Moodle Lessons

The Lessons feature allows professors to create an activity that is best compared, from the perspective of the student, to a Choose Your Own Adventure story: each page in the lesson can have a question at the bottom, and the page that comes next depends on the answer that the student gives.

Getting Started
Lessons require more advanced planning than many of the other activities. Even with only two answers per page, the number of pages can balloon very quickly (recall how fast powers of two grow: 1,2,4,8,16,32,64...). Therefore, it is probably a good idea to plan out your lesson by drawing a flowchart before you begin. Include all pages you wish to include, as well as any questions you wish to ask (with answers), and make sure that each answer goes somewhere. You can reuse pages, so it is okay to make several answers (even if they are from different pages) go to the same page. This saves a lot of time.

Creating the Lesson
1. Click the “Turn editing on” button.
2. In the week that you want to add the Lesson, click the “Add an activity...” menu, and select “Lesson.” The New Lesson page should show up. The following is a basic overview of the various options that Lessons offers. For more information about a specific option, click on the little blue button with the question mark that appears next to that option.
3. General:
   - **Name:** Give the lesson a descriptive name.
   - **Timed:** Decide if the lesson will be timed.
   - **Time limit (minutes):** If it is timed, set a time limit.
   - **Maximum number of answers/branches:** this is the maximum number of answers that each question can have. (Four is the default.)
4. Grade options:
   - **Practice lesson:** Practice lessons will not show up in the Gradebook.
   - **Custom scoring:** Questions automatically assign 1 point for correct answers and 0 points for wrong answers, but with custom scoring on, you can assign your own point values to each answer, including negative values for wrong answers.
   - **Maximum grade:** This value ranges from 0 to 100. If it is set to 0, the lesson won’t show up in any of the Grades pages. If it is set to any other value, then a student’s grade will be the number of points (s)he accumulates throughout the lesson,
divided by the maximum grade. The maximum grade can be changed at any
time, and then all values on the Grades pages will change accordingly.

**Student can re-take:** If this option is set to “Yes”, then a student can take the
lesson more than once. If the lesson is not graded, this option makes sense.
However, if the lesson is meant to be more like an exam, then re-takes are
probably not a good idea. Note: Question Analysis will only take each student’s
first try into account, whether or not retakes are allowed.

**Handling of re-takes:** When re-takes are allowed, this option allows you to
decide whether to take a student’s best try (Use maximum) or an average of all
the tries (Use mean) as the student’s grade.

**Display ongoing score:** If turned on, this will display a student’s current score to
them as they move through the lesson. For example, if they have answered five
1-point questions so far, and gotten four of them correct, then the score would
display “4/5.”

5. Flow control:

- **Allow student review:** If turned on, this will allow students to go back to
  questions that they have already answered and change their answers.
- **Display review button:** This will display a button every time a student answers a
  question wrong, allowing him to go back and change his answer.
- **Maximum number of attempts:** This sets the maximum number of times that a
  student can answer a single question.
- **Action after correct answer:** The “Normal - follow lesson path” option will bring
  the student to the next specified page after a correct answer to a question. The
  “Show an Unseen Page” option shows the student a random page that hasn’t
  been seen yet. (Pages that have already been seen will not be shown again, even
  if the question was answered wrongly the first time.) “Show an unanswered Page” will show a random page that either hasn’t been seen, or for which the
  question was answered wrongly before.
- **Display default feedback:** If this is turned on, then whenever you do not set a
  response to a particular question, the default responses “That’s the correct
  answer” and “That’s the wrong answer” will be used appropriately. Turned off,
  the student will be directed to the next page with no response.
- **Minimum number of questions:** If your lesson branches a lot, it is a good idea to
  set a minimum for the number of questions that students have to answer, so that
  students do not exit the lesson prematurely. This is especially important for
  graded lessons. The minimum is not equivalent to the number of questions that
every student will answer. For example, if the minimum were set to 20, then
students would be able to attempt more than 20 questions if they wished to, in
which case their grade would be taken out of however many they attempted.
However, if they attempted less than 20, then their grade would be taken out of 20 anyway.

**Number of pages (cards) to show:** If, for “Action after correct answer”, above, you chose “Show an Unseen Page” or “Show an unanswered Page”, then this option sets how many pages to show. Set to 0 or a number greater than the total number of pages, it will show all of the pages. Otherwise, it will show however many are specified.

**6. Lesson formatting:**

**Slide Show:** Turned on, this puts the lesson in a window of fixed width, height, and background color. If the content of a page is too big for the window, scroll bars will appear.

**Slide show width:** This specifies the width of your window (in pixels).

**Slide show height:** This specifies the height of your window (in pixels).

**Slide show background color:** This sets the color of the background of your window, and it should be set to the HTML Color Code of the color that you want. (For a list of color codes, Google “HTML color codes.”)

**Display left menu:** This will show a list of all the pages in the lesson, on the left of the slide show window.

**and only display if has grade greater than:** If set to a percentage greater than 0, the left menu will only be displayed after the student has achieved a grade greater than the percentage specified (for example, if the student wishes to go back over his work after finishing the lesson).

**Progress Bar:** Displays a progress bar at the bottom of the lesson.

**7. Access control:**

**Password protected lesson:** This will not allow students to open the lesson if they do not have the password.

**Password:** If password protection is turned on, set a password here.

**Available from:** This sets the date that the lesson will be available from.

**Deadline:** This sets the date that the lesson will stop being available.

**8. Dependent on:**

**Dependent on:** Turned on, this will make the lesson accessible to a student only if the student has already spent time in, completed, and/or achieved some grade in another lesson.

