

Configuring Ninjaboard in minutes

About Ninjaboard

Ninjaboard is a forum extension for the popular CMS Joomla! This forum component is lightweight, easy to use and easy to manage. It plugs into your Joomla! Users database, so existing users can easily use your forum when logged in with their existing account.

About the Lightning Guide

Personally, I think Ninjaboard is fairly easy to use. When you explore the back-end for a while, you'll quickly figure out how you can successfully manage the forum. But as always, there are people who would prefer to have some sort of manual that points them in the right direction.

This manual will try to fill a "hole" as documentation for this component is still non-existent. The developer(s) are excused, because they're too busy, trying to make Ninjaboard the best forum component for Joomla!

Please note that the goal of this manual is to help you setup your forum. We won't be discussing technical topics, like solving the installation problem with the Nooku Framework. If you want that kind of support, contact the developers of this component, at Ninjaforge.

About the author

I build websites in Joomla for a living, but started to using the Ninjaboard forum for my personal projects. Since I really appreciate all the hard work of the developers, I thought I'd help them where I can: by writing a manual.

I am not associated with the developers of Ninjaboard. I'm just a fan of their work, who sees a lot of potential in Ninjaboard. So, it's possible that I'm not always 100% accurate. You're free to ask me questions, but for 'real' support, please contact the people at NinjaForge.

I'm also the dude behind Joomla & More and JoomlaReporter, so there's a chance you might've read some of my work. What?! You never heard of those sites? Then pay them a visit !

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Installing Ninjaboard

Before you can start to manage your Ninjaboard forum, you have to install it. I assume that's logical to most of you, but one can never unnecessary risks when writing a manual!

First, you'll need to download the Ninjaboard extension – which is free. But before you go and download Ninjaboard, make sure your hosting meets the following requirements (as stolen from the Ninjaboard site)

Requirements

- PHP 5.2.0 or later.
- MySQL with MySQLi PHP extension. (mysqli means "MySQL improved", gives access to new features in MySQL 4.1 and above).
- MySQL v5.0.41 or later.
- Suhosin users need to add tmp:// to their protocol whitelist.

Not sure what this means? It's pretty standard stuff. If your hosting company doesn't meet these requirements, not being able to install Ninjaboard is less of a problem than "running a Joomla!" site is...

It's time to download the actual component. You can download it using the link below:

<http://ninjaforge.com/extensions/download/ninjaboard>

Once you have the component downloaded to your computer, we can get to the part of installing the extension. You install Ninjaboard like any other Joomla! Extension. In case you need it, here's a short reminder of how to install a component:

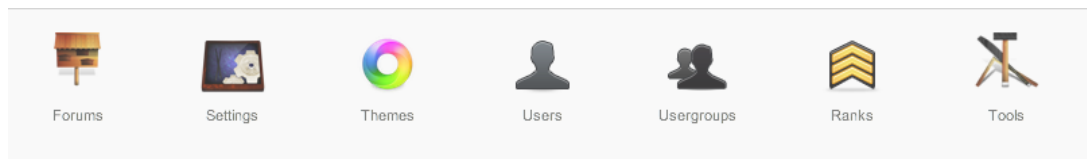
- 1) Login to your Joomla! Administrator panel.
- 2) Go to Extensions > Install / Uninstall > Install. Install the component using the method of your choice.

You'll see how Ninjaboard is installed. In most cases you won't run into problems. But if you see an error appear, *read it carefully*. It'll probably explain you in detail what went wrong, and how you can fix the problem. If you really

can't solve these problems on your own, head to the support forums for Ninjaboard on <http://www.ninjaforge.com>

A quick overview of Ninjaboard

Before we get started, I'm giving you a quick overview of the different sections of Ninjaboard. This short tour guide of Ninjaboard's back-end will explain what you can expect when you click any of the options on the back-end.



