to edit the file!

To edit the `IMPExConfig.php` file, you will need to open the file in a text editor such as Windows WordPad. (Again, the use of Windows Notepad is not recommended, as Notepad has problems displaying line breaks.)

The settings in this file need to be edited in order to get the script working.

The settings that require editing are divided into two groups.

- Target database
- Source database

### Target Database Settings

The target database is the database that will be having data imported into it by the script.

- `targetdatabasetype`—Enter the type of database here. This is usually `mysql`.
- `targetserver`—This sets the address of your database server. On most installations the database server is located on the same computer as the web server, in which case the address should be set to `localhost`, otherwise use the address of the database server as supplied by your web host.
- `targetuser`—This contains the username to connect to your target database.

- `targetpassword`—This is the password to connect to the target database.
- `targetdatabase`—This is the name of the database that contains your vBulletin.
- `targettableprefix`—If your vBulletin installation uses a prefix on the tables, then set this value here.

### Source Database Settings

The source database is the database that the script will be extracting the data from.

- `sourceexists`—If the system that is being imported from uses a database, enter the details for it here and set `sourceexists` to `TRUE`. If the source data is not contained in a database, set `sourceexists` to `FALSE`.
- `sourcedatabasetype`—Enter the type of database here. This is usually `mysql`.
- `sourceserver`—This sets the address of your database server. On most installations the database server is located on the same computer as the web server, in which case the address should be set to `localhost`. Otherwise use the address of the database server as supplied by your web host.
- `sourceuser`—This contains the username to connect to your source database.
- `sourcepassword`—This is the password to connect to the source database.
- `sourcedatabase`—Change this value to state the name of the database that contains your other forum software data on the database server.
- `sourceprefix`—If the source database uses a prefix for the tables, set that here.

### Upload the ImpEx Script

When you have finished editing the `ImpExConfig.php` file, you should save it and you are then ready to upload the ImpEx script to your web server.

Remember only to upload the contents of the `upload` folder.

Connect your web server with your FTP program and upload the files and folders.

As we saw earlier in this chapter, FTP client applications usually handle the file transfers automatically, but if this does not happen, then all text files (`.html`, `.php`, `.js`, `.xml`, and `.css`) will need to be transferred in ASCII mode, and all non-text files (`.gif`, `.png`, `.jpg`, and `.ico`) will need to be transferred in Binary mode.

Once all the files are uploaded, you are ready for the next stage of the installation.

### Running the ImpEx Script

From your Admin Control Panel select Import & Maintenance, then Import / Export, and select the system you wish to import from the list.

---

#### Version issues

Note that the ImpEx script has been written for version 3.0.1 and higher of vBulletin.

---

The script will then run automatically, and all you need to do is run each module by clicking on the appropriate button. Make sure that you work through each module in turn and don't be tempted to skip steps or rush things—the `ImpEx` script can take a lot of time.

If you receive an error message, make a note of it and carry out a search for it on the vBulletin forum. If you cannot find a resolution, contact support—importing data is a complex procedure, but the vBulletin support team is likely to be able to help you with any problems that you might have.

---

### Check usergroups

After each import, check all options for every usergroup that was imported into vBulletin using the `ImpEx` script, and make sure that all the usergroup permissions are set correctly.

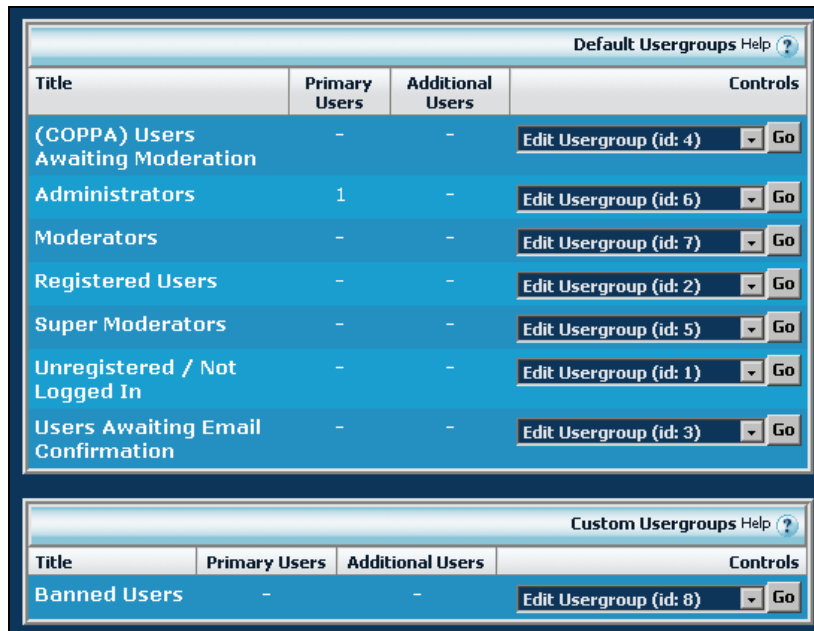
We will be covering usergroup management in Chapter 5.

---

## Default Usergroups

Every member on a vBulletin discussion board must belong to at least one usergroup. These usergroups allow you to control who has access to what and later on (Chapter 5) we will be taking a closer look at the usergroups. However, vBulletin comes pre-installed with default usergroups, which can be used to get the forum up and running quickly.

There are eight default usergroups:



The screenshot displays two tables from the vBulletin usergroup management interface. The top table, titled "Default Usergroups", lists eight usergroups with their respective primary and additional user counts and edit controls. The bottom table, titled "Custom Usergroups", shows a single "Banned Users" group.

Default Usergroups Help ?			
Title	Primary Users	Additional Users	Controls
(COPPA) Users	-	-	Edit Usergroup (id: 4) Go
Awaiting Moderation	-	-	
Administrators	1	-	Edit Usergroup (id: 6) Go
Moderators	-	-	Edit Usergroup (id: 7) Go
Registered Users	-	-	Edit Usergroup (id: 2) Go
Super Moderators	-	-	Edit Usergroup (id: 5) Go
Unregistered / Not Logged In	-	-	Edit Usergroup (id: 1) Go
Users Awaiting Email Confirmation	-	-	Edit Usergroup (id: 3) Go

Custom Usergroups Help ?			
Title	Primary Users	Additional Users	Controls
Banned Users	-	-	Edit Usergroup (id: 8) Go

Default usergroups

---

For the moment you only need to be concerned with three of the usergroups:

- Administrators—These are the users with the most power, and membership should usually be restricted to forum owners. Administrators have control over almost all features of the discussion board.
- Moderators—These are members with more powers than regular members but less than administrators. These are normally the people who look after the forum—moving posts that are in the wrong place, deleting inappropriate posts. Choose trusted people for this role.
- Registered Users—Almost everyone else! These are the people who sign up to participate on the forum.

---

### **Banned users!**

Handling banned users is something that we will come to in Chapter 5.

---

These are the main vBulletin usergroups, and most members will belong to these (unless you have made some significant changes to the way your forum works).

## **Securing vBulletin**

vBulletin is a very robust and secure application, but it still needs you to take care of some things for it to remain totally secure.

- It is passwords that secure vBulletin—make sure that all your passwords are good passwords (eight characters or greater, containing upper- and lowercase characters and numbers). Change your passwords every so often (at least 4 times a year).
- Remember too that it's not just forum access that you need to be mindful of—anyone who has access to the web server or MySQL also has access to the data the forum contains. Make sure that the passwords protecting these are robust, and if you need to give someone access (such as support personnel), change them afterwards.
- Make regular backups of your forum data (files and database), and keep these safe just in case of a future problem.
- Carry out software upgrades regularly.

## **Help & Support**

The installation and initial setup of vBulletin is quite simple and straightforward, thanks mainly to the thought put into the software and also the easy-to-follow wizard-style setup interface.

If, however, you run into serious problems, then your first port of call should be the vBulletin community forum—here you will find years of vBulletin information in one place. Chances are that a few searches will turn up a solution to your problems.

If that's not enough, then you can fall back on vBulletin support for help—you will need to fill in a trouble ticket and then wait for a response. This is usually fast and you should get an initial response in a few hours.

In order that you receive the best support, make sure you pass on the following information:

- vBulletin version
- PHP and MySQL version (Ask your host if unsure.)
- Exact error message
- Description of what causes the error
- Is the error repeatable?

The more information you provide, the easier it is for the vBulletin support team to be able to quickly and accurately deal with your problems.

## Summary

We've looked at a lot in this chapter and covered everything you need to know to install and carry out the initial configuration of the vBulletin software.

If you are installing the vBulletin software for the first time, then take your time, especially when editing the configuration files. (Keep a backup in case you make a mistake!) It can be annoying to get to the installation wizard stage only to find that you made some simple mistakes early on.

If you are upgrading from another discussion board, then be extra careful and take extra precautions—you want to make sure that everything goes back properly and that members can't do or see more than they should!

Also, once you have vBulletin up and running, take time to familiarize yourself with the software. A book like this is very useful, but it can only go so far. Work your way through the menus and options. Don't feel that you need to make changes—just seeing what's available and getting to grips with the defaults can be educational.

Finally, if things do go wrong, then remember that along with purchasing software you also bought support that you can always fall back on if you get stuck or if the worst happens.



# 3

## A Tour of vBulletin

In the previous chapter we looked at the vBulletin installation process. This process involved downloading the installation files, making edits to the configuration files, creating or preparing a database for vBulletin, uploading the installation files, and finally going through the vBulletin installation wizard. We also looked at how to import posts and settings from another discussion board into vBulletin.

Now that you have a working vBulletin board, the next thing that you need to do is familiarize yourself with it. That's what we are going to be doing in this chapter.

We will look at:

- How a vBulletin discussion board is experienced by both unregistered users and members
- How a user can become a member by registering
- The administrator's experience of a vBulletin discussion board
- The Administrator Control Panel
- Forum management
- Branding and changing the logo for a discussion board

### **The vBulletin User Experience**

Before we look at vBulletin in detail from the perspective of the administrator, let's take a look at it from the user perspective.

In the last chapter we got vBulletin working, and the discussion board that we set up is open and ready for visitors.

## How to Get to the Board?

First question that people have is "Where is the board?" The answer to this depends on where it was installed.

If you installed it into the root of your website, then accessing the site is all you need to do.

So, for example, if your site is at `www.example.com` and you installed vBulletin into the root folder, then just typing `http://www.example.com` into the browser will take you to it (the main 'page' of vBulletin is a file called `index.php`). Similarly, if you typed `http://www.example.com/index.php`, you would get to the main page of the forum.


If, on the other hand, you installed the vBulletin software into a folder on the server, then you would need to access that folder. We installed it into a folder called `vb`, so to access this, we would use `http://www.example.com/vb` to get to the main page of the forum (or, if we wanted to type more, `http://www.example.com/vb/index.php`).

Getting to the AdminCP (Admin Control Panel) requires you to go to a different URL. Using the examples above the AdminCP would be at `http://www.example.com/admincp` or `http://www.example.com/vb/admincp` (again the main 'page' here is `index.php`).

There is also a ModCP (Moderator Control Panel). Getting to this requires you to go to yet another URL. Using the examples above, the ModCP would be at `http://www.example.com/modcp` or `http://www.example.com/vb/modcp` (once again the main 'page' here is `index.php`).

## What the End Users See

OK, you know where to go, but what do people see? Well, this is what a visitor to your vBulletin site sees if they are new and aren't already logged in:



**The Example Forums Forum**

User Name:   Remember Me?  
 Password:

[Register](#) [FAQ](#) [Members List](#) [Calendar](#) [Today's Posts](#) [Search](#)

Welcome to the The Example Forums Forum.

If this is your first visit, be sure to check out the [FAQ](#) by clicking the link above. You may have to [register](#) before you can post: click the register link above to proceed. To start viewing messages, select the forum that you want to visit from the selection below.

Forum	Last Post	Threads	Posts
<b>Main Category</b>			
Main Category Description			
<a href="#">Main Forum</a> Main Forum Description	Never	0	0

[Mark Forums Read](#) [View Forum Leaders](#)

**What's Going On?**

**Currently Active Users:** 0 (0 members and 0 guests)

Most users ever online was 1, Yesterday at 03:30 PM.

**The Example Forums Forum Statistics**

Threads: 0, Posts: 0, Members: 1  
 Welcome to our newest member, [Administrator](#)

- Forum Contains New Posts
- Forum Contains No New Posts
- Forum is Closed for Posting

All times are GMT. The time now is 08:52 AM.

[Contact Us](#) - [The Example Forums](#) - [Archive](#) - [Top](#)

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## Site Logo

At the top left of the page is the logo for the discussion board. By default this is the vBulletin logo, but it is easy to change. (We'll show you how later.)



## Forum Title, Login Box, and Navbar

Below that, you have the forum title and login box. The Remember Me? box is checked by default, and when members log in, their details are saved to a cookie so that they can access the site at a later time without logging in again.

 <b>The Example Forums Forum</b>	User Name	<input type="text" value="User Name"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Remember Me?
	Password	<input type="password"/>	<input type="button" value="Log in"/>

Below that, we come to the navigation bar, also known as the **navbar**. The job of the navbar is to put tools and functions within easy reach of the user.

<a href="#">Register</a>	<a href="#">FAQ</a>	<a href="#">Members List</a>	<a href="#">Calendar</a>	<a href="#">Today's Posts</a>	<a href="#">Search ▼</a>
--------------------------	---------------------	------------------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------------	--------------------------


The navbar makes use of expanding and collapsing panes in order to save on precious screen space. Clicking on some of the links (marked by a downward pointing arrow) causes the panes to open, while moving off them causes them to close. The contents of the navbar changes dependent on whether the user is logged in or not.

## Welcome Banner

Below that, are the forum welcome banner, the introduction to the discussion board and the forums themselves. The welcome banner and introductory message are only shown to unregistered users (or members who have not logged in).

## Main Body of the Forum

Below this, comes the main body of the discussion board. This is where the forums appear. To get you started, there's one already created.


Forum	Last Post	Threads	Posts
<b>Main Category</b> Main Category Description			
 <a href="#">Main Forum</a> Main Forum Description	Never	0	0
<a href="#">Mark Forums Read</a> <a href="#">View Forum Leaders</a>			

## What's Going On


Below the discussion forums, is the What's Going On? box. This give information about the discussion board, including the number of members, the number of post, the latest member and current board users.

**What's Going On?**

**Currently Active Users:** 1 (0 members and 1 guests)

 Most users ever online was 1, Today at 12:53 PM.

**The Example Forums Forum Statistics**

 Threads: 0, Posts: 0, Members: 1  
Welcome to our newest member, [Administrator](#)

## Footer

Finally, there's the footer of the page, which contains a key to some of the graphics used and the current time. Below that, are a small footer menu and the copyright notice.

-  Forum Contains New Posts
-  Forum Contains No New Posts
-  Forum is Closed for Posting

All times are GMT. The time now is 12:53 PM.

[Contact Us](#) - [The Example Forums](#) - [Archive](#) - [Top](#)

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## Touring the Main Forum—Unregistered Users

Even as an unregistered user, you can click on the link to the Main Forum, which then takes you from the forum view into the thread view. (This is default behavior—all the permissions can be changed, as you will see in Chapter 5.)

The screenshot displays the vBulletin forum interface for 'The Example Forums Forum > Main'. At the top left is the vBulletin logo. Below it, the forum path is shown: 'The Example Forums Forum > Main' and 'Main Forum'. A user login box is present with fields for 'User Name' (containing 'User Name'), 'Password', and a 'Remember Me?' checkbox, along with a 'Log in' button. A navigation bar includes links for 'Register', 'FAQ', 'Members List', 'Calendar', 'Today's Posts', and 'Search'. A 'New Thread' button is visible. The main content area shows 'Threads in Forum: Main Forum' with a table header including 'Thread / Thread Starter', 'Rating', 'Last Post', 'Replies', and 'Views'. A message states: 'There have been no posts in the last 30 days in this forum. Try using the controls below to search for any older posts that may exist.' Below this is another 'New Thread' button and a 'Display Options' section with filters for 'Sorted By' (Last Post Time), 'Sort Order' (Descending), and 'From the' (Last Month), with a 'Show Threads' button. A legend for thread status icons is provided: New posts, No new posts, Hot thread with new posts, Hot thread with no new posts, and Thread is closed. A 'Posting Rules' box lists rules such as 'You may not post new threads' and 'You may not edit your posts', along with settings for vB code, Smilies, IMG code, and HTML code. A 'Forum Jump' dropdown is set to 'Main Forum' with a 'Go' button. At the bottom, a footer contains the text: 'All times are GMT. The time now is 01:29 PM.', 'Contact Us - The Example Forums - Archive - Top', and 'Powered by: vBulletin Version 3.0.6 Copyright ©2000 - 2005, Jelsoft Enterprises Ltd.'

There are no threads to show because there have been no posts in the last 30 days. (This is the default view—this can be changed too.) In fact, there are no posts at all.

## No "New Threads" for Unregistered Users

Notice the New Thread button. If an unregistered user clicks on this, they are taken to a screen asking them to log in or register. This screen also contains a password reset option, handy for people who have forgotten their passwords. This sends them a new password.

---

### A word about passwords

vBulletin doesn't store passwords as plain text in the database. Instead it uses an algorithm called MD5 to create a one-way hash of the password, and this is stored instead. A one-way hash means that passwords entered can be easily converted into the hash but the plain text password can't be recovered from this hash. The password password is transformed by the MD5 into 5f4dcc3b5aa765d61d8327deb882cf99, and this is stored in the database instead.

When a member logs in to the forum, the password they enter is converted to the one-way hash, and this is compared to the hash stored in the database—if the hashes are the same, the member is let in, otherwise they are rejected.

---

## Registering on a vBulletin Board

Let's now take a look at the registration process for new users. We can begin this process by clicking on the register link. Clicking on this link brings up a page outlining the forum rules. There are default rules in place, but you can customize these.

The screenshot shows the vBulletin registration process. At the top left is the vBulletin logo. The main content area is titled "The Example Forums Forum Rules". Below this title, it says "Forum Rules" and "In order to proceed, you must agree with the following rules:". A scrollable text box contains the following rules:

**Forum Rules**

Registration to this forum is free! We do insist that you abide by the rules and policies detailed below. If you agree to the terms, please check the 'I agree' checkbox and press the 'Register' button below. If you would like to cancel the registration, click [here](#) to return to the forums index.

Although the administrators and moderators of The Example Forums Forum will attempt to keep all objectionable messages off this forum, it is impossible for us to review all messages. All messages express the views of the author, and neither the owners of The Example Forums Forum, nor Jelsoft Enterprises Ltd. (developers of vBulletin) will be held responsible for the content of any message.

I have read, and agree to abide by the The Example Forums Forum rules.

Below the rules is a "Register" button. At the bottom of the page, it says "All times are GMT. The time now is 01:57 PM." and "Contact Us - The Example Forums - Archive - Top". At the very bottom, it says "Powered by: vBulletin Version 3.0.6 Copyright ©2000 - 2005, Jelsoft Enterprises Ltd."

Anyone registering on a vBulletin discussion board has to agree to the rules of the forum by checking the box, before clicking on the Register button. These rules are customizable, but a generic set of rules is pre-installed.

The next step is the registration screen. Here you have to enter basic information such as desired username (give this some thought—many people end up stuck with a silly username because they didn't give it enough thought!), a password (six to eight characters—letters and numbers are best), and an email address.

The screenshot shows the registration interface for 'The Example Forums Forum'. At the top left is the vBulletin logo. The main content area is divided into two sections: 'Register at The Example Forums Forum' and 'Additional Information'. The registration section includes fields for 'User Name' (with 'NewUser' entered), 'Password' (with '\*\*\*\*\*' entered), and 'Email Address' (with 'example@example.com' entered). The 'Additional Information' section includes a 'Referrer' field, a 'Time Zone' dropdown menu (set to '(GMT) Western Europe Time, London, Lisbon, Casablanca'), and a 'DST Correction Option' dropdown menu (set to 'Automatically detect DST settings'). There are also checkboxes for 'Receive Email from Administrators' (checked) and 'Receive Email from Other Members' (unchecked). At the bottom of the registration section are 'Complete Registration' and 'Reset Fields' buttons. Below the registration section, it says 'All times are GMT. The time now is 02:04 PM.' At the very bottom, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Contact Us', 'The Example Forums', 'Archive', and 'Top'. The footer text reads: 'Powered by: vBulletin Version 3.0.6 Copyright ©2000 - 2005, Jelsoft Enterprises Ltd.'



Clicking on Complete Registration completes the process, and a confirmation page is displayed.

## **Touring the Forum—Members**

A member, also known as a "registered user", will see a number of changes in the way that the forum looks and behaves, and they will have a lot more options and customizations open to them.

### **New Threads**

To begin with, they can create new threads for others to read by clicking on the New Thread button and filling in a short form.

The main components of the form are:

- Title—the title of the thread
- Message—the main text of the message
- Post Icons—icons that appear next to the post title

These three fields will need to be filled in before a new thread can be posted.

The screenshot displays the vBulletin interface for posting a new thread. At the top, the vBulletin logo is on the left, and navigation links like 'Home', 'FAQ', and 'Members List' are in the center. A user is logged in as 'NewUser'. The main content area is titled 'Post New Thread' and contains a form with a 'Title' field (containing 'New Thread') and a 'Message' field with a rich text editor. The editor toolbar includes icons for bold, italic, underline, text color, and background color. Below the editor are 'Additional Options' for miscellaneous settings, attachments, thread subscription, and polls. A 'Posting Rules' box is also visible at the bottom left.

**Post New Thread** Forum: Main Forum

Title:

Message: 

This is a new thread in a new forum.

id

**Additional Options**

**Miscellaneous Options**

Automatically parse links in text

Disable smilies in text

**Attach files**

Valid file extensions: bmp doc gif jpg jpeg pdf png pot ppt xls

**Thread Subscription**

notification type:

**Post a poll**

yes, post a poll with this thread

number of poll options:  (Maximum: 10)

**Posting Rules**

You **may** post new threads  
You **may** post replies  
You **may** post attachments  
You **may** edit your posts

bb code is **On**  
smilies are **On**  
[img] code is **On**  
HTML code is **Off**

All times are GMT. The time now is 02:19 PM.

[Contact Us](#) - [The Example Forums](#) - [Archive](#) - [Top](#)

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Copyright ©2000 - 2015, Jelsoft Enterprises Ltd.

Finally you click on the **Submit New Thread** button. Not only can the post contain text, but you can also use emoticons (also called smilies—those little smiling-face graphics) to add character to a post. Also, files can be attached to the posts and made available to other members.



At this stage, you might be thinking that this seems like a lot of power for an ordinary member, and you might not be sure that they should have this power. Don't worry—when we look at the discussion board from the point of view of the administrator, you will find that you actually have a lot of power at your disposal to control what members can and can't do—just because they can do something by default, it doesn't mean that you can't take that power away from them later!

## Replying

Posting a reply is similar to starting a new thread. All you need to do is click on the **Post Reply** button, and you are taken to a short form similar to the one you saw when you created the new thread.

The main difference between posting a new thread and a reply is that a reply does not require a new title.



## Editing a Message

Editing a message (say to remove typos or to add something) is an ability that most users will want at some point or other. And vBulletin makes this easy.

All you need to do is click on the Edit button. This loads the current message into a form like the one used to post it.

You then can edit the post, or delete it.

---

### Controls on editing

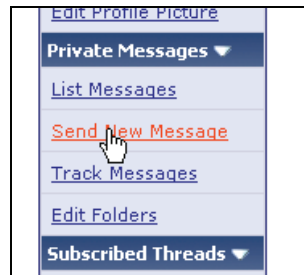
Different user permissions can be set for editing posts, and many forums utilize rules where a message cannot be edited after a fixed period of time (a few hours usually). There are several good reasons for this. The first is that edited messages don't show up as new messages, and this makes it hard for the administrators and moderators to moderate comments. Secondly, editing old messages places an additional load on the server (because current messages are cached while old ones are not).

---

## Private Messages

Communication is the cornerstone of a good discussion board. One facility that vBulletin offers is the ability to send a message to another user without that message appearing on the board. There are a number of easy ways to send a private message (also known as a PM) in vBulletin. (We're not going to list them all here.) One of the easiest is the following:

- Click on UserCP in the navbar.
- Click on Send New Message in the Private Messages section of the left-hand menu.



- This brings up the Send New Private Message page.
- Fill in the form.
- Click Submit Message.

This form is similar to the form used to create new threads and new posts or replies.

The main components of the form are:

- Recipient Username(s)—This is where you enter the username of the recipient (or recipients—by default a user can send one message to as many as 5 users simultaneously). Make sure that the username is typed in correctly. Entering an incorrect username can mean that the message is not delivered or delivered to someone else! (An error message is generated if you enter a username that doesn't exist.)
- Title—Here you enter the title of the message. This is similar to the subject line on an email.
- Message—This is for the main body of the message.

Filling in all three of these is mandatory.

## BB Code

**BB Code** is short for Bulletin Board Code. BB Code is a safe alternative to allowing users to use HTML to format their messages.

So, what is BB Code? BB Code is a set of codes that users can place in their posts. These codes are translated by the board when the post is submitted so that they are substituted with pre-approved HTML code.

### Why HTML is dangerous

A long time ago it was decided that allowing everyone the ability to post HTML into a web forum was a really bad idea.

Think about it. Your discussion board is controlled by a combination of HTML, PHP and MySQL queries. Giving others the ability to place code into a post could allow them to do all sorts of things. Now, most people would probably do no worse than format their posts using weird color and font schemes, making them difficult to read. However, you want a lot of people to come to your board, and eventually (the Web being what it is) there would be someone who would think it was a great idea to use HTML, PHP, or script to cause damage to the board. And believe it, they could!

vBulletin does allow you the option of activating HTML on the discussion board, but *this is not recommended!*

---

### What Does BB Code Look Like?

If you've formatted a message for posting onto a vBulletin board, then you will have seen BB Code in action.

Take a look at this short section of text formatted with BB Code:

```
[B]Bold[/B] text goes here.  
This is [I]italics[/I].  
This is [U]underlined[/U].  
[LEFT]Left aligned.[/LEFT]  
[CENTER]Centered.[/CENTER]  
[RIGHT]Right aligned.[/RIGHT]  
[INDENT]Indented![/INDENT]  
[list=a]  
[*]Bullet - text  
[/list] [list=1]  
[*]Bullet - numbered  
[/list]
```

This text looks like this when it is submitted for posting:

```

Bold text goes here.
This is italics.
This is underlined.
Left aligned.
                                     Centered.
                                               Right aligned.

      Indented!

a. Bullet - text

1. Bullet - numbered

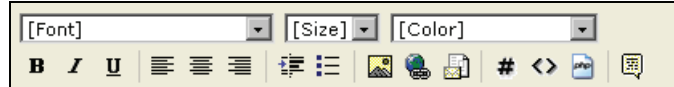
```

BB Code looks a lot like HTML—there are opening tags and closing tags around text. However, one key difference is that the tags have square brackets as opposed to the angled brackets in HTML. For example:

- In BB Code, the opening and closing tags for bold are [B] and [/B].
- In HTML, the opening and closing tags for bold are <B> and </B>.

## Using BB Code

Using BB Code (especially the in-built codes) is easy because most of the commonly required codes are available from the toolbar in the message posting interface.

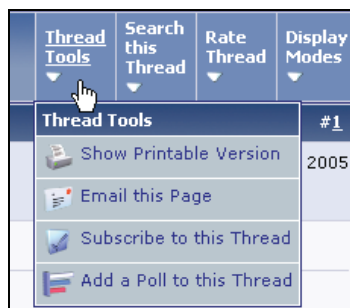


The AdminCP allows the administrator to add new codes to the forum. However, care is needed to ensure that these don't cause security problems.

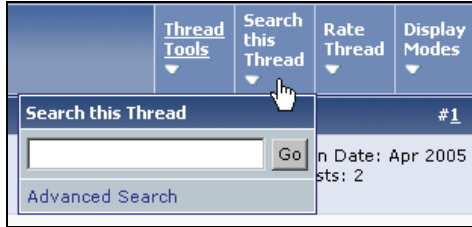
## User Tools

The user has a set of tools at their disposal:

- Thread Tools—These allow the user to work with the thread.



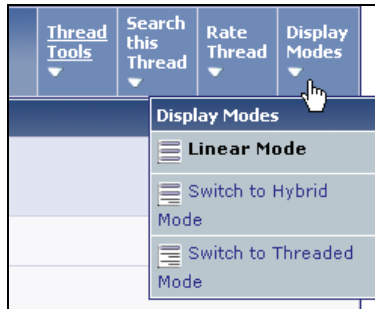
- Search this Thread—This tool allows the user to search the current thread for keywords.



- Rate Thread—This allows the user to rate the thread by giving it a rating from 5-star (excellent) to 1-star (terrible).



- Display Mode—This allows the user to change the way they view a thread.



## Display Modes

There are four possible display modes:

- Linear mode (oldest first)—In this mode, the posts are displayed chronologically from oldest to newest. Posts are shown in what is known as flat mode so that many posts can be viewed at the same time.



- Linear mode (newest first)—This is the same as linear mode, except that posts are in the opposite order.
- Threaded mode—In this mode, a tree view is shown along with every post in a thread. This view allows the reader to see the relationship between the posts, in terms of who responded to which post. In this display mode, only one post is shown at a time.



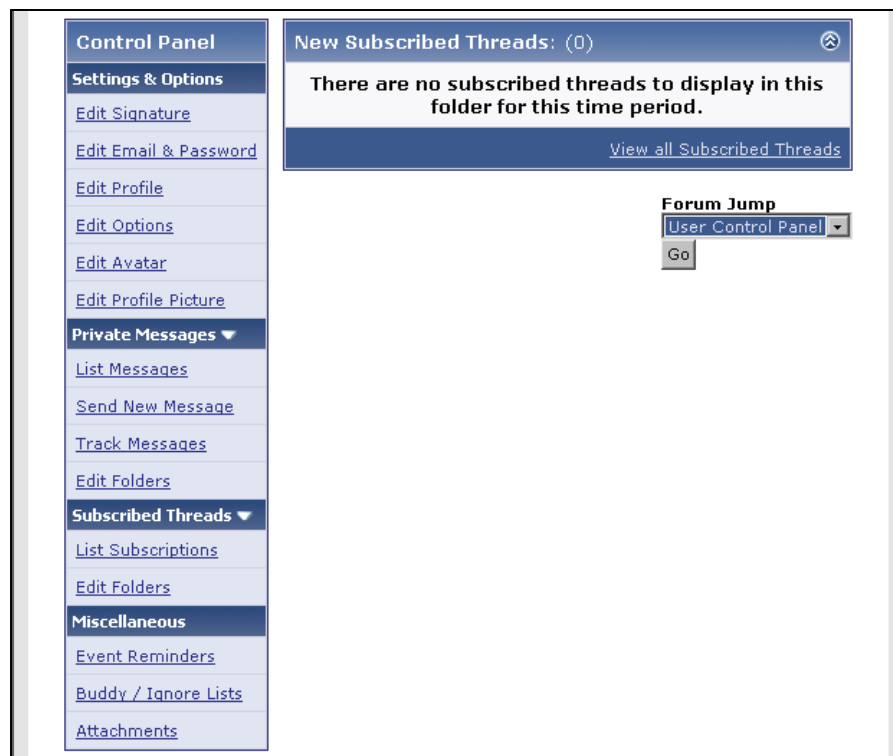
- Hybrid mode—This mode is a mixture of the linear and threaded modes. The post tree is displayed as in the threaded mode, but multiple posts are displayed simultaneously as in the linear modes.



## Navbar Changes for Members

The navbar is also different for the member (or registered user), as it has several significant and useful additions.

The first is a User CP (User Control Panel). After all, moderators and administrators both have their own CP, so why not users? In the User CP, the user can change their default settings, passwords, and email addresses, they can post signatures (default text that appears at the end of their posts) and avatars (images that appear next to their posts), and they can send private messages (messages sent to other users) and attachments.



Another useful feature is the Quick Links navbar menu.



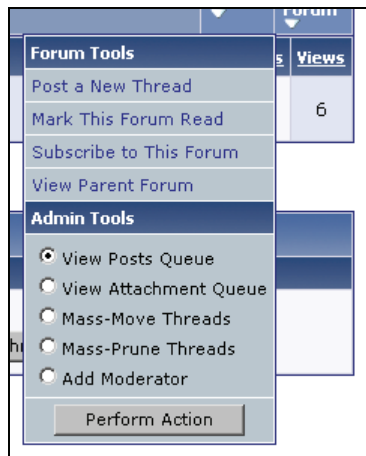
The Quick Links menu provides the user with links to often-used features of vBulletin. (Many of these features can be accessed from within the User CP.)

## The vBulletin Administrator Experience

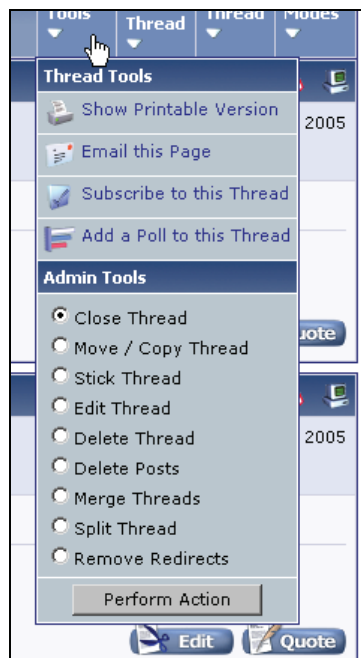
What are the differences for an administrator compared to a regular member? Well, there are quite a few. We'll take a look at some of the more important ones now.

### Forum and Thread Tools

The first differences are the forum and thread tools. Forum tools allow the administrator to view the posts and attachments that are in the moderator queue. (These are the posts and attachments that need to be approved before being made visible.) The administrator tools also allow threads to be moved and pruned and allow a moderator to be assigned to the forum.



The thread tools give the administrator the ability to close, move, copy, edit, and delete threads, as well as merge threads with other threads, split threads into multiple threads, delete posts, and remove redirects. (Redirects are left in place by default when a thread is moved to a different location.)



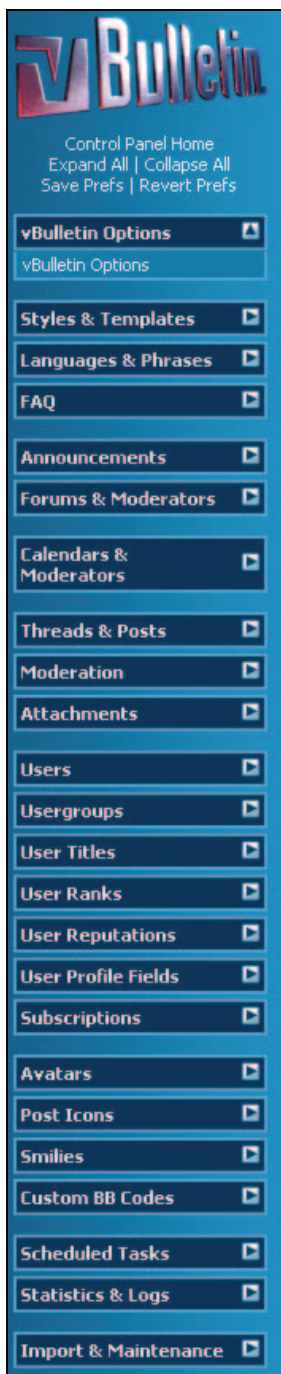
If an administrator clicks on the Edit button of a post, they get the ability to delete a message (which makes it unavailable to regular users but visible to moderators and administrators) or to remove a message. A reason can also be given for the deletion. Also, an administrator can edit a post (again, leaving a reason if they wish). Other options include closing a thread (so that users can no longer post to it) and making the thread sticky (so that it stays at the top).

The screenshot displays the vBulletin forum interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the vBulletin logo and a breadcrumb trail: [The Example Forum Forum](#) > [Main Category](#) > [Sub Forum](#) > [Sub](#). A user status box on the right shows: **Welcome, Administrator**, You last visited: Today at 12:12 PM, Posts Received: 5 Unread, Total: 0.

The main content area is divided into three sections:

- Delete this Message:** A dialog box with instructions: "To delete this message, check the appropriate option below and then click the 'Delete this Message' button. Note: Deleting this message will result in the deletion of the entire thread because this is the first post in the thread." It offers three options:  Do not delete Message,  Delete Message, and  Recursively Remove Message. A "Reason for Deletion:" field is present, and a "Delete this Message" button is at the bottom.
- Edit Post:** A rich text editor interface. It shows a "Reason for Editing:" field, a "Title:" field, and a "View Thread" link. A message is displayed: "Message originally posted by [MooDip](#) on 04-29-2005 at 02:11 PM". The editor includes a toolbar with icons for bold, italic, underline, link, unlink, list, quote, and smiley. A "Post" button is visible. Below the editor, there are "Save Changes" and "Preview Changes" buttons.
- Additional Options:** A section for configuring the post. It includes:
  - Posting Options:**  Automatically generate links in text,  Disable codes in text.
  - Attach File:** A field for "Valid file extensions: bmp doc gif jpg jpeg png pdf zip ppt xls xlsx" and a "Browse Attachments" button.
  - Thread Subscription:** A dropdown menu set to "Do not subscribe".
  - Thread Management:**  Close this thread after you submit your message,  Stick this thread after you submit your message.
 "Save Changes" and "Preview Changes" buttons are at the bottom.

