

TIPS FOR DISCUSSIONS ONLINE

GETTING STARTED

Start with Learning Outcomes

Always go back to your LOs to drive the question and determine why you are having the discussion.

Determine the Purpose

Why are students participating in a discussion? demonstrate concept mastery • build community • reflection • think critically

Set expectations for communication:

- ❖ will you allow text-speak or does traditional grammar apply?
- ❖ be clear about the amount and substance of posts required to get credit.
- ❖ define netiquette and appropriate interactions.

Discussions need structure.

Provide that structure in the question, and clear expectations of what they should address.

Online discussions are a great tool to extend classroom conversations and learning by getting students to engage with class material outside of class.

Questions That Facilitate Discussion

Use Bloom's Verbs

focus on the learning outcomes for the course, module, and/or the discussion. Then use Bloom's Taxonomy to help you craft questions that meet your outcomes.

Probing

Craft questions without a single factual answer. Make sure the questions are broad enough to elicit unique posts vs. repetitive responses.

Provide Evidence

Have them cite sources and include quotes that back up their responses or posts.

Relevance

Make your prompt relevant to the students and the content

GETTING BETTER DISCUSSIONS

Getting good discussions online is not as easy as in face-to-face. Below are strategies to encourage discussion.

Good prompts.

Prompts that are relevant to students or the times are more apt to generate good discussion.

Stagger deadlines.

Give one deadline by which students need to make their **ORIGINAL** post and another deadline by which they must **REPLY** to other's posts.

Break students into groups.

Small groups of 4-6 generate the best discussion. It also prevents the discussion task from becoming overwhelming.

Above and below.

To make sure that everyone has a reply to their original post ask students to reply, at a minimum, to the posts above theirs and below.

Question everything.

Ask students to include a question in their original posts. This will give those replying a place to start.

Professor's Role

Be a guide. Make sure that the students stay on task and guide their discussion. Let them know that you are there but don't take over. When a question is asked, give time for another student to answer first before stepping in.

Assessment

Not all boards have to be assessed but if you value student participation you should. Whether we like it or not students value a grade.

Assessment must match the learning objectives and the expectations.

Students must be given clear guidelines on how their work will be assessed.

Consider using a rubric for assessment.

Discussion Types

Don't just assume your students can "discuss." Instead assign a discussion type that will give you the desired result.

Debate: probe both sides of a topic

Devil's Advocate: student must take the opposite side of the original post in their reply.

Exploratory: probe facts & basic knowledge

Challenge: interrogate assumptions, conclusions or interpretations

Relational: ask for comparisons of themes, ideas, or issues

Diagnostic: probe motives or causes **Action:** call for a conclusion or action **Cause & Effect:** ask for causal relationships between ideas, actions or events

Extension: expand the discussion

Hypothetical: pose a change in the facts or issues

Priority: seek to identify the most important issues

Summary: elicit synthesis

Opinion: back up opinion with sources

from: <https://goo.gl/CMBUJZ>

Potential Questions

Do you agree...?

What do you think about...?

What is the most important...?

Place the following in order of priority...

How would you decide about...?

What criteria would you use to assess...?

What would you predict/infer from...?

What ideas can you add to...?

How would you create/design a new...?

What might happen if you combined...?

What solutions would you suggest for...?

"What are the implications of ___?"

"Why is ___ important?"

"What is another way to look at ___?"