- **Forums:** The place where you Add, Edit or Delete forums and subforums. (That was fairly simple, right?)
- **Settings:** Allows you to change the general settings for Ninjaboard. The place to go to if you want to tweak how your forum works. It's not unlikely that you'll only temper with these settings if you really, really need to.
- **Themes:** You'd expect this to be the place to manage your Ninjaboard themes. In reality, you'll find one theme and no options to mess around with. Perhaps that'll change in the future.
- **Users:** Gives you an overview of your users; which are actually Joomla! Users. You can change a few Ninjaboard specific settings (avatar, signature, User group the user belongs to). In general, you'll only come here to assign someone to an user group. Because you DO realize that changing someone's info without their permission is kind of rude, right?
- **User Rights:** Create user groups and manage them. Assign forum permissions to the various usergroups.
- **Ranks:** People like to boast about their post count. Here, you can create "Ranks" which someone gets for posting X posts. I suggest "Get a life, loser" when someone reaches 99,999 posts. No offense.
You're now familiar with the areas of Ninjaboard. If you're in for a bit of experimenting after reading this guide, keep this overview close if you're wondering "where could I do that thingy again?" But I doubt you'd really need to.

Configuring your Ninjaboard forum

Let's get down to business. If you're implementing a forum, I'm sure you know your "basics", like what a "forum", "user group" is, or what "permissions" are. So let's skip the boring parts, and get to work.

Feel free to experiment

The goal of my "Configuring Ninjaboard in minutes" guide is to get you started as fast as humanly possible. So we're going to help you set up a "basic" structure. If you don't like this structure, you're completely free to do things as you see fit. I suggest you follow the guide first, though, so you'll understand the fundamentals better.

1. Configuring User Groups

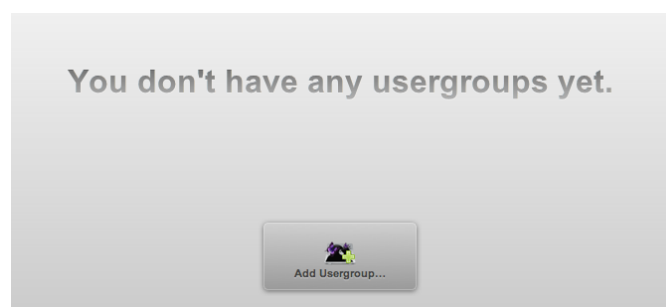
We're going to start with configuring our "default" user groups. If you've used other forum software, you probably know that there's always some default groups. In general, those are "Administrators", "Moderators", "Members"... and, well, "non-members". Which technically isn't a group. Which makes them a group.

Most people don't bother creating other groups beyond these standard groups – I know I don't. But when using Ninjaboard, you'll have to do some work as there are **no groups configured by default**.

Our first task: create those "standard" user groups. You can always add groups afterwards, should you feel the need to.

Steps:

1. **Go to Components > Ninjaboard > Tools, or click "Tools" when in the Ninja Dashboard.**
2. **No user groups will have been configured. Clever as Ninjaboard is, it'll point it out to you. Click "Add Usergroup" when prompted.**

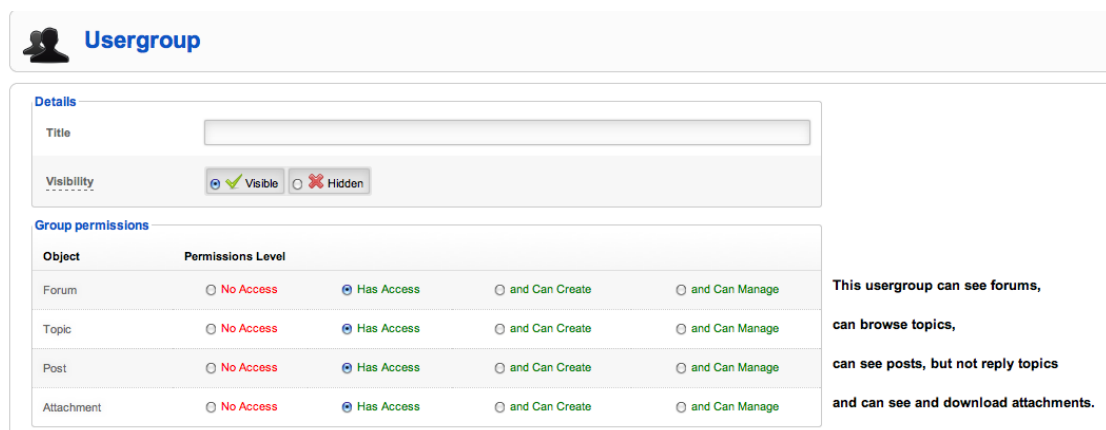


3. Configure the first User Group.

We're going to create the "Standard Groups", which are the following:

