

TEACHING ELEMENTS

9 PRACTICES FOR YOUR DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

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When designing your discussion activity:

1. Use Bloom's Taxonomy as a framework for crafting questions that encourage students to use higher order thought processes such as analysis, creation, and evaluation. (Milman, 2009).

Bloom's Higher Order Levels:	Question Openers
Analysis	What is the relationship between ... What factors need to be considered when ...
Creation	What predictions can you make from ... Propose an alternative solution that will address...
Evaluation	Determine the best course of action when ... Critique the author's argument in support of...

2. Communicate criteria to your students on the quality and length of the responses you expect and how they will be graded. This can take the form of a rubric or narrative. For examples, see the [5-Point Rubric](#) and [Advanced Rubric](#). In addition, offer examples of "quality posts" to help illustrate your expectations.
3. Organize Discussion forums and topics in a similar fashion to how the overall course schedule or outline is structured (Ko, 2001). If the course information is organized by weeks and what will be covered during

that time, then organize your Discussions by weeks and the discussion topics they will address during that time.

4. Stagger the deadlines so that students have an initial due date to post their own response and a secondary due date to respond to other student posts.
5. Create additional forums or topics for online exchanges or questions that digress from the discussion's intended focus. (Ko, 2001). A virtual café area or general Q&A topic for students can be places to keep extraneous or "off-topic" comments and questions separate from the course- or topic-specific discussions.

When facilitating your discussion activity:

1. Determine your pattern for participation and make it consistent so students know when to expect you to check in on discussion activities. Ko (2001) suggests logging in 3-5 times throughout the week for short periods of time to address discussion.
2. When you participate in the discussion, model the kind of written responses you expect from students. In addition to demonstrating the style or quality of writing you have in mind, using a respectful and encouraging tone can help establish a degree of social etiquette that students should also aspire to.
3. Close out each week's discussion activity with a written summary. This summary can reinforce important course concepts and ideas brought up, provide clarification and additional information in areas you want students to work on further, and acknowledge a variety of viewpoints on an issue or problem that students have shared.
4. Develop your own repository of pre-written responses or "keeper" posts that address the same questions, issues or themes that tend to surface for students during discussion over time and from course to course (Schiffer, 2013).

Reference List

- Milman, N.B. (2009). Crafting the "Right" Online Discussion Questions Using the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy as a Framework. *Distance Learning*. 6(4): 61-64.
- Ko, S., Rossen, S. (2001). *Teaching Online: A Practical Guide*. Boston, MA.: Houghton-Mifflin Company.
- Schiffer, E. (2013). Tips for Online Instructors: Managing Files, Feedback, and Workload. *Faculty Focus*. Retrieved 9/2013 from: <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/tips-for-online-instructors-managing-files-feedback-and-workload/> .