

FireBoard Forum Documentation

Version 1.0

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1 Getting Started

1.1 What is FireBoard¹?

FIREBOARD is a native forum software which means it integrates into your Joomla! site with no hacks or bridges, just a straight component installation and you have a powerful forum at your disposal.

FireBoard is currently translated to 35 languages.

1.2 Where to get it?

1.2.1 FireBoard component

We are going to guide you through the simple downloading and installation process to get your FireBoard forum up and running in no time.

To start you need to have Joomla! installed, this can be found on the website of Joomla site, Joomla.org. If you don't have Joomla! already installed do it now. If you are new to Joomla! it is worth reading the documentation relating to Joomla! itself to get yourself acquainted. The documentation is found at <http://help.joomla.org>.

Now that you have Joomla! installed, you need to go ahead and grab the files from the FireBoard repository, this is found in the following address: <http://joomlancode.org/gf/project/fireboard/frs>

You should download the latest stable release of FireBoard. The file name contains, version number (e.g. 1.0.5), version suffix (e.g. RC1), build number (e.g. b639) and the date the build was created. Very minor bug fixes only will be posted as new builds without changing the version.

Note: The FireBoard component is a packed archive and to install you should *not* unpacked the zip file. See Section 2.1 for more information.

1.2.2 Translations

The original language of FireBoard is English. Translation files are maintained at FireBoard Translation Project, <http://joomlancode.org/gf/project/fireboard-trans>.

¹The official and correct naming is “FireBoard” with capital B.

1.3 License

FireBoard is Copyright (C) 2005-2008 Best of Joomla! (<http://www.bestofjoomla.com>)

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Note: Best of Joomla! and its team; developers, maintainers, translators,... are not responsible for the contents of the sites using our open source software.

1.4 FireBoard Requirements

1.4.1 Minimum System Requirement

To run FireBoard, the web server you're hosted on must meet a few simple requirements. These are not terribly high, and as such most hosts meet them.

- Any web server that properly supports PHP, such as Apache or Internet Information Services (IIS).
- PHP 4.1.0 or higher. The following directives are required to be set correctly in php.ini:
 - The engine directive must be On.
 - The magic_quotes_sybase directive must be set to Off.
 - The session.save_path directive must be set to a valid directory.
 - The file_uploads directive must be On.
 - The upload_tmp_dir must be set to a valid directory.
- MySQL 3.25 or higher.
- at least 512 kilobytes of storage space in the database, although more is highly recommended.
- about two and a half megabytes of storage space on the web server, although more is recommended.

1.4.2 Recommended System Requirements

For best performance the following items are suggested:

- LINUX or another UNIX based operating system.
- The GNU Aspell and its dictionaries for spell checking support.
- APACHE with AcceptPathInfo set to *On* (Apache 2 and later only) for queryless URL support.
- PHP 4.3.0 or higher, with the following set in php.ini:
 - The `max_input_time` directive is set to a value of at least 30.
 - The `post_max_size` and `upload_max_filesize` directives are set to the size of the largest attachments you wish to be able to upload.
 - The `session.use_trans_sid` directive set to `Off`.
 - The `memory_limit` directive is set to at least 8M.
 - The `max_execution_time` directive is set to at least 15.
 - The `register_globals` directive is set to `Off`.
- MYSQL 4.0.15 or higher with query caching enabled.
- GD Graphics Library 2.0 or higher.

1.4.3 Client (User) Requirements

To use FireBoard to its fullest feature set, one of the following browsers which have received much in the way of testing are strongly recommended: (although any standards-compliant browser should be fine)

- Opera 7.0 or higher.
- Microsoft Internet Explorer 6.0 or higher.
- Netscape 6.0 or higher.
- Mozilla Suite 1.0.2 or higher.
- Apple Safari 1.0 or higher.
- Konqueror or Galeon.
- Mozilla Firefox 0.8 or higher.

Additionally, Java Script and cookies must be enabled for some features to work as intended, although efforts have been made to not require them.