- Administrator
- Moderator
- Registered
- Unregistered
- Banned

Let's start by creating the "**Administrator**" User Group. This is the group of users that'll be in complete control. The bosses of bosses. The elite of the elite.



| Object | Permissions Level | | | |
|------------|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Forum | <input type="radio"/> No Access | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Has Access | <input type="radio"/> and Can Create | <input type="radio"/> and Can Manage |
| Topic | <input type="radio"/> No Access | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Has Access | <input type="radio"/> and Can Create | <input type="radio"/> and Can Manage |
| Post | <input type="radio"/> No Access | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Has Access | <input type="radio"/> and Can Create | <input type="radio"/> and Can Manage |
| Attachment | <input type="radio"/> No Access | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Has Access | <input type="radio"/> and Can Create | <input type="radio"/> and Can Manage |

This usergroup can see forums, can browse topics, can see posts, but not reply topics and can see and download attachments.

As you see, configuring a usergroup is pretty easy.

- **Title:** Enter a name for the group in the "Title" field. Type "Administrator" here.
- **Visible:** Choose whether a group should be "visible" or not. As a general rule, set this to "Yes".

Tip: When "Invisible" groups could be usefull.

I can think of at least one scenario in which you'd like an user group to be invisible: when you want to create a "usergroup" which special priveledges, you don't want the "outsiders to know about.

For example, back when I was running 'Brevcom.net', we had a group called "VIP" (Very Important Posters). These VIP's could post in a secret forum. Which was pretty awesome, but we had one rule: Don't talk about VIP. In this case, it'd have been a dealbreaker when the VIP group was "visible"...

- **Group Permissions:** Ninjaboard makes it pretty easy to understand just *how much* you're allowing your users to do. Since an administrator is a

“Super User”, set everything to “and can manage”. Click “Save” to create the User group.

Congratulations, you just created your first usergroup! Only four to go. Since you now understand how to create a user group, you can create the others on your own, using these “Permissions”

- **Moderator:**
 - **Forum:** Has Access
 - **Topic:** And can Manage
 - **Post:** And can Manage
 - **Attachment:** And Can Manage

 - This will create a user group which can moderate posts, but which can't create new forums or administer them.

- **Registered:**
 - **Forum:** Has Access
 - **Topic:** Can Create
 - **Post:** Can Create
 - **Attachment:** Can Create

 - This will create an user which can create topics, reply to topics and which can edit his or her own posts.

- **Unregistered**
 - **Forum:** Has Access
 - **Topic:** Has Access
 - **Post:** Has Access
 - **Attachment:** No Access

