

Course Content – Discussions – Best Practices

Help students feel comfortable and provide them with guidelines as they begin to participate in discussions. Here are four general steps to developing successful online discussions:

1. **Define participation requirements.**
 - a. Share your expectations. Create a discussion where students can read about etiquette and access grading information.
 - b. Model proper online interaction and reinforce appropriate behavior with public recognition.
2. **Craft an effective question.**
 - a. Incorporate multimedia resources into your questions to reduce the monotony of purely text-based interactions. With the popularity of services like YouTube, you can ask students to view a clip and ask for responses.
3. **Encourage new ideas.**
 - a. If discussion posts contain too much agreement and not enough questioning of ideas, assign students with the last names A-M to support one side and N-Z to support the other.
4. **Moderate.**
 - a. Establish your presence. Ask for clarification, resources, or input from silent participants.

Suggested Forum Settings

Control the behavior of forums in a discussion board in these ways:

- Monitor quality and behavior.
- Have a tightly controlled forum and use it to evaluate student performance. Select the grading and moderating options. To be sure students focus on the existing threads, don't allow the creation of new threads.
- Promote originality and a variety of ideas.
- Create "post first" forums. Students must respond before they can read and reply to their classmates' posts.¹

¹ https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Instructor/Interact/Discussions/Create_Discussions