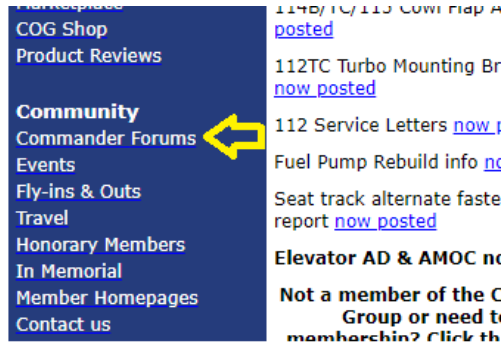# Getting Started Guide for the new Commander Owners Group Conferencing Software, vBulletin (v1.1)

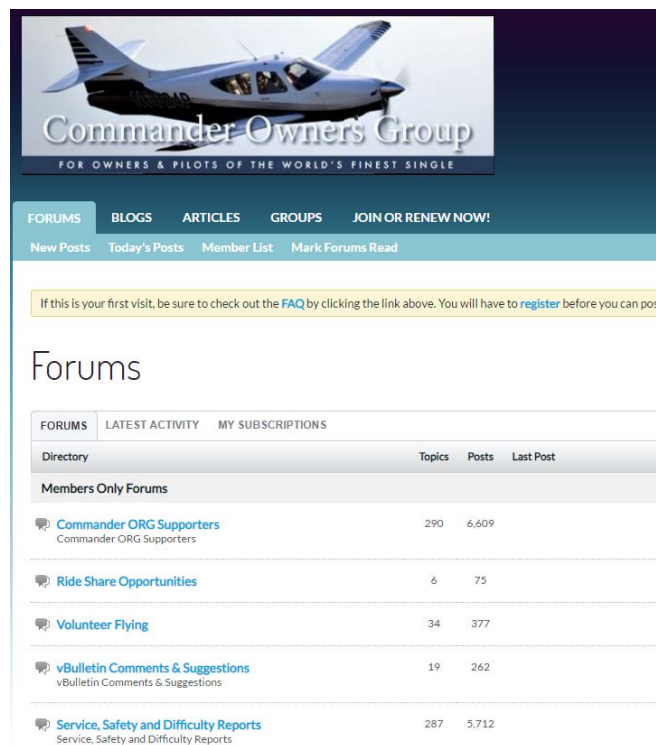The Commander Owners Group uses a software application called vBulletin for conferencing on our website.

While all conferencing software is similar in operation, this guide will give you a few tips to get started if you've never used vBulletin before.
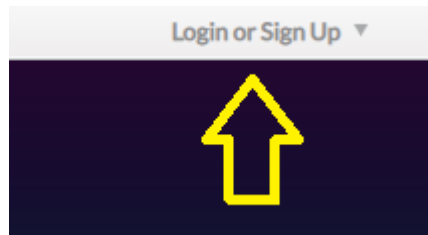
Logging In to vBulletin

The easiest way to log in to the conferencing system is to click the link from the COG homepage. So open a browser and enter www.commander.org then click on the link on the left page called Commander Forums. Note that if you have an old saved favorite, you'll need to update it.

Clicking this link will take you directly into the forums. You'll see all the individual conferences which are organized by topic.

If you've never visited before, you'll be browsing as a guest. This means that you'll see the forum titles and the number of topics, but you won't be able to view any content or create new posts. If you have an account – either as a Guest or a Member, you should login or sign up. Click the link in the upper right hand corner of the page:

If you already have created an account, either as a full member or a guest, enter your login credentials. If you check the *Remember Me* box, the next time you come to the forums you won't need to log in again. And to speed up access in future visits, bookmark this page in your browser.

If you've never visited us before, click the *Sign Up* link to create an account. Becoming a Registered User is free and includes access to the Public Forums. Note that access to the Members-only forums as well as the main website's technical documentation, parts and service information, and Commander manuals is limited to paid members in good standing.