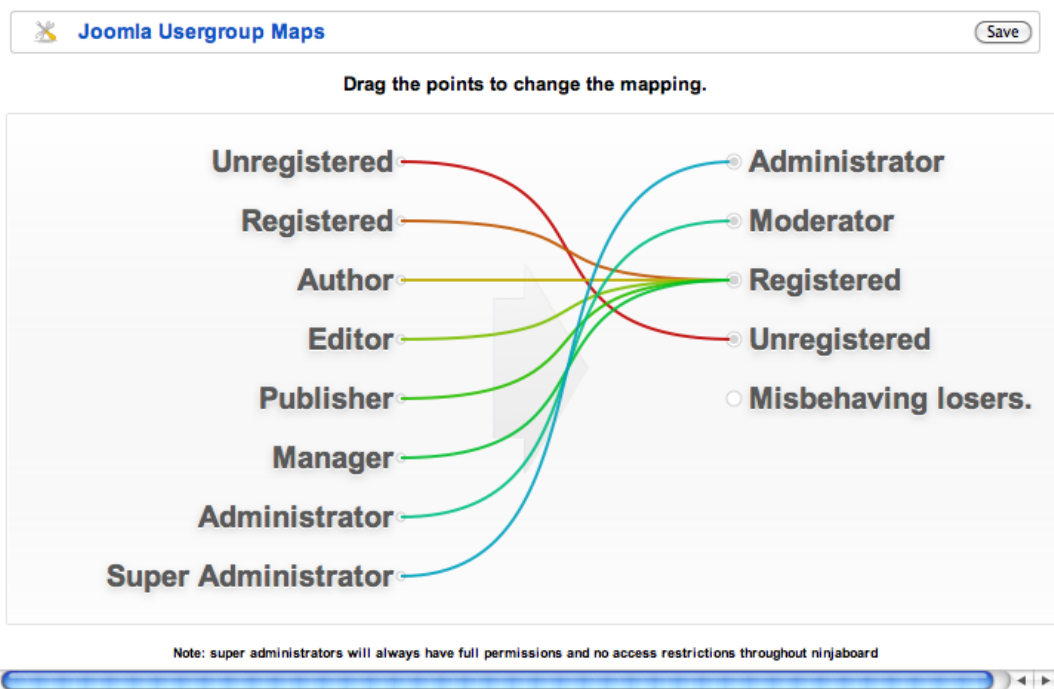
 - This creates a group of users which can *See* what's going on, without the possibility to reply. They also can't download or see your attachments.

- **Banned:**
 - **Forum:** No Access
 - **Topic:** No Access
 - **Post:** No Access
 - **Attachment:** No Access

 - Reserved for those “special” people that are really, really annoying. Can't see your forums. Can't do anything. Their silence is like golden to you.

Since we've created the Administrator User Group, creating these new user groups will be a bit different. In the overview shown, click on “New” in the top right corner, and follow the steps above.

4. Now that your user Groups are created, let's Map them to the Joomla! User groups. This allows you to automatically assign users to Ninjaboard Groups, depending on what Joomla! Group they belong to.
- Click "Map" in the top right.
 - The screen below will open. Fancy, right? You need to "draw" the lines from the Joomla group to the Ninjaboard User group you want to associate it with. See our example below.



We recommend the following setup:

- Super Administrator -> Administrator
- Administrator -> Moderator (If you trusted them more, you'd have made them Super Administrators, amiright?)
- Unregistered -> Unregistered (I know...)
- Everything else -> Registered

You'll notice that we haven't assigned any group to "Misbehaving losers." Which is a typo, that's supposed to say "banned". The reason is obvious: you wouldn't want to automatically ban anyone just because he falls under any default Joomla! Group, would you?

2. Configuring your forums

Now that your User Groups are configured, it's time to create your forums. For your website, you can of course create as many forums as you would like. In this guide we'll create three forums:

- A "regular" forum
- A subforum

- A secret forum, reserved for Administrators

99% of the times, you'll just want to create "normal" forums. This is a forum where registered members can post, where unregistered members can read posts and where moderators and administrators can do pretty much anything they want. Creating such a "normal" forum is surprisingly simple using Ninjaboard. Let's get technical!

1. **In the Ninjaboard dashboard, click "Forums", or navigate to Components > Ninjaboard > Forums.**

Since you haven't created a forum yet, Ninjaboard will point this out and shows a big "Add Forum" button. Click the button. Or, if you couldn't resist clicking the big, bright button, wait for a moment so the rest can catch up!

2. **You can now start configuring the forum.**

Details

Details

Title


Alias

Description


Forum header
Leave empty for using the description as the header.

State Enabled Disabled Lock Unlock

- **Title:** Choose a name for the forum. If you've got no inspiration, call it "General".
- **Alias:** The Alias affects the URL for this specific forum. Most people can just leave this blank – the alias will then be generated for you.
- **Description:** Write a description for the forum. This description will be visible when seeing the forum overview. For example, if you write "This is a description", you'd see the following result



| | Topics | Posts | Last post |
|---|--------|-------|-----------|
|  General This is a description. | 0 | 0 | No Posts |

- **Forum Header:** This description is displayed at the top when you're viewing a forum. For example, if you entered "This is the forum header", you'd see the following:

 **General**

This is the forum header.

