

Authoring Environment

LAMS Authoring

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The Authoring Environment is where you create and modify the sequences or learning designs that are used in Learner. You can access the Author environment by clicking on the Blue Author tab at the top of the screen, once you have logged in to LAMS.

Author Permissions

Not all LAMS users have Author permissions - sometimes a user may just be allowed to participate in and monitor learning sequences. If you want to use Author and you don't have permissions, contact your supervisor or System Administrator.

The Authoring Environment provides teachers and instructors with a visual authoring environment for creating, storing and re-using of learning designs. To create learning designs or sequences, you drag-and-drop **activities** onto the authoring space, and then create **transitions** to specify the path that learners take through. This **Graphic Workflow Model** is what principally distinguishes LAMS from other, more content based, Learning Systems by providing teachers with a high level of interactivity and collaboration.

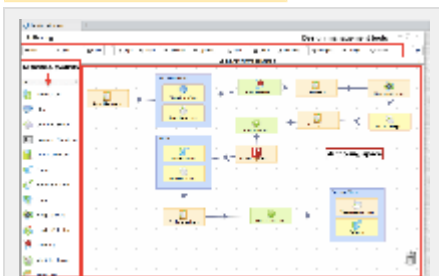
Double Clicking

Nearly everything that exists in the Authoring space can be double-clicked in order to change its properties.

There are three main areas in the Authoring Environment:

- **Authoring space** - this is the whitespace with a grid of dots. It is where sequences are Created and Edited.
- **Activities or tools** - located down the left-hand side of the screen. The toolkit contains all of the activities available for use in the sequence.
- **Design management tools/options** - located across the top of the screen. These allow File Operations (Saving, Opening) and Sequence Linking Operations (Branching and Gates) as well as allowing users to Preview their sequences.

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Click for larger view.

To **Delete** an activity from the Authoring Space, click and drag the activity to the trashcan in the lower right corner of the Authoring Environment.

Saving Sequences in Public Folders

Sequences can be saved in one of three places.

- By default, sequences are saved in your own folder (folder with your name), which means that only **you** can access them.
- You can also save sequences in the folder for each courses you are a member of. For example, you could share your Mathematics sequences only with other Maths teachers, and English sequences only with other English teachers.
- Finally, you can save sequences in the Public folder, which means that the sequence will be available to any teacher who can log in to LAMS (and has authoring rights)

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Click for larger view.

Sequence Management Tools

This is the Sequence Management Toolbar:

The Toolbar commands are:

- **File Operation Tools**
 - **New** - Clears any existing sequence from the *Authoring Space* and provides a blank work area or creating a new sequence. **NB:** The command will warn you that it will clear the *Authoring Space* and prompt you to save your sequence.
 - **Use Template** - Within the New button, the dropdown menu gives you a choice to create a new learning design using a teaching methodology or template. Once you select it, it will prompt you to select one of the teaching methodologies templates available to quickly create your learning design.
 - **Open** - Allows you to browse your personal, course and public folders to retrieve an already saved learning design.
 - **Import** - Import LAMS designs that were previously exported.
 - **Import part** - Import parts or section of other learning designs.
 - **Save** - Saves the current learning design. If no name has been specified, opens the "Save" window and prompts for filename and location.
 - **Save As** - Saves the learning design under an alternative name.
 - **Export** - You can export your learning design into a zip file that contains all the content as well as the structure of your sequence. You can share this zip files with other teachers that use LAMS and they would be able to import it on their own LAMS server. Alternatively, you might want to share your learning designs with over 10,000 teachers that share their best designs at the [LAMS Community](#)
- **Editing Tools**
 - **Copy** - Copies the selected Activity on the Authoring space.
 - **Paste** - Pastes a copied Activity back to the Authoring space.
- **Sequence Tools**
 - **Transition** - This tool changes the pointer into Transition mode (indicated by a Green pen) for drawing *transition* lines between two activities. Place the transition tool over the activity you wish to transition 'from,' click and hold the mouse, and draw a line to the activity you wish to transition 'to.' You can also jump quickly to Transition mode by holding down the 'Ctrl' key.
 - **Optional** - This option allows you to create a "container" for a particular type of activities: [Optional activities](#) or [Support activities](#)
 - **Flow** - provides options for controlling the progress of Learners through the sequence.
 - **Gates** - temporarily control stop points for Learner as they progress thru the design. [Gates](#) can be a real powerful option to manage your classes.
 - **Branch** - _ allows learners to either select a particular path through the sequence, or automatically chooses a path based on certain conditions.
 - **Group** - creates a grouping object, which arranges learners into groups for particular activities. (ie: instead of a whole class of learners participating in one chat, there can be several groups of five learners in independant chats.)
 - **Annotations** - This feature is very useful to create annotation and comment out sections of your learning design. These comments/annotations can be useful for you and/or other teachers/tutors but are not available for students to see. Only teachers can see them.
 - **Weights** - If your learning design has assessment activities, you can set the weight that each assessment output might have in the overall mark of the lessons.
 - **Arrange** - LAMS can orderly arrange the activities for you in the authoring space. Just press this button and LAMS would automatically rearrange the activities to best fit the viewable space.
 - **Preview** - allows the sequence to be run from the Authoring Environment, allowing Authors to check their design before use.

