

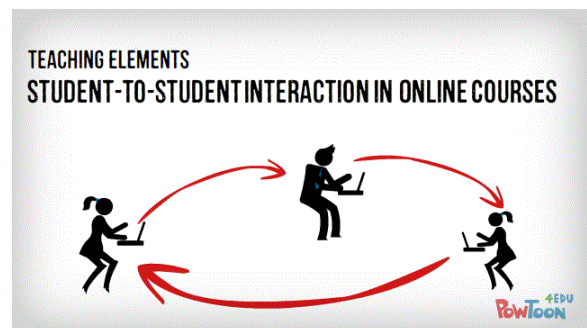
TEACHING ELEMENTS STUDENT-TO-STUDENT INTERACTION ONLINE

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WHAT IS IT?

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN FOSTERING STUDENT INTERACTION AND COLLABORATION IN ONLINE COURSES?

Student-to-student interaction is a vital part of any course experience. In a classroom setting, this interaction happens naturally, as students listen to each other's comments, ask each other questions, and build rapport through frequent contact. Instructors can also foster student-to-student interaction in an online setting, but it may require building formal and informal interaction opportunities in your course design. Designing for a high level of student-to-student interaction online is so important that university accrediting bodies, like the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, require evidence of it in online course and program design.



WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE THAT STUDENT INTERACTION HAS A POSITIVE IMPACT ON LEARNING?

Research has shown that online courses with high levels of student-to-student interaction have a positive impact on learning. For example:

- Student-to-student interaction is vital to building community in an online environment, which supports productive and satisfying learning, and helps students develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills (Kolloff, 2011).
- In one study, students who had high levels of interaction with other students reported high levels of satisfaction and learning (Swan, 2002).
- Students in an online course with a high level of interaction achieved higher performance than students in the same online course with only a moderate level of interaction (Beaudoin, 2001).
- Interaction has an impact on student achievement and satisfaction, as reflected by test performance, grades, and student satisfaction (Roblyer & Ekhaml, 2000).

STUDENT-TO-STUDENT INTERACTION IN ACTION

The basic principles of interaction in online education are rooted in Moore's (1989) definition of the three types of interaction: learner-content, learner-instructor, and learner-learner interaction. To support learner-learner (or student-to-student) interaction online, course design must address these elements (Roblyer & Ekhaml, 2000):

Rapport building

To achieve a high level of student-to-student interaction in an online course, students must have many opportunities to build rapport. This is often accomplished by providing socially-focused exchanges such as guided introductions, exchanges of personal information, and participation in activities designed to increase social rapport. For more information, see [Building Rapport in Online Courses](#).

Instructional activities

Instructional activities that encourage reflection and discussion support student-to-student interaction online. These activities require students to work with one another, share results, and may go beyond the typical course discussion. For more information, see [Interactive Online Activities](#).

Use of technology

A number of technologies can support student-to-student interaction in online courses. To promote student-to-student interaction, instructors must select the technologies appropriate for the course goals and that students can use effectively. For more information, see [Technologies for Online Student Interaction](#).

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

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