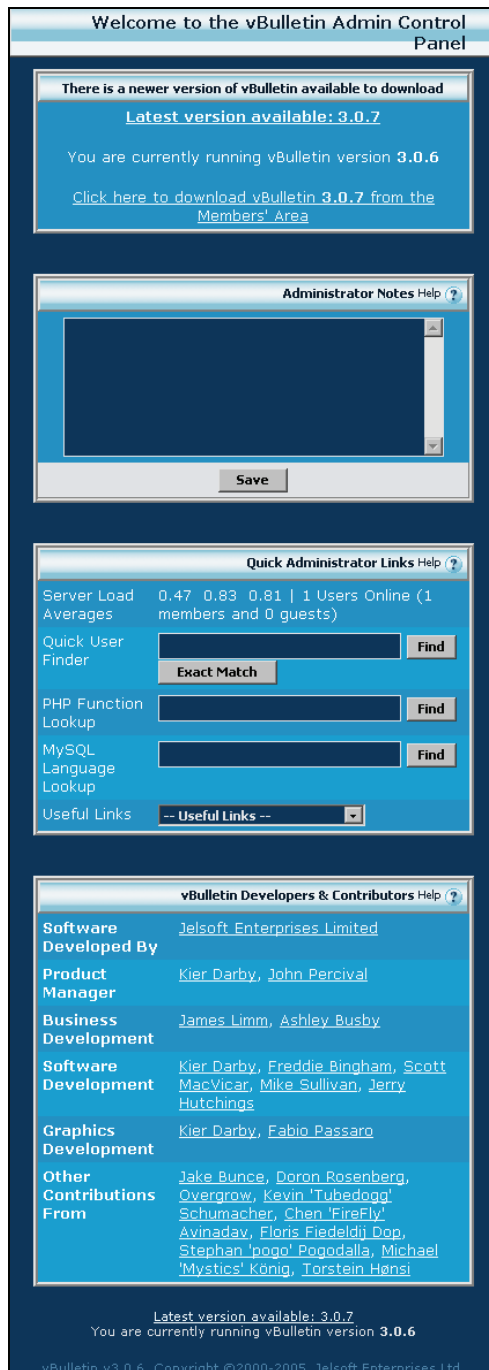
At the bottom of the page, there is a "Posting Rules" box with a list of rules: "You **may** post new threads", "You **may** post replies", "You **may** post attachments", "You **may** edit your posts". It also lists "vB code is On", "Smilies are On", "HTML code is On", and "HTML code is Off". A footer note states: "All times are GMT. The time now is 12:12 PM." The bottom navigation bar includes: [Contact Us](#) - [The Example Forum](#) - [Admin](#) - [Help](#) - [Archives](#) - [Top](#). The footer text reads: "Powered by: vBulletin® version 3.8.6 Copyright ©2004 - 2005, Jelsoft Enterprises Ltd."



## The AdminCP

The tools described in the last section are powerful and allow you to work with forums and threads, but the real power for the administrator of a vBulletin discussion board is in the Administrator Control Panel (AdminCP). You've already had a glimpse at this in the previous chapter, but now we'll take a closer look at it.

When you enter the AdminCP, you will find a navigation menu on the left-hand side. This expands and collapses as you click on the entries.



## Control Panel Home

On the right, is a screen called Control Panel Home, which has some basic information about the forum and some useful tools and utilities.

This has four key components.

## Latest Version Information

First it has a box that tells you whether you are running the latest version of vBulletin. If you aren't, it gives you a link to the member area, where you can download the latest version (if you have a valid and up-to-date license).

## Administrator Notes

Below that, is the Administrator Notes box, where you can type notes. These notes will stay there until you delete them and are very handy if there is more than one administrator!

## Quick Administrator Links

Below the Administrator Notes box is the Quick Administrator Links box. This makes available a set of tools that administrators often need. These include a Quick User Finder box that allows administrators to see user profiles, a quick PHP function, and MySQL language lookup search boxes that allow you to search for PHP and MySQL terms. Below that is a useful set of links.

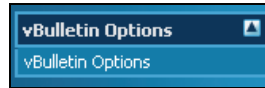
## vBulletin Contributors and Developers

Finally on the Control Panel Home screen, is a list of vBulletin contributors and developers, with links to their profiles on the vBulletin site.

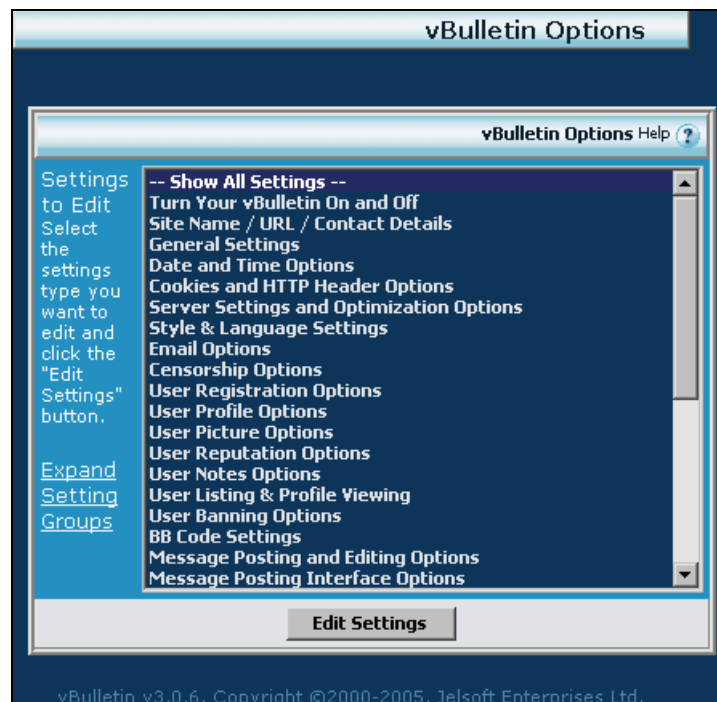


## vBulletin Options

If you click on vBulletin Options on the left-hand side menu, you will uncover another option, also called vBulletin Options.



Clicking on this uncovers a powerful array of options. From here, you can choose an option and click on Edit Settings (Alternatively, just double-click on the option you want.)

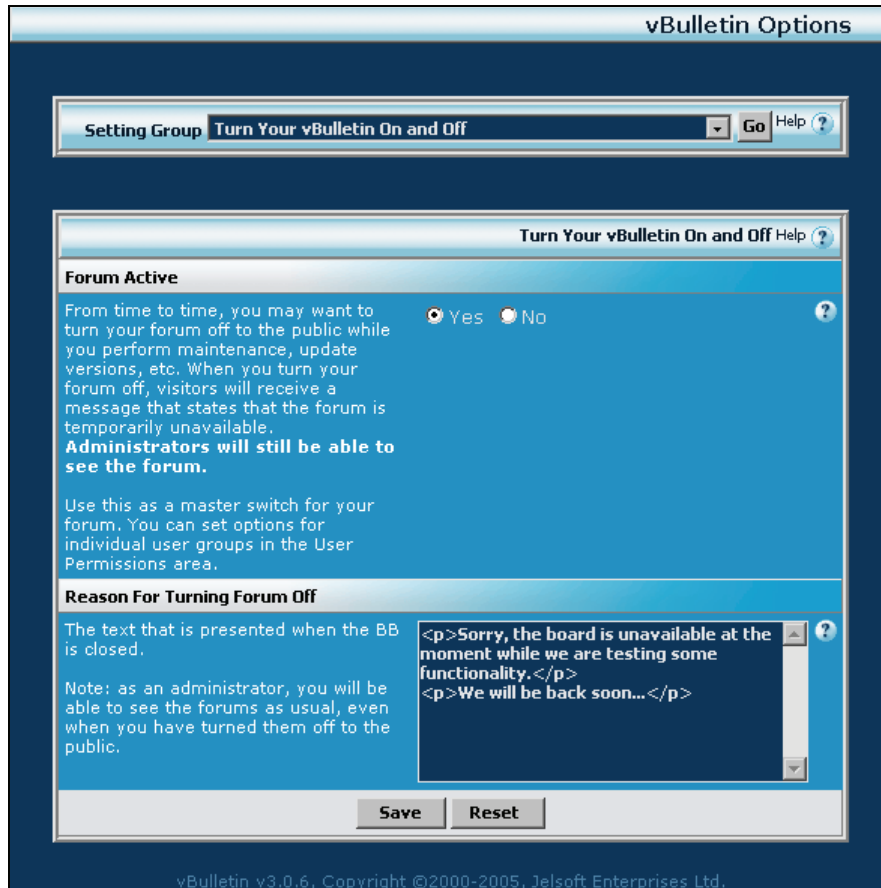


## vBulletin Option Tools

Let's take a look at some of the important options available here (we'll cover other options later):

- **Turn Your vBulletin On and Off**—This allows you to switch the forum off to regular users. Administrators can still access the forums but everyone else is faced with a customizable message saying that the forum is off.

This can be a very handy tool—it allows you to work on the discussion board without interruptions from users and without your changes being visible to them.



- Site Name / URL / Contact Details—This allows you to change the forum name and URL, the homepage name and URL, contact options, and copyright notices.

vBulletin Options

Setting Group
Go Help ?
Site Name / URL / Contact Details

Site Name / URL / Contact Details Help ?

Forum Name

Name of your forum. This appears in the title of every page.

Forum URL

URL of your forum.  
Note: do not add a trailing slash. ("/")

Homepage Name

Name of your homepage. This appears at the bottom of every page.

Homepage URL

URL of your home page. This appears at the bottom of every page.

Contact Us Link

Link for contacting the site admin. To use the built-in email form, specify **sendmessage.php** otherwise use something such as 'mailto:webmaster@example.com' or your own custom form. This appears at the bottom of every page.

Contact Us Options

You may pre-define subjects for users to pick from when using the default Contact Us form listed above. Please place one subject per line. An 'Other' option will be automatically added to the end when the form is viewed.

Site Feedback  
Registration Problem

Webmaster's Email

Email address of the webmaster.

Privacy Statement URL

Enter the URL of your privacy statement, if you have one.

Copyright Text

Copyright text to insert in the footer of the page.

Company Name

The name of your company. This is required for COPPA compliance.

Company Fax

Fax number for your company. COPPA forms will be faxed to this number.

You may wish to check out <http://www.efax.com/>.

Company Address

Address of your company. COPPA forms will be posted to this address.

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- **General Settings**—This allows you to control features such as the meta-tag information in the page headers. (This information is used by search engines to catalog the site.)

The screenshot shows the 'vBulletin Options' interface with the 'General Settings' group selected. The page contains several configuration sections:

- Meta Keywords:** A text input field containing 'vbulletin,forum,bbs,discussion,jelsoft,bulletin b'.
- Meta Description:** A text input field containing 'This is a discussion forum powered by vBulletin'.
- Use Forum Jump Menu:** Radio buttons for 'Yes' (selected) and 'No'.
- Number of Pages Visible in Page Navigator:** A text input field containing '3'.
- Enable Access Masks:** Radio buttons for 'Yes' (selected) and 'No'.
- Show Instant Messaging Program Icons:** Radio buttons for 'Yes' (selected) and 'No'.
- Add Template Name in HTML Comments:** Radio buttons for 'Yes' and 'No' (selected).
- Use Login "Strikes" System:** Radio buttons for 'Yes' and 'No' (selected).

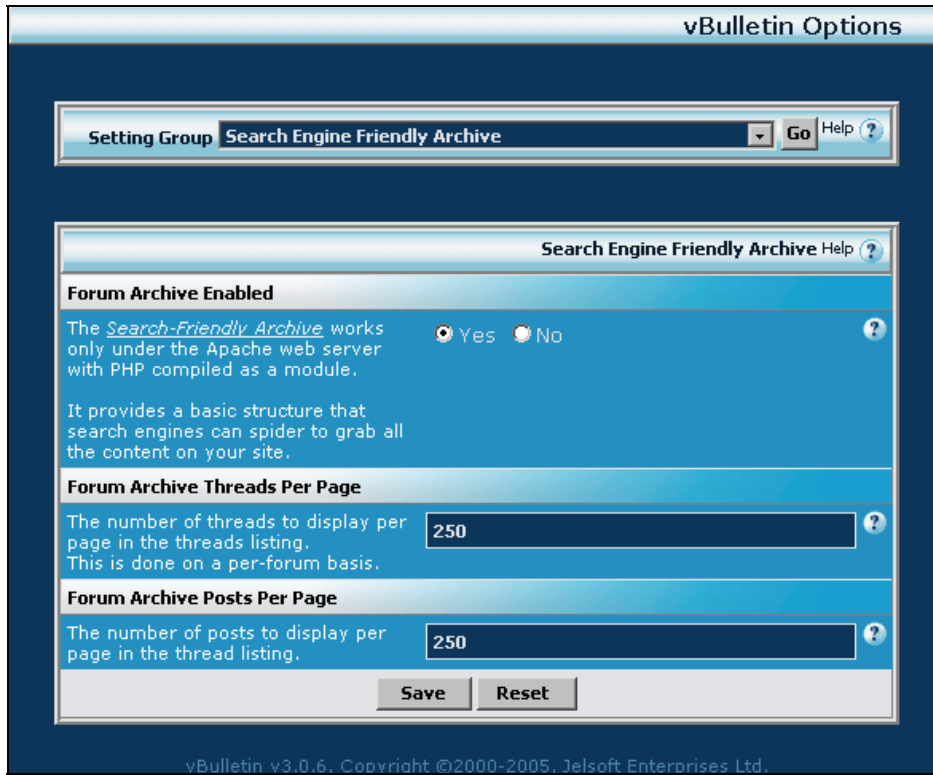
At the bottom of the settings area are 'Save' and 'Reset' buttons. The footer of the page reads 'vBulletin v3.0.6, Copyright ©2000-2005, Jelsoft Enterprises Ltd.'

- **Server Settings and Optimization Options**—You can leave most of these settings alone until you have more experience with the board. However, one setting that you might want to change sooner is called the \*NIX Server Load Limit. vBulletin has access to the overall load of the server on certain \*NIX setups (including Linux), and you can set a value that, if exceeded, results in vBulletin turning away users and giving them a Server Too Busy message.

If you do not want to use this option, set it to 0. Otherwise a typical level would be 5.00 for a reasonable warning level.

If you make use of shared hosting, then setting this level conservatively can limit the effect that your board has on the many other users on the server. On a server of your own, you can set this limit higher or even remove it altogether.

- **Forums Home Page Options**—This page controls the many items that you see on the forum home page. You can use it to rename the main forum page (`index.php` by default), display user information on the forum (hide the information, display it sorted alphabetically, or display it randomly, which take up less processing power), display birthdays, and display the calendar, holidays, and upcoming events.
- **Forum Listings Display Options**—This page contains the settings for how forums and sub-forums are displayed on the page.
- **Forum Display Options (forumdisplay)**—This page has settings related to how posts are displayed on the page. You can alter these settings according to how busy your forum is and how you want new posts or busy threads to be displayed.
- **Thread Display Options (showthread)**—This page contains the settings for thread display. These settings include how many posts to display and how text should be wrapped.
- **Search Engine Friendly Archive**—vBulletin contains many features that make it particularly friendly to search engines. (vBulletin discussion boards get good coverage in search engines such as Google and AltaVista.) In this page you can control basic settings for the archive.



- Admin Control Panel Options—This page allows you to customize the look and feel of the AdminCP.

vBulletin Options

---

Setting Group
Admin Control Panel Options
Go [Help ?](#)

Admin Control Panel Options [Help ?](#)

Control Panel Style Folder

This setting allows you to specify an alternative style for the Admin / Moderator Control Panels, based on a folder contained within the 'cpstyles' folder. The style you select here will be displayed to all Moderators, and any Administrators who have not expressed their own preference.

vbulletin 2 default  
**vBulletin 3 Default**  
vbulletin 3 frontend  
vbulletin 3 manual  
vbulletin 3 silver

Folders in the 'cpstyles' folder must contain at least the following:

- controlpanel.css
- cp\_logo.gif
- cp\_help.gif

Timeout Admin Login

Enable this option if you wish to timeout administrators from the control panel due to inactivity after the cookie timeout occurs, else it will be automatically timed out after an hour. Logins to the admincp are more secure with this enabled since the timeframe for which someone could possible hijack your session is considerably less.

Yes  No [?](#)

Control Panel Quick Statistics

Display the 'Quick Stats' on the main index page of the Admin Control Panel?

Yes  No [?](#)

Forum Manager Display

There are three options for the display of the Forum Manager:

Default [?](#)

- *Default* - Displays all of the forums on one page but may not work on all browsers, especially if you have a large number of forums.
- *Collapsible* - Allows collapsing/expansion of certain forums within the forum manager. This may reduce the ease of usability of the forum manager, but will prevent rendering problems with the dropdown menus with certain browsers/operating systems.
- *Single* - Display a single dropdown from which you may choose the forum you wish to modify. This is most useful if you have a large number of forums.

User Editor Columns

Number of columns to display in user editor. Smaller resolutions will probably want to set this to 1.

2 [?](#)

vBulletin v3.0.6, Copyright ©2000-2005, Jelsoft Enterprises Ltd.

- **Paid Subscriptions**—This page allows you to set up a paid subscription system for your forum. Currently the PayPal, NOCHEX, WorldPay and, Authorize.Net payment systems are supported.

The screenshot shows the 'vBulletin Options' interface. At the top, there is a 'Setting Group' dropdown menu set to 'Paid Subscriptions' with a 'Go' button and a 'Help' icon. Below this is a section titled 'Paid Subscriptions Help' with a 'Help' icon. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Payment Methods:** A blue box containing the text 'Please check the payment methods that you have correctly setup and wish to be made available for purchasing a subscription.' followed by four checkboxes: PayPal, NOCHEX, WorldPay, and Authorize.Net. Each checkbox has a small question mark icon to its right.
- PayPal Email:** A section with the text 'Please enter your PayPal email, all references to the subscription service will use this email.' and an empty text input field with a question mark icon to its right.
- NoChex Email:** A section with the text 'Please enter your NoChex email, all references to the subscription service will use this email.' and an empty text input field with a question mark icon to its right.
- WorldPay Installation ID:** A section with the text 'The Install ID that is generated by the WorldPay CMS for the subscription callback. Please read the manual for instructions on how to change the password.' and an empty text input field with a question mark icon to its right.
- Authorize.Net Login ID:** A section with the text 'Your Login ID for authorize.net. Please read the manual for instructions on how to change the transaction key.' and an empty text input field with a question mark icon to its right.

At the bottom of the form are two buttons: 'Save' and 'Reset'. At the very bottom of the page, there is a small copyright notice: 'vBulletin v3.0.6, Copyright ©2000-2005, Jelsoft Enterprises Ltd.'

## Forum Management

You've seen that any member can create new threads or post replies to threads, but you might be wondering how new forums are created within the discussion area?

By default, one forum exists. This is called Main Forum, and it has the imaginative description of Main Forum Description. This is within a category called Main Category, which again has an imaginative description: Main Forum Description.



Forum	Last Post	Threads	Posts
<b>Main Category</b> Main Category Description			
 <b>Main Forum</b> Main Forum Description	 <b>New thread</b> by <a href="#">NewUser</a> Yesterday 03:37 PM	1	2
<a href="#">Mark Forums Read</a> <a href="#">View Forum Leaders</a>			

These names are of course placeholders, and you are expected to change them (although you do see the occasional forum using these names!)

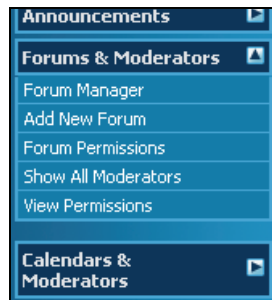
## Editing and Adding Forums

Once the board is set up, you need to give people a place to go to so that the talking (or typing!) can happen. The placeholder forum is there just to show you where the forums appear on the page—the developers expect you to create your own!

To create discussion areas, you have two options open to you:

- Edit existing forums
- Add new forums

You can make these changes in the AdminCP. In the left-hand menu, click on Forums and Moderators and then click on Forum Manager.



Clicking here brings up the Forum Manager screen in the right-hand pane. This screen allows you to work with the forums and categories of your discussion board.



The controls here allow you to make a number of changes to the categories and forums displayed. You can go straight to viewing the contents of the forum, edit it, delete it, add a child forum (that is a forum that appears beneath a forum), add a moderator, and add announcements, as well as viewing the permissions.



## Editing Existing Forums

We can edit the main category, and give it a more meaningful name and description by using these tools.

Editing the forum gives the administrator power over six areas.

Firstly, they can change the name and description of the forum, and give it a more meaningful title and description. Another interesting and useful feature is Forum Link. If you enter a URL there, anyone clicking the forum link will be redirected to that URL. The Display Order setting controls the order forums are displayed in, wherever they are shown (including the Admin CP). If you set this to 0, then a forum will not show up anywhere to the end user. It can, however, still be accessed if the user types in the direct URL to the forum.

Make sure that you click on Update Display Order if you have changed any of them. You also have control over the default view age for the threads (although users can change this manually), as well as changing the parent forum of the forum (which essentially moves it from one spot to another in your board).



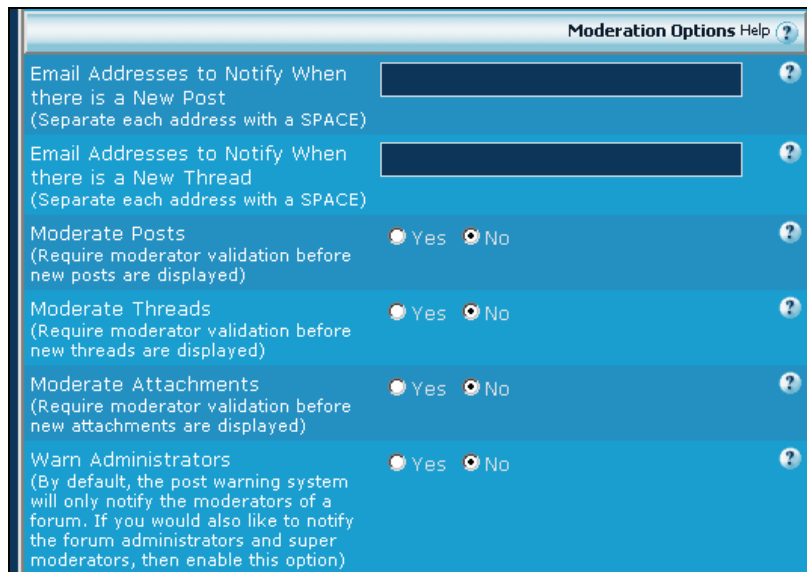
Forum: Main Category (id: 1) Help ?	
Title	Main Discussion Forum ?
Description	A place to talk about forums ?
Forum Link (Entering a URL here will cause anyone clicking the forum link to be redirected to that URL)	?
Display Order Set to '0' to not display this item	1 ?
Default View Age (Default date cut-off for thread display)	Show threads from last day ?
Parent Forum	No one ?

## Moderation Options

Below that are the moderator options for the forum. You can set these on a forum-by-forum basis, so you have total control over how each forum is moderated and how the content posted is handled.

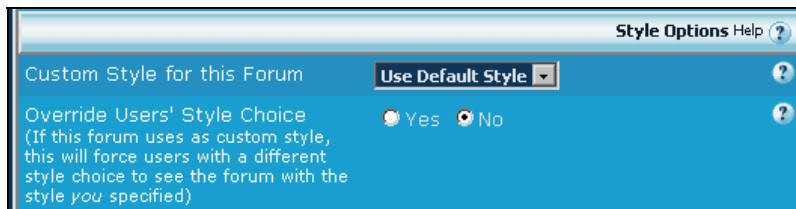
There are a number of settings that you can control. You can:

- Enter an email address to be notified when a new thread or post is made
- Require that threads and posts are validated before a post is displayed publicly
- Moderate all attachments before displaying
- Allow members to report posts to moderators and administrators



## Forum Styling

vBulletin has an option that allows you to give the forum a style different from the default. You can also let users override your choice of style.



In Chapter 7 you will see how to create new styles for your vBulletin installation that will customize the way that it looks.

## Access Control Options

You may want to control who has access to certain parts of the discussion board. This is easily done in vBulletin, as there is an option that allows you to set a password for access to particular forums. This is useful for creating private forums or for restricting access to certain members.

**Access Options Help ?**

Forum Password  ?  
 (Optional: This acts in addition to any other permissions set for this forum)

Apply This Password to Child Forums  Yes  No ?  
 (Only if changed)

Can Have Password  Yes  No ?  
 (Setting this to no will prevent a password from being inherited and from being set by moderators)  
 (Note: You may still set a password manually)

## Forum Posting Options

Not all forums are the same. There are a number of settings that come under the section Posting Options.

For example, this section allows you to control whether the forum can be posted to or whether it is a category below which other forums will appear.

You can also control whether the forum is active or not, open or closed, or whether it should be searchable. (It can be useful to have some areas not searchable. This improves search speeds and reduces the database size, as the search index is stored in the database along with the rest of the data.)

**Posting Options Help ?**

Act as Forum  Yes  No ?  
 (Will act as category if no)

Forum is Active  Yes  No ?  
 (Will not appear if set to no, but remains accessible if the forum's URL is known)

Forum is Open  Yes  No ?  
 (Set this to 'No' to prevent any new posts being made in this forum)

Index New Posts in Search Engine  Yes  No ?  
 (Setting this to 'No' will prevent anyone from being able to search in this forum)

## Enable/Disable Features

Finally come the Enable/Disable Features options. If you are creating or modifying a category, then BB Code, [IMG] Code, Smilies, Post Icons, and Thread Ratings are not needed.

Note that it is not recommended that you enable HTML code anywhere within your forum.



The options for a forum rather than a category post would include all these options apart from Allow HTML enabled by default.

When you have finished making changes, click the Save button to save the changes or Reset to go back to the previous options.

Here is what the forum looks like after a few small modifications.

Forum	Last Post	Threads	Posts
<b>Main Discussion Forum</b> A place to talk about forums			
<b>Big Boards!</b> Discussion relating to big forums (>500,000 posts)	<b>New thread</b> by <a href="#">NewUser</a> Yesterday 03:37 PM	1	2
<b>Small Boards!</b> Discussion relating to small forums (<500,000 posts)	Never	0	0
<a href="#">Mark Forums Read</a> <a href="#">View Forum Leaders</a>			

## Branding

One thing that's important to the growth and success of a forum is branding. For a community to grow it needs to have a place that it feels is special and unique to it. vBulletin is a great discussion board tool because it is highly customizable, but forum owners can feel a little out of their depth at the beginning. Because vBulletin is so customizable, it can seem like there's an awful lot to do!

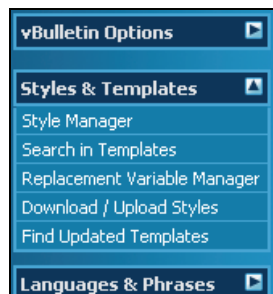
However, this doesn't have to be the case. You can start small and build from there. A good place to begin to establish your own brand and feel is to have your own logo on your forum!

## Changing the Logo

As we saw earlier in this chapter, the default logo for a vBulletin discussion board is the vBulletin logo. Changing this logo is easy, but you have to know where to find it! First of all, make sure that you've uploaded your logo to the web server and that you know the location for it. You will need this later! To change the default logo follow these steps.

First, create or modify a logo suited to your needs. This can be the hardest part as it can be difficult to make a logo that fits in with the rest of the color scheme. (In Chapter 7 we will look at how to customize the look of the discussion board.) Eventually, you are bound to move away from the default look and feel, but for now let's just think about changing the logo—bigger changes can come later.

Go into the AdminCP and click on **Styles & Templates** in the menu on the left to expand it. This will open a new page in the right-hand window. In this click on the option marked **Style Manager**.

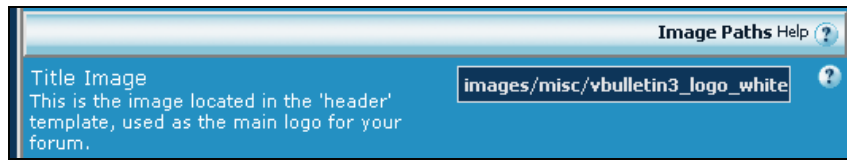


This will now take you to the style manager screen. At first this screen can appear confusing to some, as it crams a lot of power into a small space. For now don't worry about all the options, just click the button marked **Go**, which takes you to **All Style Options** selected by default in the drop-down menu.

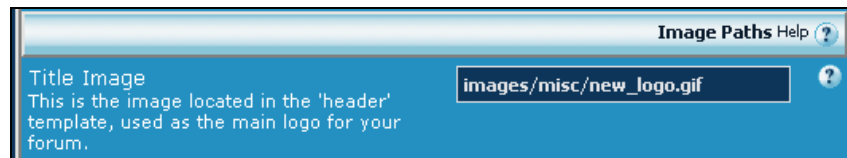


This will now take you to a screen that is huge and seems even more bewildering at first than the style manager page—and that's probably because it is! **All Style Options** is just that—all the style options for vBulletin displayed in one place! We're not even going to attempt to show it in a screenshot here as it's massive and contains hundreds of options—all of which you can change!

Scroll down to a section labeled **Image Paths** (you don't need to scroll too far to reach this), and there you will find an option marked **Title Image**.



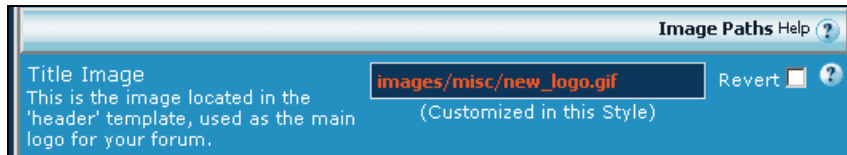
Once you find this you can change it to point to your logo. Just type the URL in the box (either the full URL that begins with `http://` or a relative one with respect to the installation folder of vBulletin).



Once you've done this, you need to scroll all the way down to the bottom on the screen (a long way!) and then click on the button marked Save. You can then view the changes in the forum.

## Undoing the Change

Now we come to another powerful and immensely useful feature of vBulletin. Let's say you're not happy with the change you made and want to go back and either change it to point to another logo or perhaps even go back to what it was before. This is a lot easier with vBulletin than with other discussion boards. If you now go back to the All Style Options page and make your way down to the section labeled Image Paths you'll find something different about the Title Image section. The text in the box is now red, and there is a checkbox beside it marked Revert. Also the setting is marked as (Customized in this Style).



This makes finding changes that you have made a lot easier (although the more changes you have made the harder it becomes to find the last one!) The Revert checkbox is also handy, because if you check this and then save the settings, this option will revert back to what it was originally. This should give you the confidence to make changes, certain in the knowledge that, if something goes wrong, you can quickly and easily roll specific changes back to the default.



## Summary

In this chapter we've tried to give you a whistle-stop tour of vBulletin from both the end user's perspective and the administrator's point of view. By now it's probably clear to you just how big, powerful, and customizable vBulletin is. The more you dig, the more options and settings you end up finding! Once you get comfortable with using vBulletin, this is great, but in the beginning it can make it seem like a huge learning curve. What we've tried to do with this chapter is give you a fast track up that learning curve to a base camp at a point where you have a working forum and are in a position to begin making a few basic changes to it.

At this stage we recommend that you take a break from reading and spend some time with your vBulletin installation again (a few hours if possible)—work through the options outlined here and get a feel for what's on offer and how it's presented by the interface. If you feel confident enough, then make some small changes to your installation, and see what implications they have—if you don't like them, undo the changes. By having some hands-on time with your forum, you'll gain the confidence you need to perform the bigger, more complex tasks we'll be looking at in later chapters.



# 4

## Customizing Your vBulletin Board

Most of the best discussion boards on the Web have been customized in one way or another. Some have only basic customizations to give the place a specific look and feel, while others have been heavily modified and customized to look, feel, and work exactly how the owners want them to.

At this stage you probably want something in the middle—you want a certain level of customization but don't want to take on too much too soon, right? That's fine—the great thing about customizing vBulletin is that you can start small and keep on adding to it until you get what you want.

In this chapter we will look at:

- Modifying CSS stylesheets
- Editing the default text on the board
- Modifying templates
- Changing the board's PHP code
- Hacks

---

### **Warning—make sure you have a backup!!!**

Remember that anything you do can have consequences that you might not expect! If you make a change to something, then there are things that can (and sometimes will) go wrong. Usually just undoing the changes will fix the problem, but this isn't always the case.

The data is the most important thing on your website, so make sure you take care of it! Most web hosts allow you to do this easily through the control panel.

Also, don't just have a backup—have up-to-date backups. If your site is important, try to make a backup at least once a week. If your site is very important, then do it daily, and make sure you keep at least the last three backups in case the most recent carries the problem you are trying to fix. This way, if something does go wrong, you just reload the backup, and you are away again in minutes rather than days.

---

In the next chapter we will cover in detail how to recover your site from a disaster, but for now just be aware that it's a good idea to have a backup of both your website and the database—just in case!

---

## Types of Customization

By now you're probably well aware of the fact that vBulletin is very versatile, and in keeping with this, you won't be surprised to learn that there are several different ways you can customize a vBulletin installation. In fact, there are five different types of change you can make.

These are:

- **CSS stylesheets**—CSS stands for Cascading Style Sheets, and it is a technology that enables web developers to decide how their web pages are displayed. This style information is stored in a stylesheet, which controls the way that things look on the final page outputted to the browser (and other devices such as printers).
- **Phrases**—Nearly all the default text strings that are displayed by vBulletin are stored in the database as distinct phrases.
- **Templates**—Templates control the layout and structure of almost every different page that vBulletin can show the end user.
- **PHP code**—You can edit and add to the underlying PHP code of the vBulletin installation.
- **Hacks**—Finally, you can modify the board using a 'hack'.

Sometimes you will find yourself only needing to make a change in one area. Other times you will want to make several changes in order to accomplish what you desire. Either way, the power is there for you to use.

Let's take a look at how to modify your forum using each of these.

## CSS Modifications

Let's look at how to make a few forum changes. Specifically let's look at how to make the table title text bigger and tweak the color a little bit. The original table title is shown in the image below:

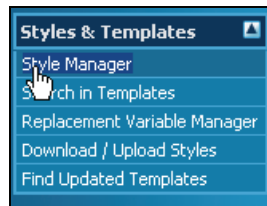


Forum	Last Post	Threads	Posts
-------	-----------	---------	-------

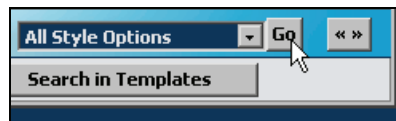
## Changing the Table Title Text

Practice makes perfect, and it also gives you the confidence to make bigger changes later, so we suggest that you work through this quick exercise with us. (You can easily revert the changes back to the default at the end.)

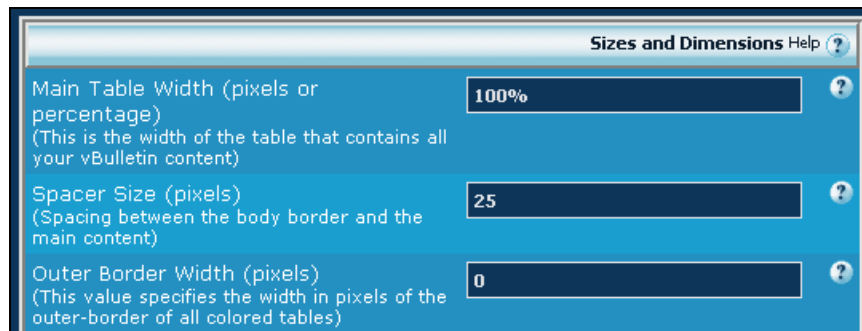
To do this, first enter the vBulletin AdminCP. From here, click on Styles & Templates to expand that menu, and then click on Style Manager as shown below:



Now click on the button in the right-hand window marked Go (shown below). This brings up the All Style Options page.



This loads up a massive page with a large number of options. Note how all the sections are clearly labeled as to what settings they control. At the top you have the settings for the Common Templates, including the generic page headers and footers. Below that you have the section that controls Sizes and Dimensions of elements within the forum (shown below):



To change the table header, scroll down to the section marked Table Header.



This is the section that controls the CSS settings relating to all the table headers that are marked within the code with the CSS selector `thead` and displayed within the vBulletin forum. The appropriate selector is shown at the bottom of the relevant section as overleaf.



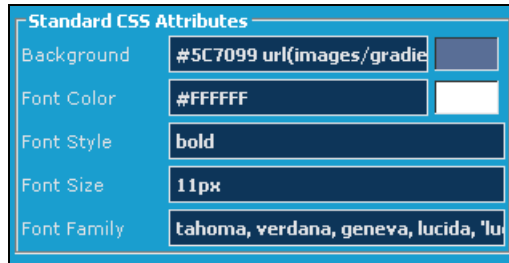
In the code of the page a selector is shown as follows:

`<tr><td class="thead">quick Links</td></tr>` Any table header containing this CSS selector will be affected by the changes we are going to make.

