

Forums for Dummies

How to Save Time and Money Using the ERA Web Site Revised Edition

By Bob Thomas

If you've joined the Electrical Rebuilder's Association (ERA) and are already using the Web site, you're two steps ahead of everyone else reading this. If you've joined the ERA and haven't been using the Forums, you're missing out on one of the main benefits of membership. If you have not joined the ERA, did you know that you can test drive the Web site for 30 days at no charge, and join online if you like what you find? So what are you waiting for? Need help? Keep reading.

The Forums are only one part of the ERA Web site, but that's where technical questions are asked and answered, information and ideas are shared between members, and the latest industry news can be found as it happens. The majority of the questions that members ask are answered within hours of being posted. Since the Web site debuted in 2004, there have been over 600 requests for technical information and over 2,500 replies. All of these are contained in a searchable archive, so the answer to those questions is attainable in minutes once you learn to use the Forums.

How do you get started? You'll need access to a computer with an Internet connection. Then, you'll need the address to the ERA Web site: www.electricalrebuilders.org.

If you're an ERA member, you're already in the database, even if you've never used the site before. If you don't know your username/password, go to the home page (Web address above) and click on the red type right under the log in box. The red type says, "ERA members that need username/password click here." Fill out the request and submit it. Your request will be answered promptly in the form of an e-mail including some helpful instructions.

If you are not a member of the ERA, but would like to use the Web site for 30 days, go to the home page, click on "Membership" on the left side of the page, and click on "30 Day Trial." Fill out the request form, and submit it. You'll be notified by e-mail when the trial membership is approved, usually the same day.

Once you have your username and password, you can log in on the main Web site, but there is one more step before you can use the Forums. That's because the Forums is a *Web site within a Web site* and it has its own separate log in. In case you're asking why, it's because the program was designed as a stand alone Web site and was incorporated into the ERA site as a complete communications tool for members. Don't let the separate log in confuse you. The tools and features this program provides are more than worth the effort of the second log in.

After you're safely logged in on the

Forums Login Screen

Forums Home Screen

ERA Web site, you'll see your username in the upper left of the green bar at the top of the page. It will say, "You are logged in as (your username)." If you don't see this you are not logged in. Log in using the box just below the ERA banner. If you check the "Remember Me" box when you log in, your computer will automatically log you in when you return if you visit the site regularly (at least once a week).

Now you're ready to register to use the Forums, which can be a little tricky

if you don't follow these instructions:

First: Click on "Forums" on the green bar at the top of the ERA home page. This will take you to the Forums log in page. (See: Forums Login Screen.)