2 Setting up your forum

2.1 Installation

If it is your first time installing FireBoard you should complete the following steps. Otherwise, if you are upgrading from JOOMLABOARD or a previous version of FireBoard, please follow the upgrade instructions in **Section 2.3**.

FireBoard installs as simply as other Joomla! components. Installation of FireBoard 1.0.5+ is simple and easy. The Installation process is fully automated and should not require manual intervention. The install process has been tested on both Joomla 1.0.15+ as well as 1.5.5+.

Before you go any further make sure you have redundant backups of your site.

As with any software you might experience issues. We test FireBoard releases thoroughly, but we cannot guarantee that everything works just fine in your individual configuration. The *only* way for you to proceed is to make sure you have the most current backup of your site ready - in case you need to roll back. So, BACKUP - BACKUP - BACKUP!

Reminder: Please make sure you have the latest build release of FireBoard. (See Section 1.2)

Download the appropriate package for your target system. *Do not* decompress them unless you have a need to access individual files locally. The package is a valid Joomla install package and needs to remain in its structure if you want to leverage Joomla's built in installation component.

For know issues See Section 2.5.

We assume you are familiar with the Administration Back-end of Joomla. You will require full admin access in order to install FireBoard and configure it to your individual needs.

2.1.1 Joomla 1.0.x

Log into the Administrator back-end of Joomla 1.0.x. Select **Installers/Components** in the main menu. Once you are on the installation screen you have multiple options on how to install the package. In this manual we will only focus on the most commonly used option.

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First of all check the list of currently installed components. Make sure FireBoard is not in that list. If it is, please check the Section 2.3 of this document.

Joomla does *not* support the installation of an identical package more than once.

In the first section Upload Package File select the local FireBoard package by hitting the Choose File button. Once selected click on Upload File & Install. The installation process will produce some output. It should not contain any error message. If you do see error messages, please check bestiofjoomla.com and its community forum for possible solutions to your problem.

Once the installation process has finished please proceed to perform an initial configuration of FireBoard. Select Components/FireBoard Forum in the main menu.

Before you do anything else, please got to FireBoard Configuration. Adjust the default settings to your individual needs and click the Save button on the top right corner of the admin screen. This will force the configuration to be written into the database and the creation of a legacy config file for use with components and modules written for previous version of FireBoard. This legacy support will only get created when you hit the Save button.

On initial install the Forum will be *empty* and will not contain any categories, sub forums or post. As such the front end will not display any content. The FireBoard configuration allows you to insert some sample data, to give you a few examples on how you might want to start your install setup.

Important: Do not modify the sample data and adopt it for your own needs. But rather create new categories and structures. The sample data uses special IDs, that allow it to be removed from your system. Once you are satisfied with your setup, simply remove the sample data or delete sample posts and categories manually through the FireBoard admin back-end.

The last step to enable FireBoard on your system is to create a menu link on Joomla. This will allow your users to actually see the forum component on the front end. In order to do so select Menu/Menu Manager from the Joomla admin back-end main menu.

In there click on the Menu Items icon of the menu you would like to add FireBoard to. In most cases this will be main menu. Once selected, hit the New button in the top right corner. Select Component and hit Next. Choose a name for the menu entry for example: "Forum" and select the FireBoard Forum component in the list of available components. Select the other options as per your individual requirements and finish the menu item by clicking the "Save" button in the top right corner of your Joomla admin back-end.

By now you are ready to go and use FireBoard.¹

¹For additional information on how to setup FireBoard, questions bout configuration and templates please visit <http://www.bestofjoomla.com>

2.1.2 Joomla 1.5.x

The installation of FireBoard 1.0.5 on Joomla 1.5.x is very similar to installing it on Joomla 1.0.x. The main difference is that you first have to enable Joomla 1.0.x *legacy* support as FireBoard 1.0.5 is a native Joomla 1.0.x application.

To do so log into the Administrator back-end of Joomla 1.5.x. Select **Extensions/Plugin Manager** from the main menu. In the list of installed plug-ins search for **System - Legacy**. On a standard Joomla 1.5.x install that might be on the second page of all listed plug-ins. If this plug-in is marked with a red X (as in disabled) simply click on the icon and the back-end will mark the plug-in as enabled.