On the registration page, complete the top section, then scroll to the bottom of the page and enter your name, agree to the terms and rules, enter the image verification code, then click **Complete Signup.**

Very important! To combat spammers, we verify the email address of every new Registered User. **This means you will receive an email message from our system that you will need to respond to before your account becomes active**. If you don't receive this email within 30 minutes of completing your registration, please check your spam and junk mail folders.
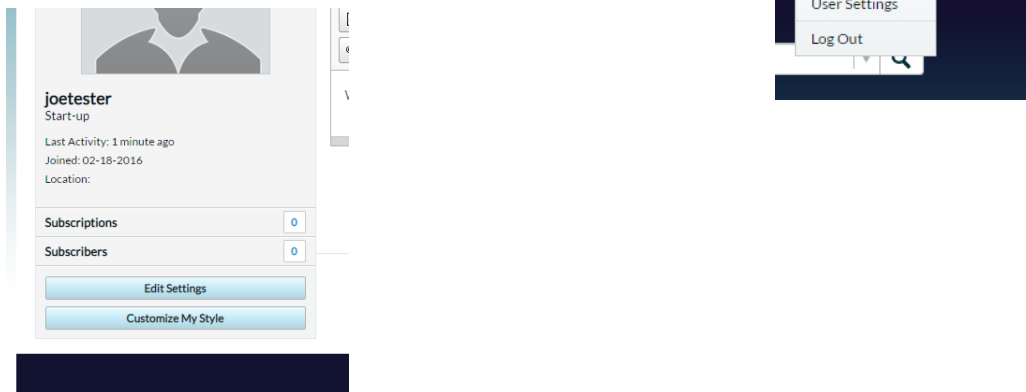
Working in the Forums

If you've successfully logged in, you'll find yourself at the Main Forum Page. This is a jumping off point for the many things you can do in vBulletin and also a quick summary of recent activity in the conferences. For example, note on the right you can see any message threads you've subscribed to as well as some of the latest topics.

You should take some time to explore, but for the purposes of this guide we'll focus on a few options to get you started.

The first task you should undertake is to update your profile information to make sure your basic information is correct.
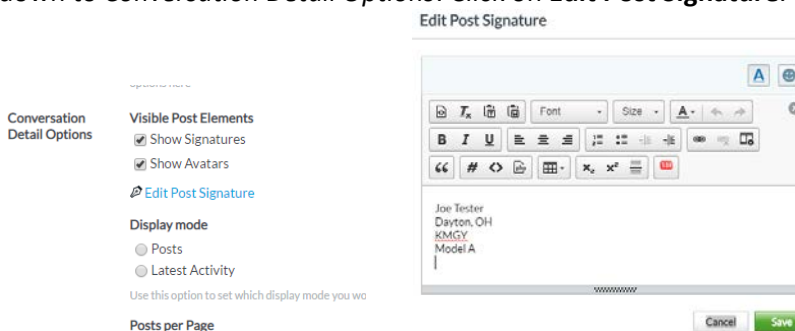
Edit Your Profile

In the upper right of any screen, click the down arrow next to your username and select **My Profile.** On the left of the profile screen, you can upload an avatar by clicking the image box, but first click on *Edit Settings*:

The new screen that opens will allow you to enter some additional information. Note the sections about where you're based, the type of aircraft you fly, etc. These are very helpful for other members who might be able to offer assistance as to local-to-you maintenance resources or parts, ride sharing, etc. So we encourage you to complete these sections.

Next, edit your signature so that people have some basic info about you and what/where you fly when you post. Click on the Account tab and scroll down to *Conversation Detail Options*. Click on **Edit Post Signature**.

Note that you have formatting tools available if you want to get fancy. At a minimum we suggest you include your name, N-number, home field, year, model, and serial number of your aircraft. This information will help others respond to your posts effectively.