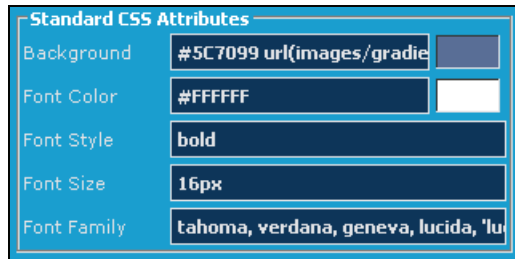
OK, we are going to change the font size and tweak the color a little. This is controlled by the settings stored in the Standard CSS Attributes section.

Settings available for change here are:

- Background
- Font Color
- Font Style
- Font Size
- Font Family



To tweak the font size, just change the value in the textbox labeled Font Size. Don't remove the px at the end, as this refers to the unit of size (px is short for pixel). To make the text bigger enter a bigger number; to make the text smaller, enter a smaller number. In the screenshot below we have changed this to 16px.



Let's also tweak the color a little. The colors are entered as hexadecimal RGB values with FFFFFFFF being white and 000000 being black. The font color is currently set to white. Notice how these values are prefixed by the hash character #.

---

### Hexadecimal color primer

Once you know how hexadecimal colors work, it becomes a lot easier. White is represented as FFFFFFFF, but this is in turn a shorthand way of representing how much red, green, and blue are in the final color. Values range from 00 (hexadecimal for 0) to FF (hexadecimal for 255). The first two hexadecimal numbers represents the amount of red in the color, the third and fourth the amount of green, and the final two the amount of blue. Red, green, and blue are all set to maximum for white, while they are all at zero for black.

Red alone would be FF0000, green would be 00FF00, and blue would be represented by 0000FF.

Remember to prefix this with the hash character (#) otherwise things might not work properly.

---

Let's change the font to a silver color. This color is represented in hexadecimal as C0C0C0, and so what you need is to change the FFFFFFFF to C0C0C0, remembering to use the # prefix.

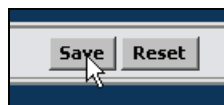
---

### Did you notice?

The colors used are shown in the color tile next to the setting. This feature can be very handy indeed, as it lets you see instantly what you have chosen. Clicking on the color tile opens up a color chart so that you can choose the color you want from a range of palettes.



To save the settings that you have changed, scroll down to the bottom of the screen (it's a long way down to the bottom!), and click on the button marked Save as shown below. Alternatively, click on Reset to revert the settings back to what they were and cancel any changes.



## Viewing Changes

Once you save the changes, the All Style Options page will be reloaded. A quick and easy way to get back to the forum is to click on the Forum Home Page link at the top of the browser window that is at the top of every page in the AdminCP and ModCP.



This takes you to the forum, where you will see the changes you made to the table headers.

Forum	Last Post	Threads	Posts
<b>Main Discussion Forum</b> A place to talk about forums			
<b>Big Boards!</b> Discussion relating to big forums (>500,000 posts)	<b>New thread</b> by <a href="#">NewUser</a> 04-19-2005 03:37 PM	1	2
<b>Small Boards!</b> Discussion relating to small foarums (<500,000 posts)	Never	0	0
<a href="#">Mark Forums Read</a> <a href="#">View Forum Leaders</a>			

**What's Going On?**

**Currently Active Users:** 1 (1 members and 0 guests)

Most users ever online was 1, Today at 12:54 PM.  
[Administrator](#)

**The Example Forums Forum Statistics**

Threads: 1, Posts: 2, Members: 2  
 Welcome to our newest member, [NewUser](#)

These changes aren't just present on the front page. A quick look around will show you everywhere that uses the thread CSS selector, such as the example below, which shows the tops of posts made in the forum.

04-19-2005, 03:31 PM #1

**NewUser** Join Date: Apr 2005  
Posts: 2

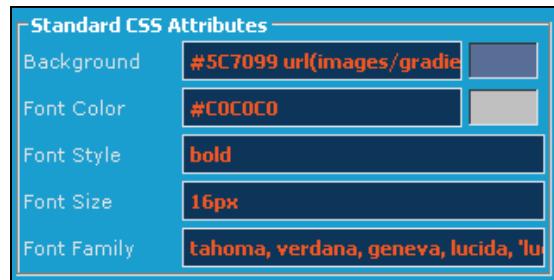
Junior Member

Because of this widespread use of specific CSS selectors, you should examine the forum thoroughly after making changes to ensure that only the changes you want appear. When we look at making changes to the templates themselves, you will see how you can control this and make much more specific changes to the way the forum looks.



## Undoing the Changes

If you scroll down to the location where you made the changes in the All Style Options page, you will notice that the attributes you changed are highlighted in red as shown below:



This allows you to find the changes easily so that you can re-tweak the settings you made. If, however, you don't like the changes and want to reverse the changes you made to a section, then there is a quick way to do this. At the bottom of each section that's been changed, there is a checkbox as shown below.

To revert this group of settings to their inherited value, tick this box and submit the form.

Selector: `.thead`

Reversing the changes made to a section is done by checking the box and clicking the Save button at the bottom of the page.

## Phrase Modifications

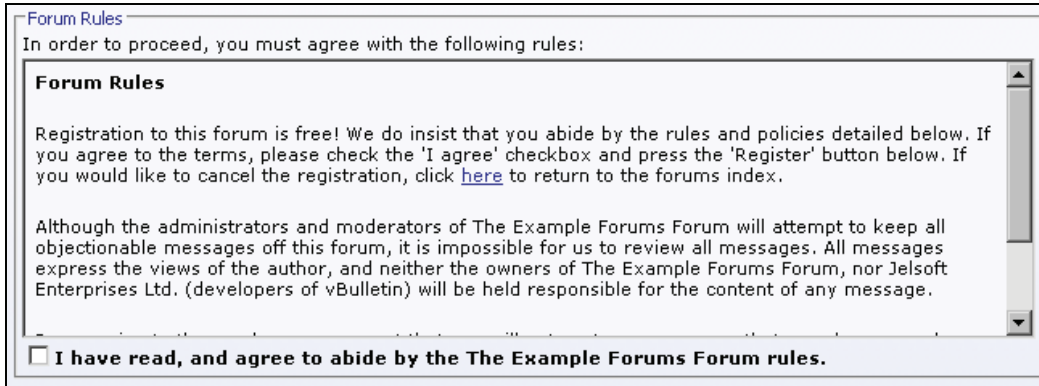
There is very little built-in text in the forum. By "built-in text" we mean text that is hard-coded into pages and can only be changed by making changes to the source files. In fact, almost all the text that you see (apart from forum text and titles and such) is stored as phrases, and there is a great deal of logic behind separating the code of the forum from the text.

To begin with, it makes it easy to create language packs for the forum that customize the base language of the forum. There are in fact a number of language packs that have been created for vBulletin, including French, Spanish, Arabic, and Hebrew. Links to a number of these can be found on the official vBulletin site at <http://www.vbulletin.com/forum/showthread.php?t=99151>.

Another major advantage is that, in order to make a change to the text in the forum, an administrator does not need to change critical files containing PHP code, where a single error could bring down the forum. It is far safer and easier to have the text separated from the code (just as the code is separated from the CSS styling information as we saw above).

Making changes to phrases is easy—there's an interface that handles the searching for the right phrase to change, making the change, and also reverting any changes back to the original phrase.

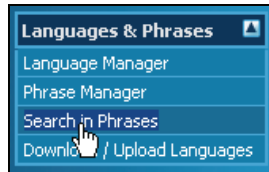
Let's examine how to make changes to phrases by looking at how to change the forum rules page (shown below) that is shown to all new members who sign up for registered status on the forum.



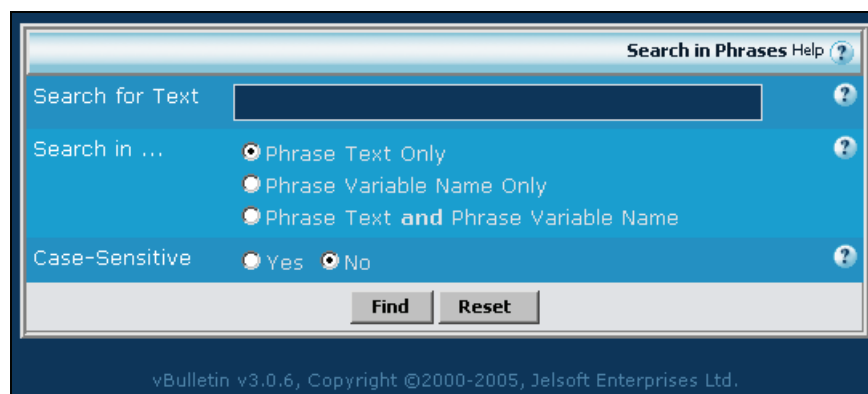
Follow along with us as we show you how to make changes to the forum rules phrase in vBulletin. Feel free to make different changes to those we make—it's not the change that you make that's important, but the concept.

## Searching for Phrases

Begin again in the AdminCP, and choose Languages & Phrases in the left-hand menu to expand it. From there you can click on Phrase Manager and look for the phrase you want to change, but there are a lot of phrases, so you may prefer to search for a phrase using Search in Phrases (shown below). As you get more experience with vBulletin, you will eventually get a feel for where phrases are, but for now use the search feature.



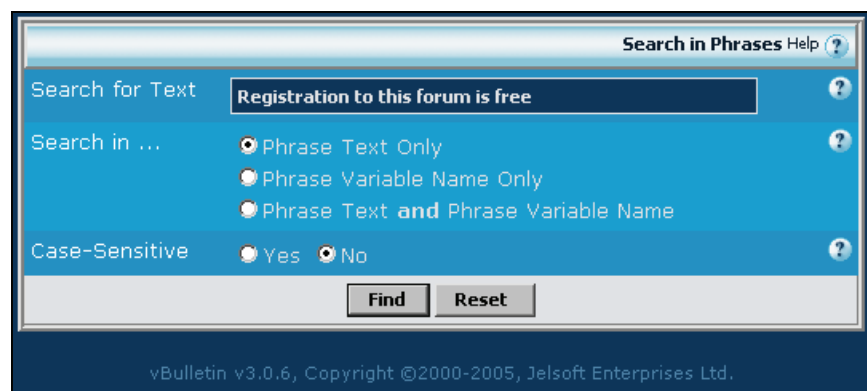
This will bring up the search interface, which contains a number of options.



This interface gives us the option to search for:

- Text in the phrases
- Variable names (we'll come to these in a moment)
- Text and variable names

We can now take a small portion of the text from the rules and use this as a search parameter, and then click on Find. We will use "Registration to this forum is free" and search for phrase text only (detailed in the image below).



vBulletin then searches through all the phrases for the appropriate string and displays all phrases that contain it. In this case there is only the one, as you can see in the image below. To aid you in spotting the search string, it is underlined and displayed in yellow.

Phrase Manager

Search Results

Register Phrases Containing 'Registration to this forum is free'

<b>forum_rules_description</b>	Standard Phrase	<p>&lt;p&gt;&lt;strong&gt;Forum Rules&lt;/strong&gt;&lt;/p&gt; &lt;p&gt;&lt;a href="#"&gt;Registration to this forum is free! We do insist that you abide by the rules and policies detailed below. If you agree to the terms, please check the 'I agree' checkbox and press the 'Register' button below. If you would like to cancel the registration, click &lt;a href="{1}"&gt;here&lt;/a&gt; to return to the forums index.&lt;/p&gt; &lt;p&gt;Although the administrators and moderators of {2} will attempt to keep all objectionable messages off this forum, it is impossible for us to review all messages. All messages express the views of the author, and neither the owners of {2}, nor Jelsoft Enterprises Ltd. (developers of vBulletin) will be held responsible for the content of any message.&lt;/p&gt; &lt;p&gt;By agreeing to these rules, you warrant that you will not post any messages that are obscene, vulgar, sexually-orientated, hateful, threatening, or otherwise violative of any laws.&lt;/p&gt; &lt;p&gt;The owners of {2} reserve the right to remove, edit, move or close any thread for any reason.&lt;/p&gt;</p>	<b>Edit</b>
--------------------------------	-----------------	--	-------------

Search in Phrases Help ?

Search for Text  ?

Search in ...

- Phrase Text Only ?
- Phrase Variable Name Only
- Phrase Text **and** Phrase Variable Name

Case-Sensitive  Yes  No ?

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---

### Search tips

You might not always find the phrase you are looking for on your first search. The main reason for this is that the phrases can contain HTML formatting tags (such as `<p>` and `<p/>`) which form part of the phrase but you might not notice them otherwise. For example, if we had searched for the string "Forum Rules Registration to this forum is free" we wouldn't have had a match because the actual HTML is "Forum Rules</strong></p><p>Registration to this forum is free" (as you can see in the image opposite).

The old saying is as relevant today as ever—if at first you don't succeed, try, try, and try again!

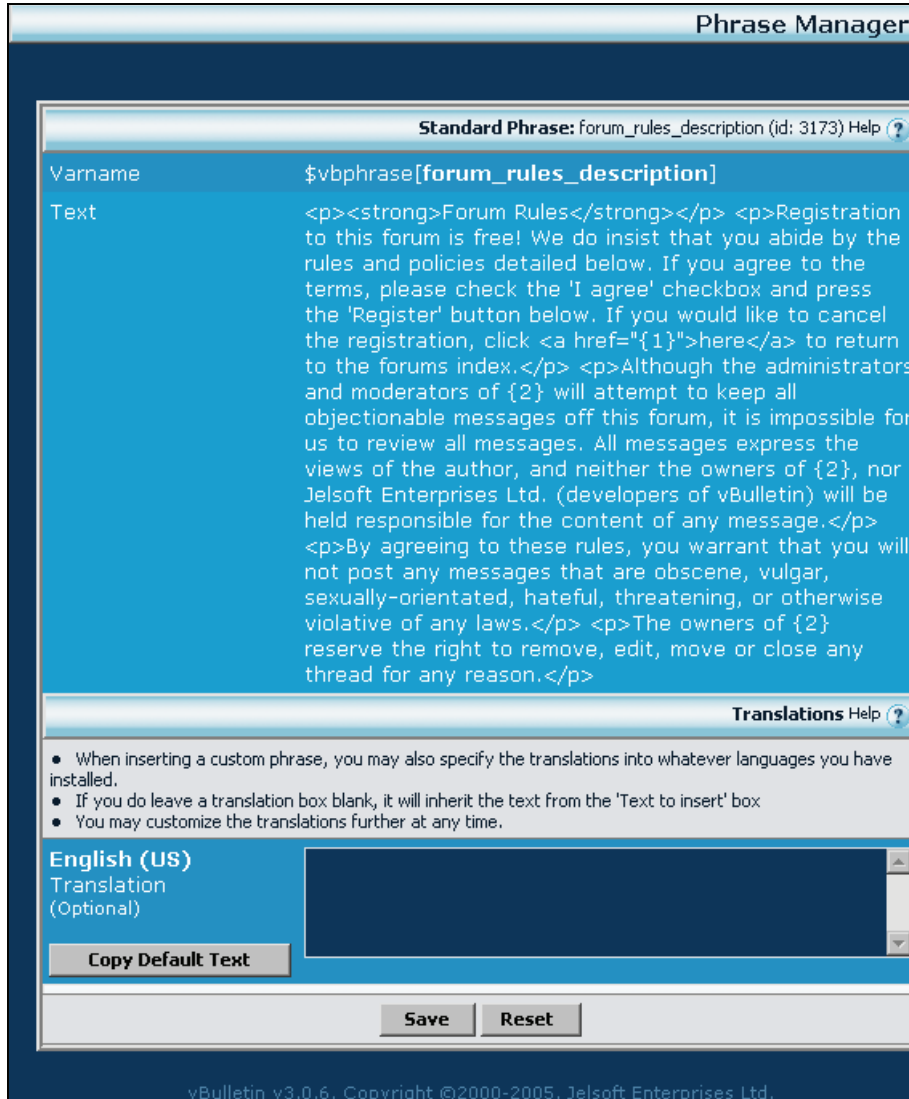
---

## Making Changes

Now that you've found the phrase that you want, you can go about editing it. To get the ball rolling, click on the Edit button that appears next to the phrase.



This will bring up the phrase editing page allowing you to make changes to the text (shown below).



This screen contains a lot of information and features, so let's take a moment to familiarize ourselves with the information.

At the top, is the phrase description and title (shown below). This is a standard phrase (that is, it appears in the standard phrase category), and has the title forum\_rules\_description.



Below that, is the variable name assigned to the phrase (see below). Here this is `$vbphrase[forum_rules_description]`. Knowing the variable name for a particular phrase is really useful, because it allows you to have control over which phrases are displayed. If this is placed into a `vBulletin` template then the text of the phrase will be shown in that location. Don't worry if this doesn't make any sense right now—it will shortly! Similarly, if you remove the phrase variable from the code, then the text is removed from the displayed page.

```
Vaname          $vbphrase[forum_rules_description]
```

---

### Finding phrases

Navigating the code by phrases can be a good way to work through the `vBulletin` code. If you can find a bit of text in the code, you can then search for the phrase that contains that text. Later we'll show you how to search through the templates for phrase variables.

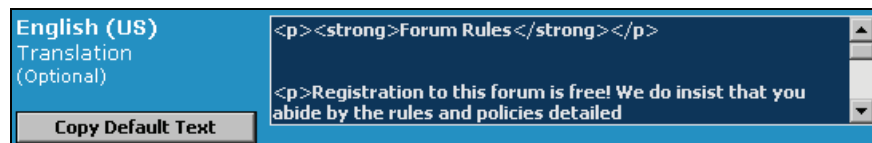
---

Below this, appears the existing phrase text, as you can see in the image below. This is there as a safeguard so that you know for sure what you are editing as well as the current wording of the phrase.

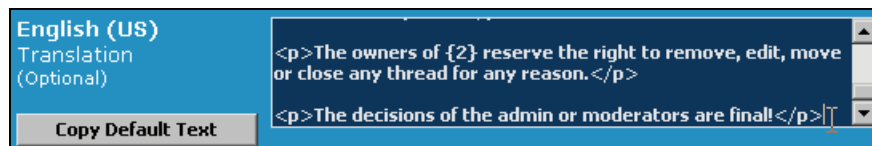
Below this, comes the box that does the work—this is where we enter new text. This can be confusing for newcomers to `vBulletin`, because the edit box is labeled as `Translations`. However, this is the right way to go about editing the phrases.

You can also choose to copy the existing text into the edit box by clicking on the `Copy Default Text` button, which means that you don't have to bother retyping it or messing around with cut and paste.

We just want to make some small changes to the rules, so we'll copy the existing phrase by using the `Copy Default Text` button. The existing text is then placed in the edit box ready for editing as shown below:



Let's just make the small change to the text shown in the image below:



We can customize this a little further if you want. Take a look through the text of the phrase, and you will find the following lines:

```
if you would like to cancel the registration, click <a href="{1}">here</a>
```

and

`<p>Although the administrators and moderators of {2} will attempt to`

and

`All messages express the views of the author, and neither the owners of {2},`

and

`<p>The owners of {2} reserve the right to remove,`

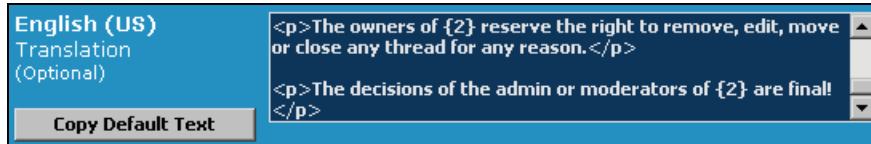
See the instances of {1} and {2} in the phrase. If you take a look at the rules page, you will see that {1} corresponds to the URL of the forum, while {2} is the forum name, both of which are shown below:

registration, click [here](#) to return to the forums index.

The owners of The Example Forums Forum reserve the right to remove

Using these variables we can customize the addition we made to the rules.

`<p>The decisions of the admin or moderators of {2} are final!</p>`



We're now done making the changes to the phrase, so we click on the button marked Save at the bottom.

## Viewing the Changes

Now view the change. Go to the front page of the forum as an unregistered/unsigned in member (clicking on Log Out at the top of the AdminCP screen or on the navbar will allow you to do this), and you can start the registration process and take a look at the updated phrase, which is shown below:

The decisions of the admin or moderators of The Example Forums Forum are final!

## Undoing Changes

Be careful when making changes to phrases, as there is no automatic undo or revert feature available. The best thing to do is to keep a backup of any of the text that you change in case you change your mind and want to go back to the original wording.



---

### Recovering phrases

If you didn't keep a backup of the phrases that you changed, all is not lost. They are all stored in the file `\install\vbulletin-1language.xml`. If you search this file, you'll find all the phrases that vBulletin uses.

---

## Template Modifications

So far we've looked at how to modify CSS stylesheet information, which controls how vBulletin looks, and the phrases, which control the text. Both of these modifications allow you to radically change how your vBulletin board looks and feels. Template modifications allow you to do a lot more and to make much more radical changes to your vBulletin installation. In fact, templates control nearly every aspect of a vBulletin board. Each page that the end user sees is the result of one or more templates coming together and displaying information.

Let's take a closer look at templates in vBulletin.

---

### Templates are powerful yet complicated

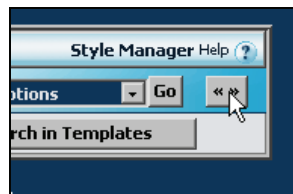
Just a note about templates though, before we go further. Templates are quite complicated, and you need a good knowledge of how HTML works to make small changes. To make bigger changes you need to have an understanding of how the templates work. Work methodically and make notes of the changes you make. That way, if something goes wrong, you can undo it. If things go drastically wrong, you can always reverse all the changes made.

---

## Accessing Templates

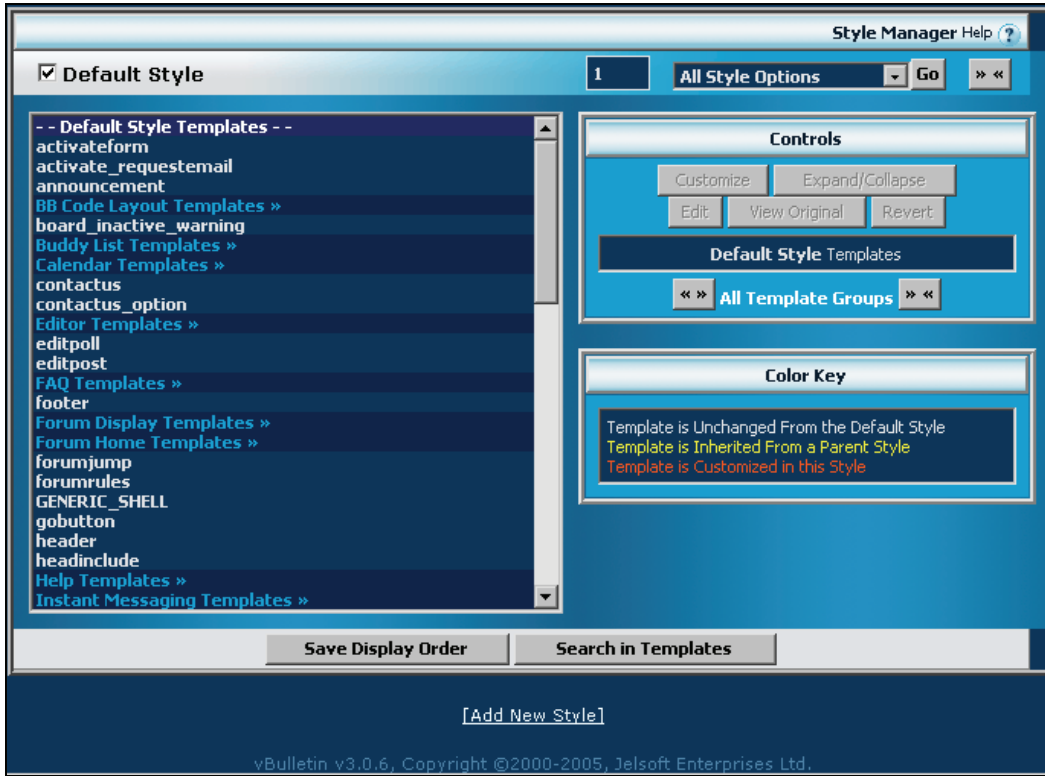
To access the templates, first click on Styles & Templates in the left-hand navigation pane to expand the menu. From there, click on Style Manager as shown below.

It's the next stage that many people find confusing—finding the templates! The way to get the right-hand frame to display the templates is to click on the 'expand templates' button on the right of the screen. It looks like << >> (shown below).

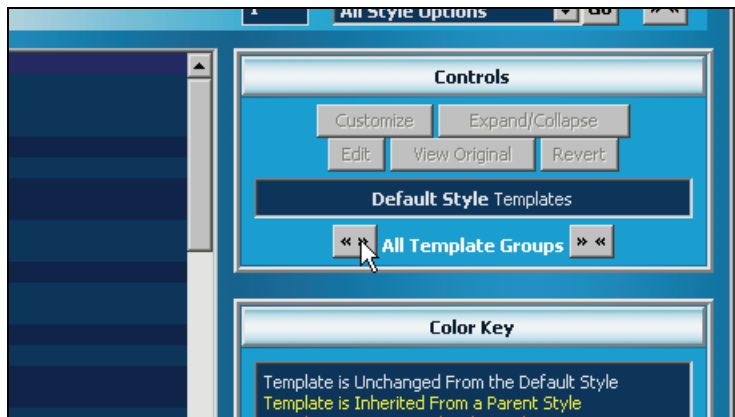


This now displays some of the templates used by vBulletin, some of which are shown below. Most of the pages that you see when using a vBulletin board are made up of one or more of these templates. (Generally, a page is made of three: a header, a footer, and the main body.)

Here, templates are grouped. Headings are in blue, and template names are in white. As you will see later, edited templates appear in red text to make finding them easier.



To display all the templates, you have to click on another button, again marked << >>, to expand all the template groups.



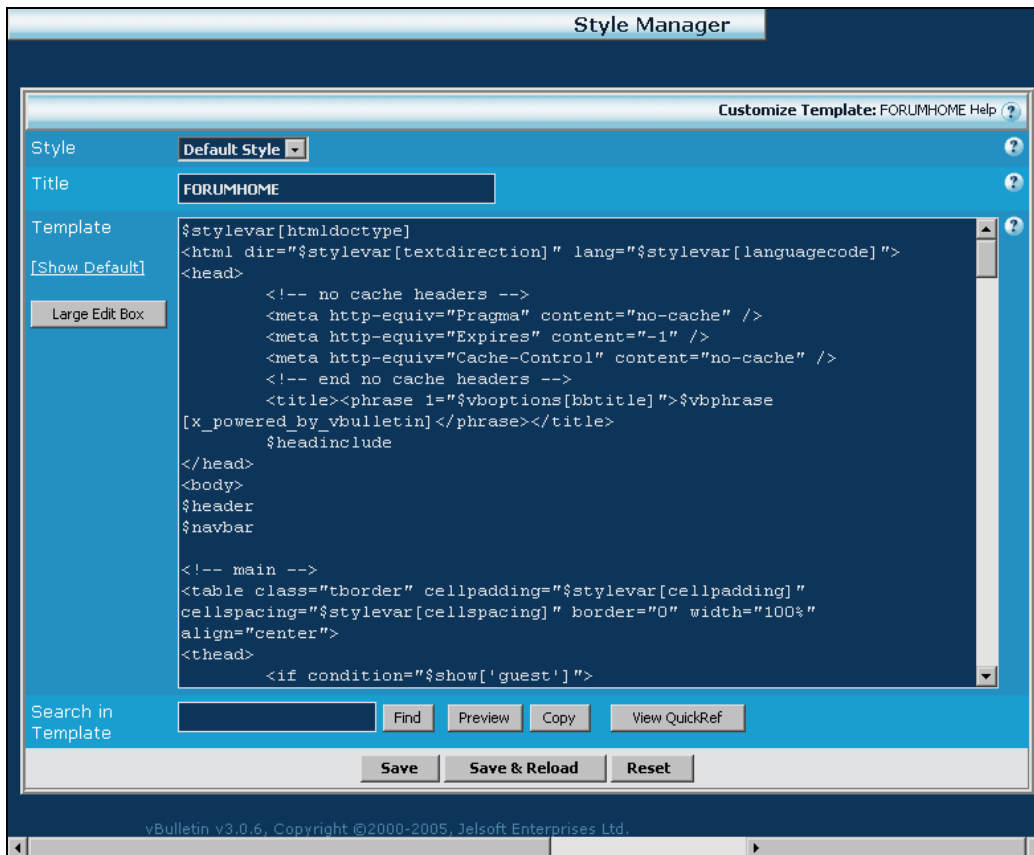
---

You will now see a full listing of the vBulletin templates available. There are a significant number, and they are grouped into 34 categories:

- BB Code Layout Templates
- Buddy List Templates
- Calendar Templates
- Editor Templates
- FAQ Templates
- Forum Display Templates
- Forum Home Templates
- Help Templates
- Instant Messaging Templates
- Member Info Templates
- Modify User Option Templates
- Navigation / Breadcrumb Templates
- New Posting Templates
- Page Navigation Templates
- PHP Include Code Templates
- Private Message Templates
- Poll Templates
- Postbit Templates
- Post Icon Templates
- Printable Thread Templates
- Registration Templates
- User Reputation Templates
- Search Templates
- Show Groups Templates
- Show Thread Templates
- Smilie Popup Templates
- Subscribed Thread Templates
- Paid Subscriptions Templates
- Thread Administration Templates
- User Control Panel Templates
- User Profile Field Templates
- User Note Templates
- Who Posted? Templates
- Who's Online Templates

## Exploring a Template

Let's take a close-up look at a template. We're going to examine the FORUMHOME template, which is the main template that controls the look and operation of the forum homepage. To find this template, scroll down the Forum Home Templates section and double-click on FORUMHOME to open it. The template opens in vBulletin's template editor as shown below:



### In-built template editing

By now you're probably noticing how little you have to use any external editors when working with vBulletin—most features can be edited through vBulletin's own editing interface. This saves the administrator a lot of time and effort, as well as reducing the time it takes to make changes—the changes are done directly to the data on the server, and no FTP program is required!

You might not believe it, but the code shown is the code that underlies the main vBulletin forum page that you see when viewing the forum.

## Template Structure

Let's take a quick look at the structure of the FORUMHOME template before we go on to make some changes to it.

Right at the top of the template is the beginning of the HTML code for the actual page displayed in the browser.

```
$stylevar[htmldoctype]
<html dir="$stylevar[textdirection]" lang="$stylevar[languagecode]">
<head>
  <!-- no cache headers -->
  <meta http-equiv="Pragma" content="no-cache" />
  <meta http-equiv="Expires" content="-1" />
  <meta http-equiv="Cache-Control" content="no-cache" />
  <!-- end no cache headers -->
  <title><phrase 1="$vboptions[bbtitle]">$vbphrase
[x_powered_by_vbulletin]</phrase></title>
  $headinclude
</head>
```

There are a number of vBulletin variables in this small section of code. Variables can be easily spotted because they are all prefixed with the \$ character. Some of these variables refer to phrases that we looked at earlier while others control the running for the forum. For example, \$vbphrase[x\_powered\_by\_vbulletin] refers to a phrase in vBulletin—this is the phrase that adds the—powered by vBulletin to the menu bar of the browser, while the \$vboptions[bbtitle] variable extracts the forum title from the vBulletin options settings and displays it. Both of these are shown below. All the templates follow this format—HTML combined with vBulletin-specific variables.



The other variables, such as \$stylevar[htmldoctype] and \$stylevar[languagecode], control settings outputted to the HTML header, shown below:

```
<!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Transitional//EN"
"http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-transitional.dtd">
<html dir="ltr" lang="en">
<head>
  <!-- no cache headers -->
  <meta http-equiv="Pragma" content="no-cache" />
  ..<meta http-equiv="Expires" content="-1" />
  ..<meta http-equiv="Cache-Control" content="no-cache" />
  ..<!-- end no cache headers -->
  ..<title>The Example Forums Forum - powered by vBulletin</title>
  ..<meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=ISO-8859-1" />
  <meta name="generator" content="vBulletin 3.5.2" />
  <meta name="keywords"
    content="vbulletin,forum,bbs,discussion,jelsoft,bulletinboard" />
  <meta name="description" content="This is a discussion forum powered by
vBulletin. To find out about vBulletin, go to http://www.vbulletin.com/ ." />
```

These settings are stored and edited through the vBulletin Style Manager.

Further along in the code, you will find other variables, and you might be able to guess at what some of them do—for example, \$navbar. The code that controls the display of the navbar is stored in a separate template, which is inserted into the main page. This allows different parts of the forum to be stored (and edited) separately. Because the navbar is used extensively in vBulletin discussion boards, it makes sense to store that code in one place—this results in less code overall

and also means that, if you want to make a change to the navbar, you need do so only once. So, when the FORUMHOME template is used to display the front page of the forum, all the variables are processed at the server, and the final page outputted to the browser for display.

---

### Similarities to PHP and ASP includes

If you are used to using PHP or ASP, you will more than likely be familiar with the concept of includes—this is where one section of code is inserted into another so that they are combined server-side before being displayed. This is exactly what is happening here.

---

If you carry on looking at this template (or any other template), you will see a combination of HTML and variables coming together to create a forum page. Sometimes the relationship between the two is clear, other times it's not so clear, and you might need to experiment with the code before figuring it out. (We will get a clearer understanding of working with templates in Chapter 8.)

## Adding a FORUMHOME Sidebar

Now you've had a chance to get acquainted with the FORUMHOME template, let's look at how we can make changes to it, by adding a sidebar to the forum. A sidebar is a place where you can add your own content to be displayed on the front page of your forum. This is a change that vBulletin administrators often want to make because it gives them a place to make specific additions to the forum, such as important announcements, links, or advertisements.

Making changes to templates generally requires you to have at least a basic understanding of HTML. The more HTML you know, the more easily you will be able to make changes and customizations to your forum.

All the changes here are going to be to the FORUMHOME template, but don't worry about damaging your forum—if things go wrong, you can always undo the changes later. However, if you follow these instructions, then things will be fine.

## Two Changes

You only need to make two changes to the FORUMHOME template. These two changes involve the addition to two sections of HTML code.

Firstly, scroll down the FORUMHOME template to the section of code shown below:

```
<body>
$header
$navbar

<!-- main -->
```

Between the \$navbar variable and the <!-- main --> comment tag, add a couple of hard returns to make space for the code you want to add.

```
<body>
$header
$navbar

<!-- main -->
```

Now, when you make modifications to a template, you might need to find these changers later in order to edit or delete them. If you just add modifications directly to the code, then it's easy for them to get lost. We suggest that you add some comment tags and place your changes within these. To the comment tags, we usually add a description of the change we're making and the date. Also, if we know how many changes we are going to make, we add that information too. These comments will also be very useful to you later on when upgrading to a new version of vBulletin because it makes your modifications easy to spot.

```
<body>
$header
$navbar

<!-- Start sidebar code / Jan 06 / change 1 of 2 -->

<!-- End sidebar code / Jan 06 / change 1 of 2 -->

<!-- main -->
```

Now we can add the code. Here this is the beginning of an HTML table. The table will be 150 pixels wide.

```
<body>
$header
$navbar

<!-- Start sidebar code / Apr 05 / change 1 of 2 -->
<table width="$stylevar[outertablewidth]" border="0"
cellpadding="$stylevar[cellpadding]" cellspacing="0" align="center">
  <tr>
    <td width="150" valign="top">
      ADD CONTENT HERE
    </td>
    <td valign="top">
<!-- End sidebar code / Apr 05 / change 1 of 2 -->

<!-- main -->
```

These are all the changes we need to make at the top for now. Now scroll to near the bottom of the FORUMHOME template to the point shown below:

```
</table>
<!-- / icons and login code -->

$footer
</body>
```

Now again add a few returns between the <!-- / icons and login code --> comment tag and the \$footer variable.

```
</table>
<!-- / icons and login code -->

$footer
</body>
```

Next, add the comment tags that will later allow you to find the change you made.

```

</table>
<!-- / icons and login code -->
<!-- Start sidebar code / Jan 06 / change 2 of 2 -->

<!-- End sidebar code / Jan 06 / change 2 of 2 -->

$footer
</body>

```

Now it's time to add the code. This is simply the HTML code that closes the table we opened above.

```

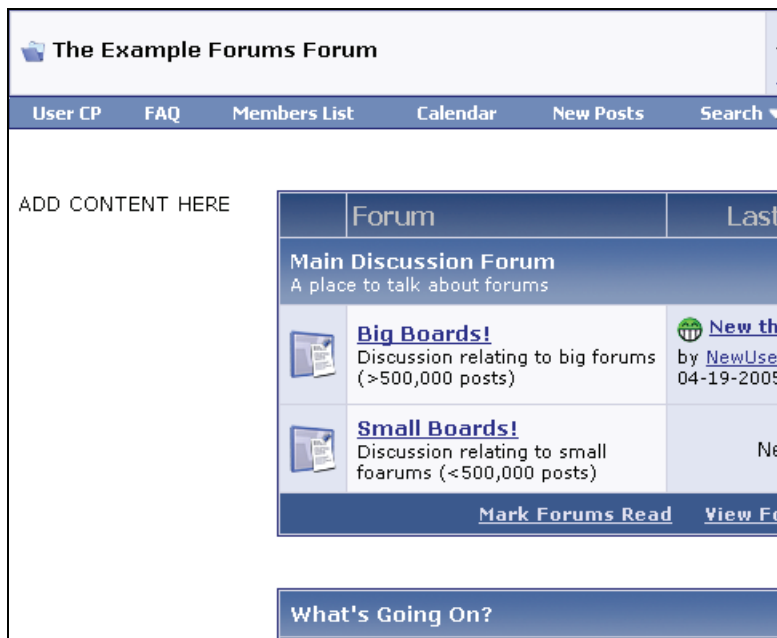
</table>
<!-- / icons and login code -->
<!-- Start sidebar code / Jan 06 / change 2 of 2 -->
</td>
</tr>
</table>
<!-- End sidebar code / Jan 06 / change 2 of 2 -->

$footer
</body>

```

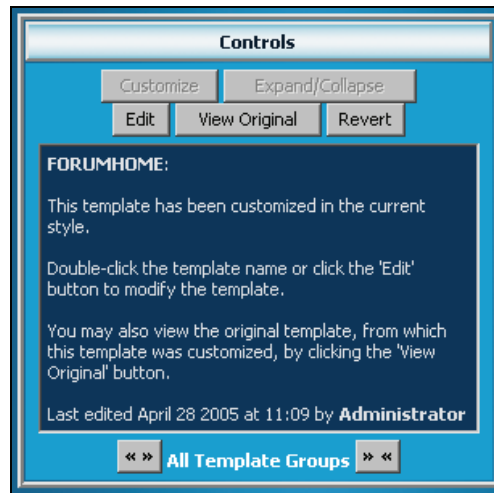
With the final change made, all that is left to do is to save the template by clicking on the Save button at the bottom (or Save & Reload, which combines saving the template with reloading it into the editor).