- **Help**
 - **Authoring Help** - Links to this web page.

Creating Activities

The main components of any sequence are the activity tools. Each tool has a set of features specific to that tool, as well as some features that are found in all tools. This section describes the basic features found on all tools first. There are also pages specific to the properties of each activity.

Each tool contains three tabs:

- **Basic** - which controls the **Content** of the Activity.
- **Advanced** - which controls the **Behaviour** of the Activity.
- **Conditions** - Some activities support conditions that can help you create conditions to be used for branching decision points.

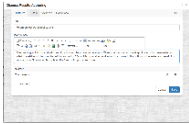
The **activities toolkit** contains all of the activities that you can add to your sequence.

The toolkit contains communicative and collaborative tools as well as tools designed for delivering and sharing resources, and also tools for assessing and evaluating student contributions.

The Whitespace at the top of the toolkit will display a short description a tool when it is selected.

To create an activity, simply click the desired activity on the toolkit, keep the mouse button held down, and drag the activity onto the Authoring Space. To place the activity, release the mouse button.

Setting the content for Activities - General Features



Click to Magnify Thumbnail.

To change the Content and behaviour of an activity, simply double click a particular activity to bring up it's **Properties Page**..

To the Left is a screenshot of the *Basic* tab of a *Forum* activity. It contains two elements, a *Title* and *Instructions* screen.

These elements are found on nearly every activity in LAMS.

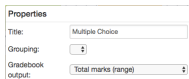
All tools have a title that is presented at the top of the Learner Environment - this is where you can specify that title.

Presented under 'Title' is the 'Instructions' section. This is where the main text to be displayed to the learners is created. (TIP: For other tools there is always a section for text instructions or content, although it may have a different name than 'Instructions, ie: Content, Questions, etc.)

Other Activities

See other [LAMS Activities](#) available within LAMS.

Properties Inspector



The Properties Inspector (shown below) provides quick access to some common tasks for Activities: gradebook output, groupings and activity name.

Title - This is the name of the activity. It is shown on the activity box in the Authoring Space, as well as on various screens in the Monitoring Environment, and also in the Progress Bar in the Learner Environment. Ideally, you want to keep Activity Titles as short as possible - less than about 20 characters (including spaces) is recommended. Note: The Title is NOT the same as the Name specified on the Properties Page. Instead, the Title specified in the Properties Inspector provides a quick way to distinguish the activity from others of the same type.

Grouping - All activities can be set to operate in *Whole Class Mode* or in *Small Group Mode*. To operate in Small Group Mode, a *Grouping Object* must be added to the sequence. Once this is done, any tool can be set to use those groups, creating multiple instantiations of each tool according to the number of groups created. Note: It is possible to create several Grouping Objects and then choose different grouping structures for different tools.

Gradebook output - If the activity you have selected supports outputs (grades, time taken or other), they will be available in this drop down menu. Select which activity output you want to send to the gradebook once students complete the activity. The output types vary from activity to activity depending of what the activity does (assessment, reflection, etc).