Next you may optionally add an Avatar to your profile. Click the **Back to Profile** button then put your mouse over the avatar image area and an edit link will appear. Click that link. An Avatar is a small picture that is associated with your profile and will appear with each post you make. If you have a picture of your aircraft that would be perfect. The desired size is 160x160 pixels. If you select a larger image it will be cropped, but go ahead and try a few to see how they look.

You should now be ready to post and respond to messages, so let's go!
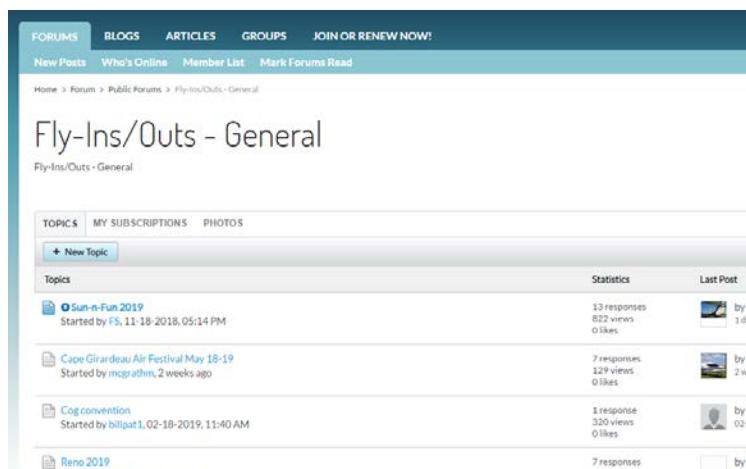
Reading and Posting Messages

To get back to the main forums page, click on the Forums link in the menu bar on any page.
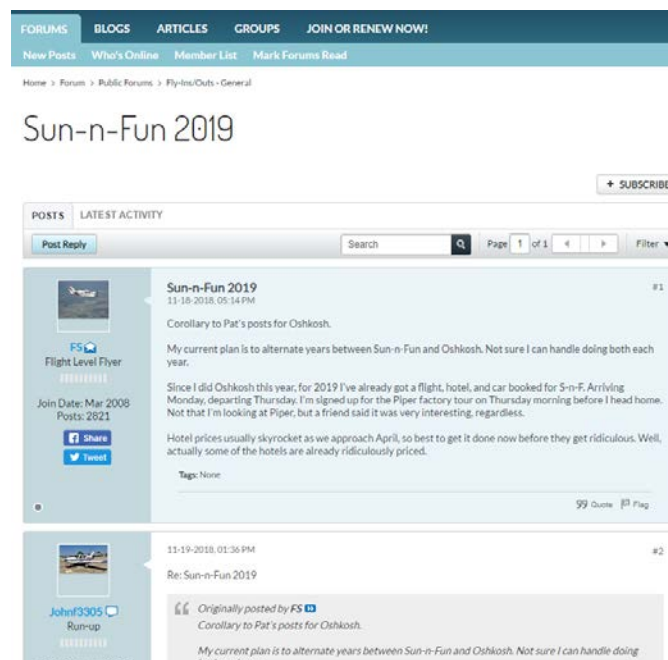

This will show you a list of all our Forums. Each can be considered an area for a specific topic of discussion. You'll want to post and look for content in the forum relevant to what you're interested in. Please note that the Members Only Forums will show in the listing for Registered Users and Guests but the content will not be available.

The *Forum Name* describes the topic of the particular forum. *Threads* refers to each unique topic in that forum. The dark blue bar across the top has several useful hyperlinks and pull-down menus and we'll discuss using some of those in a minute.