Once you have enabled Legacy support, the install is identical to Joomla 1.0.x

Select **Extensions/Install/Uninstall** choose the local package file by clicking the **Choose File** button and hit **Upload File & Install**.

The remainder of the initial install and setup is identical to the Joomla 1.0.x process. Please refer to 2.1.1 for more information on the initial setup.

Note: Joomla 1.5.x requires a lot more resources than Joomla 1.0.5. Because of that the upload and install of FireBoard can take longer than 30 sec on a shared hosting environment. Unfortunately, this is a very common PHP timeout setting. If you run into this issue you can increase the PHP time out from 30 to 60 sec. Please contact your hosting provider for details. Alternatively, you may upload the entire package through ftp into a temporary directory. Unpack the files and use Joomla's feature to install from a directory. This will eliminate the upload and decompress time from the install so it will easily run in less than 30 sec.

2.2 Configuration

Configuring your FireBoard is where the fun begins. You really get to play with your forum, adding and removing categories, user ranks and a whole host of other nice gadgets and gizmo's.

Note: If at this stage you are upgrading from JoomlaBoard or an earlier version of FireBoard please see Section 2.3.

If on the other hand you have a clean installation of FireBoard, we shall continue. First things first, you need to go into the FireBoard component located at: **Administration > Components > FireBoard forum**. Once you have entered the FireBoard component you will be met with the following screen:

To complete the installation you simply need to click the **Apply!** button underneath **Clean Installation**, this will now upload the necessary database files for your FireBoard installation.

On successful install you will now be met with:

Click **continue** to be redirected to the FireBoard Control Panel - you are now free to configure FireBoard how you like.

2.3 Upgrading

Upgrading an existing installation of FireBoard to 1.0.5+ is simple and easy. We have spent considerable resources and time to fully automate the process. Upgrading FireBoard 1.0.0 - 1.0.4 to the latest stable (currently v1.0.5) is simple process that no longer requires you to execute any special scripts or SQL statements by hand.

Going forward all new versions of FireBoard will come with an automated upgrade process. The upgrade process has been tested on both Joomla 1.0.15 as well as 1.5.5. If by the time you install this package, there are newer versions of Joomla available, please see <http://www.BestofJoomla.com> for additional information.

To start, there is a *one time* migration requirement for any prior version of FireBoard to 1.0.5. In order to facilitate that one time migration we have released a stand alone component `com_fbconverter`. It migrates the existing configuration settings of an existing FireBoard install (versions 1.0.0 to 1.0.4) into the database before the upgrade.

Make sure you download the latest package from JoomlaCode.org: <http://joomla.org/gf/project/fireboard/frs>.

Look for a package like: `com_fbconverter_v1.0.5RC2_b159_2008-07-15.zip` It has the same new naming convention like all new FireBoard packages. By the time you read this there might be a newer version and build of it out there. Get the latest!

The converter is only required if you want to *preserve* the existing settings of FireBoard. All categories and posts are independent from that and do not require the converter. Only the settings that used to be stored in `fireboard_config.php` are getting translated by `com_fbconverter` and written into the database.

Just to be sure we mention it again: BACKUP - BACKUP - BACKUP!

2.3.1 Upgrading an installation on JOOMLA 1.0.x

In order to upgrade your existing FireBoard install (prior versions 1.0.0 to 1.0.4) you will need to execute above mentioned converter to preserve the existing configuration settings. This is not mandatory but will make the upgrade process a little bit easier as you don't have to re-enter the config settings in the FireBoard back-end. This is *not* required to maintain the existing category and thread hierarchy as all as all posts and profiles.

If you are already on an earlier build of 1.0.5 you *must* not run this converter. It is only used for the very first time getting onto 1.0.5. Starting with this version FireBoard keeps its configuration inside the database, which does not require a converter for future upgrades.

To perform the one time conversion of the configuration simply install the latest `com_fbconverter` component onto your target system that runs the existing FireBoard installation.