Having done that, you can view the changes you made to the forum in a browser. The result is shown below:

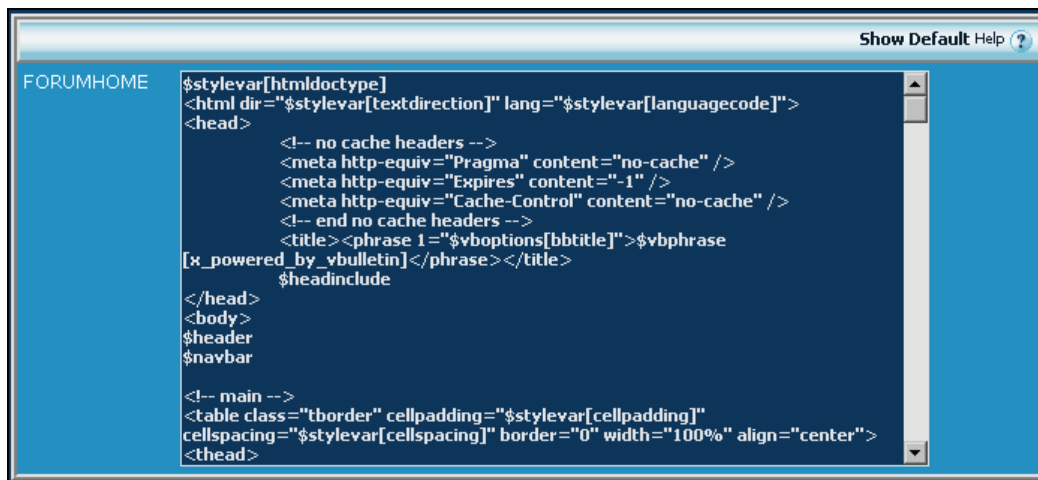




If you were doing this for real, you could now go back to the FORUMHOME template and add the content you want to appear in the sidebar. If you return to the Style Manager, you will notice that the entry for FORUMHOME is highlighted in red and that beside it appear the details of when the change was made and who made it. We've shown this below for the FORUMHOME template that we have just modified.



In the image above, you will see two buttons that are very useful once you have templates that have been modified. These are the View Original button and the Revert button. Clicking on the View Original button allows you to view the original template without any of the modifications added. Viewing the original template does not alter the content of the altered template—both are stored separately.



The Revert button does exactly what you'd expect. It reverts the template back to original and eliminates any changes made. Use this with care, as there is no undo feature and your changes will be lost!

## PHP Code Modifications

The final kind of modification that can be made to a vBulletin installation is direct modification to the underlying PHP code of the forum. There is no direct access to the PHP code from within the vBulletin, so all of this has to be done using a text editor and an FTP program to upload the file.

---

### Words of caution

Be careful when making changes to the PHP code that lies behind your vBulletin forum—it is very easy to damage or destroy your forum if you make incorrect changes. Also, if you do have problems, don't expect to receive support, as this is not covered. (You will be advised to reload the forum software or fall back to a backup to solve the problem.) So take care!

Be careful when making changes—always make a note of the changes you make and keep backups of any files that you alter.

---

## PayPal Modification

Let's look at making a very simple PHP modification to a vBulletin forum.

This modification revolves around the PayPal subscription system that allows paid subscriptions to a vBulletin forum. Generally, the PayPal subscription is treated as a non-shipping transaction (services only), and the address of the person subscribing isn't transmitted to the administrator when a subscription is made. Usually this is fine, but there are times when a forum subscription might include a gift or a hard copy magazine or newsletter. A simple modification to the PHP code allows PayPal to treat a subscription as a goods transaction and provides the subscriber's address to the administrator of the forum. (The subscriber can change this if they want.)

## File Modification

This modification only involves one file. This is `includes\functions_subscriptions.php`. To begin this modification process, either download a copy of this file from the server using FTP, or go to your original installation files and retrieve a copy of it. (Remember to keep an unaltered original just in case you want to revert the changes.)

Open the file in a text editor. (Do not use Notepad, as this can have problems—instead use WordPad or another editor such as UltraEdit.) Now, in this file we scroll down to line 381. This is the line that we need to change for the modification to work. The change is simple, but effective.

Change this:

```
<input type="hidden" name="no_shipping" value="1" />
```

to this:

```
<input type="hidden" name="no_shipping" value="0" />
```

All that needs to be done is to change `value="1"` to `value="0"`.

Once this is done, save the file. In particular, take care not to add any spaces or carriage returns at the end of the file, as these can cause problems. Now upload it into the appropriate folder back on the server.

That's it! Job done!

## Hacks

So far we've talked about making modifications to a vBulletin installation, and we've looked at four different ways to modify the installation. So far we've called the changes 'modifications', but the term that you are more likely to see used on the web is 'hacks'. Whenever a board is modified, it is said to be **hacked** (not to be confused with 'hacked' as in the security being compromised by a hacker), and modifications are known as **hacks** as in "hacks to a board". Basically, any change that alters the underlying code of the forum is looked upon as a hack. Changing the CSS and style settings through the interface is not generally thought of as a hack because these are expected and they don't change the underlying functionality of the board. However, making changes to the templates and the PHP code is definitely considered to be hacking the board. Making changes to the phrases that control the board is considered by many to be hacking too, though some just look at this as part of the customization process, similar to changing the stylesheet.

A hack can be one change or a hack can be many changes. So far we've looked at some very simple hacks, but in later chapters we'll go much deeper. However, before we do that, let's look at the pros and cons of hacking a board.

## Pros and Cons of Hacking a vBulletin Board

As with everything in life, there are pros and cons when it comes to hacking a vBulletin board. When you are considering a hack, you have to decide whether or not it is worth the potential downsides. There are a number of pros to carrying out hacks on your vBulletin installation.

Below are a few positive points to consider:

- Hacking the board can make your board unique and different from other installations, and enable you to personalize your discussion board.
- Hacking can add much-needed functionality.

Hacking can also remove unwanted functionality. There are, in fact, more cons to hacking than pros. However, you have to balance things out—a hack that adds a spellchecker or allows you to display advertisements in the forum is quite a powerful pro point. Against these pros you balance out the cons.

Typical cons include:

- Hacks can take time to install—this can mean downtime for your members.
- Hacking the code can damage the forum and cause downtime if things go wrong.
- Support for hacked boards can be limited to reinstallation of the software.
- A hacked board is harder to upgrade than a board left in a standard state.

As a forum administrator, you must balance out these cons against the benefits. However, if you take care when carrying out a hack (by, for example, documenting your changes and ensuring you have a recent forum backup in case things go wrong), you should be fine.

## Finding a Hack

So, where does the typical forum administrator find hacks? There are a few options:

- You can develop your own hacks. This is an option for the experienced administrator and for people who have been working with vBulletin for some time, but it is not recommended for a beginner with no experience of PHP and MySQL.
- You can download hacks. There are a number of forums and websites dedicated to vBulletin hacks. The most popular is <http://www.vbulletin.org>. A search here will generally yield a number of hacks.
- You can get a hack made. On many of the vBulletin forums (including <http://www.vbulletin.org>), you can ask for a hack to be made. This might not be cheap, and you might have to be specific about what you want, but this is another option open to vBulletin administrators.

## Installing a Hack

Once you have found a hack, you have to install it. However, there's no one single way to install a hack. In fact, there is almost as many ways of installing a hack as there are hacks!

Generally a hack consists of code and installation instructions. Instructions are generally quite clear and straight forward following the following format:

1. Open file xyz.php.
2. At line xx add the following code: ...
3. Save the file and upload.
4. Open up template yyy.
5. Find the following code: ...
6. Add the following code: ...
7. Save the template.

These instructions are usually detailed, but it is recommended that you work through the instructions before making any actual changes to the files—this way, if there are any ambiguities in the instructions, you have a chance of spotting them first.

Be on the lookout for problems. If the instructions ask you to find some particular code or highlight a line of code that you cannot find, then first make sure that you are looking in the correct file. If you still cannot find the code, then there may be a problem somewhere. For example, you might have already made changes to that file, or perhaps a later version of vBulletin has removed the line referenced in the instructions. Either way, don't make guesses at where the code should go, as this could be disastrous. Check for an updated version of the hack, or get in touch with the author of the hack. (If you found the hack on a forum, this should be easy.) Installing a hack is easier if it contains an install script—you just upload the files to the appropriate location on the server (usually specified in the instructions) and then run the install script, which will make all the changes for you. When done, you normally delete the installation file to prevent it being rerun by some other, unauthorized person.

Don't be lulled into a false sense of security by a hack that has an installation script—things can nonetheless go wrong, so make sure that you have an up-to-date backup of the forum and of the database just in case things don't go according to plan.

After installation, test the hack thoroughly. Since each hack is different, it's impossible to offer detailed advice on how to do this, but if you've installed a spellchecker, then test that it works; if you've installed a hack that makes moderating easier, then test this. Work methodically, and be on the lookout for problems. Don't tolerate error messages—if you see any, find out what the problem is. Don't ignore them—they will only get worse!

## Backing Up a Hack

There are two levels of backup for hacks.

1. First, if it's a hack you have installed on your forum, keep a copy of the hack and the installation instructions in case you ever need to install it again. It's always recommended that you check for an updated version of the hack if you have to reinstall it, but there are always a few that you end up not being able to find again.
2. Back up the whole forum using FTP, and keep a copy of the database. This way, you have a copy of the installed hack, and if anything goes wrong with your forum, it should take you only minutes or hours to recover from (depending on the size of your forum and database, and the speed of your Internet connection).

## Commercial Hacks

So far, I've just mentioned free hacks or hacks specially created for someone. There are also a number of commercial hacks available. Sometimes it may be disputed whether they are hacks at all, but if they integrate into a vBulletin installation and add features, then they are hacks, albeit generally bigger and packing much more functionality.

---

### Support

Another element to commercial hacks is support—when you buy software, you normally get support, and this can be very useful indeed. You can generally get good support all the way from installation to troubleshooting.

---

There are a number of commercial hacks available for vBulletin—far too many to list them all here. However, here are a few of the more popular ones:

- PhotoPost PHP Pro—<http://www.photopost.com>—photo gallery software
- PhotoPost Classifieds—<http://www.photopost.com/class>—classified advertisement system
- ReviewPost PHP Pro—<http://www.reviewpost.com>—product review software
- vbAdvanced—<http://www.vbadvanced.com>—content management system (The main content management system software is free, but there are commercial add-ons available.)
- VirtuaNews—<http://www.virtuanews.com>—website creation tool (This integrates with vBulletin.)

Treat commercial hacks in the same way as free hacks:

- Always make a backup of the forum and database before installation.
- Always keep an unedited copy of all the files you update.
- Do a dry run before the actual installation to make sure that the instructions are clear and unambiguous before you begin.
- Test the hack thoroughly after installation.
- Keep a backup of the hack.

For more details on commercial hacks for vBulletin, visit the official vBulletin site (<http://www.vbulletin.com>).

## Summary

This chapter has been all about making modifications and customizations to your vBulletin installation. We've tried to cover a broad range of modifications in this chapter, from simply changing a few stylesheet settings to making modifications to the vBulletin templates and PHP files.

The purpose of this chapter is to show you what's possible—no one is saying you must hack your board, and there are many good communities out there that are running on boards that have minimal customizations. However, many administrators do feel that their boards need a certain level of customization and modification.

If you're just starting to set up a vBulletin board, then you probably feel that you have enough to do right now, but over time, as you get everything in place and you have more time on your hands, you will find your mind wandering to changes that would be useful. This is when you can really start to put what you've learned in this chapter to good use!

# 5

## Administering Your Forum

There's a lot to do as a forum administrator. It's not just about participating in the discussions, facilitating new discussion, and making the tough decisions as to who should be moderated or banned. There's a lot to do behind the scenes—the day-to-day care of the forum as well as routine maintenance. You will also run into problems from time to time, and then you will need to carry out emergency repairs to get your forum going again.

This chapter is about the most common tasks an administrator performs, some of which will be mundane while others will be vital to your forum's survival!

We will be looking at:

- How to create a forum
- How permissions can be used to restrict access to a forum
- Super administrators
- Some useful changes that can be made to the `config.php` file
- Backing up, repairing, and optimizing the database
- Some changes to the counters in the database that may be necessary from time to time
- How smilies and avatars can be used to give a human feel to a forum

### Setting Up a Forum

As administrator you will create several forums within your discussion board so that members can find the right place for the topics they want to discuss. For example, you might divide a discussion group related to computers into two different forums called `hardware` and `software`.

However, these forums may become crowded so that you would find it useful to break down these topics into subtopics as follows:

- `hardware`—PCs, CPUs, Hard drives, Video adapters, Memory
- `software`—Windows, Linux

Of course, these topics could be subdivided even further.

By now, you probably get the picture on how this works. But there's a deeper level that you can take this to. First thing's first. A forum doesn't appear from nowhere. It takes planning and preparation.

Your discussion board will probably have moderators who will take care of moving posts and deleting unacceptable comments, as well as hosting discussions within the forums. You might also have other administrators. It would be good to have a place where you can come together with these other contributors and discuss the running of and future plans for the forum. One solution would be to set up a forum for administrators and moderators, and this what we will do.

## Creating the Forum

Let's walk through the setup process for setting up a specific area on a board for administrators and moderators. For this we will continue to use our generic board, because the fewer distractions there are, the better—you might want to work through this on your main forum or on a test forum.

---

### vBulletin test forum

If you have a valid license for vBulletin, you are entitled to set up an additional test forum so that you can test any code, template, and database modifications. To make this clear to vBulletin and its license verification system, you should place this installation in a directory called `testvb` and password protect it. This installation must not be accessible by the general public.

We recommend that you take vBulletin up on this. Having a test forum allows you to roll out changes there and test their impact on the board without letting members see the result. It also allows you a safe way to experiment with the vBulletin source code without any risk of bringing down your main active installation.

---

Start off by accessing your discussion board's AdminCP. Expand the left-hand menu by clicking on Forums & Moderators, and then click on Add New Forum.

This brings up the Forum Manager screen on the right.

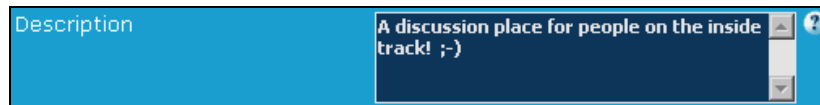
This is where you can enter all the details for the new forum. We only need to concern ourselves with a few of these options:

- **Title.** Enter the title of the forum here. We will choose something clear and descriptive—Admins and Moderators Only!.



The screenshot shows a text input field with the label "Title" on the left. The text "Admins and Moderators Only!" is entered into the field. To the right of the input field is a small blue square button with a white question mark icon.

- **Description.** Enter some text to back up the name given to the forum.



The screenshot shows a text input field with the label "Description" on the left. The text "A discussion place for people on the inside track! ;-)" is entered into the field. To the right of the input field is a small blue square button with a white question mark icon.



- **Parent Forum.** Set this to **No one** (the default), as we want it to appear as a top-level forum.

Parent Forum **No one** [?] [v]

- **Forum is Active.** Set this to **No** for now, as you don't want it to appear to others until you have it set up properly.

Forum is Active (Will not appear if set to no, but remains accessible if the forum's URL is known)  Yes  No [?]

- **Forum is Open.** Set this to **No** for now too. Until you've got the forum set up properly, you don't want any posts made there.

Forum is Open (Set this to 'No' to prevent any new posts being made in this forum)  Yes  No [?]

- When all this is done, click on the **Save** button.

The forum will be created with the settings you prescribed.

Forum Manager Help [?]

If you change the display orders, please be sure to submit the form using the 'Save Display Order' button at the bottom of the page

Forum	Controls	Display Order	Moderators
<a href="#">Main Discussion Forum</a>	<a href="#">Edit Forum</a> [v] <a href="#">Go</a>	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<a href="#">Moderators (0)</a> [v] <a href="#">Go</a>
- - <a href="#">Big Boards!</a>	<a href="#">Edit Forum</a> [v] <a href="#">Go</a>	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<a href="#">Moderators (0)</a> [v] <a href="#">Go</a>
- - <a href="#">Small Boards!</a>	<a href="#">Edit Forum</a> [v] <a href="#">Go</a>	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<a href="#">Moderators (0)</a> [v] <a href="#">Go</a>
Forum	Controls	Display Order	Moderators
<a href="#">Admins and Moderators Only!</a>	<a href="#">Edit Forum</a> [v] <a href="#">Go</a>	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<a href="#">Moderators (0)</a> [v] <a href="#">Go</a>

[Save Display Order](#) [Add New Forum](#)

Finally, we'll move the new forum so that it appears at the top of the forum listing. To do this, change the display order to 0, and click on **Save Display Order**. This will move the new forum to the top of the list of forums (as you can see from the first screenshot in the next section).

You have now set up your forum for administrators and moderators, but there is a potential drawback—you would have to discuss your plans in view of the other members. Fortunately, you can make this forum private so that only administrators and moderators will have access to it. You do this by setting up permissions.

## Forum Permissions

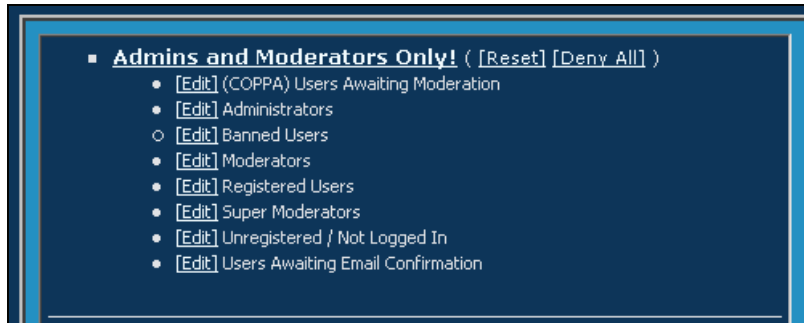
In vBulletin **permissions** enable you to set up forums within your discussion board that can be used only by the members you want.

We will now make some changes to the access permissions for the new forum. To begin this process, click on the drop-down box next to the Admins and Moderators Only! link, choose View Permissions, and click on Go.



This now brings up the Forum Permissions Manager page.

We are concerned with the section of this page that deals with the forum that we just created.



At the moment everyone has access to this area, but we can change this easily. There are two options:

- We can click on Deny All and then specifically allow access to the Administrators and Moderators user groups.
- We can deny access specifically to all groups except Administrators and Moderators.

It is always safer to deny access to all and then allow in the user groups that you want, so this is what we are going to do now. (The other way is prone to leaving out a group by accident.)

To begin the process, click on the Deny All link.



This changes all the usergroup permissions for this forum, denying them all access. The page then reloads, and all the usergroups are now displayed in red showing that they have been customized manually.

---

### Yellow alert

If the names of usergroups appear in yellow, then they are inheriting permissions from a parent forum. In the example forum, this would happen if we changed the permissions on the Main Discussion Forum, which is the parent forum of both the Big Boards! and Small Boards! forums.

---

Right now, no one can access the forum! Let's change that.

Click on the Edit link next to Administrators.



The page that is displayed now can be used to customize the forum permissions for administrators.

**Forum Permissions Manager**

**Edit Forum Permissions For Usergroup:** Administrators in Forum Admins and Help ?  
Moderators Only!

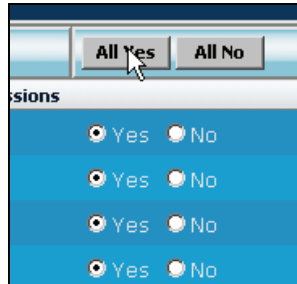
Use Usergroup Default Permissions (Note: this will delete any previous custom permissions set) ?  
 Use Custom Permissions

Edit Forum Permissions	All Yes	All No
<b>Forum Viewing Permissions</b>		
Can View Forum	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	?
Can View Others' Threads	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	?
Can See Deletion Notices	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	?
Can Search Forum	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	?
Can Use Email to Friend	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	?
Can Download Attachments	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	?
<b>Post Permissions</b>		
Can Post Threads	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	?
Can Reply to Own Threads	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	?
Can Reply to Others' Threads	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	?
Always Moderate This Group's Posts	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	?
Can Upload Attachments	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	?
Can Rate Threads	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	?
<b>Post / Thread Permissions</b>		
Can Edit Own Posts	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	?
Can Delete Own Posts	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	?
Can Move Own Threads	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	?
Can Open / Close Own Threads	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	?
Can Delete Own Threads	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	?
<b>Poll Permissions</b>		
Can Post Polls	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	?
Can Vote on Polls	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	?
<input type="button" value="Save"/> <input type="button" value="Reset"/>		

vBulletin v3.0.6, Copyright ©2000-2005, Jelsoft Enterprises Ltd.

The next part is the tricky part, and you need to take care. To reset the permissions to standard administrator privileges, you need to set all the options to *Yes apart from Always Moderate This Group's Posts* (unless you want all administrator posts to be moderated by moderators, which is unlikely).

However, clicking the button marked *All Yes* changes all the options to *Yes apart from Always Moderate This Group's Posts*. This is a little-known feature, and users of vBulletin are often unaware of it.



Scroll down to the bottom of the page, and click on *Save*. You can now repeat the process for the Moderators usergroup.

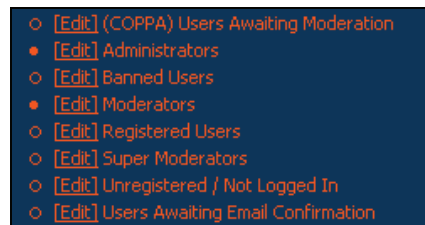
## Viewing Permissions

We will now look at two features of the Forum Permissions Manager page that will make your life a lot easier.

Firstly, there is the color coding. The name of each usergroup is displayed in one of three different colors according to that group's permissions as follows:

- **Standard:** These are displayed in white. These usergroups have default usergroup permissions.
- **Customized:** These are displayed in red. These usergroups have custom permissions.
- **Inherited:** These are displayed in yellow. These usergroups have custom permissions inherited from a parent forum.

But it's not just the colors that help you navigate the forum permissions page. If you take a look to the left of the usergroup names, you will see solid dots and open circles in either red, yellow, or white.



The solid dots represent usergroups who can view the forum in question, while open circles represent those who cannot.

---

### Browser-specific feature

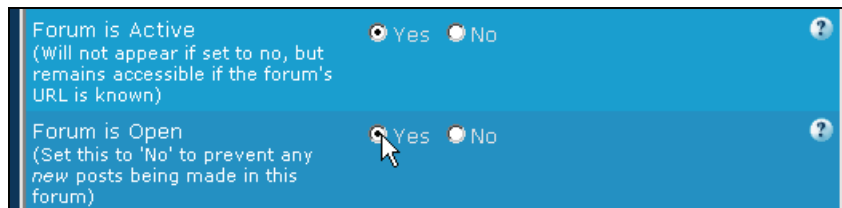
The solid dots and open circles only apply if you are using Microsoft Internet Explorer 4+, Netscape 6+ or Firefox browsers. This effect also works in Opera, but the dots are much smaller and can be harder to see.

---

## Opening the Forum

We have nearly finished. Remember how we initially chose not to set the new forum active and open. Well, setting it to open is the final step that we need to take.

In the Forum Manager page, scroll down to Posting Options, and change both Forum is Active and Forum is Open to Yes.



Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on Save.

The new forum is now visible and available to all members of the administrator and moderator usergroups.

---

### Helping hand

By now you're probably noticing the question mark icon next to items in the AdminCP (and the ModCP). These are the help buttons—clicking on them will bring up help screens on the topic they appear next to.

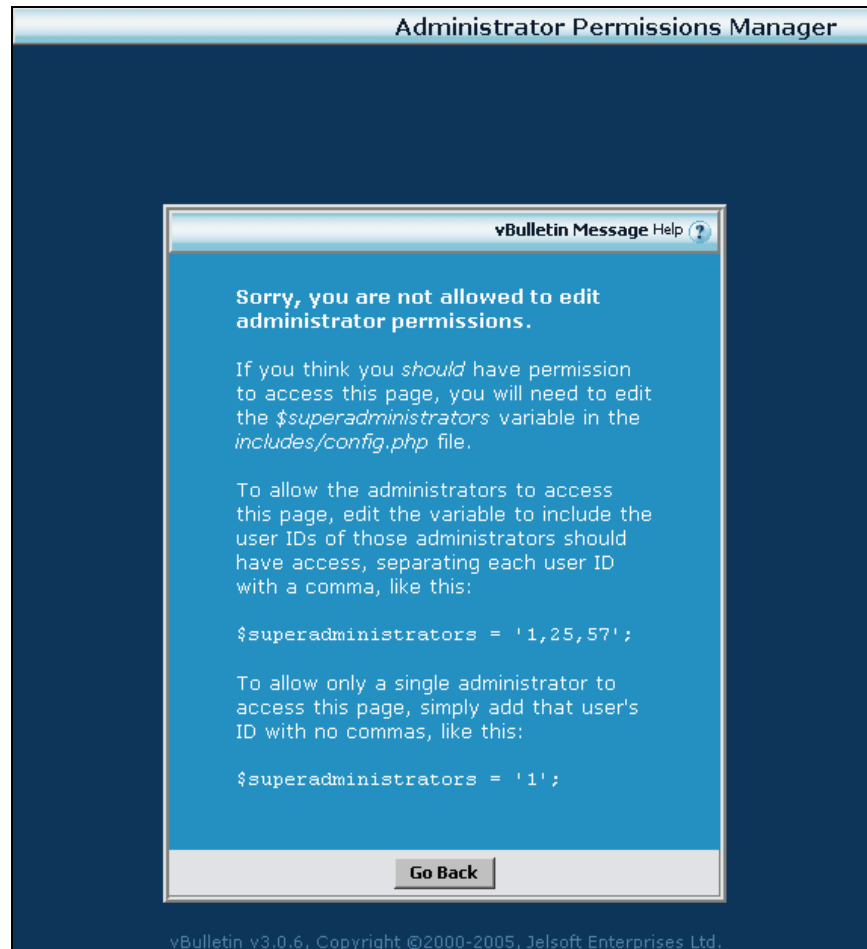
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## Super Administrators

If you own the forum or run the forum, then you are probably a member of the Administrator usergroup. But are you a super administrator? Probably not! Want to find out how to set yourself up as a super administrator? Read on!

You need to be a super administrator to have control over other administrators and to change their permissions. For example, suppose that you have another administrator who is your 'second in command' and that you want to change this administrator's permissions on the forum. To do this

you click on Usergroups in the left-hand menu and then click on Administrator Permissions. However, you come up against a message telling you that you don't have permission.



This message also tells you how to make the changes that will enable you to carry out this action. You do, however, require access to the server to carry out these changes.

## Creating a Super Administrator

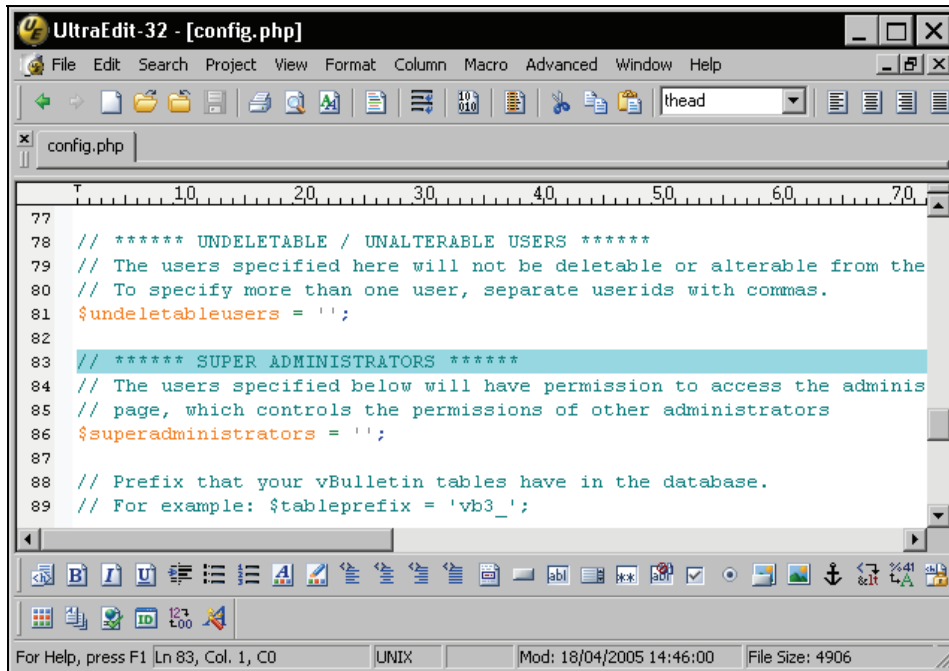
To create a super administrator, you need to make a change to the `includes/config.php` file. The easiest way to edit this file is to download it using FTP and edit it locally.

### Local edit versus server edit

Some web hosts might allow you to edit files through a built-in file manager application, but this isn't recommended. By downloading the file, you can keep an unchanged copy of it in case your edits go wrong.

Once you have downloaded the `config.php` file, you can open it. You may remember that you edited this file to provide vBulletin with the information needed to connect to the database when you first set up the discussion board.

Scroll down to the section marked `***** SUPER ADMINISTRATORS *****` as shown below (line number 83).



The screenshot shows the UltraEdit-32 text editor with the `config.php` file open. The editor's status bar at the bottom indicates the current position is at line 83, column 1. The code visible in the editor includes:

```
77
78 // ***** UNDELETABLE / UNALTERABLE USERS *****
79 // The users specified here will not be deletable or alterable from the
80 // To specify more than one user, separate userids with commas.
81 $undeletableusers = '';
82
83 // ***** SUPER ADMINISTRATORS *****
84 // The users specified below will have permission to access the adminis
85 // page, which controls the permissions of other administrators
86 $superadministrators = '';
87
88 // Prefix that your vBulletin tables have in the database.
89 // For example: $tableprefix = 'vb3_';
```

You need to change this line of code:

```
$superadministrators = '';
```

To make an administrator into a super administrator, you add their user ID number inside the single quotes. As the holder of the first account in the vBulletin database, your user ID should be 1.

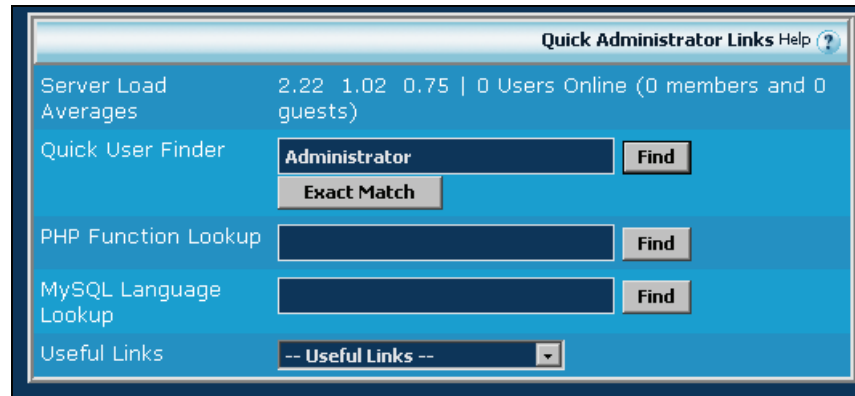
```
$superadministrators = '1';
```

If you want to add more than one super administrator, separate each user ID with a comma, like this:

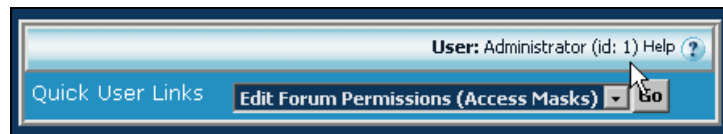
```
$superadministrators = '1,2,42';
```



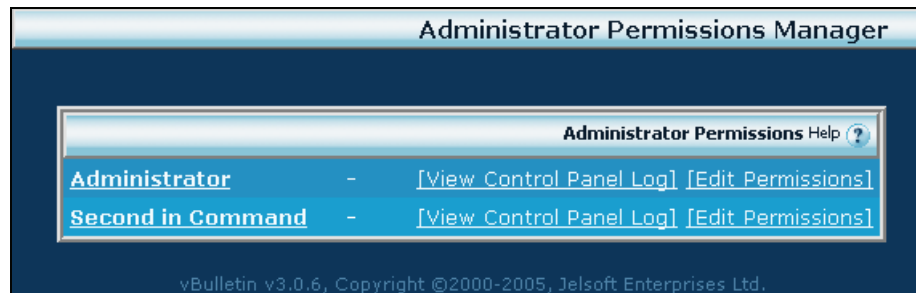
Finding the user ID of a member is easy. The AdminCP home page has a feature, called the Quick User Finder, that allows you to look up users' IDs.



Type the user name in here, and click Exact Match. This takes you to the User Manager page, and at the top of this screen, you will find the user ID for that user.



Finally, save the file and upload it back to the server (making sure it overwrites the old file). The change is instant, and you can now access the Administrator Permissions page.

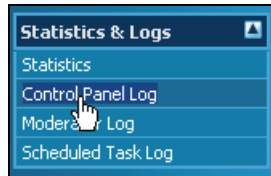


## Other Changes to the config.php File

There are several other changes that you can make to the `includes/config.php` file in addition to creating a super administrator. We will look at four of these changes.

## Admin Log Viewing Permission

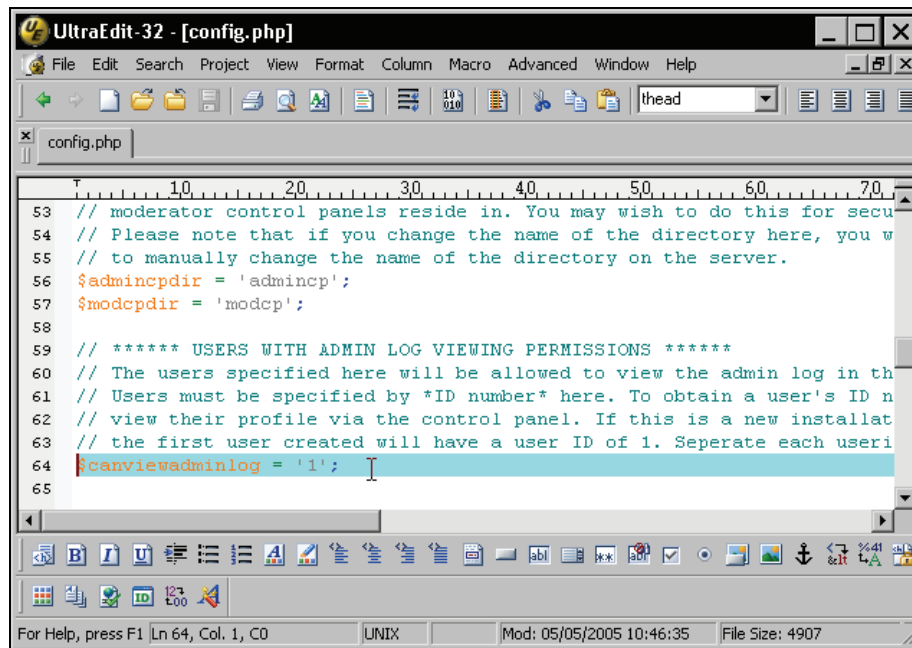
The Admin log keeps track of all the changes and edits that the administrators have carried out. To view this, click on **Statistics & Logs** in the left-hand menu, and then click on **Control Panel Log**.