To go into a forum and read messages, simply click on the Forum Name and that forum will open. For example, if you click on **Fly-Ins/Outs – General**, you would see the following:
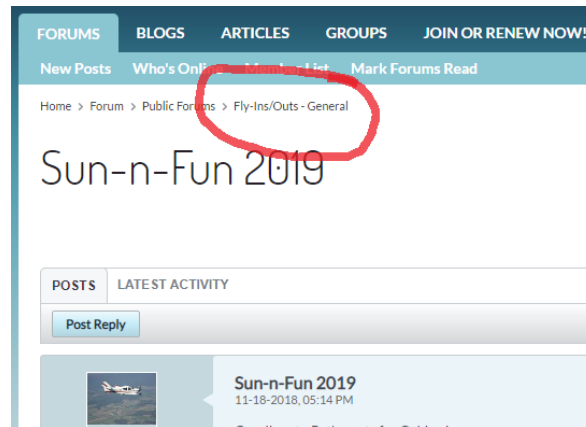

To read any individual thread, simply click on the thread title. So to check out what the thread **Sun-n-Fun 2019** is all about, click on it and you'll see the following:

You'll note that the individual who posted the message and their Avatar are shown in the left of the message box, message details are to the right, and the poster's signature (if set up) is below the message body.

Any replies appear below the message in chronological order so you can simply scroll down to read the discussion about the topic. Note that there can be multiple pages for many threads and there are page forward/back controls in the upper right and lower right of each page.

To read more threads in the same forum, click the breadcrumb link up above the first post. This will take you back to the list of threads in this particular forum:

To go back to the main listing of all the forums, click the Forums link in the main navigation bar.
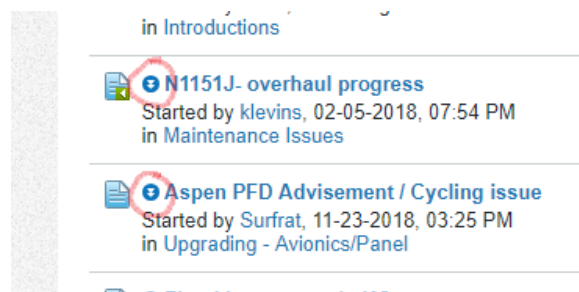
Advanced Navigation

Most users typically visit the forums, read messages, and then when they come back, they only wish to see new messages posted since they have last visited. This is easy to do in vBulletin.

vBulletin will automatically electronically mark a message as read any time it is displayed on your screen. So in the above example where you clicked on the **Sun-n-Fun 2019** thread, all the messages in that thread (at least the first 15 since vBulletin displays 15 messages per page) were marked as read even if you did not actually look at each one.

Now say you come back tomorrow and only want to look at new messages. From the main forum page, go to the blue bar at the top of the screen and click on **New Posts.**
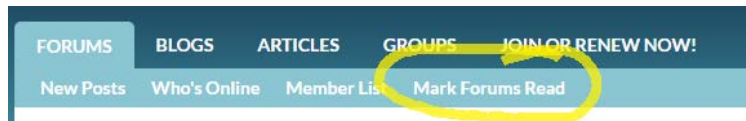

This will display only threads with new content. Now to jump directly to the first message you haven't yet read, click on the little down arrow next to the thread title:

If you have a question about a previous post in a thread, they are all still there – simply navigate back to look at previously read material.

Now after you finish reading one new post, simply click on **New Posts** again and you can read the next new posting. Continue on this way until there are no new posts left and you've read everything. Note that if you want to simply mark everything read without looking at each thread, that's easy too. In the menu bar, click **Mark Forums Read**
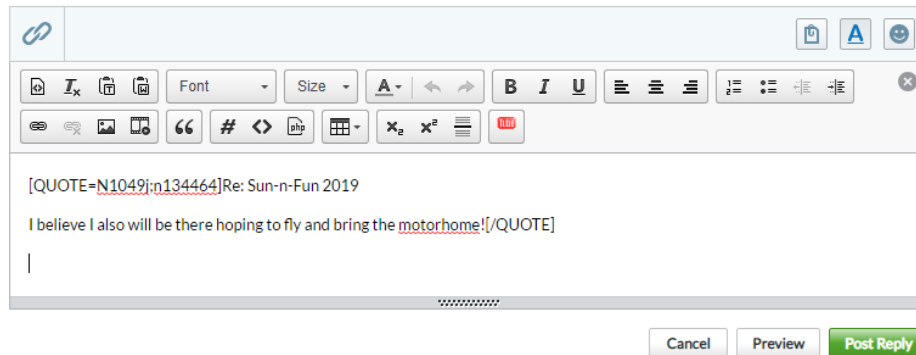

Posting in an Existing Thread

If you want to reply to a post in a thread, it's easy.