Log into the Administrator back-end of Joomla 1.0.x. Select Installers/Components in the main menu. ("Extensions/Install/Uninstall" for Joomla 1.5.x)

Once you are on the installation screen you have multiple options on how to install the package.

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Note: In this manual we will only focus on the most commonly used option.

First of all check the list of currently installed components. Make sure FireBoard Converter is not in that list. If it is, please Uninstall it first before you proceed. Joomla does *not* support the installation of an identical package name more than once.

In the first section "Upload Package File" select the local `com_fbconverter` package by hitting the "Choose File" button. Once selected click "Upload File & Install"

The installation process will produce some output. It should not contain any error message. If you do see error messages, please check our forums for possible solutions to your problem.

Once installed the FireBoard configuration is already converted as part of the install. You may uninstall the Converter immediately. As it will serve no other purpose. If you have to run the conversion again for various reasons, simply install the latest converter package again.

That was the *difficult* part of the upgrade - if you did choose to do so.

In order to upgrade FireBoard itself you now simply uninstall the existing FireBoard component and re-install the latest version.

Log into the Administrator back-end of Joomla 1.0.x. Select Installers/Components in the main menu. (Extensions/Install/Uninstall for Joomla 1.5.x)

To uninstall any existing FireBoard component select FireBoard Forum from the list of installed components and click the Uninstall button on the top right corner. Uninstalling the component will *not* remove any database content from your server.

Once uninstalled successfully proceed to the very same steps as outlined in the 2.1.1 and install the new FireBoard package.

The built in installer will automatically detect the presence of prior releases data and will perform the necessary upgrade steps to convert that data to the latest 1.0.5 format.

2.3.2 Upgrading an installation on Joomla 1.5.x

Since you are upgrading from a prior FireBoard version on Joomla 1.5.x it is assumed that Joomla legacy support is already *enabled* on your system or FireBoard 1.0.x series would not be able to run. In case you are not sure see 2.1.2 for further information on how to check and enable Joomla Legacy support.

Upgrading to FireBoard 1.0.5 on Joomla 1.5.x is virtually identical to the upgrade process for Joomla 1.0.x. Please refer to 2.3.1 for details on if and how to run the legacy `com_fbconverter` and the remainder of the upgrade process.

The only difference to Joomla 1.0.x is that the component installer is located at Extensions/Install/Uninstall of the main menu. All other steps are identical.

2.4 Uninstallation

Important: By uninstalling all your FireBoard files will be *deleted!* However, if you have a version greater than 1.0.2, your uploaded files, avatars and all the files that

2 Setting up your forum

are under Joomla_Root/images directory will not be deleted. Also, your database tables will not be dropped.

1. Go to Administrator▷Installers▷Components
2. Select FireBoard and click Uninstall.
3. After this point, you can decide if you want to completely uninstall FireBoard or leave the database, tables and uploaded files in place for e. g. future re-installation.
4. If you want to *completely* uninstall FireBoard, apply the following database queries and delete Joomla_Root/images/fbfiles/ directory:

```
DROP TABLE 'jos_fb_announcement' , 'jos_fb_attachments' ,  
'jos_fb_categories' , 'jos_fb_favorites' ,  
'jos_fb_groups' , 'jos_fb_messages' , 'jos_fb_messages_text' ,  
'jos_fb_moderation' , 'jos_fb_ranks' ,  
'jos_fb_sessions' , 'jos_fb_smileys' , 'jos_fb_subscriptions' ,  
'jos_fb_users' , 'jos_fb_whoisonline'
```

If you are uninstalling FireBoard because of technical difficulties please log on to the Best of Joomla forum, search the forums and if necessary post a new topic first. Remember we may already have a solution for your problem or at least be working on one.