This gives you access to the Admin log.



By default, only the first administrator account has access to this. (This is the account, with user ID 1, that was created during the setup of the vBulletin board.) To give this power to more administrators (or take it away), you should make a change to the section of code in the `includes/config.php` file labeled `***** USERS WITH ADMIN LOG VIEWING PERMISSIONS *****`.



Make the change to this line of code:

```
$canviewadminlog = '1';
```

Remember to separate each user ID with a comma.

Save the file, and upload it to make the changes active.

## Admin Log Pruning Permission

As well as controlling who can view the Admin log, you can control who can prune it (in other words, delete stuff from it).

Add the user IDs of all Administrators you want to have this power here:

```
$canpruneadminlog = '1';
```

User ID 1 is there by default.

## Query Running Permission

This is a powerful permission that you should grant with care. Giving someone the power to run queries allows them to interact with the actual database that holds the vBulletin data. We've not looked at this yet and won't until Chapter 9. For now, let's just look at how to give this power to or take it away from administrators.

The line of code you need to edit is this:

```
$canrunqueries = '';
```

Add the user IDs inside the single quotes. Separate multiple user IDs with a comma.

---

---

### **With great power, comes great responsibility**

Be very careful with this. The ability to run queries is a very powerful tool that we will come to later. Running queries can easily damage or destroy your discussion board and any other data in the database. For the safety and security of your board, you may want to remove all user IDs from this list and allow queries to be run only through phpMyAdmin or through a shell.

---

## **Undeletable and Unalterable Users**

You might want your administrators (or other members) to be undeletable and unalterable. (This refers to the profile settings.) This setting can be handy, because it prevents you from deleting or demoting administrators (including yourself!) by accident.

The line of code you will need to edit is this:

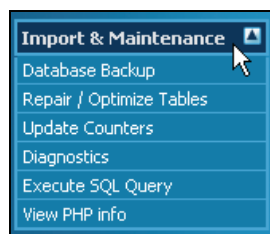
```
$undeletableusers = '';
```

## **Maintaining the Database**

Without the data, your community is gone. Not only will you lose all the forums that have been set up (along with any customizations and changes you made), but you will also lose all the people. By this, I mean you will lose all the members—lose the database and their accounts. Usernames, passwords, everything will be lost.

Running a forum without taking care of the database is asking for trouble. Not only might you run into problems and difficulties when you make a change to the forum (such as adding new features or upgrading vBulletin), but also your data is vulnerable to damage if the server hosting your community encounters problems. Small database problems can quickly grow into major issues, and the best defense against problems is to keep a backup.

vBulletin has a lot of features to allow you to protect your precious data from damage, corruptions, and loss. These tools can be accessed through the Import & Maintenance menu on the left of the AdminCP.



## Backing Up the Database

vBulletin makes this job quite easy as long as your database isn't too big. How big is too big depends on a variety of factors, but if your database is under 250 Mb, you should be able to use this feature just fine.

---

### Back to basics

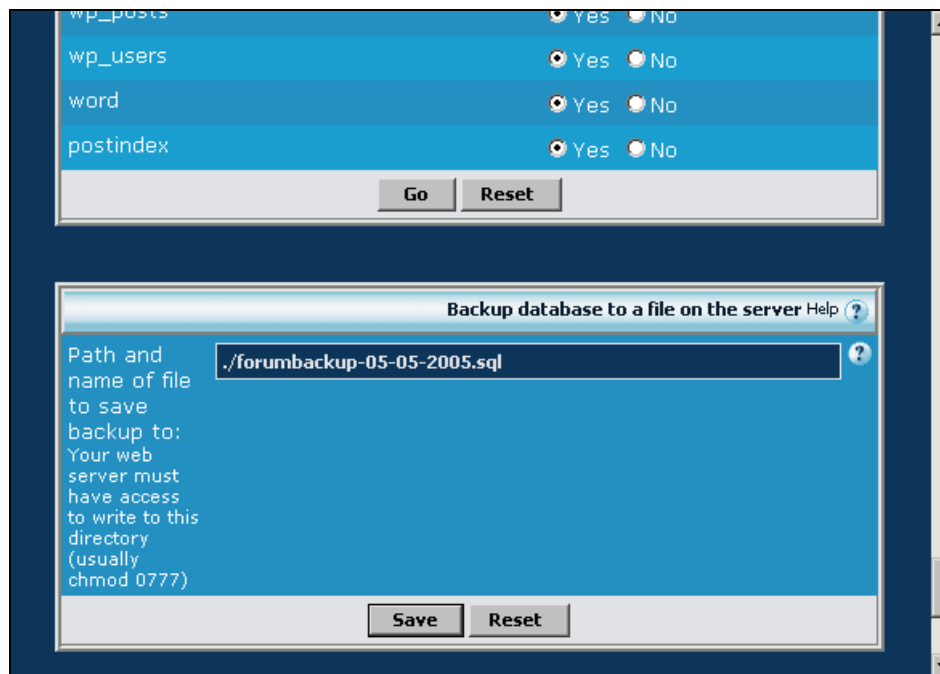
For large databases, saving the database via the command line is recommended. This is done using the following command:

```
shell> mysqldump --tab=/path/to/some/dir --opt db_name
```

---

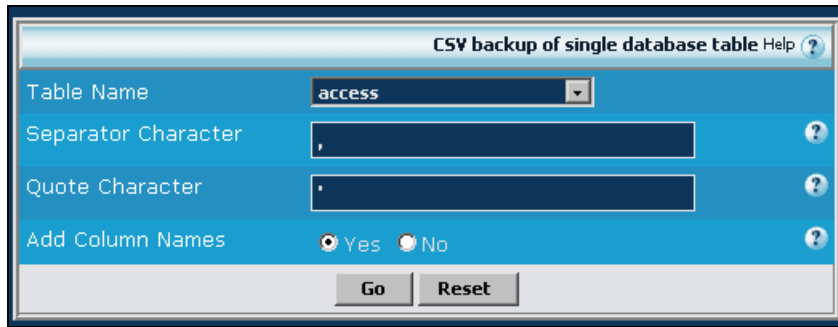
The backup interface is easy to use. It shows you all the tables that are available in the database that contains vBulletin (including non-vBulletin tables).

You should choose the tables you want to back up (it's probably best to choose all the tables initially) and then select at the bottom of the screen the location to save the backup to. This has to be a folder on the server that vBulletin can write to, so its chmod permission should be set to 777.



After you have done this, click on Save. The backup will then be carried out.

You can also back up single database tables into a CSV (comma separated variable) file, which is handy if you plan on making changes to the database.



Restoration of this database is carried out through the phpMyAdmin interface.

---

### Command-line recovery

Recovery of a database through the command line is a two-step process. First, create a database to receive the data.

```
$ mysql -h localhost -u xxxxxx -p YYYYYY
```

Here xxxxxx is the username of the database and YYYYYY is the password.

Then move the data to the new database:

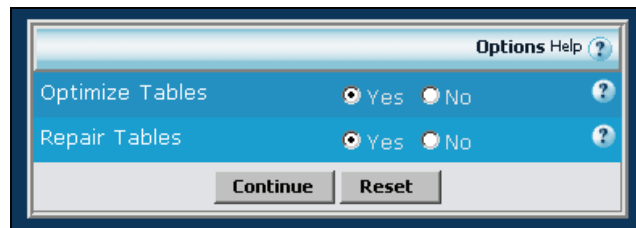
```
$ mysql -h localhost -u xxxxxx -p YYYYYY restored < db_name
```

---

## Repairing and Optimizing the Database

Again, this process gives you access to all the tables in the database, not just the tables relating to vBulletin. You can choose to repair and optimize some of the tables, or you can repair and optimize all the tables.

At the bottom of the page choose whether you want to optimize the tables, repair the tables, or carry out both operations.



When you have selected the required options, click on Continue.

**Backup first!**

Make sure that you have an up-to-date backup before carrying out the repair/optimize process.



The screenshot shows a window titled "Repair / Optimize Tables" with a "Please Wait..." message. Below the message is a table with the following data:

Results		
Table	Action	Message
access	Check	Status: OK
access	Optimize	Status: Table is already up to date
adminhelp	Check	Status: OK
adminhelp	Optimize	Status: OK
administrator	Check	Status: OK
administrator	Optimize	Status: OK
adminlog	Check	Status: OK
adminlog	Optimize	Status: OK
adminutil	Check	Status: OK
adminutil	Optimize	Status: Table is already up to date
announcement	Check	Status: OK

It is recommended that you run the repair/optimize process twice to make sure all problems are fixed.

**Some Maintenance Issues**

The Update Counters page enables you to change many of the counters in the database.

**Take your time**

This process can take a lot of time—there is no way to rush it, so it's best to start it and leave it to finish on its own.

These counters are important for the smooth running of the database, but they may require updating following a change to the database. These are some of the changes that you may need to make:

- **Update the forums**  
This feature will update the information for each forum including last post information, thread count, and post count. This operation can be carried out after a mass moving or pruning of threads and posts.

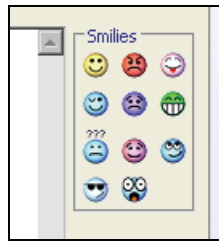
- **Update user titles**  
This will go through every user on the forums and determine their correct user title.
- **Update user names**  
This will update user names everywhere they occur on your forums. This operation may need to be done after changing a user's name in the AdminCP.
- **Update post counts**  
This will update the post count for each user by counting how many posts they have in the database. If someone has artificially inflated or deflated post counts by editing profiles in the AdminCP, then this procedure will reset the post counts to their true values.
- **Fix broken user profiles**  
This will fix any broken user profiles.
- **Rebuild forum information**  
This will update the forum counters (post counts) and also check for orphan moderators. You may need to do this after merging or deleting threads or posts in your forums.
- **Rebuild thread information**  
This will update the thread counters including last post information, reply count, and view count. You may need to do this after moving or pruning threads or posts.
- **Rebuild similar threads**  
This will search the forums for threads that are similar to each other. To show similar threads you need to enable the option in the vBulletin options. If you want your forums to search for similar threads when a new thread is posted (rather than having to update this counter later), then you need to enable the option on this page.
- **Rebuild search index**  
This will need to be done after changing the max/min search word length in the vBulletin options.
- **Rebuild statistics**  
This will rebuild the information that is displayed on the vBulletin Statistics page.
- **Rebuild post cache**  
vBulletin doesn't parse vB code in posts each time they are displayed. Instead the parsed posts are saved in the post\_parsed table. This reduces the processing time needed to display a post. Updating this counter will rebuild the parsed posts. This needs to be done after changing vB codes or posting allowances.
- **Delete duplicate threads**  
Sometimes duplicate threads are created during the posting process. Updating this counter will remove those duplicates.
- **Rebuild styles**  
Updating this counter will rebuild the style structure.
- **Rebuild attachment thumbnails**  
Rebuilding thumbnails is necessary after changing the thumbnail settings in the vBulletin options.



- **Rebuild user reputation**  
You will need to update this counter if you change the default reputation value in the vBulletin options.
- **Remove orphan threads**  
This will delete any threads that belong to forums that no longer exist.
- **Remove orphan posts**  
This will delete any posts that belong to threads that no longer exist.

## Smilies

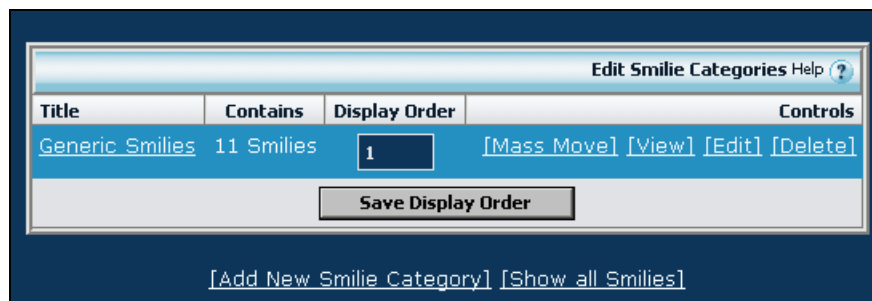
Because a forum relies on text-based communication, anything that helps someone get their message across is a good thing. That's where **smilies** come in. They are little graphics that have a variety of faces displaying different emotions.



Smilies are controlled through the control panel. If you click on Smilies in the left-hand menu, then three options will be made available.



Clicking on Smilie Manager will take you to a window where you can edit, move, delete, or view smilie categories. By default, there is one smilie category called Generic Smilies.



If you now click on View, you will be taken to another screen that shows you all the smilies in that category.



You have a number of options when working with smilies. These include editing a smilie, adding a smilie to a category, and uploading a smilie.

## Editing a Smilie

Clicking on Edit allows you to change a number of the smilie's parameters. These include:

- **Title**  
This is the title or name of the smilie displayed.
- **Text to replace with a smilie**  
This is the text that, when entered into a post, will be replaced by the smilie. This can be changed to suit. Don't make this a real word as this might cause sentences to have random smilies placed in them. The preferred format is :name:.
- **Smilie file path (on server)**  
This is the path to the smilie image on the server.
- **Smilie category**  
This is the category where the smilie is stored.
- **Display order**  
This is the order in which the smilies are displayed to the end user when previewed. The smilies with lower numbers are displayed before those with higher numbers.

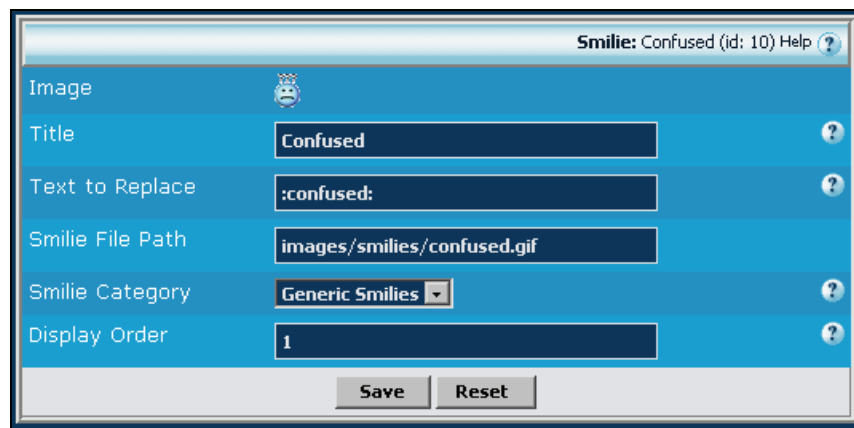




Image	
Title	<input type="text" value="Confused"/>
Text to Replace	<input "="" type="text" value=":confused:"/>
Smilie File Path	<input type="text" value="images/smilies/confused.gif"/>
Smilie Category	<input type="text" value="Generic Smilies"/>
Display Order	<input type="text" value="1"/>

## Adding a New Smilie

If a smilie is already on the server, then you can add it to one of the categories. To do this, you fill in the details for the smilie and click on Add Smilies. The smilie will then be added to the list available to users.



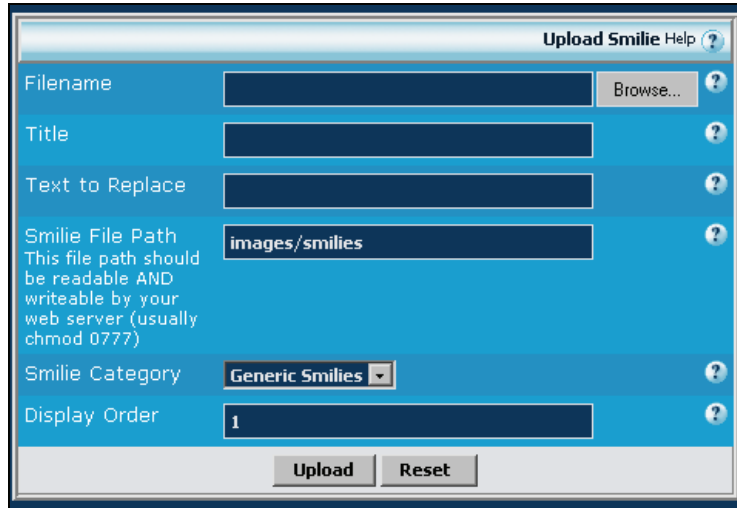
Add a Single Smilie Help ?	
Title	<input type="text"/>
Text to Replace	<input type="text"/>
Smilie File Path	<input type="text"/>
Smilie Category	<input type="text" value="Generic Smilies"/>
Display Order	<input type="text" value="1"/>
<input type="button" value="Add Smilie"/> <input type="button" value="Reset"/>	

Add Multiple Smilies Help ?	
Smilie Category	<input type="text" value="Generic Smilies"/>
Smilies File Path	<input type="text" value="images/smilies"/>
Smilies to Show Per Page	<input type="text" value="10"/>
<input type="button" value="Add Smilies"/> <input type="button" value="Reset"/>	

## Uploading a Smilie

This is very similar to adding a new smilie to a category—if you click on the **Browse...** button, you will be able to upload smilies direct to the server from your computer. The file path specified will need to have a `chmod` permission of `777` set in order to allow file uploads.



The screenshot shows a web form titled "Upload Smilie" with a "Help" icon. The form contains the following fields and controls:

- Filename:** A text input field with a "Browse..." button and a help icon.
- Title:** A text input field with a help icon.
- Text to Replace:** A text input field with a help icon.
- Smilie File Path:** A text input field containing "images/smilies". Below the field is a note: "This file path should be readable AND writeable by your web server (usually chmod 0777)". A help icon is to the right.
- Smilie Category:** A dropdown menu with "Generic Smilies" selected. A help icon is to the right.
- Display Order:** A text input field containing "1". A help icon is to the right.

At the bottom of the form are two buttons: "Upload" and "Reset".

## Creating Your Own Smilies

You can make your own smilies if you are good with graphics—they are just standard GIF format files. However, there are literally thousands of smilies and smilie packs to be found on the Web for you to use.

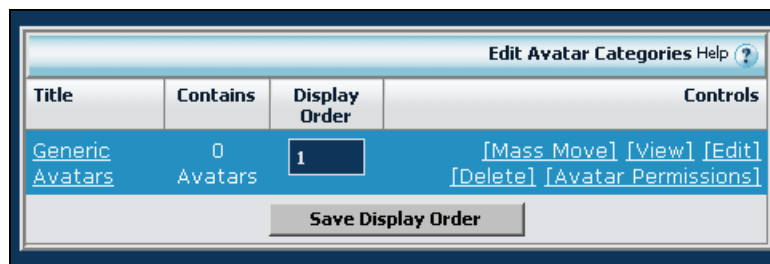
## Avatars

An **avatar** is a small picture that can be set to appear next to a username to give the user a visual identity. Users can choose from a set of preloaded avatars, or the administrator can allow custom avatars to be uploaded.

To control avatars, click on **Avatars** in the AdminCP to expand the options, and then click on **Avatar Manager**.



You will then be able to use the avatar manager to control avatars, in much the same way that you use the smilie manager to control smilies.



We will now see how to add and store avatars.

## Adding Avatars

Just as with smilies, there are two ways to add avatars—use avatars already on the server or upload new avatars. You can either add avatars singly or in batches, depending on what information you provide.

**Add a Single Avatar** Help ?

Title

Minimum Posts

Avatar File Path

Avatar Category

Display Order

Add Avatar Reset

---

**Add Multiple Avatars** Help ?

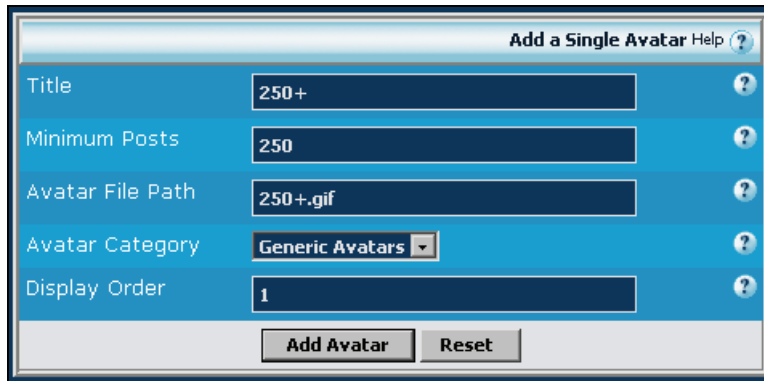
Avatar Category

Avatars File Path

Avatars to Show Per Page

Add Avatars Reset

The only difference with this process compared to the smilie upload process is that you have to provide a number for the Minimum Posts field. This is to control who has access to which avatar. So, for example, if you supplied an avatar and you only wanted people with 250 posts or more to be able to use it, you would enter 250 into the minimum posts field.



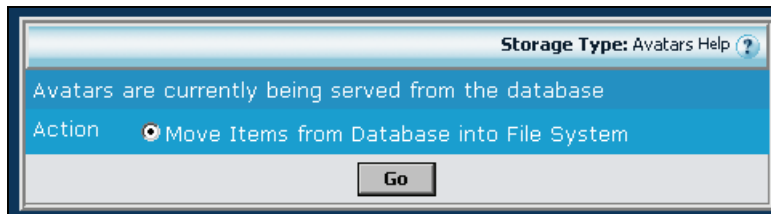
Add a Single Avatar Help ?	
Title	250+
Minimum Posts	250
Avatar File Path	250+.gif
Avatar Category	Generic Avatars
Display Order	1
<input type="button" value="Add Avatar"/> <input type="button" value="Reset"/>	

## Storing Avatars

There are two places in which avatars can be stored: either in the file system or in the database.

- The advantage of storing avatars in the database is that the storage system is more efficient and they are easier to back up (because you just have to backup the database and not individual files). However, storing them in the database can add a considerable amount of data to the database, making it grow in size dramatically. It also adds a greater load onto the database in terms of data access.

You can change where the avatars are stored using the Avatar Storage Type screen.



Storage Type: Avatars Help ?	
Avatars are currently being served from the database	
Action	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Move Items from Database into File System
<input type="button" value="Go"/>	

Before moving the avatars from the database (where they are stored by default), you will need to set the chmod permission of the folders receiving the avatars to 777 and make sure that there is enough space on the server for all the files. If you fail to do this, then the process will fail and the avatars will remain in the database.

If you change your mind later, you can move the avatars back into the database by reversing this process.

## Summary

In this chapter we've looked at the critical role the administrators play in keeping a forum working. Some of the tasks that we've looked at (such as updating the counters) are just general housekeeping, while others (such as backing up the database) are critical tasks that can make all the difference to the long term health of your forum.

We've also looked at two items that add fun and individuality to your forum—smilies and avatars.

The message here is a simple one—take care of your vBulletin discussion board, and it will take care of your members.





# 6

## Upgrading vBulletin

Nothing stays the same. Life is a constantly moving forward, and software moves forward faster than most things. vBulletin is constantly changing as new versions are released. Sometimes these are big changes (such as from version 2 to version 3), and other times they are just bug fixes and security updates (such as 3.5.2 to 3.5.4).

The updates to vBulletin generally contain security fixes rather than cosmetic tweaks, so it is important to install them in a timely fashion so as to eliminate security vulnerabilities in your discussion board.

---

### License issues

Purchasing a license for vBulletin (either leased or owned) entitles you to a year's worth of updates. After this, you will need either to renew your license (if you leased the license) or to pay a nominal fee for updates (if you bought an owned license).

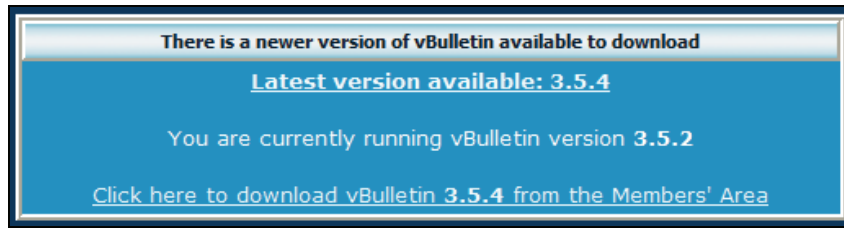
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In this chapter, we're going to look at how to upgrade a vBulletin discussion board from version 3.5.2 to 3.5.5. In particular, we will look at:

- How vBulletin automatically tells you when to upgrade
- What preparations are necessary before you upgrade
- Migrating the changes that you have made to your bulletin board
- How to upload the files to your server
- Testing the upgraded version of your board
- Getting the upgraded version up and running

### When to Upgrade

vBulletin will tell you when it needs upgrading. When you access the AdminCP, you will see messages telling you whether a new version is available. This happens automatically and requires no input on the part of the administrator.



This has two advantages:

- It spreads the word about updates quickly and easily.
- It encourages people to upgrade licenses!

Clicking on the link takes you to the members' download area. (You will need your customer number and password to access this area.) From there, you'll be able to download the latest vBulletin installation package (in the form of a compressed Zip file about 1.5Mb in size).

## Preparing for Upgrade

Before you upgrade anything, you need to backup your database with the data for the forum. We saw how to do this in Chapter 5.

As well as a database backup, make an up-to-date copy of the files on the server—preferably a full server backup of all files and folders, just in case something goes wrong or you upload the files to the wrong location and overwrite non-vBulletin files.

---

### Backup motto

It's better to have made a backup and not need it than not to have made one and find that you do!

---

The next stage is to extract the files from the compressed archive that you downloaded. Extract them to a separate folder on your system.

Once you have done this, locate the folder called `upload`, and rename it to match the name of the existing vBulletin folder on your server (in our case `vb`).

## Migrating Changes

Before you upload the files to the server, stop and think for a moment. Have you carried out any changes to the core PHP files of vBulletin? (We saw how to customize a bulletin board in Chapter 4.) If you have made any changes, uploading the new files will obliterate these changes. Most

people want to keep any changes they made to their vBulletin installation, and this often keeps them from carrying out upgrades.

If there is only one change, then it may be easier just to make the same change again after the upgrade. However, if there are many changes, repeating them will be much more complicated and will need a lot more time and effort, and of course, there will always be scope to get things wrong. What you want is a file compare utility that highlights the differences between two files.

In Chapter 4, we saw how to modify the PHP code so that PayPal treats a subscription as a goods transaction. We will use this example to show how a file compare utility can be used to easily migrate changes to a new version of your bulletin board.

## File Compare Utilities

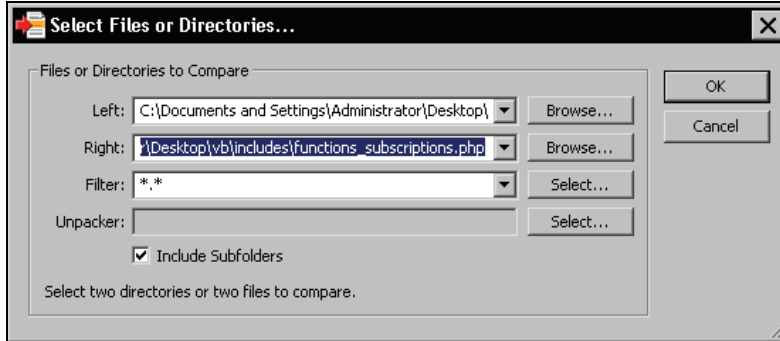
There are a variety of such file compare utilities available. Two of the best are UltraCompare by the makers of UltraEdit (<http://www.ultracompare.com>) and DiffDog by Altova (<http://www.altova.com>). These are both commercial applications, and they do an excellent job of comparing files and highlighting the differences.

Another option is taking the free route—an application called WinMerge is available for free from <http://winmerge.sourceforge.net>.



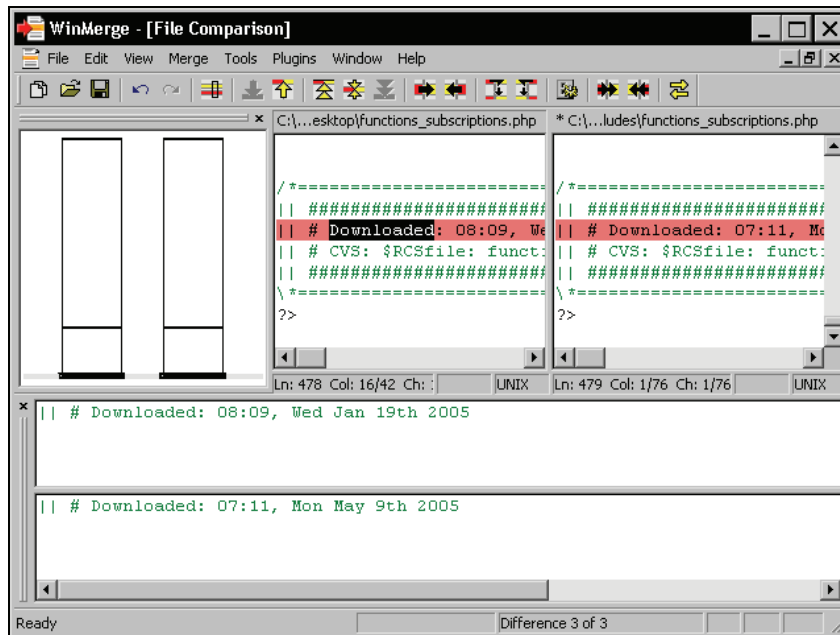
We can now run WinMerge on both versions of the file that was hacked (`includes/functions_subscriptions.php`). This will highlight the differences between the two files. Some differences are to be expected while others are hacks.

In WinMerge open the two files (the new version and the old version that we hacked).

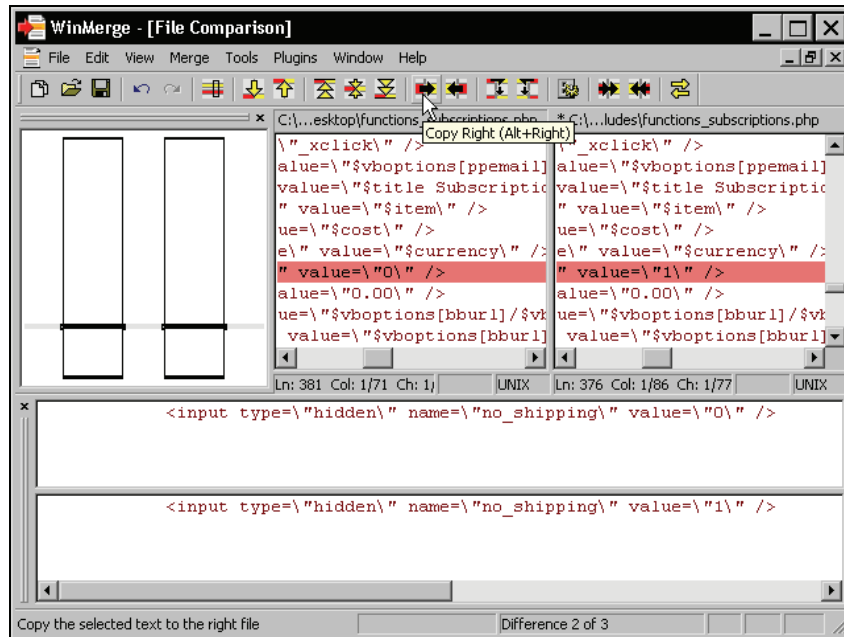


When you open the two files, the lines that contain differences are highlighted. Also, on the left-hand side, there is a location pane that shows a schematic of the documents and places lines in them to show where there are differences.

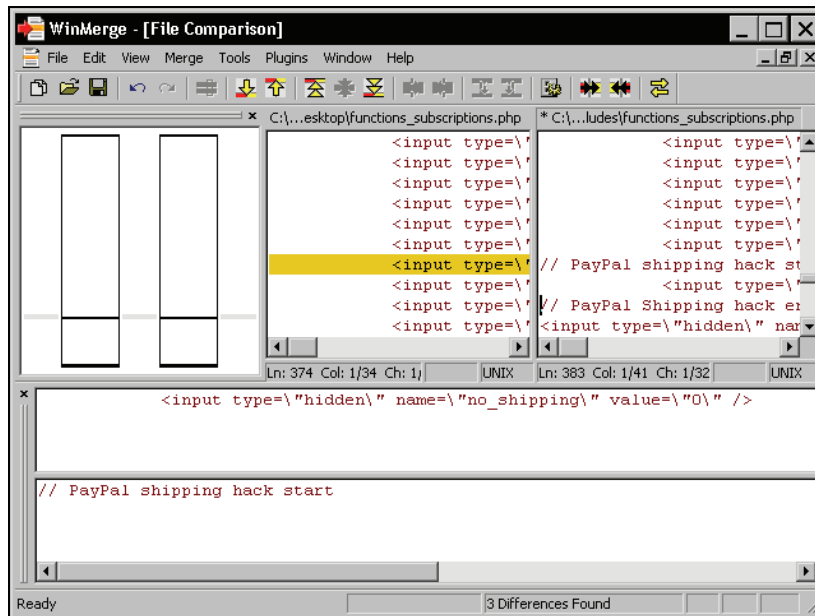
When a new version of vBulletin is released, not all the files will have been changed. In fact, only a few of the files will contain actual code changes. However, there will be changes in the headers and footers of all the files. In the header, the version number will have been changed, in this case from version 3.5.2 to 3.5.4. In the footer, the changes will be to the date that the package was downloaded and, if the file has been updated, to the version number.



The only other change to the code represents that hack that we installed earlier. Migrating this hack is simply a case of using the buttons on the menu to copy the change from the left-hand window (the original file) to the right-hand window (containing the new file).



To make this hack easier to spot in the future, you can add a comment to the code, explaining what the hack does.



Save the file with the changes, and repeat the file compare process for any other files that have been changed.

If your forum has a lot of hacked files, you might need to go through each file and compare it with the file on the server. However, to make life easier, the vBulletin development team releases a change list detailing the files that have been changed—this makes the job of finding updated files easier.

We're now ready to move on to the next phase of the update process.

## Uploading the Files

The next stage of the upgrade is to upload the files. There are two options open to you:

- Overwriting all the files that were previously uploaded to the web server
- Deleting all the old files and folders, and then uploading the new files

It's easier to overwrite the old files, so that's what we'll do here.

Before you do this though, one thing—close the forum! This prevents users from logging in and allows you to work in peace. It also means that you and only you see the errors if things go wrong.

Log into the AdminCP, expand vBulletin Options in the left-hand menu, and click on vBulletin Options.

In the right-hand pane, double-click on Turn Your vBulletin On and Off. Change Forum Active to No, and click on Save. Now only Administrators can access the forum.

The screenshot shows the vBulletin Options interface. At the top, there is a header 'vBulletin Options'. Below it, a navigation bar contains 'Setting Group Help ?' and a dropdown menu with 'Turn Your vBulletin On and Off' selected, followed by a 'Go' button. The main content area is titled 'Turn Your vBulletin On and Off Help ?' and contains the following sections:

- Forum Active**: A section with a text description and two radio buttons, 'Yes' (selected) and 'No'.
- Reason For Turning Forum Off**: A section with a text description and a text area containing HTML code for a message.

At the bottom of the main content area are 'Save' and 'Reset' buttons. The footer of the page reads 'vBulletin v3.0.7, Copyright ©2000-2005, Jelsoft Enterprises Ltd.'

Once that is done, take your FTP program and upload the new files over the old files. When asked if you want to overwrite, remember to choose Yes (or whatever option your FTP application gives you).

Remember that the same rules apply here as when installing the forum (see Chapter 2):

- Transfer all text files in ASCII mode.
- Transfer all non-text files in Binary mode.

Consult your FTP program for details of how to do this. Usually, transferring the files in auto mode will work fine.

It is important that you upload all the files from the latest vBulletin package to the web server. This includes the entire contents of the `install` folder. Failure to do this can result in the upgrade script being unable to complete the upgrade process.

When all the files have been uploaded, you are ready to move on to the next phase of the upgrade.

## Running the Upgrade Script

With the newest vBulletin files uploaded to your web server, you are now ready to run the upgrade script.