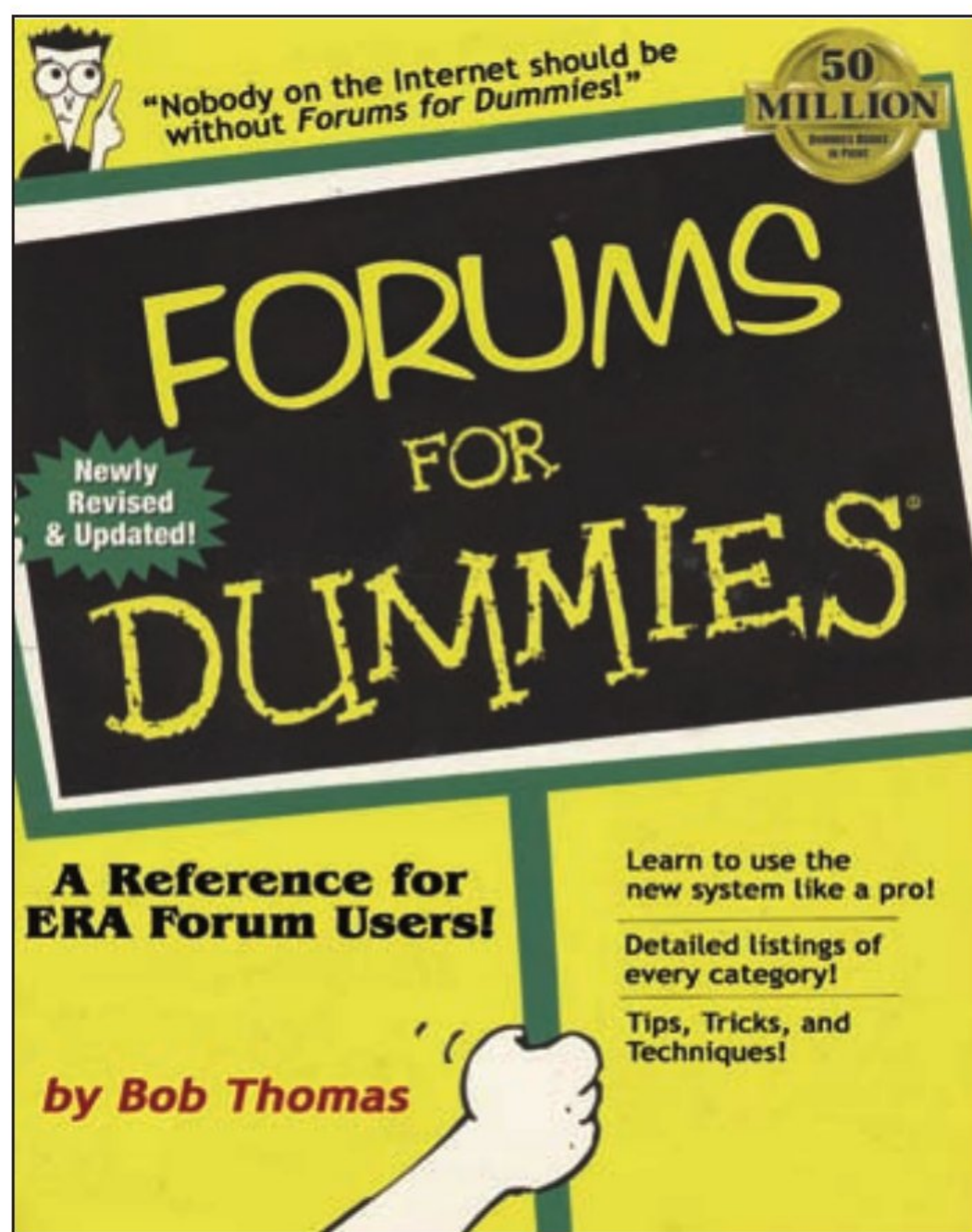
Second: Click on the word "Register" in green type at the bottom of the log in box. This will take you to a Forum Rules page.

Read the rules, check the "I agree" box, and click on the "Register" button at the bottom.

Third: Finally, you'll be taken to the

Forums registration page. Fill out the form and be sure to use the same username and password you used to log in on the main Web site. *That's important.* Be sure to fill out the profile information. This will be your contact info should another member need to communicate with you directly when you're looking for a part, unit, or answer to a tech question. Don't forget to push the "Submit Registration" button when you're finished.

Fourth: Wait for the e-mail from the



Forums (may take a few hours) and click on the link on the e-mail to complete the process. Now you can log in on the Forums Main Page. (See: Forums Home Screen.)

Once you reach the Forums Main Page you'll see there are 13 different forums divided into four basic categories. Here's a short description of what you'll find in each forum:

Main Forums

Technical Help Forum—This is where rebuilders can ask technical questions about specific rebuilding problems. A sample thread is shown at the end of this article.

Business & Industry News—This is where you'll find news on events that affect your business.

Quality Concerns—If there's a quality problem with a specific component or part, you can learn all about it on this forum. The Quality Concerns Forum is the only one that's moderated, which means that messages do not appear instantly. The first thread on the QC Forum explains the use of this forum and why it's a little different.

Marketplace

Wanted—Looking for a hard to find part? List it here and get answers from suppliers and other rebuilders. A sample thread from this forum is shown at the end of this article.

For Sale—Need to clear out unneeded parts, cores or equipment? List it on the marketplace forum. One rebuilder's trash can be another's treasure.

ERA Community

ERA News & Events—Find out what's happening inside the ERA, and all the latest details of upcoming events.

Small Business Issues—Here's where rebuilders can ask for opinions or

share tips on business related problems.

Employment Opportunities—Use this forum to list help wanted.

Off Topic Forum—Discuss anything not connected to rebuilding here.

Political Playground—Want to talk about politics? Please keep all political discussions on this forum.

Forum Help and Suggestions

Help Forum—Need help or have a question about using the Forums? Ask here and get a prompt response from the ERA Web site team.