[New Topic >>](#)

| | Replies | Views | Last post |
|---|---------|-------|--|
|  This is a post. | 1 | 0 |  by Toretto 14 seconds ago |

- **State:** You've got four options here. Choose "enable" as you'll want your forum to be accessible.

About the other options: Choosing "disabled" will make it inaccessible to all members. If you choose "Lock" regular users will have no access but they can still read topics and posts – unlocking a forum makes it accessible again!

Forum Hierarchy

The concept of this field is so simple, no screenshot is needed. If you want to make a forum into a subforum, then click the "parent forum". If you don't want the forum to be a subforum, click "No parent."

What to do: Click "No parent."

Permissions

Do you remember configuring permissions for the User Groups? You can override them here.

But since we're trying to create a "Standard" forum, we'll ignore the "Permissions" Tab for now.

Customization

Since we're not going to cover theming in this guide, choose an icon for the forum – or none, if you're a fan of minimalism. You can also click the link for instructions on how to upload your own icons. It's easy, I promise.

Once all the fields are completed, click "Save", or "Apply". Your standard forum is now ready. To create a subforum, repeat all the steps above. In the "parent" field, select the forum this forum will fall under.

We were also going to create an additional forum, for the Administrators and Moderators only, so they can secretly discuss who to ban next.

How it's done

Create a new forum. Fill in all fields as you see fit, but pause for a second when you reach "Permissions." By default, a forum allows registered users to view a forum, create topics and posts. This forum will be invisible for them, so let's change permissions.

1. Leave the "Administrators" and "Moderators" alone. This means they'll keep their "default permissions" – they'll be able to see, post in, and

moderate this forum.

2. For the other User Groups, flip the switch to “On”. Then, set all permissions to “None”. This way, they won’t be able to see the forum (that’s the idea of a secret forum, after all).

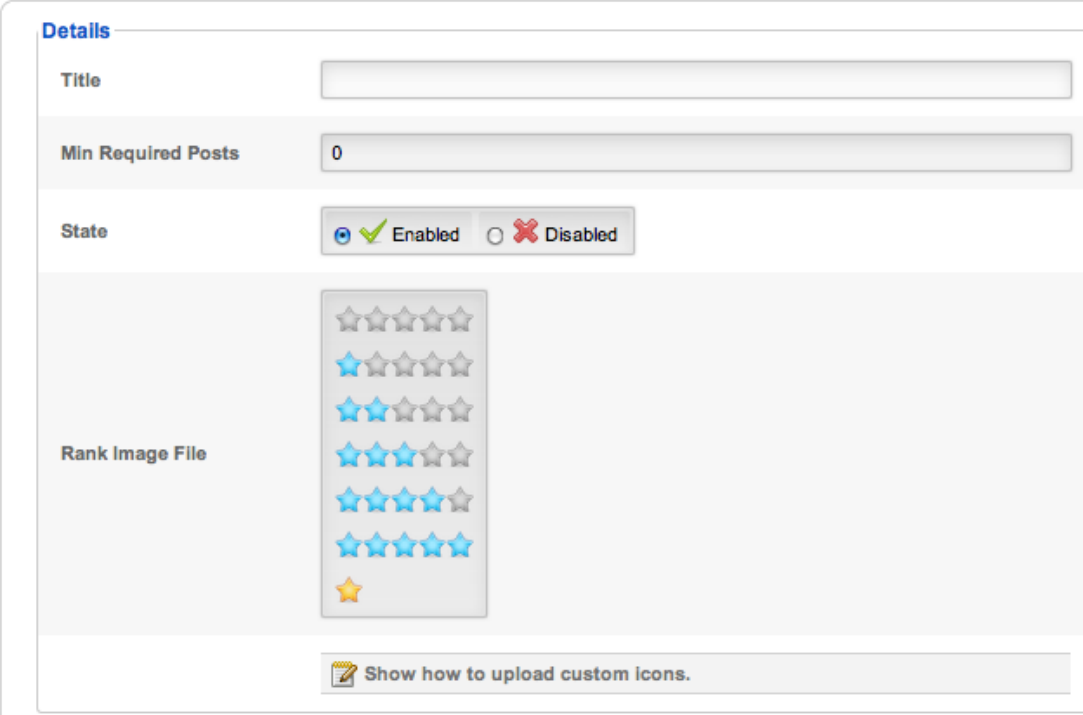
Note: You’ll never need to change the permissions of the “Banned” group. They’ll never have access to any forum, ever.