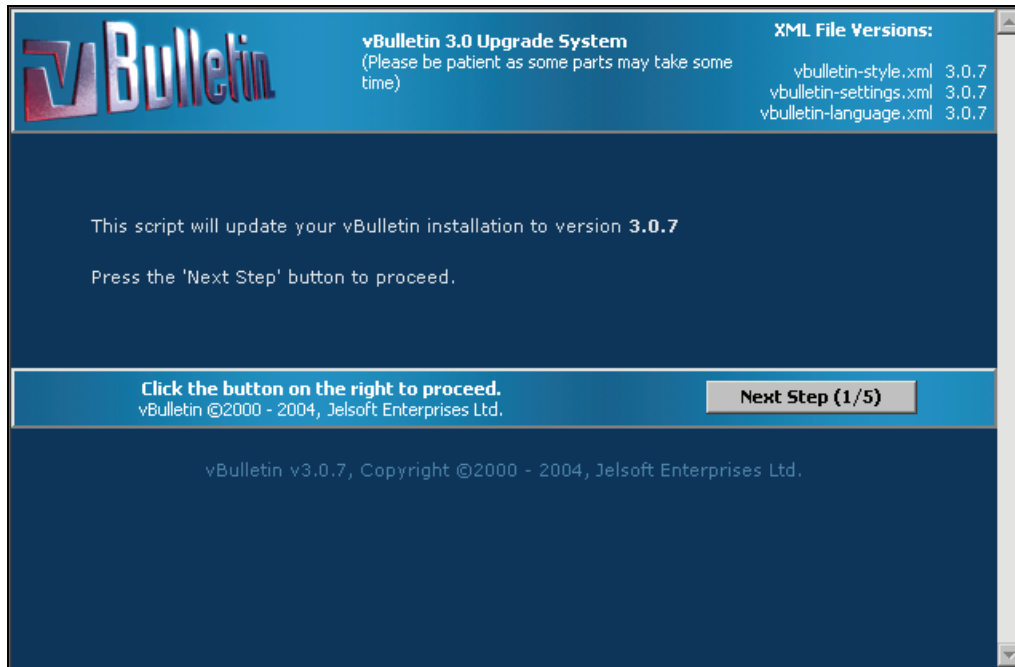
This is the simple part of the upgrade, so it's all plain sailing from here.

To run the script point your web browser at `http://www.example.com/vb/install/upgrade.php`, remembering to replace `www.example.com/vb` with the correct path to your own vBulletin installation.

To proceed with the upgrade, you'll need your vBulletin Customer Number.

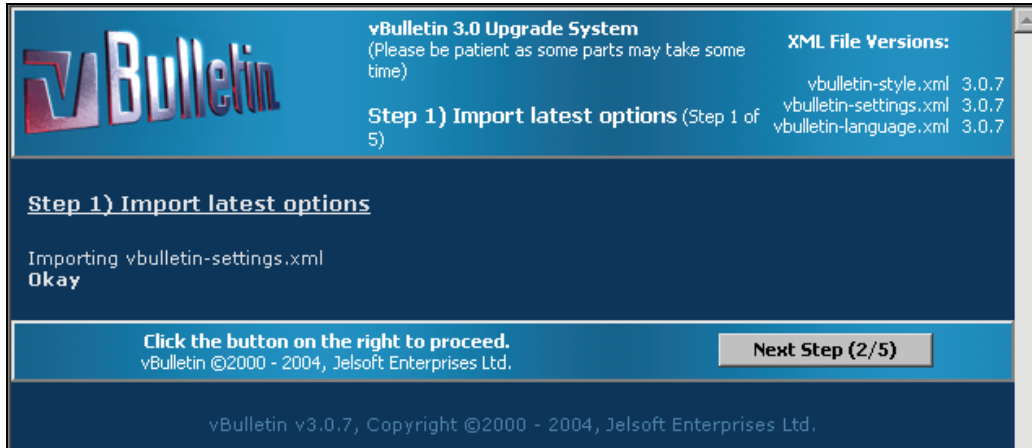
The installation wizard will then begin.

This screen confirms that the files have been properly uploaded, and we are ready to begin, so click on the **Next Step** button to continue.

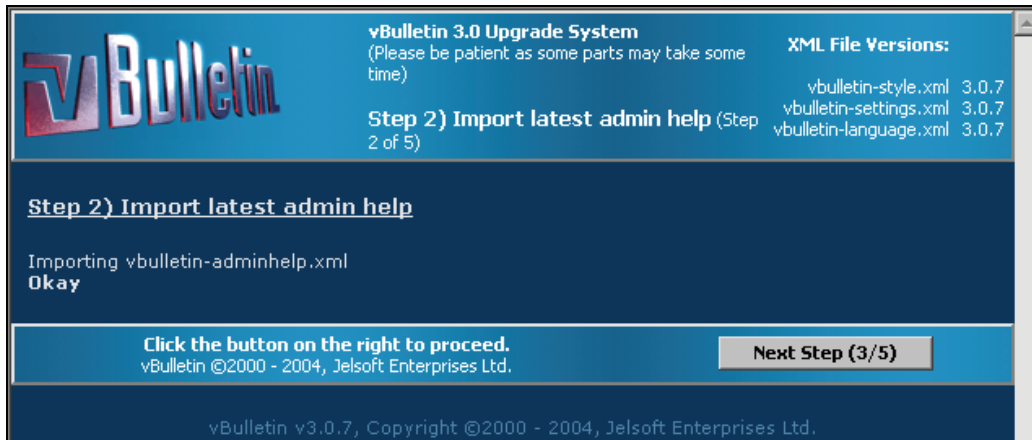




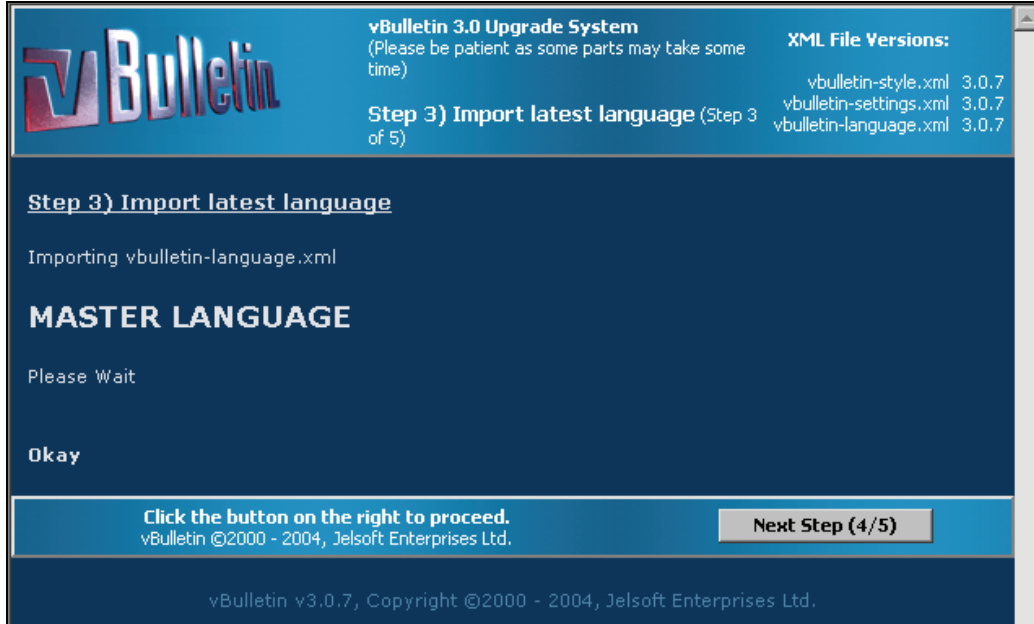
Step 1 imports the latest vBulletin options into the database.



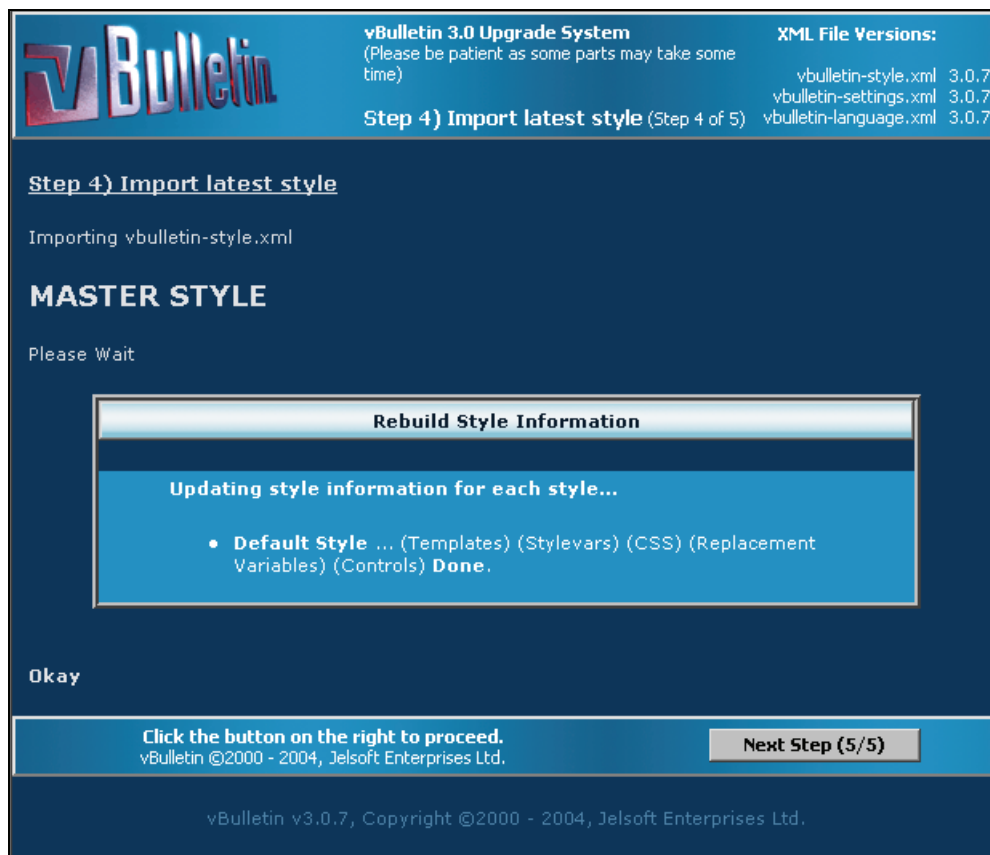
In step 2, the updated help files are loaded.



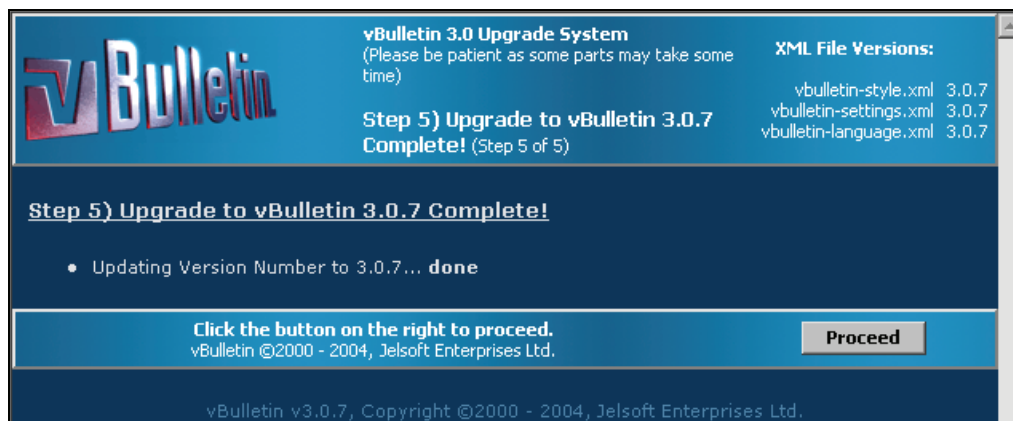
The next step updates the master language files.



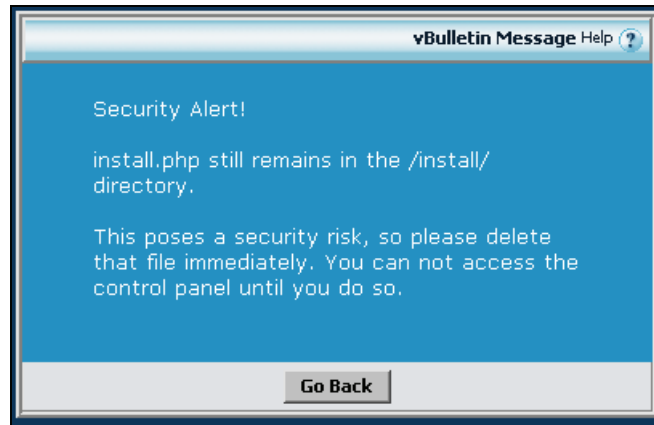
Next the updated vBulletin styles are loaded.



Finally, the vBulletin version number is updated. Click on the Proceed button to finish.



The final page is an important one—there is a reminder to delete the `install/install.php` file. This prevents others from running the install script, which may damage your forum.



Delete the `install.php` file via FTP, click on **Go Back**, and then click on **Proceed** once again. You will then be taken to the log-on screen for the AdminCP, where the change of version numbers along with the absence of a screen telling you to upgrade are sure signs that things have worked out fine.

## Testing the Upgrade

Once the upgrade is done, test the forum. Nothing elaborate. Just see if things are working. If you have a lot of hacks installed, then it might be a good idea to see whether they all work. This is a lot easier to do if you have more than one administrator on the site!

You can spend as much (or as little) time as you want doing this. As a bare minimum, check that you can still log in, post messages, and read messages. If you have a busy forum rest assured that the members will soon let you know if other things aren't working!

## Unveiling the Upgrade

The final step is to unveil the upgrade to the members. Access the vBulletin Options page, and switch the forum back on. This will allow your members to log in again, to post and read messages, and to interact normally.

Be on the lookout for things that don't work, and take all reports of problems seriously. If you think that there are problems, follow these simple steps:

- Shut the forum down.
- Test to see whether you can recreate the problem. (Remember to test the forum using a registered user's account as well as an administrator's account, as some problems may only show up to members.)

- 
- Carry out the upgrade again. This time pay special attention to migrating the hacks and uploading the files properly.
  - Test again.

If problems persist, then it could be that one of your hacks is incompatible with the new version. If you think that this is the case, then install a hack-free version and add the hacks manually to find out which one is causing the problem. If you are making use of a popular hack, then it is likely that others will also have the problem and will be talking about it on the vBulletin forums over on <http://www.vbulletin.com> or <http://www.vbulletin.org>—check these out for information!

## Summary

This chapter has dealt exclusively with upgrading a vBulletin discussion board. This is a process that you will probably need to carry out a few times a year to keep up to date with the latest releases.

On paper, this looks like a long process, but in reality it's quite easy—upgrading a basic board with just a few hacks (or no hacks at all) takes only minutes. With practice, it is possible to upgrade an extensively hacked board in less than an hour. After one or two upgrades, you will start to get a feel for how it works and where things are (for example, which files you've hacked and what other changes you've made). You'll then find that it is a lot faster and a lot easier.



# 7

## Changing the Look of vBulletin

In this chapter we're going to examine ways to change how your vBulletin installation looks to the outside world.

The sky's pretty much the limit with what you can do with vBulletin, and there's no point going through the process of building a custom style here, because what you will want to do will be different to what we will do. So, instead, we'll offer you some hints, tips, and insights into style manipulation and creation for vBulletin.

In this chapter we will look at:

- The role of styles and templates in vBulletin
- How to modify the default style
- How to add and edit a new style
- How to distribute a style that you have created
- How to upload a new style to your server and install it

### Styling vBulletin

There are two ways that styles get created for vBulletin:

- Modification of the default style
- Creation of Custom styles

By far the most common method of creating styles for vBulletin is to start off with the default style (the blue and white style that you've seen so far in this book) and to make modifications to this style. You can think of this as a sort of 'feature-creep' or 'style-creep' of the original. This method is much easier and more straightforward than creating a style completely from scratch, and by using the default style as a starting point, you are making certain you haven't forgotten something or left something important out of the template.

### **Buy your way out of work!**

You don't have to bother about creating templates for yourself. If you fire up your browser and search for "vBulletin styles" or "vBulletin templates", you will find literally thousands of examples. Most of these are commercial so that you have to buy them, but there are quite a number of templates freely available for download—check out the vBulletin discussion forum for more details.

---

## **Template Lifecycles**

A discussion board can go through one of two distinct template lifecycles. Which one it follows depends a lot on the administrator of the forum and what they are trying to achieve with it.

### **Lifecycle 1—Constant Change**

This lifecycle is probably the more common of the two and probably accounts for many of the customized vBulletin boards you've come across.

This is where the administrator installs their copy of vBulletin and gets their forum going as quickly as possible. So, in order to minimize any delay between getting the discussion board installed and getting it working, they simply open up the forums for discussion using of the default style (or download and use another style that they fancy).

Then, with the board open and operational, the administrator sets about making incremental changes to the discussion board. They start off small, perhaps adding their logo, or changing a font color or table background. Then they start to make bigger, more significant changes. Then, at some point they probably install a hack or two onto the board.

By now the board is looking significantly different from the default that they installed maybe only a few weeks earlier. The cycle of development continues until one of three things happen:

- A new version breaks the customized template.
- The administrator wants to completely change the look of the site.
- The administrator is happy with the end result. (Hmmm, don't think that ever happens!)



## Lifecycle 2—Working Behind the Scenes

This is where the administrator installs the forum and then either opens it with a default skin or keeps it closed while they work on a brand new skin for the site. This is a little bit like the magician's trick where they pull away the curtain. Tada—a dramatic unveiling.

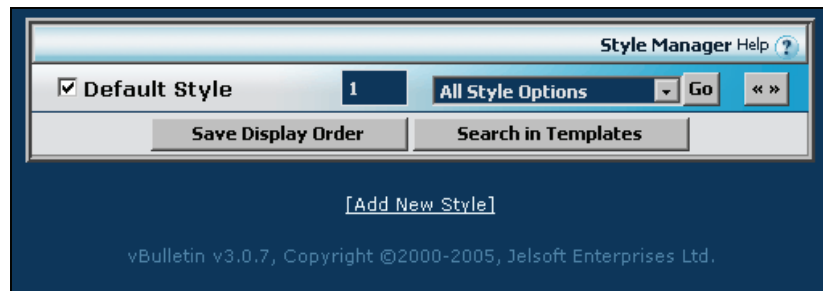
There are several drawbacks associated with this method. The first, and most significant, is the forum downtime involved. If you only planning a few small tweaks to the default style, then you could be up and running in a reasonable period of time, ranging from a few minutes (for quick hacks and tweaks) to a few days (for something more involved).

Prolonged, unnecessary downtime is bad for a discussion board—old members start to look for somewhere new to go, new members can't sign up, and your ranking in the search engine listings start to drop. Keep downtime to an absolute minimum.

## Editing the Default Style

You've seen what you start with, so let's take a look at how to make some serious changes to the default style for the vBulletin template.

To carry out these modifications, click on **Styles & Templates** in the left-hand menu, and then click on **Style Manager**. This brings up the **Style Manager** window, which we first met in Chapter 3.



As we saw in Chapter 3, if you click on the **Go** button, then you are taken to a very large window called **All Style Options** window. (In Chapter 3 we saw how to use this page to change your board's logo.)

## Changing Image Paths

There are a lot more images in a vBulletin installation than just the main logo. There are, in fact, over 200 images contained in 13 folders within the main `images` folder.

<b>Button Images Folder</b> This is the folder containing all the button images for this style. The location of this folder can be overridden by a language setting.	<code>images/buttons</code>	?
<b>Item Status Icon Folder</b> This folder contains all the icons representing the status of forums, threads, posts etc. For example: <i>announcement_old.gif</i> / <i>announcement_new.gif</i>	<code>images/statusicon</code>	?
<b>Attachment Icons Folder</b> This folder contains the various icons used to represent different attachment file types such as <i>txt</i> , <i>jpg</i> , <i>zip</i> etc.	<code>images/attach</code>	?
<b>Miscellaneous Images Folder</b> This folder contains the various images that do not fit into other category.	<code>images/misc</code>	?
<b>Text Editor Controls Folder</b> This folder contains the button and interface images for the vBulletin text editor (used to post/edit messages)	<code>images/editor</code>	?
<b>Poll Images Folder</b> This folder contains the various images used to build the colored bars in poll voting results.	<code>images/polls</code>	?
<b>Ratings Images Folder</b> This folder contains the images used to illustrate the rating applied to an item (usually a thread).	<code>images/rating</code>	?
<b>Reputation Images Folder</b> This folder contains the small images used to display a user's current reputation.	<code>images/reputation</code>	?

You can change the default location of eight of these folders:

- `images/buttons`  
This folder contains all the button images.
- `images/statusicon`  
This folder contains all the icons that are used to represent the status of forums, threads, and posts.
- `images/attach`  
This folder contains the various icons that are used to represent different attachment file types.
- `images/misc`  
This folder contains miscellaneous images.

- `images/editor`  
This folder contains the button and interface images for the vBulletin editor.
- `images/polls`  
This folder contains the images used to build the bars in the poll voting results page.
- `images/rating`  
This folder contains the images used to illustrate the rating applied to a thread.
- `images/reputation`  
This folder contains the small images used to display a user's current reputation.

Upload the new images to new folders on the web server. You can move forward some of the defaults if you've not made an entire set of new images. However, if your new images are dramatically different from the old ones, you should make an effort to change all the images—odd styling of images can be confusing for the user.

Once the new images are uploaded, change the paths, and click on **Save**. The new images will immediately appear on the board.

## Other Editable Elements

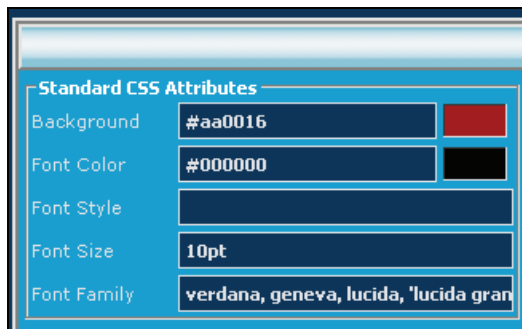
Much of the default style can be edited through the All Style Options page. Here are the categories that the different sections have been grouped into:

- Common Templates
- Sizes and Dimensions
- Image Paths
- Miscellaneous
- Body
- Page Background
- `<td>`, `<th>`, `<p>`, `<li>`
- Table Border
- Category Strips
- Table Header
- Table Footer
- First Alternating Color
- Second Alternating Color
- WYSIWYG Editor
- Input Fields
- Buttons
- `<select>` Menus
- Small Font

- Time Color
- Navbar Text
- Highlighted Font
- Panel Surround
- Panel (Forms)
- <legend>
- Popup Menu Controls
- Popup Menu Body
- Popup Menu Option Row
- Popup Menu Highlighted Option
- Forum Jump Menu
- Additional CSS Definitions
- Text Editor Control Styles
- Toolbar Menu Options

Each one of these categories is home to several changes and tweaks that you can make to the styling of your board.

For example, let's change the background color of the body of the forum page. In the Body section, type #aa0016 (a dark red) into the Background box. You'll see the color of the tile change when you do this. Then click Save CSS for the Body section. (Alternatively, you can click Save at the very bottom of the Style Manager page to save changes to multiple sections). Notice that the text you entered for the background attribute is now shown in red—indicating that you've made a customization to that style. To undo the change, you can either type the original value in the box, or you can use the revert option at the bottom of the Body section.



You can change further elements of the page by editing the CSS attributes for those sections of the board. (You can also use the CSS selector at the bottom left of each section of the Style Manager page and then use a CSS editor to locate that section in the HTML source code.)

---

## Some Tips about Editing Styles

When you are making changes to a style, two things are paramount:

- That the changes you think you've made are actually carried out
- That the changes you've made to the style haven't been detrimental to the discussion board as a whole

In order to make sure that things work smoothly, it's recommended that you follow these simple rules:

- Make a note of any changes you make. Keep a text file open and list the changes there.
- Make the minimal number of changes needed at any one time. Making lots of changes at once makes undoing a specific change tricky.
- Browser crashes, losing Internet connectivity, or power outages can cause you to lose any unsaved changes you've made. So, to prevent such losses, save your changes often.
- Check the effect that your changes have had on the discussion board. Are the changes what you expected them to be? Are you getting nearer to your goals or further away?
- If you make changes that have an adverse effect on the discussion board, stop what you are doing immediately, and check the changes you made—did you make a mistake, or is something unexpected happening? If you can't solve the problem quickly, then undo the changes using the revert option for that section in the style manager, and try again.
- The best place to experiment with changes and modifications to your discussion board is on your test installation—you can then migrate the changes to the live discussion board.

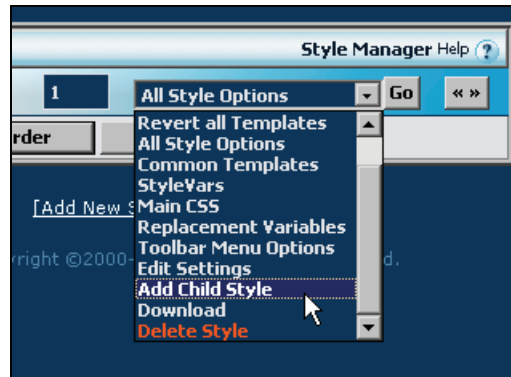
## Adding a New Style

So far, we've looked at modifying the existing default style, but what about creating a whole new style?

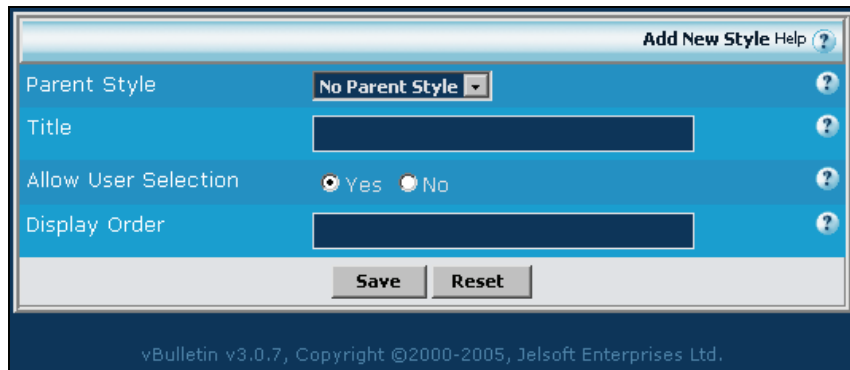
Easy!

Again, start off at the All Style Options page. Take a look at what's below the buttons. Do you see the link marked Add New Style?

It's amazing how many people miss that altogether and simply cannot find a way to make a new style. (Many people resort to using the Add Child Style option in the drop-down box instead.)



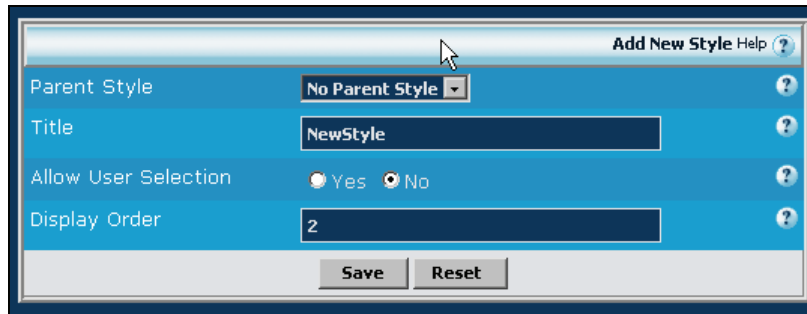
Click on the Add New Style link. This takes you to the Add New Style page shown below:



You can now fill in the following details of the new stylesheet:

- **Parent Style**  
This allows you to choose whether the new style has a parent style or is itself a parent style. (A parent style has child styles based upon it.)
- **Title**  
This is the name of the new style.
- **Allow User Selection**  
This determines whether the new stylesheet is selectable by the board users from the main forum page and the UserCP. Set this to No initially if you don't want others to see your 'work in progress'.
- **Display Order**  
This lets you choose the display order of the styles as displayed in Style Manager and the Quick Style Chooser in the forum.

The Add New Style window should now look like this:

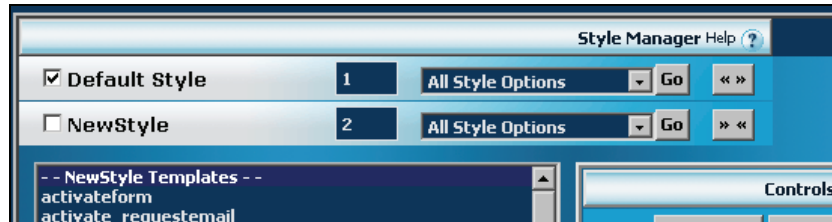


In case you are wondering, the radio buttons just below the style name indicate whether it is selectable by the end users.

OK, now you have your new style, it's time to do something with it!

## Editing the Style

The Style Manager window now looks a little different with two styles in there waiting to be edited.



Another interesting feature is that, when you hover the cursor over the name of one of the styles, it gives you the ability to view the discussion board using that particular style.

This is done using a carefully crafted hyperlink:

<http://www.example.com/vb/index.php?s=&styleid=4>

You can now edit the new style in the same way that you edited the old one. What you will notice initially is that your new style is in fact the old style—it's just a rendition of the default style.

However, this allows you to work on the style and keep the changes separate from the style in use on the discussion board.

---

## Fonts

Be careful about making too many changes to the fonts used—remember that fonts need to be installed on the user's computer too. By default, a number of fonts are specified, and if the first one is unavailable, another is used. Font types are also specified to cover a broad range of different fonts.

Be careful with fonts—if the font you specify is not available and you don't specify alternatives, your forum can end up looking very strange indeed!

---

### Save Often!

Remember, save your changes often!

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## Saving the Style

Right, you've made some changes to your new style. The next thing you need to do is back up the changes just in case something goes wrong. You don't believe that things can go wrong? You think your forum is safe on the server? Think again! A whole host of things can, and do, go wrong:

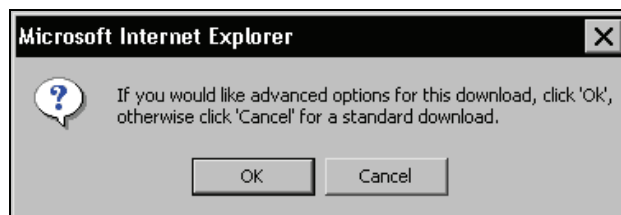
- A cataclysmic failure of the server
- A vanishing web host
- A corrupted database
- A hacker attack
- Accidental deletion
- Wipe-out by installing a new version
- The unexpected—fire, flood, aliens ...

The best place to keep a backup is not on the server but on your PC or an external storage medium, so make a copy and keep it safe (perhaps on a USB flash memory device or a CD).

## Downloading the Style

The Style Manager page is the place to go when you want to download your style. In the drop-down box next to the style you want to download, you'll find Download.

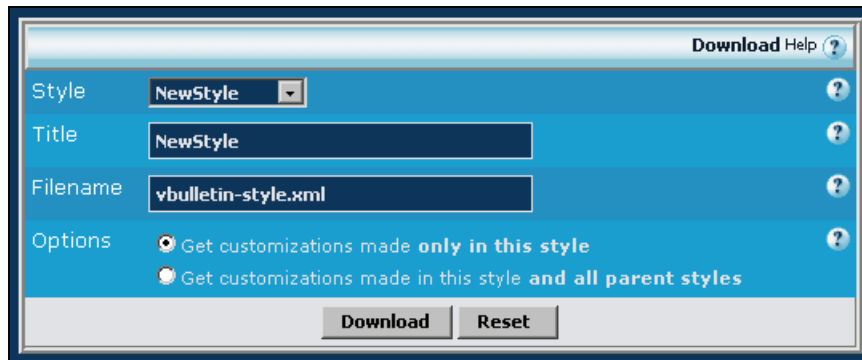
You will then be presented with a message box like this:



If you click on Cancel, then a file that contains all the changes to the style will be downloaded.

If you click OK to access the advanced options, you get the ability to change the name of the file and what is downloaded.





The XML file contains all the changes that have been made to the style. Here's a small sample of an XML file:

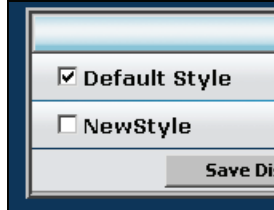
```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="ISO-8859-1"?>
<style name="NewStyle" vbversion="3.5.4" type="custom">
  <templategroup name="CSS Special Templates">
    <template name=".button" templatetype="css" date="1117789818"
username="Administrator"
version=""><![CDATA[a:4:{s:10:"background";s:0:"";s:5:"color";s:0:"";s:4:"font
";a:3:{s:5:"style";s:0:"";s:4:"size";s:4:"10px";s:6:"family";s:70:"verdana,
geneva, lucida, 'lucida grande', arial, helvetica, sans-
serif";s:5:"EXTRA";s:0:"";}]]></template>
    <template name=".navbar" templatetype="css" date="1117789818"
username="Administrator"
version=""><![CDATA[a:7:{s:10:"background";s:0:"";s:5:"color";s:0:"";s:4:"font
";a:3:{s:5:"style";s:0:"";s:4:"size";s:4:"10px";s:6:"family";s:70:"verdana,
geneva, lucida, 'lucida grande', arial, helvetica, sans-
serif";s:5:"EXTRA";s:0:"";s:6:"LINK_N";a:3:{s:10:"background";s:0:"";s:5:"col
or";s:0:"";s:15:"text-
decoration";s:0:"";s:6:"LINK_V";a:3:{s:10:"background";s:0:"";s:5:"color";s:0
:"";s:15:"text-
decoration";s:0:"";s:6:"LINK_M";a:3:{s:10:"background";s:0:"";s:5:"color";s:0
:"";s:15:"text-decoration";s:0:"";}]]></template>
    <template name=".smallfont" templatetype="css" date="1117789818"
username="Administrator"
version=""><![CDATA[a:4:{s:10:"background";s:0:"";s:5:"color";s:0:"";s:4:"font
";a:3:{s:5:"style";s:0:"";s:4:"size";s:4:"10px";s:6:"family";s:70:"verdana,
geneva, lucida, 'lucida grande', arial, helvetica, sans-
serif";s:5:"EXTRA";s:0:"";}]]></template>
    <template name=".tcat" templatetype="css" date="1117789818"
username="Administrator"
version=""><![CDATA[a:7:{s:10:"background";s:65:"#869BBF
url(images/gradients/gradient_tcat.gif) repeat-x top
left";s:5:"color";s:7:"#FFFFFF";s:4:"font";a:3:{s:5:"style";s:4:"bold";s:4:"si
ze";s:3:"9pt";s:6:"family";s:70:"verdana, geneva, lucida, 'lucida grande',
arial, helvetica, sans-
serif";s:5:"EXTRA";s:0:"";s:6:"LINK_N";a:3:{s:10:"background";s:0:"";s:5:"col
or";s:7:"#ffffff";s:15:"text-
decoration";s:4:"none";s:6:"LINK_V";a:3:{s:10:"background";s:0:"";s:5:"color"
;s:7:"#ffffff";s:15:"text-
decoration";s:4:"none";s:6:"LINK_M";a:3:{s:10:"background";s:0:"";s:5:"color"
;s:7:"#FFFF66";s:15:"text-decoration";s:9:"underline";}]]></template>
```

This file is a plain text file, and it is editable using a text editor, but as you can see, it isn't a place where you would want to go and make many changes!

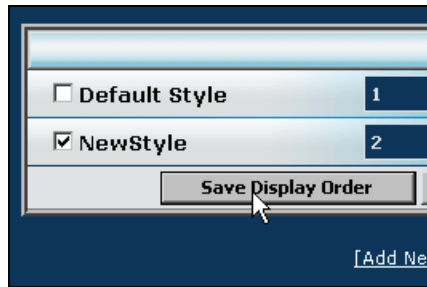
## Making the New Style into the Default

OK, you've created a new style, and you want to make it available as the default. How do you do this?

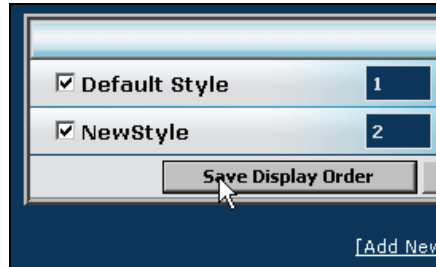
Easy! You may have noticed some checkboxes at the top left of the Style Manager window.



The style currently in use is checked. To change the style in use, just swap the check marks around, and click on the button marked Save Display Order.



The new style will now be available, and the old style won't be available. If you want to make both styles available, check both options and click on Save Display Order.



This will now make both styles available to the users of the board, and they can choose which one they want to use.

## Distributing a Style

You've made a great style, and you think that others might like to use it. You can choose to make it available for free, or you could decide to sell it. (Remember though that selling a style usually means having to provide the buyer with installation support.)

But how do you package it?

A style consists of the following elements:

- An XML file containing the changes
- All the custom images that go with it

To create a distribution package for a style, first take the custom XML file that you created and place it in a folder. (Call the folder the same name as the style.)

Then, download all the folders that contain custom images for the style from the web server. Make sure that you get the folders and the images. So, for our earlier example, we'd need to download the following folders:

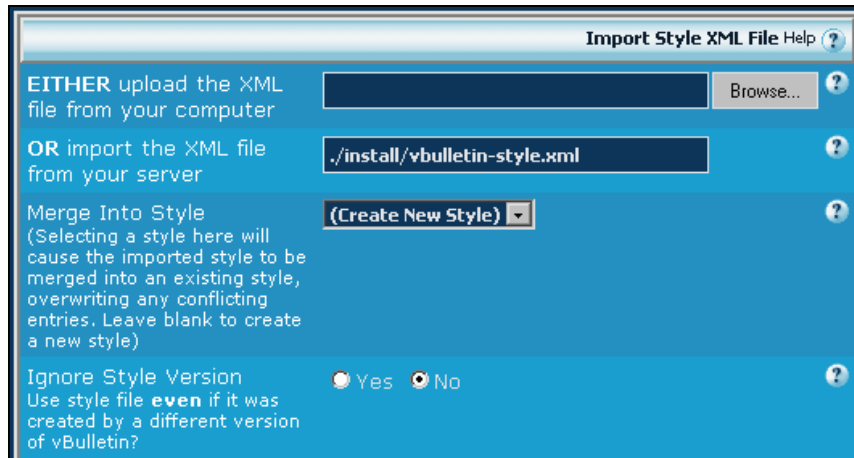
- `images/custom/buttons`
- `images/custom/statusicon`
- `images/custom/attach`
- `images/custom/misc`
- `images/custom/editor`
- `images/custom/polls`
- `images/custom/rating`
- `images/custom/reputation`

Place these folders and their contents into the folder containing the XML file and you're done. You can package up the whole thing into a zip file for convenience if you want—it also helps to keep all the files together in one place.