**Time Spent (minutes):** The student must spend this much time in the required lesson.

**Completed:** The student must complete the required lesson.

**Grade better than (%)** The student must achieve a grade better than this in the required lesson.

**9. Pop-up to file or web page:**
**Pop-up to file or web page:** This will create a pop-up window to the specified file at the beginning of the lesson. A link to the file will also be included on every page. Supported file types: MP3, Media Player, Quicktime, Realmedia, HTML, Plain Text, GIF, JPEG, and PNG. All other file types will provide a link for download.

**Show close button:** This will show a “Close window” button at the bottom of the pop-up window.

**Window height:** This specifies the height (in pixels) of the pop-up window.

**width:** This specifies the width (in pixels) of the pop-up window.

10. Other:

- **Link to an activity:** The drop-down menu contains all activities in this course. If one is selected, a link to it will appear at the end of the lesson.
- **Number of high scores displayed:** This sets the number of high scores to display. If you don’t want to display any, set to 0.
- **Use this lesson’s settings as defaults:** If set to yes before the lesson is saved, the settings for this lesson will appear as the default settings for all future lessons created in this course.

11. Common module settings:

- **Visible:** Set to “Show” to make the lesson viewable by students in the course.

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**Making Question Pages and Branch Tables**

Now that you’ve created the shell for a lesson, you can start adding question pages and branch tables. Both question pages and branch tables allow you to ask a question and take the student to a different page based on his answer.

**Creating a question page:**

1. Click the link titled “Add a Question Page.”
2. Give the page a title. The title will be visible to the student, but you should also make sure that it is something that will help you recognize the page when it appears in drop-down menus.
3. Enter some page content. The content should include the question that you want the student to answer. You can also include some background information.
4. Select the question type: multiple choice, true/false, short-answer, numerical, or matching.
5. Enter the correct answer in the Answer 1 box, and some incorrect answers in the Answer 2, Answer 3, and Answer 4 boxes. Don’t worry about the correct answer always coming first; the answers will automatically be randomized when the student sees them.
6. Enter responses to each answer in the “Response” boxes, if you want to.
7. The default behavior of question pages will take the student to the next question page if they select the correct answer, and will return them to the same page if they select the wrong answer. You can change this behavior if you wish to, by selecting different pages in the “Jump” drop-down menus.

8. Set “Scores” for each answer. For ungraded questions, leave everything at 0.

9. Click the “Add a Question Page” button at the bottom of the page.

10. To add more Question Pages, click “Add a Question Page Here” where you would like the Question Page to appear.

Creating a branch table
Basically, the only differences between question pages and branch tables are: question pages give you the option of giving responses (such as “That’s correct!” or “Sorry, that’s wrong.”) to student answers before they are taken to the next page, and they are also give you the option of attaching points to certain answers. Branch pages do not, but they still allow you to ask questions and show pages based on the student’s answer. Accordingly, the form for creating a branch table is almost exactly like the one for a question page, except that there are no boxes for Responses, and no place to set point values for each answer.

Creating an End of Branch
If you use branch tables, you should end each branch with an End of Branch, which will take the student back to the last branch table page so that they can choose a different branch. This is important because it helps students see the material that they missed the first time because they went down a different branch.

Managing Your Lesson
At the top of each page in the main “Edit” page for your lesson, you’ll see buttons for moving, updating (editing), previewing, and deleting that page. You can also test your lesson by clicking the “Check Navigation” link on the bottom of the “Edit” page, which will take you to the first page in your lesson as a student will see it. You can then work your way through the lesson.

Branching Quizzes and Flash Cards
Two of the most popular ways to use Lessons are to create branching quizzes and flash cards. A branching quiz allows you to organize questions around different topics or concepts. Flash cards work about the same way as regular flash cards.

Branching Quizzes
To create a branching quiz, first make a branching table, which will have links to each of the different topics you wish to cover in the quiz. Then create separate lines of questions for each topic. For example, you might have ten questions about the Solar System, eleven about the Civil War, and eight about Hamlet. For each question, make the correct answer lead to the next question under the same topic. For the last question in each topic, have it lead back to the original branching table.

You might want to make sure that you set a reasonable “Minimum number of questions” in the settings for the Lesson. Otherwise, students might be tempted to finish one “branch” of the quiz, and stop the quiz immediately.

Flash Cards
Flash cards are basically large collections of Question Pages. In Lesson settings, set “Action after correct answer” to either “Show an Unseen Page” or “Show an unanswered Page”, whichever you prefer. Then create a whole lot of Question Pages. The order doesn’t matter; the pages will be randomized anyway.

You might want to set a low value for the “Maximum grade”, so that students have some incentive to use the flash cards, but it doesn’t impact their grades too much. You probably also want to set “Student can re-take” to “Yes”, since flash cards are meant to help the students in their studying, after all, and some students may wish to use the flash cards more than once.

Finishing up
Once your lesson is finished, there isn’t much management involved on your part. Unlike some of the other Activities, Lessons does not allow you to access a student’s performance. You will only be able to see each student’s grade as he completes the lesson. So sit back, relax, and watch the grades roll in.