There you have it! You’ve now created a forum that’s only visible and useable by moderators and administrators. Those registered users won’t have a clue!

Your forum is now almost ready to go. To finish the job, let’s add a few Ranks.

Add Ranks

1. In the Ninja Dashboard, go to “Ranks”. Or, go to Components >



The screenshot shows the 'Details' section of the Ranks configuration page. It includes a 'Title' text input field, a 'Min Required Posts' input field with the value '0', and a 'State' section with radio buttons for 'Enabled' (checked) and 'Disabled'. Below this is a 'Rank Image File' section with a grid of star icons: five rows of five stars each, with the first four rows having the first four stars highlighted in blue, and a fifth row with a single yellow star. At the bottom, there is a button labeled 'Show how to upload custom icons.'

Ninjaboard > Ranks.

2. **Ninjaboard** will kindly point out you haven’t created any ranks yet. So, click the shiny button.
 3. **Let’s create a rank** which we’ll call “Lurker”. (A lurker is someone who only reads posts in a forum, but who doesn’t post enough to be considered a poster).
- **Title:** Set this to lurker, to set the Rank’s title.

- **Min Required posts:** Number of posts someone has to make to get a new rank. Let's set this to 0 for this rank.
- **State:** Set it to "Enabled" so the rank can be assigned to members worthy of it.
- **Rank Image File:** Choose a nifty image to go along with the Rank. Let's go for zero stars.

If you want to use some "cooler" icons, you can always click the link and learn how to upload and use your own icons.

Feel free to create some ranks of your own. Do you mind if I make a few suggestions?

- **Newbie:** 20 posts. Has posted enough not to be a creepy lurker. Hasn't been posted enough to be a regular.
- **Regular:** 100 posts.
- **Veteran:** 1,000 posts.
- **Get a life!:** 99,999 posts.

Settings / Themes

We're not going to cover "Settings" or "Themes" in this manual. In my years of using various forum technology I never really felt the need to temper with the default settings. The same applies to Ninjaboard. It works just fine if you use the default settings – all you have to do, is do nothing at all.

On topic of themes: If you'd go and visit the "Themes" section you'd find the Cameleon theme sitting there. And a surprising lack of options.

Time will tell if those options will be added in the future, but you don't really need them. The default theme, "Cameleon" is a very cool theme which blends in with your Joomla! Template. So, it's sort of a "universal theme" which anyone can use.

3. Make the forum accessible

It's now time to make the forum accessible. You do this by creating a menu item.

1. Go to the menu of your choice, and add a new item.
2. Create a **Ninjaboard > Items** menu item.

3. While you're at it, also create a menu item for **Ninjaboard > View profile** and **Ninjaboard > Edit Profile**

4. You're done!

That's right, your forum is now ready to be used and abused by your users! Of course, the work of an Administrator is never really done. Deleting posts, moving topics, moving users to the "Banned Group"... those will all be daily tasks.

Well hopefully not the banning part. But you get the idea. Managing your forum is very simple. So simple, I don't think a manual is necessary. When visiting the forum, people with enough rights will be presented the buttons to easily move topics, or delete them. Those with access to the backend can go to "Users" and make changes with the click of a button. Like, I don't know, add them to the "Banned" Usergroup.

I wish you the best of luck with your brand new forum. May the Ninja's be watching over your Ninjaboard!