

Tips for Creating Successful Online Discussions

Online Discussion Boards are a great way to have your students interact and share ideas with each other. It's a place where they can debate topics and ideas just as they would in a face to face class. Here are some tips for running successful online discussion boards.

Check out this Canvas guide on [how to create discussions](#).

Expectations

State what you expect the students to do during an online discussion. For example, how long should a post be, how often should they post, and what you expect out of a reply to other students.

Here's an example for the syllabus:

The purpose of the discussion boards is to allow students to freely exchange ideas. It is imperative to remain respectful of all viewpoints and positions and, when necessary, agree to respectfully disagree. While active and frequent participation is encouraged, cluttering a discussion board with inappropriate, irrelevant, or insignificant material will not earn additional points and may result in receiving less than full credit. Frequency matters, but contributing content that adds value is paramount. Please remember to cite all sources—when relevant—in order to avoid plagiarism. Please post your viewpoints first and then discuss others' viewpoints.

The quality of your posts and how others view and respond to them are the most valued. A single statement mostly implying "I agree" or "I do not agree" is not counted as a post. Explain, clarify, politely ask for details, provide details, persuade, and enrich communications for a great discussion experience. Please note, there is a requirement to respond to at least two fellow class members' posts. Also, remember to cite all sources—when relevant—in order to avoid plagiarism.

Please post before Wednesday of each week by 11:59 p.m. Replies to others are due by Sunday of each week by 11:59 p.m. Posts should be at least 200 words, with sources listed in APA format.

Creating Questions

Great discussion boards start with great questions. Avoid asking questions that can give easy yes or no answers. Instead, think of the Discussion Board as a debate. Ask a question that allows students to give their opinion that is backed up with materials from the class as well as their own sources. Here is a great article about [cultivating online discussions](#).

Monitoring Discussions

Instructor feedback and participation is very important in an online discussion. You don't have to respond to each post, however if you see minimal participation or that the topic is getting off track, you can make a post that encourages students to stay on subject. It also helps to go and ask for some further discussion.

Discussion Rubrics

Rubrics help students understand what is expected in Online Discussions. They set the criteria which students must follow if they want to achieve success. Here is an example of a good, thoughtful Discussion Rubric. Yours does not have to follow this exactly, but it can be used as a guide.

Sample Discussion Board Rubric

	Sophisticated	Strong	Competent	Developing
Description and analysis of the situation or issue	Offer thoughtful, thorough analysis of the material/case. Provide insightful discussion that goes far beyond the basic requirements. Reference relevant examples or readings to clarify your ideas.	Offer thorough analysis of the material/case. Provide discussion that goes beyond the basic requirements. Make an effort to provide relevant examples.	Offers description and some analysis of the material/case. Provides discussion that meets the basic requirements.	Offers description but no analysis of the material/case. Provides discussion that does not meet the basic requirements.
Links to other relevant concepts, discussions, and evidence	Draw explicit and provocative connections between the concepts in this assignment and other relevant discussions. Incorporate significant supporting evidence from class readings and external research.	Draw clear connections between the concepts in this assignment and other relevant discussions. Incorporate some supporting evidence from class readings or external research.	Make an effort to draw connections between the concepts in this assignment and other relevant discussions. Incorporate limited evidence from class readings or external research.	Connections between the concepts in this assignment and other relevant discussions are limited or nonexistent. No incorporation of evidence from class readings or external research.
Includes required components	Include all required components and go beyond the minimum.	Include all required components.	Include most required components.	Significant required components are absent.
Engages with other students' posts	Comments are respectful, enhance understanding of the material, and produce additional conversation; comments see conversations through to their natural end.	Comments are respectful, engaged and produce additional conversation.	Comments are respectful and engaged.	Comments that are included are respectful but not engaged, or comments are absent.