Let's say you see one post or reply another user made and you want to specifically reply to it. Click on the **Quote** link in the lower right of the original post you want to reply to.
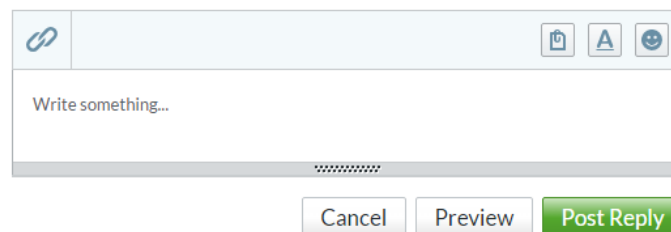

This will scroll your screen to the bottom of the page and bring up an editing window like this:

Note that the original poster's comment is already on the page along with some vBulletin coding. Just leave all that alone – there's nothing you need to do with it. The cursor is already positioned for your to start typing to go to it! You can add links and pictures to your post if you want – see the vBulletin Help system for more info by using the Help link at the very bottom of every page.

When you're done with your post, hit the **Post Reply** link and your comments – referencing the quoted post – will be added to the thread.

And if you don't want to specifically reply to any previous post but just want to add a comment to the thread, you can simply navigate to the very end of the thread where you'll find a waiting message box. Type in your message and hit **Post Reply**.
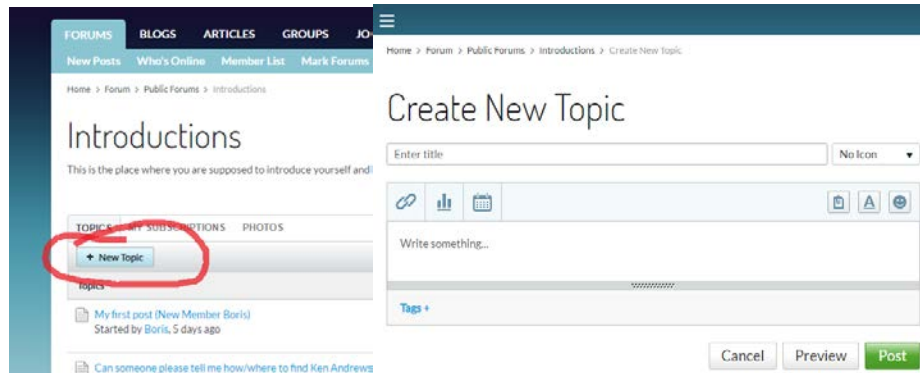
Create a Brand New Thread

Let's say you have a brand new topic you'd like to start a discussion about. This is easy, too.

Navigate to the Home Forum screen so you see a listing of all the forums. Select the one that is most relevant to the subject that you wish to post about and click on it. This will give you a list of all current threads in that forum.

At the top of the page, click on **New Topic**. Enter a title that is relevant to your post, a description, add any pictures or links that are relevant, the click **Post**.

Getting More Help

The best way to become comfortable with vBulletin is to spend some time navigating around the system. Get a cool beverage and block out 30-45 minutes and try navigating around, reading messages, and checking out what's in the various menus and screens. Specifically, we would point you at the **Help** system which may be accessed by a link at the very bottom of every page. There are many tips located there to help you effectively use vBulletin. Also, if you have a question post it and another member may be able to help you out.

We look forward to 'talking' with you in the forums soon!