

Discussion Board - Helpful Hints

Netiquette - Remind students of proper “netiquette” - a respectful code of conduct when communicating online. Some netiquette tips:

- Be very clear and stick to the point when writing posts
- Check for spelling/grammar errors and do not use slang
- Be respectful of others with appropriate choice of language
- Challenge others, but avoid personal attacks
- Be careful when using humor online – it can easily be misinterpreted

Replace Subject Lines - When replying to discussion board posts, it is helpful to replace the existing subject line with a descriptive subject line pertaining to the post. This makes it much easier to follow the thread and search for posts as the discussion thread grows.

Anonymous Posting – Although it is an option to allow students to post anonymously, think carefully before enabling this setting. While it might be an effective strategy for a short or controlled period of time, allowing anonymous posts opens up the possibility for students to publish inappropriate or hurtful comments that cannot be tracked.

Subscribe to Threads/Forums – Turning this setting on provides students the option of subscribing to threads or forums via email, helping to insure that they receive notice of new postings.

Instructor Participation – It is not necessary that the instructor respond to every post, but it is a good idea to participate in each thread. Not only does this let the students know the instructor is interested in what they are writing about, but it’s also a way to check in and moderate the board, making sure the discussions stay on topic and are not inappropriate.

Possible Uses of Discussion Board:

‘Student Café’ – Designate one forum as an area where students can ask general questions about the class, instead of emailing them to the instructor or TAs.

Assessment – Include posting to a discussion forum as part of a graded assignment. For example, the assignment could be that students have to read a chapter from their text and respond thoughtfully to questions on the discussion board, as well as comment on two of their peers’ responses. Include a rubric and/or sample postings to give students a clear idea of what is expected.

Peer Review – Students can post rough drafts of papers, assignments, etc. to a forum for feedback from class members.

Group Discussion Board – If students are doing any group work in the class, they can use their group’s discussion board (created separately from the course discussion board) to discuss and collaborate on their project.