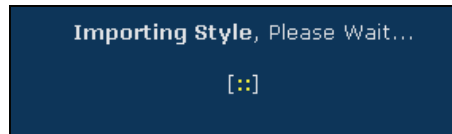
## Installing a New Style

Installing a new style is simple. Follow these simple steps:

- First, find the style that you want to use.
- If the style has been packaged, extract the contents of the zip file.
- Upload the folders containing images into the `images` folder on the web server. Do not upload the XML file.
- Next, click on **Styles & Templates** in the left-hand menu, and then click on **Download/Upload Styles**.
- This takes you to the interface that you saw earlier when downloading the XML file. This time, we're interested in uploading it.



- Click on the **Browse...** button, and go in search of the XML file.
- Make sure that **(Create New Style)** is selected in the Merge Into Style drop-down box.
- Scroll to the bottom of the page and click on **Import**.
- The import process will run and import the style into vBulletin.



And that's all there is to it!

## Summary

In this chapter we've looked at how to style a vBulletin installation. If you're like most people, this is something you're likely to want to take your time over and work on to get right. It's a good idea not to rush things and to work methodically, checking often that the changes result in the look that you expect.

Also, remember to save regularly and make regular backups—don't rely on the web host to do this for you. If you've spent time making modifications and changes, then take the time to keep them safe!

Finally, you might also want to consider making your style available to others—this is both quick and simple with vBulletin.

Happy styling!

# 8

## Developing a Hack

In this chapter we'll be looking at how you go about developing a hack for a vBulletin installation. Being based on the PHP language and on MySQL database infrastructure makes vBulletin very versatile, so we're going to have to limit our scope. Almost anything that you would want to do with vBulletin is possible if you know how to leverage PHP and MySQL!

In particular we will look at:

- How to hack a discussion board by changing one of the template files
- How to distribute a hack by giving other programmers clear instructions about the code changes

### Hacking vBulletin

Let's take a look at how to create a vBulletin hack. The hack we're going to be developing here is one that allows you to control how vBulletin handles private message receipts. As we saw in Chapter 3, private messages, known as PMs, are messages that one member can send to another member of the board.

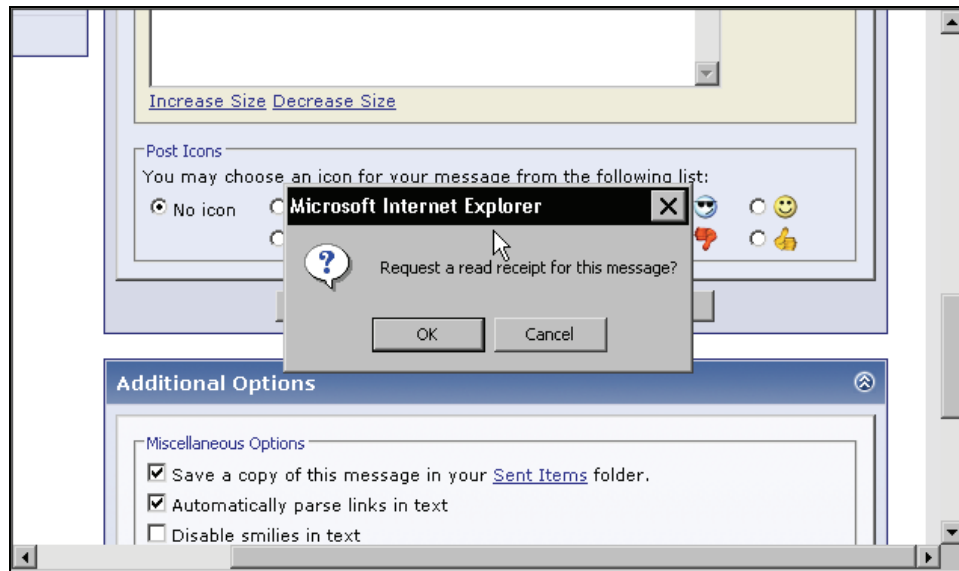
The screenshot shows a user profile for 'Second in Command', an Administrator. The profile includes a header with the user's name and title, a status bar with 'Last Activity: 05-05-2005 10:17 AM' and 'Offline', and three buttons: 'Add Second in Command to Your Buddy List', 'Add Second in Command to Your Ignore List', and 'User Options'. Below this are two columns: 'Forum Info' and 'Contact Info'. The 'Forum Info' column shows 'Join Date: 05-05-2005' and a 'Posts' section with 'Total Posts: 0 (0.00 posts per day)' and two links: 'Find all posts by Second in Command' and 'Find all threads started by Second in Command'. The 'Contact Info' column shows 'Email:' with a link 'Send a message via email to Second in Command' and 'Private Message:' with a link 'Send a private message to Second in Command' and a mouse cursor pointing at it.

View Profile: Second in Command		
<b>Second in Command</b> Administrator		
Last Activity: 05-05-2005 10:17 AM Offline		
<a href="#">Add Second in Command to Your Buddy List</a>	<a href="#">Add Second in Command to Your Ignore List</a>	<a href="#">User Options</a>
Forum Info	Contact Info	
Join Date: <b>05-05-2005</b>	Email: <a href="#">Send a message via email to Second in Command</a>	
Posts Total Posts: <b>0</b> (0.00 posts per day) <a href="#">Find all posts by Second in Command</a> <a href="#">Find all threads started by Second in Command</a>	Private Message: <a href="#">Send a private message to Second in Command</a>	

The member types a message into the private message window and then clicks on the Submit Message button.

The recipient can collect the message the next time they log in (or, if they are already logged in, the next time they request a new page from the board).

But there's one feature that seems to annoy some members (especially if it's a popular board where the members make a lot of use of the PM facility). This is the read receipt feature. When a PM is submitted, a message box is displayed asking the sender whether they want to request a read receipt.



Read receipts are a useful feature, but the problem is the message box displayed—people find it gets in the way and often they won't want to send a read receipt with every message. You as the administrator can do something about this—you can hack your vBulletin installation to give your members greater control over how read receipts are handled.

---

### **You have the power ...**

... to disable private messaging read receipts altogether. In the left-hand menu in the AdminCP, click on Usergroups followed by Usergroup Manager. Then for each usergroup you don't want to have this feature, click on Edit Usergroup and set Can Use Message Tracking and Can Deny Private Message Read Receipt Request to No. Doing this, however, will remove the ability for members to request a read receipt. It would be much better to simply change how the request works.

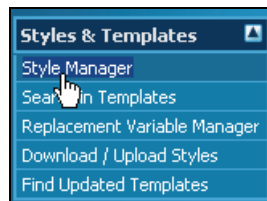
---

## Making the Changes

Let's now work through how to make this hack possible. There are a few code changes you need to make to a vBulletin template. If things go wrong, you already know how to revert templates back to their original state. As long as you take care and follow the code here carefully, everything will work out fine. But always keep a backup just in case!

## Locating the Template

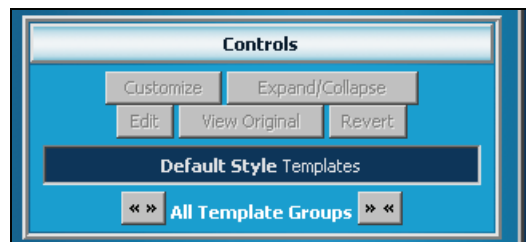
In the left-hand menu of the AdminCP, click on Styles & Templates to expand it, and then click on Style Manager.



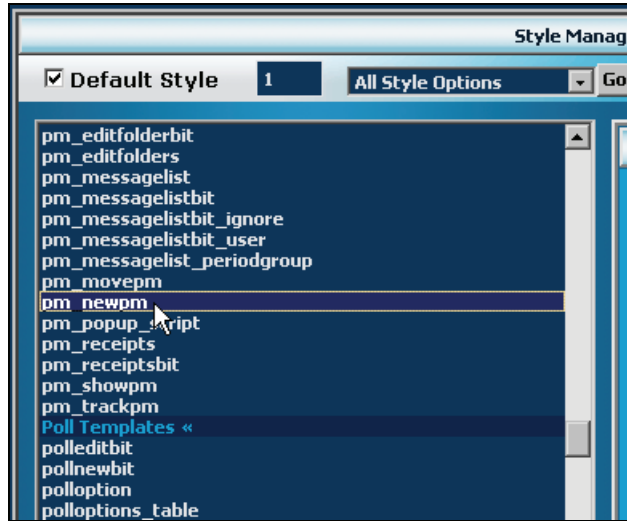
This brings up the Style Manager page in the right-hand side screen. Click on the button marked << >> to expand the template window.



You now need to click on the new button marked << >> lower down on the page to expand all the templates so as to find the one you are looking for.



In the scrolling window, work your way down until you get to a template called `pm_newpm`. Double-click on the link to open the template.



## Hacking the `pm_newpm` Template

You can now make a few changes to this template. These changes involve removing the existing code that causes the prompt to appear and adding new code that provides a checkbox so that the sender can request a read receipt if they want one.

The first thing you need to do is locate the following segment of JavaScript code in the template:

```
else if (formname.dopreview != true)
{
    <if condition="$show['trackpm']">
    if (confirm("$vbphrase[request_receipt_for_message]"))
    {
        formname.receipt.value = 1;
    }
    </if>
}
```

You need to remove this section of code. Rather than delete it outright it's much better to just comment out the code by adding `//` and a space to the beginning of each line of the script:

```
// else if (formname.dopreview != true)
// {
```

and so on.

While you're doing this, it's a good idea to add a note so that later you will be reminded later why you commented it out!

```
// Begin PM read receipt hack
// else if (formname.dopreview != true)
// {
```



```
// }
// End PM read receipt hack
```

Next, within the same template, find this segment of code:

```
<input type="hidden" name="receipt" value="0" />
```

(This will be on one long line, so it may be rather hard to find.) Comment this out too. Since this is HTML, we comment it out by placing `<!--` and `-->` around the line. Again, it's wise to add comments to the code to remind you why you removed the line:

```
<!-- Begin PM read receipt hack -->
<!-- line removed -->
<!-- <input type="hidden" name="receipt" value="0" /> -->
<!-- End PM read receipt hack -->
```

Next, look for the following segment of code:

```
<div>
  <label for="cb_parseurl">
    <input type="checkbox" name="parseurl" value="1" id="cb_parseurl"
      tabindex="1" $checked[parseurl] />
    $vbphrase[automatically_parse_links_in_text]
  </label>
</div>
```

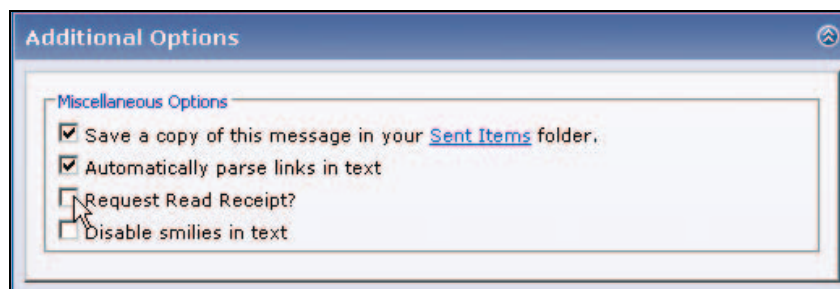
When you locate it, you need to add below it as follows (again remembering to add the comments):

```
<!-- Begin PM read receipt hack -->
<!-- line added -->
<div>
  <label for="cb_receipt">
    <input type="checkbox" name="receipt" id="cb_receipt" value="1" />
    Request Read Receipt?
  </label>
</div>
<!-- End PM read receipt hack -->
```

Now that you've made the modifications to the code, you can save it by clicking on the Save button.

## Testing the Hack

Testing is simple—try sending a PM! When you are in the private message window, you will see the new checkbox enabling you to specify that you want a read receipt for the message you send. Try a couple of tests, one with a read receipt request and another one without, just to make sure it all works.



## Hack Distribution

So now you have a hack and you want to make it available to other people. The question is, how do you do this? The license agreement prevents you from distributing whole templates, and anyway, you're only making small changes to the template so it's silly to get people to replace code that is unchanged.

The best way to distribute hacks is in the form of clear instructions that others can easily follow. There are many ways to do this but the following is an example of one way that is clear and straightforward.

MODIFICATION - PM READ RECEIPT CHECKBOX Version 1.0.2  
-----

Open TEMPLATE pm\_newpm

Find and DELETE/COMMENT OUT:

```
else if (formname.dopreview != true)
{
    <if condition="$show['trackpm']">
        if (confirm("$vbphrase[request_receipt_for_message]"))
        {
            formname.receipt.value = 1;
        }
    </if>
}
```

Find and DELETE/COMMENT OUT:

```
<input type="hidden" name="receipt" value="0" />
```

Find:

```
<div>
    <label for="cb_parseurl">
        <input type="checkbox" name="parseurl" value="1"
            id="cb_parseurl" tabindex="1" $checked[parseurl] />
        $vbphrase[automatically_parse_links_in_text]
    </label>
</div>
```

Below code ADD:

```
<div>
    <label for="cb_receipt">
        <input type="checkbox" name="receipt" id="cb_receipt" value="1" />
        Request Read Receipt?
    </label>
</div>
```

SAVE pm\_newpm and CLOSE.

Test modification.

END OF MODIFICATION  
-----

With this hack we needed only to modify templates, but there are times when you need to document edits to settings or even to actual PHP files. Settings changes can be documented by specifying the menu navigation and the final setting change.

```
Admin CP -> Usergroups -> Usergroup Manager -> Edit Usergroup
Set "Can Use Message Tracking"
and "Can Deny Private Message Read Receipt Request" to "No".
```

The PHP file modification that we saw in Chapter 4 can also be documented in this way:

```
PAYPAL MODIFICATION Version 1.0.2
-----

Open includes\functions_subscriptions.php

Find:

        <input type=\"hidden\" name=\"no_shipping\" value=\"1\" />

Replace with:

        <input type=\"hidden\" name=\"no_shipping\" value=\"0\" />

SAVE and UPLOAD

Test modification.

END OF MODIFICATION
-----
```

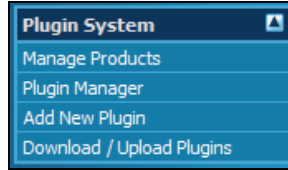
## Tips for Hack Distribution

Here are a few tips that make code distribution easier for both you and the person following the instructions:

1. Test hacks thoroughly. If possible, try them out on a test installation of vBulletin before making changes to your active board.
2. Be specific as to which file or template requires modification.
3. Replace whole lines of code—don't mess about trying to explain which bit of the line needs changing.
4. Feel free to add comments to the code you include. This will make life easier for the person using the instructions—but will also bulk out your code.
5. Be clear as to what code you want the user to find and what they should then do with it (e.g. replace it with different code or add something above or below it). Be careful to check that the code you want the user to search for isn't duplicated elsewhere in the file. If this is the case, then be more specific and display more than one line of code.
6. Don't use line numbers—these can change with updates to the software. Also, any code changes (or other hacks) above the line will cause the line numbers to be wrong.
7. Make sure that you give the proper name for the template or PHP file you want editing. In the case of PHP files, include the path within the vBulletin installation.
8. Keep version numbers updated. If you make a small change to the code (to fix a typo say or make a small modification), then change the minor version number (say from 1.0.2 to 1.0.3). For big changes or alterations that allow the code to work for a new version of vBulletin, change the major version number (say from 1.0.4 to 2.0.0).

## Plugins and Products

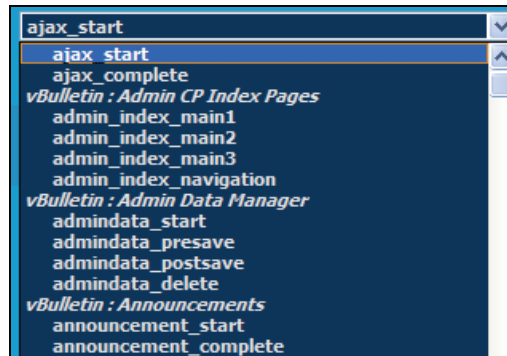
One of the new features available in vBulletin 3.5 is plugins and products. Plugins and products are a new and easy way to add new features to a vBulletin installation.



There are some differences between a plugin and a product. A **plugin** allows new features to be added to a core vBulletin installation. In other words, it is a code snippet imported into vBulletin and executed by specific hooks. This is an easy way to extend functionality without making changes to the underlying PHP files of vBulletin.

A **product** is a downloadable package that contains not only plugins but also templates, options, phrases, help files, and control panel entries. This means that these are a bigger, more integrated types of plugins.

**Hooks** are what drives plugins. These are locations within the PHP code of vBulletin that trigger events. These events can be used to run code contained in plugins. You can view these hooks from the AdminCP by clicking on Plugin System followed by Add New Plugin, and then clicking on the Hook Location drop-down box.



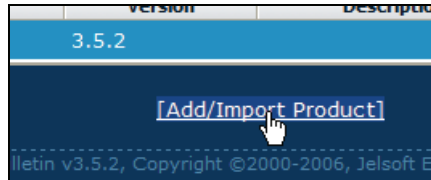
## Getting Plugins and Products

Plenty of plugins and products that are designed to carry out a multitude of tasks are available for download. In fact, many hacks and board modifications have been converted to plugins and products because of the ease of installation.

The best place to begin your search for plugins is <http://www.vbulletin.org>.

## Adding a Product

After you have downloaded a product (which will be an XML file), access AdminCP and click on Plugin System followed by Manage Products. From here click on Add/Import Product:



This will take you to the Import Product screen:

A screenshot of the 'Import Product' form. The form has a title bar that says 'Import Product'. It contains two main options: 'EITHER upload the XML file from your computer' with a text input field and a 'Browse...' button; and 'OR import the XML file from your server' with a text input field containing the path './includes/xml/product.xml'. Below these options, there is a section for 'Allow Overwrite' with the text 'If you wish to upgrade a product, you must set this to yes.' and two radio buttons labeled 'Yes' and 'No', with 'No' being selected. At the bottom of the form, there are two buttons: 'Import' and 'Reset'.

Using this, you can choose to import the plugin either from your computer (by uploading it to the server) or import the XML file from your server. Once you have found the file, click Import. This will import the plugin into vBulletin and activate it and make it ready for use.

After you have installed the plugin, make sure to follow any additional installation instructions provided with the plugin.

## Adding a Plugin

Adding a plugin to a vBulletin installation is much easier. From the AdminCP, click on Plugin System followed by Add New Plugin.

The screenshot shows a web form titled "Add New Plugin". The form is set against a blue background. At the top, there is a dropdown menu for "Product" with "vBulletin" selected. Below that is a "Hook Location" dropdown menu with "ajax\_start" selected. A text box for "Title" is empty. The "Plugin PHP Code" section features a large text area with a "Large Edit Box" button to its left. At the bottom right of the form, there are two links: "Increase Size" and "Decrease Size".

In this screen you can cut and paste the code from the instructions you have, and choose the necessary hook to execute the plugin.

After making all the changes, click on Save, and the plugin will be added to vBulletin and be ready to use.

## What If Things Go Wrong?

Whenever you add any new code to a vBulletin installation, there is a chance that things may go wrong. The worst-case scenario is that you bring down the whole vBulletin board and make it totally inaccessible.

Fortunately, there's a global way to disable plugins, and it doesn't require access to the vBulleting interface, only FTP access to the server.

All you need to do is find the `includes/config.php` file and add the following code:

```
Define('DISABLE_HOOKS', true);
```

Save the file and upload it to the server. Now vBulletin will run without plugins, and this gives you a chance to remove the offending product or plugin using Manage Products or Manage Plugins from the AdminCP.

Once you have removed the offending plugin, you can reactivate the plugin system by removing that line of code from `includes/config.php`.

## Summary

In this chapter we've looked at another code modification, but this time instead of concentrating on the hack itself we paid attention to the process of making a hack to the code of a vBulletin board. You are likely to want to carry out a number of hacks to your board, and with each one you will increase your knowledge and understanding of how the board works. With time you will get an understanding of how the different templates and PHP files interact, and this is when you are most likely to start to think about creating your own hacks.

Take your time when creating your own hacks—don't rush it. Take advantage of the vBulletin licensing policy, and work on a test-bed installation of the discussion board—that way, if things go badly wrong, you don't bring your whole forum down!





# 9

## Programmer's Reference

This chapter has information that you may need if you are going to delve deeper into your vBulletin installation, and make changes, tweaks, and other hacks.

In this chapter we will look at:

- The settings for the default usergroups
- The default database tables created by a vBulletin installation
- How to migrate to a new server
- How graphics work in vBulletin
- How to find and replace text in posts
- Some tips on how to program for vBulletin

### Default Usergroup Settings

vBulletin comes pre-configured with seven default usergroups and one custom usergroup.

Default Usergroups
(COPPA) Users Awaiting Moderation
Administrators
Moderators
Registered Users
Super Moderators
Unregistered / Not Logged In
Users Awaiting Email Confirmation

Custom Usergroup
Banned Users

Here are the default usergroup settings for these usergroups.

## (COPPA) Users Awaiting Moderation

Viewable on Show Groups	No
Birthdays Viewable	No
Viewable on the Memberlist	No
Allow Users to have Member Groups	Yes
This Usergroup is a 'Banned' Group	No
Can 'See' Users Who Have Chosen to be Invisible While Online	No
Can View Member Info	Yes
Can Edit Own Profile	Yes
Can Set Self to Invisible Mode	No
Show edited by note on edited messages?	No
Can Use Custom Title	No
Can Use Signatures	No
Can View Others' Profile Pictures	No
Can View Private Custom Fields	No
Can View Forum	Yes
Can View Others' Threads	Yes
Can See Deletion Notices	No
Can Search Forums	Yes
Can Use Email to Friend	Yes
Can Download Attachments	No
Can Post Threads	No
Can Reply to Own Threads	No
Can Reply to Others' Threads	No
Can Edit Own Posts	No
Can Delete Own Posts	No
Can Move Own Threads	No
Can Open / Close Own Threads	No
Can Delete Own Threads	No
Always Moderate This Group's Posts	No
Can Rate Threads	No
Can Upload Attachments	No
Space (in bytes) that a user's total attachment usage may consume	0
Can Post Polls	No

Can Vote on Polls	No
Can Upload Custom Avatars	No
Custom Avatar Maximum Width (pixels)	80
Custom Avatar Maximum Height (pixels)	80
Custom Avatar Maximum File Size (bytes)	20000
Can Upload Profile Pictures	No
Profile Picture Maximum Width (pixels)	100
Profile Picture Maximum Height (pixels)	100
Profile Picture Maximum File Size (bytes)	65535
Maximum Stored Messages	50
Can Use Message Tracking	No
Can Deny Private Message Read Receipt Request	No
Maximum Recipients to Send PMs at a time	0
Can View Calendar	No
Can Post Events	No
Can Edit Own Events	No
Can Delete Own Events	No
Can View Others' Events	No
Can View Who's Online	No
Can View Detailed Location Info for Users	No
Can View IP Addresses	No
Can View Detailed Location Info of Users Who Visit Bad / No Permission Locations	No
Can view actual location of user (filepath/url)	No
Can Use Reputation	No
Can Leave Negative Reputation	No
Can See Who Left User Ratings	No
Can Hide Reputation from Others	No
Can View User Notes About Self	No
Can Manage User Notes About Self	No
Can Post User Notes About Self	No
Can View User Notes About Others	No
Can Manage User Notes About Others	No
Can Post User Notes About Others	No
Can Manage Own User Notes	No

Notes that this User Has Posted, for Self or Others (This will override the above manage permissions, if enabled)	No
User Notes Can Be Posted About This Group	No
Can Moderate All Forums (is Super Moderator)	No
Can Access Control Panel (is Administrator)	No

## Administrators

Viewable on Show Groups	Yes
Birthdays Viewable	Yes
Viewable on the Memberlist	Yes
Allow Users to have Member Groups	Yes
This Usergroup is a 'Banned' Group	No
Can 'See' Users Who Have Chosen to be Invisible While Online	Yes
Can View Member Info	Yes
Can Edit Own Profile	Yes
Can Set Self to Invisible Mode	Yes
Show edited by note on edited messages?	Yes
Can Use Custom Title	Yes
Can Use Signatures	Yes
Can View Others' Profile Pictures	Yes
Can View Private Custom Fields	Yes
Can View Forum	Yes
Can View Others' Threads	Yes
Can See Deletion Notices	Yes
Can Search Forums	Yes
Can Use Email to Friend	Yes
Can Download Attachments	Yes
Can Post Threads	Yes
Can Reply to Own Threads	Yes
Can Reply to Others' Threads	Yes
Can Edit Own Posts	Yes
Can Delete Own Posts	Yes
Can Move Own Threads	Yes
Can Open / Close Own Threads	Yes

Can Delete Own Threads	Yes
Always Moderate This Group's Posts	No
Can Rate Threads	Yes
Can Upload Attachments	Yes
Space (in bytes) that a user's total attachment usage may consume	0
Can Post Polls	Yes
Can Vote on Polls	Yes
Can Upload Custom Avatars	Yes
Custom Avatar Maximum Width (pixels)	80
Custom Avatar Maximum Height (pixels)	80
Custom Avatar Maximum File Size (bytes)	20000
Can Upload Profile Pictures	Yes
Profile Picture Maximum Width (pixels)	100
Profile Picture Maximum Height (pixels)	100
Profile Picture Maximum File Size (bytes)	65535
Maximum Stored Messages	50
Can Use Message Tracking	Yes
Can Deny Private Message Read Receipt Request	Yes
Maximum Recipients to Send PMs at a time	5
Can View Calendar	Yes
Can Post Events	Yes
Can Edit Own Events	Yes
Can Delete Own Events	Yes
Can View Others' Events	Yes
Can View Who's Online	Yes
Can View Detailed Location Info for Users	Yes
Can View IP Addresses	Yes
Can View Detailed Location Info of Users Who Visit Bad / No Permission Locations	Yes
Can view actual location of user (filepath/url)	Yes
Can Use Reputation	Yes
Can Leave Negative Reputation	Yes
Can See Who Left User Ratings	Yes
Can Hide Reputation from Others	Yes
Can View User Notes About Self	Yes

Can Manage User Notes About Self	Yes
Can Post User Notes About Self	Yes
Can View User Notes About Others	Yes
Can Manage User Notes About Others	Yes
Can Post User Notes About Others	Yes
Can Manage Own User Notes	Yes
Notes that this user has posted, for self or others (This will override the above manage permissions, if enabled)	Yes
User Notes Can Be Posted About This Group	No
Can Moderate All Forums (is Super Moderator)	Yes
Can Access Control Panel (is Administrator)	Yes

## Moderators

Viewable on Show Groups	No
Birthdays Viewable	Yes
Viewable on the Memberlist	Yes
Allow Users to have Member Groups	Yes
This Usergroup is a 'Banned' Group	No
Can 'See' Users Who Have Chosen to be Invisible While Online	No
Can View Member Info	Yes
Can Edit Own Profile	Yes
Can Set Self to Invisible Mode	Yes
Show edited by note on edited messages?	No
Can Use Custom Title	Yes
Can Use Signatures	Yes
Can View Others' Profile Pictures	Yes
Can View Private Custom Fields	No
Can View Forum	Yes
Can View Others' Threads	Yes
Can See Deletion Notices	No
Can Search Forums	Yes
Can Use Email to Friend	Yes
Can Download Attachments	Yes
Can Post Threads	Yes

Can Reply to Own Threads	Yes
Can Reply to Others' Threads	Yes
Can Edit Own Posts	Yes
Can Delete Own Posts	Yes
Can Move Own Threads	No
Can Open / Close Own Threads	No
Can Delete Own Threads	No
Always Moderate This Group's Posts	No
Can Rate Threads	Yes
Can Upload Attachments	Yes
Space (in bytes) that a user's total attachment usage may consume	0
Can Post Polls	Yes
Can Vote on Polls	Yes
Can Upload Custom Avatars	Yes
Custom Avatar Maximum Width (pixels)	80
Custom Avatar Maximum Height (pixels)	80
Custom Avatar Maximum File Size (bytes)	20000
Can Upload Profile Pictures	Yes
Profile Picture Maximum Width (pixels)	100
Profile Picture Maximum Height (pixels)	100
Profile Picture Maximum File Size (bytes)	65535
Maximum Stored Messages	50
Can Use Message Tracking	Yes
Can Deny Private Message Read Receipt Request	No
Maximum Recipients to Send PMs at a time	5
Can View Calendar	Yes
Can Post Events	Yes
Can Edit Own Events	Yes
Can Delete Own Events	Yes
Can View Others' Events	Yes
Can View Who's Online	Yes
Can View Detailed Location Info for Users	No
Can View IP Addresses	Yes
Can View Detailed Location Info of Users Who Visit Bad / No Permission Locations	No

Can view actual location of user (filepath/url)	No
Can Use Reputation	Yes
Can Leave Negative Reputation	Yes
Can See Who Left User Ratings	No
Can Hide Reputation from Others	No
Can View User Notes About Self	No
Can Manage User Notes About Self	No
Can Post User Notes About Self	No
Can View User Notes About Others	Yes
Can Manage User Notes About Others	No
Can Post User Notes About Others	No
Can Manage Own User Notes	No
User Notes Can Be Posted About This Group	No
Can Moderate All Forums (is Super Moderator)	No
Can Access Control Panel (is Administrator)	No

## Registered Users

Viewable on Show Groups	No
Birthdays Viewable	Yes
Viewable on the Memberlist	Yes
Allow Users to have Member Groups	Yes
This Usergroup is a 'Banned' Group	No
Can 'See' Users Who Have Chosen to be Invisible While Online	No
Can View Member Info	Yes
Can Edit Own Profile	Yes
Can Set Self to Invisible Mode	Yes
Show edited by note on edited messages?	Yes
Can Use Custom Title	No
Can Use Signatures	Yes
Can View Others' Profile Pictures	Yes
Can View Private Custom Fields	No
Can View Forum	Yes
Can View Others' Threads	Yes
Can See Deletion Notices	No



Can Search Forums	Yes
Can Use Email to Friend	Yes
Can Download Attachments	Yes
Can Post Threads	Yes
Can Reply to Own Threads	Yes
Can Reply to Others' Threads	Yes
Can Edit Own Posts	Yes
Can Delete Own Posts	Yes
Can Move Own Threads	No
Can Open / Close Own Threads	No
Can Delete Own Threads	No
Always Moderate This Group's Posts	No
Can Rate Threads	Yes
Can Upload Attachments	Yes
Space (in bytes) that a user's total attachment usage may consume	0
Can Post Polls	Yes
Can Vote on Polls	Yes
Can Upload Custom Avatars	No
Custom Avatar Maximum Width (pixels)	80
Custom Avatar Maximum Height (pixels)	80
Custom Avatar Maximum File Size (bytes)	20000
Can Upload Profile Pictures	Yes
Profile Picture Maximum Width (pixels)	100
Profile Picture Maximum Height (pixels)	100
Profile Picture Maximum File Size (bytes)	65535
Maximum Stored Messages	50
Can Use Message Tracking	Yes
Can Deny Private Message Read Receipt Request	Yes
Maximum Recipients to Send PMs at a time	5
Can View Calendar	Yes
Can Post Events	Yes
Can Edit Own Events	No
Can Delete Own Events	No
Can View Others' Events	Yes

Can View Who's Online	Yes
Can View Detailed Location Info for Users	No
Can View IP Addresses	No
Can View Detailed Location Info of Users Who Visit Bad / No Permission Locations	No
Can view actual location of user (filepath/url)	No
Can Use Reputation	Yes
Can Leave Negative Reputation	Yes
Can See Who Left User Ratings	No
Can Hide Reputation from Others	No
Can View User Notes About Self	No
Can Manage User Notes About Self	No
Can Post User Notes About Self	No
Can View User Notes About Others	No
Can Manage User Notes About Others	No
Can Post User Notes About Others	No
Can Manage Own User Notes	No
User Notes Can Be Posted About This Group	Yes
Can Moderate All Forums (is Super Moderator)	No
Can Access Control Panel (is Administrator)	No

## Super Moderators

Viewable on Show Groups	Yes
Birthdays Viewable	Yes
Viewable on the Memberlist	Yes
Allow Users to have Member Groups	Yes
This Usergroup is a 'Banned' Group	No
Can 'See' Users Who Have Chosen to be Invisible While Online	Yes
Can View Member Info	Yes
Can Edit Own Profile	Yes
Can Set Self to Invisible Mode	Yes
Show edited by note on edited messages?	Yes
Can Use Custom Title	Yes
Can Use Signatures	Yes
Can View Others' Profile Pictures	Yes

Can View Private Custom Fields	Yes
Can View Forum	Yes
Can View Others' Threads	Yes
Can See Deletion Notices	Yes
Can Search Forums	Yes
Can Use Email to Friend	Yes
Can Download Attachments	Yes
Can Post Threads	Yes
Can Reply to Own Threads	Yes
Can Reply to Others' Threads	Yes
Can Edit Own Posts	Yes
Can Delete Own Posts	Yes
Can Move Own Threads	Yes
Can Open / Close Own Threads	Yes
Can Delete Own Threads	Yes
Always Moderate This Group's Posts	No
Can Rate Threads	Yes
Can Upload Attachments	Yes
Space (in bytes) that a user's total attachment usage may consume	0
Can Post Polls	Yes
Can Vote on Polls	Yes
Can Upload Custom Avatars	No
Custom Avatar Maximum Width (pixels)	80
Custom Avatar Maximum Height (pixels)	80
Custom Avatar Maximum File Size (bytes)	20000
Can Upload Profile Pictures	No
Profile Picture Maximum Width (pixels)	100
Profile Picture Maximum Height (pixels)	100
Profile Picture Maximum File Size (bytes)	65535
Maximum Stored Messages	50
Can Use Message Tracking	Yes
Can Deny Private Message Read Receipt Request	Yes
Maximum Recipients to Send PMs at a time	0
Can View Calendar	Yes

## Programmer's Reference

---

Can Post Events	Yes
Can Edit Own Events	Yes
Can Delete Own Events	Yes
Can View Others' Events	Yes
Can View Who's Online	Yes
Can View Detailed Location Info for Users	Yes
Can View IP Addresses	Yes
Can View Detailed Location Info of Users Who Visit Bad / No Permission Locations	Yes
Can view actual location of user (filepath/url)	No
Can Use Reputation	Yes
Can Leave Negative Reputation	Yes
Can See Who Left User Ratings	Yes
Can Hide Reputation from Others	No
Can View User Notes About Self	No
Can Manage User Notes About Self	No
Can Post User Notes About Self	No
Can View User Notes About Others	Yes
Can Manage User Notes About Others	Yes
Can Post User Notes About Others	Yes
Can Manage Own User Notes	Yes
User Notes Can Be Posted About This Group	Yes
Can Moderate All Forums (is Super Moderator)	Yes
Can Access Control Panel (is Administrator)	No

## Unregistered / Not Logged In

Viewable on Show Groups	No
Birthdays Viewable	No
Viewable on the Memberlist	No
Allow Users to have Member Groups	No
This Usergroup is a 'Banned' Group	No
Can 'See' Users Who Have Chosen to be Invisible While Online	No
Can View Member Info	Yes
Can Edit Own Profile	No
Can Set Self to Invisible Mode	No

Show edited by note on edited messages?	Yes
Can Use Custom Title	No
Can Use Signatures	No
Can View Others' Profile Pictures	No
Can View Private Custom Fields	No
Can View Forum	Yes
Can View Others' Threads	Yes
Can See Deletion Notices	No
Can Search Forums	Yes
Can Use Email to Friend	No
Can Download Attachments	Yes
Can Post Threads	No
Can Reply to Own Threads	No
Can Reply to Others' Threads	No
Can Edit Own Posts	No
Can Delete Own Posts	No
Can Move Own Threads	No
Can Open / Close Own Threads	No
Can Delete Own Threads	No
Always Moderate This Group's Posts	No
Can Rate Threads	No
Can Post Polls	No
Can Vote on Polls	No
Can Upload Custom Avatars	No
Custom Avatar Maximum Width (pixels)	80
Custom Avatar Maximum Height (pixels)	80
Custom Avatar Maximum File Size (bytes)	20000
Can Upload Profile Pictures	No
Profile Picture Maximum Width (pixels)	100
Profile Picture Maximum Height (pixels)	100
Profile Picture Maximum File Size (bytes)	65535
Maximum Stored Messages	50
Can Use Message Tracking	No
Can Deny Private Message Read Receipt Request	No