Suggestion Box—We are all looking for ideas to improve and enhance the Web site and the association. If you have an idea, you can share it here.

Testing Forum—This forum was set up to test forum features during the site's development. We kept it, just in case you'd like to test your ability to upload photos or reply to a thread, use this forum if you'd like to make a test post.

How to Post a Question

If you have a question you'd like to ask or a comment you'd like to make for other members, you can start a new thread. Here's how to do it:

1 – Pick the right forum! Use the guide above to decide which forum will be best for your message. From Forums home page, click on the forum you want to use.

2 – Once your selected forum page opens, you'll see a "New Thread" button on the left side near the top. Click on it to open a new thread page.

3 – This page is where you create your message. Don't let all the choices scare you.

Your first task is to choose a title. Pick one that is short, yet lets others know what you're looking for or asking about.

4 – Type your message in the large box. Be sure to include unit numbers, application and as much information as you can.

5 – Read it over before you submit the new thread. If you would like to include a picture, it can be uploaded from a file on your computer using the "Manage Attachments" button in the box below the "Submit Thread" button.

6 – In addition, below the "Manage Attachment" button, you'll see you have a choice to be notified by e-mail when there is a response to your message.

7 – Lastly, you'll find an assortment of smileys to the right of the message box that can be placed on your message. If you've been reading the messages

The ERA Web site is a communication tool for our members to share information, ideas and opinions relating to our industry. We encourage all members to participate and share their views. However, a few rules are needed to keep the site professional and maintain a setting that is conducive to constructive participation from all members.

RULES OF USE

- Profanity, references to drug use, sexually explicit material, racist or sexist remarks are not permitted anywhere on the Web site (including private messages).
- Personal attacks directed towards other members or obnoxious behavior will not be tolerated (including private messages).
- Forum posts or replies containing specific price information are not permitted. Private messaging or personal e-mails should be used when sharing price information.
- Forum replies that do not add anything constructive to the topic or have been made for personal amusement are not permitted. Such off topic replies directed toward a specific individual should be done using private messaging.
- The Off Topic Forum has been provided for all discussion that does not fit into any of the other forums. Please keep off topic comments on the forum that has been set up for it. Any reply that does not make a contribution to a specific thread should be moved to the Off Topic Forum.
- The ERA retains the right to modify or amend these rules at any time.

posted by other members, you've already seen what they look like. The icons shown below the message box can be used to draw attention to your message and let others know the nature of your request. If used, the icons will appear in front of your message title.

Hope you find this information useful. If you have Internet access and have not yet checked out the ERA Web site, you're missing an opportunity to save yourself time and money.

Tap into the experience of hundreds of other rebuilders. Save yourself the agony of making costly rebuilding mistakes. *The money you save will more than cover the cost of ERA membership!*

Glossary

Log In—When you enter your username and password, the Web site recognizes you as a member. You are logged in. The Forums can remember your username and password for seven days if you check the "Remember Me" box when you log in.

Post—Any message posted to the Forums is a post. It can be a "New Thread" or "Reply."

Thread—Any message that starts a new topic also starts a thread. Any reply to that original message becomes a part of that thread.

User CP—User Control Panel can be used to change your e-mail address, password, profile options and various other personal Forums settings. You can access your Control Panel by clicking on User CP on the left side of the Forums green bar menu.

Smileys—Everyone has seen the smiley face ☺. You can attach a variety of different smiles to your post if you wish. They are a way of showing your emotion concerning the post and their use is optional.

Icons—Icons are used to emphasize the nature of your post. There are 14 Icon options from a question mark to a light bulb, to thumbs up or thumbs down.

FAQ—Frequently Asked Questions can be found on the Forums menu bar next to User CP. Reading the FAQ will answer many questions about using the Forums before you think about asking them.

Moderated—At this time, the only forum that is moderated is Quality Concerns. That simply means your post will not appear immediately. Why? Each post is checked to ensure it follows the forum rules of use. Please be patient.

Avatar—Avatars are pictures that will appear in front of your name each time you post a message. It can be a photo of yourself, your shop, your pet, your company logo, your car, a favorite cartoon or superhero. So long as the file size does not exceed the limits, it can even be animated.

Subscribe (to threads)—You can subscribe to any thread you wish, which means the Forums will send you an e-mail whenever there is a reply. This is especially helpful when you post a question, or are looking for a hard to find part.

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