

What are the advantages to using Etudes vs. Moodle?

From instructors who have shared their experience with Moodle with us:

- No way to automatically enter a cut-off time for late accepted assignments in Moodle.
- No way to allow both submitted text and an attached file on assignment submissions in Moodle. Etudes allows unlimited attachments and you can paste text for your teacher.
- You cannot easily see when new assignments are turned in in Moodle. You must click on Assignments then click on "view # submitted" and then you can see if any assignments are not graded. This was comparing it to Etudes Assignment tool which shows you *clearly* if there are any ungraded as soon as you click on Assignments.
- You cannot see the number of points you assigned to an assignment from the Assignments area in Moodle. You must go to the gradebook. Too many clicks to find information. Students do not see the total points for that assignment prior to submitting the assignment, unless the instructor includes the point total possible in the assignment instructions. This allows for errors, since if you have to change the points possible, you must remember to change it in two places. In contract, in Etudes, instructors and students can see the points that an assignment is worth from Assignments.
- You cannot override points earned on quiz questions within the quiz itself in Moodle. To override a quiz grade you must override the entire quiz score through the GB. However that score is not reflected on the quizzes page so this can be confusing since the GB shows one score and the quiz page shows a different score. There is no tracking of your changes. In Etudes, you can override the quiz score in the quiz itself, and the change is reflected instantly (and points adjusted automatically) in the quiz AND the GB. Etudes allows the instructor to adjust grades for one student, if needed.
- Forums are kind of clunky to work with in Moodle. For an instructor to start a new forum (discussion topic) you have to make numerous selections (minimum of 10 choices must be selected). Etudes makes set up and grading of discussions so easy!
- Setting up multiple choice with multiple answers is difficult in Moodle, though it does provide more options. If you want to set it up so that each answer is worth the same number of points plus or minus depending on if they select it correctly, then you must make the calculations as to what that answer is worth yourself. It is much easier to simply give overall points for the question and let the program calculate the percentage of the total points were earned on that question due to the selected answers (Example: In Etudes if you have a question worth 4 points and there are 4 possible answers and only two are correct, you don't do anything special other than mark which answers are correct. Then if a student selects every answer the student will get a total of 0 points for that because it calculates $+2 + -2=0$. To set up the question this way in Moodle, it is not that intuitive. To select your correct answers you would set them as 50% and to select the wrong choices you set them as -50%. I am still not sure if this is correct.

- Too much flexibility of setting up the course homepage of Moodle, which includes where navigation links will be located. If there is no standard way to set up the home page, students must learn the setup of each course. There will be no universal understanding of the students that the calendar is always here, or the messages box is always there. Etudes allows instructors to remove tools, but if they are enabled they always show up in a consistent location so students can find them if they are enabled. There are no technical support inquiries from students in Etudes, as a result. The system is very intuitive for students, and the consistency across courses helps learners.
- The way that forums are set up in Moodle makes it difficult to read the various posts, having to click back and forth on the links to read all of them. Students skip over them and not read them because of this. It seems to take away from the community building aspect. I didn't feel as involved, even though I went into the forums daily. It was that the posts were separate, and not viewable all on the same screen. In contract, in Etudes, you can read all the communication in one page.
- No bookmark capability for discussions in Moodle. Etudes supports bookmarks.
- No way to automatically set up a forum to open or close. Etudes offers this not just for forums, but also for topics. It is a great functionality that automates this tedious work.
- Cannot lock a forum in Moodle. Etudes allows manual or automatic lock (on a date).
- Adding equations is difficult (but I don't know of any online method yet that is easy).
- You can't set early to automatically open forums on certain dates or close on certain dates in Moodle. This must be done manually. Etudes supports open and close dates in forums and topics, and the discussions open, close, and get locked automatically.

Testimonials

Below are testimonials from faculty who have used Moodle and were getting trained in Etudes:

- *“The gradebook of Moodle is totally unusable. My faculty can’t figure it out. The Etudes GB is nice and simple by comparison. Not many bells and whistles, but it does the job, and it’s easy to use!”*
- *“Wow! The discussion tool of Etudes is impressive. I am finding that my peers who use Moodle avoid group work and collaboration because it’s not easy to grading. What a shame to not assign graded discussions because of this, when it’s the heart of online classes. I am excited about the grading of discussions functionality of Etudes. So easy!”*
- *“I like that Etudes includes the ability to view all the assignments in one area, all the lessons in one area, all the discussions in one area, etc. and not just have one main list of the schedule by week, with everything together. The schedule helps, but it’s nice to see that Etudes offers the Course Map, but also allows students to view all tests, all assignments, all lessons in one spot.”*
- *“This may be a minor point, but I do think that impressions count. I think Saturday morning cartoons when I am on Moodle. I don't think it is an appropriate ‘atmosphere’ for teaching college-level reading, writing and critical thinking. I can't imagine getting into the higher level cognitive functioning using it.”*
- *“The community of practice (Users Group) that ETUDES offers is a huge asset for online faculty. Yes, Moodle has its own community, but it is worldwide and I think the efficacy of a community of practice is hampered when it gets too big. Etudes offers intimate support for its college faculty.*
- *“ETUDES is being designed specifically for and serves California Community Colleges, which may not have glaringly different requirements from other schools, but some subtle yet important differences. Add to this the fact that as an ETUDES faculty member, you do actually have input as to how ETUDES features and the tools used in it evolve.”*
- *“I found Moodle has a steeper learning curve (this is subjective of course). I think it is more difficult to do certain things with Moodle (more clicks and more settings to set).”*
- *“I've been taking a four week course on Moodle--not the best in the world. I don't think that it's that hard a program, but so far, there's a lot of things I haven't a clue about. Vivie Sinou and the ETUDES training facilitators were exemplary when it came to course layout, instruction, and support, especially in answering questions, some of which I now realize had obvious answers.”*