## Programmer's Reference

---

Maximum Recipients to Send PMs at a time	0
Can View Calendar	No
Can Post Events	No
Can Edit Own Events	No
Can Delete Own Events	No
Can View Others' Events	No
Can View Who's Online	Yes
Can View Detailed Location Info for Users	No
Can View IP Addresses	No
Can View Detailed Location Info of Users Who Visit Bad / No Permission Locations	No
Can view actual location of user (filepath/url)	No
Can Use Reputation	No
Can View User Notes About Self	No
Can Manage User Notes About Self	No
Can Post User Notes About Self	No
Can View User Notes About Others	No
Can Manage User Notes About Others	No
Can Post User Notes About Others	No
Can Manage Own User Notes	No
User Notes Can Be Posted About This Group	No
Can Moderate All Forums (is Super Moderator)	No
Can Access Control Panel (is Administrator)	No

## Users Awaiting Email Confirmation

Viewable on Show Groups	No
Birthdays Viewable	No
Viewable on the Memberlist	No
Allow Users to have Member Groups	Yes
This Usergroup is a 'Banned' Group	No
Can 'See' Users Who Have Chosen to be Invisible While Online	No
Can View Member Info	Yes
Can Edit Own Profile	Yes
Can Set Self to Invisible Mode	Yes
Show edited by note on edited messages?	Yes

Can Use Custom Title	No
Can Use Signatures	Yes
Can View Others' Profile Pictures	No
Can View Private Custom Fields	No
Can View Forum	Yes
Can View Others' Threads	Yes
Can See Deletion Notices	No
Can Search Forums	Yes
Can Use Email to Friend	Yes
Can Download Attachments	Yes
Can Post Threads	No
Can Reply to Own Threads	No
Can Reply to Others' Threads	No
Can Edit Own Posts	No
Can Delete Own Posts	No
Can Move Own Threads	No
Can Open / Close Own Threads	No
Can Delete Own Threads	No
Always Moderate This Group's Posts	No
Can Rate Threads	No
Can Upload Attachments	No
Space (in bytes) that a user's total attachment usage may consume	0
Can Post Polls	No
Can Vote on Polls	No
Can Upload Custom Avatars	No
Custom Avatar Maximum Width (pixels)	80
Custom Avatar Maximum Height (pixels)	80
Custom Avatar Maximum File Size (bytes)	20000
Can Upload Profile Pictures	No
Profile Picture Maximum Width (pixels)	100
Profile Picture Maximum Height (pixels)	100
Profile Picture Maximum File Size (bytes)	65535
Maximum Stored Messages	50
Can Use Message Tracking	No

Can Deny Private Message Read Receipt Request	No
Maximum Recipients to Send PMs at a time	0
Can View Calendar	No
Can Post Events	No
Can Edit Own Events	No
Can Delete Own Events	No
Can View Others' Events	No
Can View Who's Online	No
Can View Detailed Location Info for Users	No
Can View IP Addresses	No
Can View Detailed Location Info of Users Who Visit Bad / No Permission Locations	No
Can view actual location of user (filepath/url)	No
Can Use Reputation	No
Can Leave Negative Reputation	No
Can See Who Left User Ratings	No
Can Hide Reputation from Others	No
Can View User Notes About Self	No
Can Manage User Notes About Self	No
Can Post User Notes About Self	No
Can View User Notes About Others	No
Can Manage User Notes About Others	No
Can Post User Notes About Others	No
Can Manage Own User Notes	No
User Notes Can Be Posted About This Group	No
Can Moderate All Forums (is Super Moderator)	No
Can Access Control Panel (is Administrator)	No

## Banned Users

Viewable on Show Groups	No
Birthdays Viewable	No
Viewable on the Memberlist	No
Allow Users to have Member Groups	No
This Usergroup is a 'Banned' Group	Yes



Public (Joinable) Custom Usergroups	No
Can override primary group title/markup	No
Can 'See' Users Who Have Chosen to be Invisible While Online	No
Can View Member Info	No
Can Edit Own Profile	No
Can Set Self to Invisible Mode	No
Show edited by note on edited messages?	No
Can Use Custom Title	No
Can Use Signatures	No
Can View Others' Profile Pictures	No
Can View Private Custom Fields	No
Can View Forum	No
Can View Others' Threads	No
Can See Deletion Notices	No
Can Search Forums	No
Can Use Email to Friend	No
Can Download Attachments	No
Can Post Threads	No
Can Reply to Own Threads	No
Can Reply to Others' Threads	No
Can Edit Own Posts	No
Can Delete Own Posts	No
Can Move Own Threads	No
Can Open / Close Own Threads	No
Can Delete Own Threads	No
Always Moderate This Group's Posts	No
Can Rate Threads	No
Can Upload Attachments	No
Space (in bytes) that a user's total attachment usage may consume	0
Can Post Polls	No
Can Vote on Polls	No
Can Upload Custom Avatars	No
Custom Avatar Maximum Width (pixels)	80

Programmer's Reference

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Custom Avatar Maximum Height (pixels)	80
Custom Avatar Maximum File Size (bytes)	20000
Can Upload Profile Pictures	No
Profile Picture Maximum Width (pixels)	100
Profile Picture Maximum Height (pixels)	100
Profile Picture Maximum File Size (bytes)	65535
Maximum Stored Messages	50
Can Use Message Tracking	No
Can Deny Private Message Read Receipt Request	No
Maximum Recipients to Send PMs at a time	0
Can View Calendar	No
Can Post Events	No
Can Edit Own Events	No
Can Delete Own Events	No
Can View Others' Events	No
Can View Who's Online	No
Can View Detailed Location Info for Users	No
Can View IP Addresses	No
Can View Detailed Location Info of Users Who Visit Bad / No Permission Locations	No
Can view actual location of user (filepath/url)	No
Can Use Reputation	No
Can Leave Negative Reputation	No
Can See Who Left User Ratings	No
Can Hide Reputation from Others	No
Can View User Notes About Self	No
Can Manage User Notes About Self	No
Can Post User Notes About Self	No
Can View User Notes About Others	No
Can Manage User Notes About Others	No
Can Post User Notes About Others	No
Can Manage Own User Notes	No
User Notes Can Be Posted About This Group	No
Can Moderate All Forums (is Super Moderator)	No
Can Access Control Panel (is Administrator)	No

## Default vBulletin Database Tables

The following are the default database tables created by a vBulletin installation.

These table names may be prefixed to allow them to be installed in a database with other applications and so that they can be distinguished from other tables. The default prefix is vb\_.

access	imagecategorypermission	strikes
adminhelp	language	style
administrator	mailqueue	subscribeevent
adminlog	moderation	subscribeforum
adminutil	moderator	subscribethread
announcement	moderatorlog	subscription
attachment	phrase	subscriptionlog
attachmenttype	phrasetype	template
attachmentviews	pm	thread
avatar	pmreceipt	threadrate
bbcode	pmtxt	threadviews
calendar	poll	upgradelog
calendarcustomfield	pollvote	user
calendarmoderator	post	useractivation
calendarpermission	post_parsed	userban
cpsession	posthash	userfield
cron	postindex	usergroup
cronlog	profilefield	usergroupleader
customavatar	ranks	usergrouprequest
customprofilepic	regimage	usernote
datastore	reminder	userpromotion
deletionlog	reputation	usertextfield
editlog	reputationlevel	usertitle
event	search	word
faq	session	strikes
forum	setting	style
forumpermission	settinggroup	subscribeevent
holiday	smilie	subscribeforum
icon	stats	subscribethread
imagecategory	imagecategorypermission	subscription

## Moving Servers in Six Easy Steps

If your discussion board grows beyond the capabilities offered by your current host, then you can migrate the whole vBulletin installation from one server to another with the minimum of fuss and effort. In this section we will look at how to do this.

We can break down the server move into six easy steps.

- Cookie check
- Back up database
- Download the vBulletin installation
- Transfer to new server
- Restore database
- Back online!

### Cookie Check

The first thing to do is check on the current cookie settings. Setting a specific cookie domain and cookie paths can cause problems for you when moving servers or even changing the URL of the discussion board. To prevent these problems, reset your cookie path to / and remove any cookie domain value that might be present before carrying out the server move.

---

---

#### **A warning about cookies!**

An incorrectly set cookie domain or path can prevent you from accessing your control panel!

---

---

### Back up Database

The next step is to back up the database. Refer to Chapter 5 for full details on how to do this. Make sure that you use an up-to-date backup and that you've locked the forum prior to carrying out the backup so that there can be no changes made to the data.

### Download the vBulletin Files

Using an FTP program, download your current vBulletin installation to your PC. You could reinstall vBulletin onto the new server, but you will lose any changes you made.

### Transfer to New Server

The quickest and easiest way to transfer the database to a new server is using SSH or Telnet.

---

### New Host Tips

Make sure that your new host allows you to have such shell access. (They might not allow it as standard, but check to see if they will allow it temporarily to allow you to carry out the move.)

---

Follow this simple transfer process.

1. Telnet into your existing server.
2. Type the following:

```
ftp NEWSERVER
```

Where `NEWSERVER` is the hostname or IP address of your new server. You will be prompted for a username and password to login.

3. Next, type:

```
bin  
cd /PATH/TO/NEW/DIRECTORY  
put /PATH/TO/DATABASE/DUMP.SQL
```

replacing `/PATH/TO/NEW/DIRECTORY` by the path to the directory where you want to place the database backup and `/PATH/TO/DATABASE/DUMP.SQL` by the path to the database dump. If you omit this step, the backup will be put into the root of the server.

4. This process will now transfer the database.
5. When completed, type:  

```
close  
quit
```
6. Verify that the database has been transferred.

### Database Restoration

1. On the new server, create the database in which your vBulletin data will be installed.
2. Telnet/SSH into the new server.
3. Type:

```
mysql -USERNAME -p NEWDATABASENAME < PATH/TO/DUMP.SQL
```

replacing `USERNAME` by the username to access the database, `NEWDATABASENAME` by the name of the new database, and `/PATH/TO/DUMP.SQL` by the path to the database backup file.

### Back Online

Upload your vBulletin files (the ones you downloaded earlier) remembering first to edit the `includes/config.php` file. Edit `$servername`, `$dbusername`, `$dbpassword`, and `$dbname` with the values that correspond with the new server.

Finally, log into the forum. Everything should be working as normal.

If, during the server change, you changed the URL used to access the community, then you'll also need to change BB URL value. Log in to the administrator control panel, go to the vBulletin Options section, and change you BB URL to correspond to the new URL.

## Graphics

The graphics that you see in a standard vBulletin installation are not standard graphics. They started life as 3D objects and scenes created in an application called Lightwave 3D. The resulting rendered images were then post-processed using Adobe Photoshop.

3D graphics work differently from normal graphics—the edges of the images do not end in a sharply defined pixel border. Instead they are matted to a specific background color. If you use the default background colors in vBulletin, then everything will be fine. However, if you change the background colors of the page, then you may need to do some work on the graphics. To make this easy the vBulletin developers have made available two versions of the Graphics Developer Kit. (You can download them from the vBulletin Members' Area.) The first kit contains fully prepared images, and all you need to do is choose the matte color and save the images. The second kit contains much larger layered images that allow you to make numerous changes to the look of the graphics before saving them.

---

---

### Lightwave 3D and Adobe Photoshop

For more details on Lightwave 3D visit <http://www.newtek.com/lightwave>, and for more details on Adobe Photoshop visit <http://www.adobe.com/products/photoshop>.

Be aware, neither of these applications is cheap!

---

---

## Global Post Text Find and Replace

This is something that many board administrators want to do but aren't sure how—messing with the database directly seems dangerous to many. It is quite simple though, and you can do it all through the AdminCP.

Log into the AdminCP, and in the left-hand menu click on Import & Maintenance followed by Execute SQL Query. If you are greeted with a message that says:

You are not authorized to execute SQL queries  
you will need to add your user ID number to the line:

```
$canrunqueries = '';
```

in the `includes/config.php` file. For example, if your user ID is 1, this line will become:

```
$canrunqueries = '1';
```

Now you can run queries. To carry out a find and replace on all the post data in your board, you will need to run an SQL query like this:

```
UPDATE post SET pagetext = REPLACE  
(pagetext, 'vbulletin', 'vBulletin') WHERE pagetext LIKE '%vbulletin%';
```

This SQL query looks through the posts for instances of `Vbulletin` and replaces them with `vBulletin`. The `WHERE` clause is used to optimize the find and replace as this allows MySQL to take advantages of indexes, which speeds things up.

If you get an error running this query then check to see if you are using a table prefix in the database for the tables (such as `vb_`) and add this to the query. This would change the query to the following:

```
UPDATE vb_post SET pagetext = REPLACE
(pagetext, 'vbulletin', 'vBulletin') WHERE pagetext LIKE '%vbulletin%';
```

If you wanted to carry out a similar find and replace within PMs, you'd use the following query:

```
UPDATE pmtext SET message = REPLACE
(message, 'vbulletin', 'vBulletin') WHERE message LIKE '%vbulletin%';
```

By using MySQL queries you are taking total control over the data held in the database. We don't have the time or scope here to cover MySQL queries in detail, so for more information visit <http://dev.mysql.com>. Alternatively, you can read *Mastering phpMyAdmin for Effective MySQL Management* by Marc Delisle, published by Packt Publishing (ISBN 1-904811-03-5).

## Programming Standards

Good programming is clear, unambiguous programming. Let's run through a few tips to help make your code more readable, easier to debug, and easier to make changes to later on.

### Braces

For clarity each brace should be placed on its own line in the code:

```
if ($condition)
{
    // code goes here
}
```

Don't be tempted to condense code like this:

```
if ($condition)
{ // code goes here }
```

### Indenting

Indent code between braces:

```
if ($condition)
{
    // code goes here
}
```

Code between braces within braces should have deeper indenting:

```
if ($condition)
{
    if ($condition2)
    {
        // code goes here
    }
    // some more code goes here
}
```

## Give Operators Space

All operators (except -- and ++) should have a space either side.

```
$a = $b + $c;
```

## String Quoting

All strings should be quoted with single quotes when they don't contain variables or control characters. Otherwise always use double quotes:

```
$a = 'Hello, world!';  
$b = "Hello,\nworld!";  
$c = "$hello,\nworld!";
```

## Return Values

Use only lower-case true and false for return values. Upper-case should be reserved for custom constants.

```
if ($condition)  
{  
    return true;  
}  
else  
{  
    return false;  
}
```

## AND and OR

Always use AND rather than and or &&, and OR rather than or or || in your code.

```
if ($num1 AND $num2 OR $num3)
```

## AS

Similarly, AS in foreach statements should be capitalized.

```
foreach ($array AS $num => $var)  
{  
    // code goes here  
}
```

## SQL Queries

Under all circumstances, make sure that you double quote all SQL queries.

```
$DB_site->query("SELECT field FROM " . TABLE_PREFIX . "table ORDER BY field");
```

It may be better to write long queries on more than one line.



## Naming Conventions for Functions

Custom names for functions you add should all adhere to the following naming conventions:

Prefix	Description
build_	Save data back to the database.
cache_	Read data from the database and create a temporary PHP cache variables to reduce SQL database load.
can_	Return true or false based on permissions.
construct_	Return variables containing HTML.
convert_	Convert the data format of input variables.
delete_	Delete data from the database.
exec_	Perform an action.
fetch_	Return arrays, strings, integers, etc.
file_	Deal directly with the file system.
handle_	Called by the bbcode parser to deal with a specific bbcode type.
import_	Take an array of data and import it into the database.
is_, contains_	Return true or false based on conditions.
js_	JavaScript functions defined within the PHP code.
log_	Append to the vBulletin logs.
parse_	Initialize the bbcode parsing process.
print_	Print code out to browser or buffer.
process_	Prepare an array for later reference.
sanitize_	Check and clear data (such as removing illegal characters) for later processing.
sort_	Sort data.
strip_	Strip elements from strings.
undelete_	Functions that undo a soft deletion.
vb_, vb	Replace built-in vBulletin PHP functions with replacements designed to increase functionality or alter the behavior of the built-in function.
verify_	Check conditions and generate an error message if particular conditions are satisfied.
xml_	Read or output XML.

## Summary

This chapter has been a rundown of information that will be of use to those who plan to do more with their vBulletin installation than just install it and leave it be. While really only scratching the surface of vBulletin, we're presented the information people request most often.

Happy hacking!

# A

## vBulletin Directory Structure

Being able to navigate the vBulletin directory structure makes installation, customization, updating, and upgrading vBulletin much quicker, easier, and safer. In this appendix we will take a brief tour of the directory structure as it appears on your web server after uploading the vBulletin applications.

---

### Version control

Here we are examining the directory structure of the 3.5.3 version. However, few differences exist between different versions.

---

## vBulletin Directory Structure

vBulletin root directory (this can be the root of the public facing directory of your site)

```
|
|
|
|  ajax.php
|  announcement.php
|  attachment.php
|  calendar.php
|  clear.gif
|  cron.php
|  editpost.php
|  external.php
|  faq.php
|  favicon.ico
|  forumdisplay.php
|  global.php
|  image.php
|  index.php
```

## vBulletin Directory Structure

---

```
| inlinemod.php
| joinrequests.php
| login.php
| member.php
| memberlist.php
| misc.php
| moderator.php
| newattachment.php
| newreply.php
| newthread.php
| online.php
| payments.php
| payment_gateway.php
| poll.php
| postings.php
| printthread.php
| private.php
| profile.php
| register.php
| report.php
| reputation.php
| search.php
| sendmessage.php
| showgroups.php
| showpost.php
| showthread.php
| subscription.php
| threadrate.php
| usercp.php
| usernote.php
|
+---admincp
| | accessmask.php
| | admincalendar.php
| | adminlog.php
| | adminpermissions.php
| | adminreputation.php
```

---

```
| | announcement.php
| | attachment.php
| | avatar.php
| | backup.php
| | bbcode.php
| | calendarpermission.php
| | cronadmin.php
| | cronlog.php
| | css.php
| | diagnostic.php
| | email.php
| | faq.php
| | forum.php
| | forumpermission.php
| | global.php
| | help.php
| | image.php
| | index.php
| | language.php
| | misc.php
| | moderator.php
| | modlog.php
| | options.php
| | phrase.php
| | plugin.php
| | profilefield.php
| | queries.php
| | ranks.php
| | repair.php
| | replacement.php
| | resources.php
| | stats.php
| | subscriptions.php
| | template.php
| | textarea.php
| | thread.php
| | user.php
```

## vBulletin Directory Structure

---

```
| |   usergroup.php
| |   usertitle.php
| |   usertools.php
| |
| +---control_examples
|     button_down.gif
|     button_hover.gif
|     button_normal.gif
|     button_selected.gif
|     index.html
|     menu_down.gif
|     menu_hover.gif
|     menu_normal.gif
|     popup_down.gif
|
+---archive
|     archive.css
|     global.php
|     index.php
|
+---clientscript
| |   activecell.htc
| |   index.html
| |   vbulletin_ajax_namesugg.js
| |   vbulletin_ajax_threadslist.js
| |   vbulletin_attachment.js
| |   vbulletin_cpcolorpicker.js
| |   vbulletin_editor.css
| |   vbulletin_global.js
| |   vbulletin_inlinemod.js
| |   vbulletin_md5.js
| |   vbulletin_menu.js
| |   vbulletin_quick_edit.js
| |   vbulletin_quick_reply.js
| |   vbulletin_templatemgr.js
| |   vbulletin_textedit.js
| |   vbulletin_thrpostlist.js
```

```
| |
| |
| +---vbulletin_css
| |       index.html
| |
| |
+---cpstyles
| |       index.html
| |
| |
| +---vBulletin_2_Default
| |       colorpicker_close.gif
| |       colorpicker_toggle.gif
| |       colorpicker_transparent.gif
| |       controlpanel.css
| |       cp_collapse.gif
| |       cp_expand.gif
| |       cp_help.gif
| |       cp_logo.gif
| |       cp_tick_no.gif
| |       cp_tick_yes.gif
| |       index.html
| |       move_down.gif
| |       move_up.gif
| |
| |
| +---vBulletin_3_Default
| |       colorpicker_close.gif
| |       colorpicker_toggle.gif
| |       colorpicker_transparent.gif
| |       controlpanel.css
| |       cp_colheader_bg.gif
| |       cp_collapse.gif
| |       cp_expand.gif
| |       cp_help.gif
| |       cp_logo.gif
| |       cp_navbody_bg.gif
| |       cp_tblhead_bg.gif
| |       cp_tick_no.gif
| |       cp_tick_yes.gif
| |       index.html
```

## vBulletin Directory Structure

---

```
| |      move_down.gif
| |      move_up.gif
| |      option_name_bg.gif
| |
| +---vBulletin_3_Frontend
| |      colorpicker_close.gif
| |      colorpicker_toggle.gif
| |      colorpicker_transparent.gif
| |      controlpanel.css
| |      cp_colheader_bg.gif
| |      cp_collapse.gif
| |      cp_expand.gif
| |      cp_help.gif
| |      cp_logo.gif
| |      cp_tblhead_bg.gif
| |      cp_tick_no.gif
| |      cp_tick_yes.gif
| |      index.html
| |      move_down.gif
| |      move_up.gif
| |
| +---vBulletin_3_Manual
| |      colorpicker_close.gif
| |      colorpicker_toggle.gif
| |      colorpicker_transparent.gif
| |      controlpanel.css
| |      cp_colheader_bg.gif
| |      cp_collapse.gif
| |      cp_expand.gif
| |      cp_help.gif
| |      cp_logo.gif
| |      cp_tblhead_bg.gif
| |      cp_tick_no.gif
| |      cp_tick_yes.gif
| |      index.html
| |      move_down.gif
| |      move_up.gif
```



```
| | vb_logo_small.gif
| |
| +---vBulletin_3_Silver
| | colorpicker_close.gif
| | colorpicker_toggle.gif
| | colorpicker_transparent.gif
| | controlpanel.css
| | cp_button_bg.gif
| | cp_colheader_bg.gif
| | cp_collapse.gif
| | cp_expand.gif
| | cp_help.gif
| | cp_logo.gif
| | cp_navbody_bg.gif
| | cp_tblhead_bg.gif
| | cp_tick_no.gif
| | cp_tick_yes.gif
| | index.html
| | move_down.gif
| | move_up.gif
| | option_name_bg.gif
|
| +---customavatars
| | index.html
|
| +---customprofilepics
| | index.html
|
| +---images
| | index.html
| |
| | +---attach
| | | attach.gif
| | | bmp.gif
| | | doc.gif
| | | gif.gif
| | | index.html
```

vBulletin Directory Structure

---

```
| | jpe.gif
| | jpeg.gif
| | jpg.gif
| | mp3.gif
| | pdf.gif
| | php.gif
| | png.gif
| | psd.gif
| | rtf.gif
| | tif.gif
| | tiff.gif
| | txt.gif
| | wmv.gif
| | xml.gif
| | zip.gif
| |
| +---avatars
| |     index.html
| |
| +---buttons
| |     addpoll.gif
| |     collapse_alt.gif
| |     collapse_alt_collapsed.gif
| |     collapse_tcat.gif
| |     collapse_tcat_collapsed.gif
| |     collapse_thead.gif
| |     collapse_thead_collapsed.gif
| |     edit.gif
| |     email.gif
| |     find.gif
| |     firstnew.gif
| |     forward.gif
| |     home.gif
| |     index.html
| |     ip.gif
| |     lastpost.gif
| |     mode_hybrid.gif
```

```
| | mode_linear.gif
| | mode_threaded.gif
| | newthread.gif
| | printer.gif
| | quickreply.gif
| | quote.gif
| | reply.gif
| | reply_small.gif
| | report.gif
| | reputation.gif
| | sendpm.gif
| | sendtofriend.gif
| | sortasc.gif
| | sortdesc.gif
| | subscribe.gif
| | threadclosed.gif
| |
| +---editor
| | attach.gif
| | bold.gif
| | code.gif
| | color.gif
| | copy.gif
| | createlink.gif
| | cut.gif
| | email.gif
| | html.gif
| | indent.gif
| | index.html
| | insertimage.gif
| | insertorderedlist.gif
| | insertunorderedlist.gif
| | italic.gif
| | justifycenter.gif
| | justifyleft.gif
| | justifyright.gif
| | menupop.gif
| | outdent.gif
```

## vBulletin Directory Structure

---

```
| | paperclip.gif
| | paste.gif
| | php.gif
| | quote.gif
| | redo.gif
| | removeformat.gif
| | resize_0.gif
| | resize_1.gif
| | separator.gif
| | smilie.gif
| | spelling.gif
| | switchmode.gif
| | underline.gif
| | undo.gif
| | unlink.gif
| |
| +---gradients
| | gradient_panel.gif
| | gradient_panelsurround.gif
| | gradient_tcat.gif
| | gradient_thead.gif
| | index.html
| |
| +---icons
| | icon1.gif
| | icon10.gif
| | icon11.gif
| | icon12.gif
| | icon13.gif
| | icon14.gif
| | icon2.gif
| | icon3.gif
| | icon4.gif
| | icon5.gif
| | icon6.gif
| | icon7.gif
| | icon8.gif
```

```
| | icon9.gif
| | index.html
| |
| +---misc
| | birthday.gif
| | birthday_small.gif
| | calendar.gif
| | calendar_icon.gif
| | im_aim.gif
| | im_icq.gif
| | im_msn.gif
| | im_skype.gif
| | im_yahoo.gif
| | index.html
| | menu_background.gif
| | menu_open.gif
| | moderated.gif
| | moderated_small.gif
| | multipage.gif
| | navbits_finallink.gif
| | navbits_start.gif
| | paperclip.gif
| | poll_posticon.gif
| | question_icon.gif
| | skype_addcontact.gif
| | skype_callstart.gif
| | skype_fileupload.gif
| | skype_info.gif
| | skype_message.gif
| | skype_voicemail.gif
| | stats.gif
| | sticky.gif
| | subscribed.gif
| | subscribed_event.gif
| | tree_i.gif
| | tree_l.gif
| | tree_t.gif
| | vbulletin2_logo.gif
```

## vBulletin Directory Structure

---

```
| |      vbulletin3_logo_grey.gif
| |      vbulletin3_logo_white.gif
| |      whos_online.gif
| |
| +---polls
| |      bar1-l.gif
| |      bar1-r.gif
| |      bar1.gif
| |      bar2-l.gif
| |      bar2-r.gif
| |      bar2.gif
| |      bar3-l.gif
| |      bar3-r.gif
| |      bar3.gif
| |      bar4-l.gif
| |      bar4-r.gif
| |      bar4.gif
| |      bar5-l.gif
| |      bar5-r.gif
| |      bar5.gif
| |      bar6-l.gif
| |      bar6-r.gif
| |      bar6.gif
| |      index.html
| |
| +---ranks
| |      index.html
| |
| +---rating
| |      index.html
| |      rating_0.gif
| |      rating_1.gif
| |      rating_2.gif
| |      rating_3.gif
| |      rating_4.gif
| |      rating_5.gif
| |
| +---reputation
```

```
| | index.html
| | reputation_balance.gif
| | reputation_highneg.gif
| | reputation_highpos.gif
| | reputation_neg.gif
| | reputation_off.gif
| | reputation_pos.gif
| |
| +---smilies
| | biggrin.gif
| | confused.gif
| | cool.gif
| | eek.gif
| | frown.gif
| | index.html
| | mad.gif
| | redface.gif
| | rolleyes.gif
| | smile.gif
| | tongue.gif
| | wink.gif
| |
| +---statusicon
| | announcement_new.gif
| | announcement_old.gif
| | forum_link.gif
| | forum_new.gif
| | forum_new_lock.gif
| | forum_old.gif
| | forum_old_lock.gif
| | index.html
| | pm_forwarded.gif
| | pm_new.gif
| | pm_old.gif
| | pm_replied.gif
| | post_new.gif
| | post_old.gif
| | subforum_link.gif
```

## vBulletin Directory Structure

---

```
|      subforum_new.gif
|      subforum_old.gif
|      thread.gif
|      thread_dot.gif
|      thread_dot_hot.gif
|      thread_dot_hot_lock.gif
|      thread_dot_hot_lock_new.gif
|      thread_dot_hot_new.gif
|      thread_dot_lock.gif
|      thread_dot_lock_new.gif
|      thread_dot_new.gif
|      thread_hot.gif
|      thread_hot_lock.gif
|      thread_hot_lock_new.gif
|      thread_hot_new.gif
|      thread_lock.gif
|      thread_lock_new.gif
|      thread_moved.gif
|      thread_moved_new.gif
|      thread_new.gif
|      user_invisible.gif
|      user_offline.gif
|      user_online.gif
|      wol_error.gif
|      wol_lockedout.gif
|      wol_nopermission.gif
|
+---includes
|  |  adminfunctions.php
|  |  adminfunctions_announcement.php
|  |  adminfunctions_backup.php
|  |  adminfunctions_forums.php
|  |  adminfunctions_help.php
|  |  adminfunctions_language.php
|  |  adminfunctions_navpanel.php
|  |  adminfunctions_options.php
|  |  adminfunctions_profilefield.php
|  |  adminfunctions_reminder.php
```



---

```
| | adminfunctions_reputation.php
| | adminfunctions_template.php
| | adminfunctions_user.php
| | class_bbcode.php
| | class_bbcode_alt.php
| | class_bitfield_builder.php
| | class_core.php
| | class_database_explain.php
| | class_datastore.php
| | class_dbalter.php
| | class_diff.php
| | class_dm.php
| | class_dm_admin.php
| | class_dm_attachment.php
| | class_dm_event.php
| | class_dm_forum.php
| | class_dm_moderator.php
| | class_dm_pm.php
| | class_dm_poll.php
| | class_dm_pollvote.php
| | class_dm_threadpost.php
| | class_dm_threadrate.php
| | class_dm_user.php
| | class_dm_userpic.php
| | class_hook.php
| | class_image.php
| | class_mail.php
| | class_paid_subscription.php
| | class_postbit.php
| | class_postbit_alt.php
| | class_upload.php
| | class_xml.php
| | config.php.new
| | database_error_message.html
| | database_error_page.html
| | datastore_cache.php
| | functions.php
| | functions_bigthree.php
```

vBulletin Directory Structure

---

```
| | functions_calendar.php
| | functions_cron.php
| | functions_databuild.php
| | functions_digest.php
| | functions_editor.php
| | functions_external.php
| | functions_faq.php
| | functions_file.php
| | functions_forumdisplay.php
| | functions_forumlist.php
| | functions_legacy.php
| | functions_login.php
| | functions_log_error.php
| | functions_misc.php
| | functions_newpost.php
| | functions_online.php
| | functions_ranks.php
| | functions_regimage.php
| | functions_reputation.php
| | functions_search.php
| | functions_threadedmode.php
| | functions_threadmanage.php
| | functions_user.php
| | functions_wysiwyg.php
| | index.html
| | init.php
| | modfunctions.php
| | searchwords.php
| | vbulletin_credits.php
| |
| +---cron
| | activate.php
| | attachmentviews.php
| | birthday.php
| | cleanup.php
| | cleanup2.php
| | digestdaily.php
| | digestweekly.php
```

```
| | index.html
| | promotion.php
| | reminder.php
| | removebans.php
| | stats.php
| | subscriptions.php
| | threadviews.php
| |
| +---paymentapi
| | class_2checkout.php
| | class_authorizenet.php
| | class_moneybookers.php
| | class_nochex.php
| | class_paypal.php
| | class_worldpay.php
| | index.html
| |
| +---xml
| | bitfield_vbulletin.xml
| | cnav_vbulletin.xml
| | hooks_vbulletin.xml
| | index.html
| | js_safe_phrases.xml
| | spiders_vbulletin.xml
| |
| +---install
| | authenticate.php
| | finalupgrade.php
| | index.html
| | init.php
| | install.php
| | installcore.php
| | install_language_en.php
| | mysql-schema.php
| | tableprefix.php
| | upgrade.php
| | upgradecore.php
| | upgrade_300.php
```

## vBulletin Directory Structure

---

- | upgrade\_300b3.php
- | upgrade\_300b4.php
- | upgrade\_300b5.php
- | upgrade\_300b6.php
- | upgrade\_300b7.php
- | upgrade\_300g.php
- | upgrade\_300rc1.php
- | upgrade\_300rc2.php
- | upgrade\_300rc3.php
- | upgrade\_300rc4.php
- | upgrade\_301.php
- | upgrade\_3010.php
- | upgrade\_3011.php
- | upgrade\_3012.php
- | upgrade\_302.php
- | upgrade\_303.php
- | upgrade\_304.php
- | upgrade\_305.php
- | upgrade\_306.php
- | upgrade\_307.php
- | upgrade\_308.php
- | upgrade\_309.php
- | upgrade\_350.php
- | upgrade\_350b1.php
- | upgrade\_350b2.php
- | upgrade\_350b3.php
- | upgrade\_350b4.php
- | upgrade\_350rc1.php
- | upgrade\_350rc2.php
- | upgrade\_350rc3.php
- | upgrade\_351.php
- | upgrade\_352.php
- | upgrade\_353.php
- | upgrade\_language\_en.php
- | vbulletin-adminhelp.xml
- | vbulletin-language.xml
- | vbulletin-settings.xml
- | vbulletin-style.xml

```
|  
+---modcp  
    announcement.php  
    banning.php  
    deletedposts.php  
    forum.php  
    global.php  
    help.php  
    index.php  
    moderate.php  
    thread.php  
    user.php
```

## Notes

- There is a total of 598 files in 33 directories (including the root directory).
- The standard entry point for end users into vBulletin in the `index.php` file in the root directory.
- After uploading all the files and folders using a suitable FTP program, the program is installed by running `install/install.php`.
- The file `install.php` in the `install` folder must be deleted for security reasons after installation of the software or an upgrade. (This prevents others from carrying out a reinstallation using different parameters.)
- The administrator control panel (AdminCP) is accessible from `admincp/index.php`. Access is based on usergroup and permissions.
- The moderator control panel (ModCP) is accessible from `modcp/index.php`. Access is based on usergroup and permissions.
- If you are migrating to vBulletin from a different discussion board, then you will need to download the ImpEx Import System, available from the vBulletin members' area. After the import process is completed, this can be safely deleted.
- Always make a backup of the file structure and keep copies of any files you make changes to.



# B

## vBulletin Resources, Hacks, Add-ons, and Templates

This appendix consists of a web resource list for vBulletin. We've broken it down into general categories, although there is quite some crossover on certain sites. We recommend that you visit as many of these sites as possible—they contain a wealth of information about using, customizing, and modifying vBulletin.

While some of these sites will be providing information, software, and code for free, others are commercial enterprises and sell products and services. You may also like to check out our own website <http://www.kingsley-hughes.com/books> for further information and updates.

### **Official vBulletin Sites**

<http://www.vbulletin.com>—vBulletin official site

<http://www.jelsoft.com>—Jelsoft Enterprises Ltd official site

### **Main vBulletin Hack Site**

<http://www.vbulletin.org>

### **vBulletin Styles and Templates**

<http://www.vbstyles.com>—vBulletin skins

<http://www.vbmechanic.com>—vBulletin vBMechanic

<http://www.pixelbypixel.com>—PixelByPixel—skins for cPanel, phpBB, and vBulletin

<http://www.extremepixels.com>—Extreme Pixels—skins and graphics for bulletin boards and other sites

<http://www.vbtemplates.com>—vBTemplates—vBulletin skins

<http://www.justwebtemplates.com>—Just Web Templates—resource for web templates sites

<http://www.transversestyles.com>—Transverse styles—Invision Power Board vBulletin skins and styles

<http://www.templatefreak.com>—TemplateFeaks—pre-made web pages without content

<http://www.vbulletintemplates.com>—vBulletin Templates—template modification archive

<http://www.olate.com>—Olate—tutorials, articles and scripts

<http://www.templates911.com>—Templates911: online template store

## **vBulletin Add-Ons**

<http://www.vbadvanced.com> vBadvanced Forums—features and flexibility built around vBulletin

<http://www.vbportal.com>—vbPortal—a CMS and portal for vBulletin

<http://www.tufat.com>—TUFaT.com—software for web servers

<http://www.vbarticles.com>—vBArticles—content management for vBulletin

<http://www.photopost.com>—PhotoPost—photo gallery for community-driven sites

<http://www.reviewpost.com>—ReviewPost—user reviews for sites

<http://www.123flashchat.com>—123 Flash Chat—solution to host and manage real-time communication

<http://www.virtuanews.com>—VirtuaNews—powerful and customizable way of creating a new website

## **General Discussion Board-Related Sites**

<http://www.theadminzone.com>—the Admin Zone—resources for community administrators

<http://www.webhostingtalk.com>—WebHosting Talk—discussions on all aspects of web hosting

<http://www.vbulletin-fans.com>—vBulletinFans.com—the vBulletin fans website

<http://www.big-boards.com>—Big Boards—tracks the most active message boards and forums on the Web

<http://www.sitepoint.com>—sitepoint—site for web developers

<http://www.webmasterworld.com>—WebMaster World—news and discussion for the web professional



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