2.5 Known Issues

Unfortunately, there are a handful of known issues that are still being worked on:

Corrupt GIF icons on some Joomla hosts

For some unknown reason, some Joomla 1.0.x installs will corrupt some of the small GIF icons during the install. This is believed to be a Joomla 1.0.x issue but we have not been able to get confirmation on this. This problem will result in some of the template icons to be missing in the front end. The problem has only been reproduced with the zip archive of the package. You might want to check whether your platform supports other compressed file types. In case you run into this issue, simply unzip the package file on your local computer and manually upload the missing files to the required location. The GIF icons in the package are OK, only the copies created by Joomla during the install might get corrupted.

International special characters in URLs

The new URL auto-linking feature does not support special characters in domain names of URLs. For example domain names with German Umlaut will brake the auto linking process. Domains with such special characters are very rare.

30 sec timeout on Joomla 1.5.x

Joomla 1.5.x requires a lot more resources than Joomla 1.0.x. Because of that the upload and install of FireBoard can take longer than 30 sec on a shared hosting environment. Unfortunately this is a very common PHP timeout setting. If you run into this issue you can increase the PHP time out from 30 to 60 sec. Please see your hosting provider for details. Alternatively you may upload the entire package through ftp into a temporary directory. Unpack the files and use Joomla's feature to install from a directory. This will eliminate the upload and decompress time from the install so it will easily run in less than 30 sec. Should you hit this timeout, you first must uninstall the partial FireBoard setup. Depending on where the timeout occurred, you might be required to delete the `components/com_fireboard` and `adminstartor/components/com_fireboard` directories by hand through either ftp or ssh access of your hosting environment.

3 How to use FireBoard

in this section we should describe the basic working of FireBoard. Try to avoid big images as much as you can, by defining the walk-through.

4 Contributing to the FireBoard Project

FireBoard is mostly written in PHP. It is a large project, and as a result it is not free from bugs, or the need for improvements in the source code.

4.1 Reporting a bug

While using FireBoard, you may find behavior which you consider a bug.

FireBoard has a bug tracking system, which you can find at <http://joomla.org/gf/project/fireboard/tracker>. You should check the bug tracker before reporting any bugs, in case it has already been reported. If you have a comment on an existing bug, or wish to report a new bug, you may either use the bug tracker, or post a new topic (if not already posted) to the community forum at <http://www.bestofjoomla.com>.

A useful bug report will at a minimum include the version of FireBoard & Joomla! you are having the problem with, PHP and Server information and an exact copy of the error or detailed information to reproduce the error. Accurate, detailed descriptions are preferred - the more time developers have to spend to pinpoint the source of a bug, the less time they have for other improvements. Mention the system and system version you are running FireBoard with. If necessary, give the versions of the components/modules/plugins/libraries you have installed on your website.

4.2 Contributing fixes and new features

If you have made changes to FireBoard's source that you think should become part of FireBoard, send your changes as a diff file (in unified format) to the relevant forums, along with a change log, and a description of what your patch does, preferably with a demo link or screen-shot.

If you feel that you can invest more time on this project, you are welcome to contact us, via info@bestofjoomla.com together with a short resume. Any help is much appreciated.

4.3 Contributing to the Documentation

FireBoard's documentation is under constant development, and each new release adds new features. You may find some documentation needs improvement. This section describes what to do if you find an error, or have some suggestions for improving the documentation.

Reporting Errors in the Manuals

If you find a problem with the documentation, send a message to the related documentation category in community forums. The documentation team will make any necessary fixes.

Joining the Documentation Team.

The FireBoard Documentation Project, like anything else in the FireBoard project, can always use assistance! If you're interested in contributing to the Documentation Project, you need to do the following:

1. Get the latest FireBoard source code, a file called `userguide.lxy`
2. Next, read the *User's Guide* and sticky notes on documentation forums.
The point of this exercise is to give you ideas. The *User's Guide* is likely to be the most up-to-date of all of the documentation. You should be able to glean some insights into how we want the manuals to read and to look.
3. Contact the team at the related forums to discuss your intended changes, and get some feedback on them. In case you want to join, send an email to:
`info/at/bestofjoomla.com`

The changes you wish to make may range from improving clarity of the text, to doing major re-structuring of the documentation. Any and all improvements are gladly received.

5 Credits

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