Online Discussion Checklist

An online discussion is a valuable digital communication tool that requires a unique skillset. Use the various strategies and resources listed below to facilitate successful discussions in digital learning environments.

Online Discussion Checklist

- [ ] Begin a discussion group with friendly introductions. Finding commonalities will begin to build community, leading to more motivated and productive discussions.
- [ ] Stay involved and be visible in all discussions, without overpowering student-to-student discourse or becoming the central focus.
- [ ] Model for students how to be explicit and use precise wording to make a point in a text-based discussion. This is important when students cannot rely on facial expressions, body language, and other social cues.
- [ ] Use sarcasm and humor judiciously because it can easily be misinterpreted in online discussions.
- [ ] Hold students accountable for reviewing previous responses before contributing, thereby moving discussions forward rather than repeating information.
- [ ] Stake out a controversial position or play devil's advocate to challenge students to think through their ideas.
- [ ] Engage students in thinking by inviting them to problem-solve a dilemma you are facing.
- [ ] Ask questions that can be responded to with a thoughtful answer.
- [ ] Provide feedback to let students know when they are on the right track.
- [ ] Highlight important points made during discussions.
- [ ] Question students about their understanding, or ask them to clarify and expand on certain ideas.
- [ ] Use timing in your responses to affect the pace and feel of conversations. An instantaneous response helps to keep a conversation moving, but may make students feel pressured to also respond quickly. A timely response, such as within one or two days, helps students feel responded to yet allows time for reflection.

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- ☐ Correct misconceptions and misunderstandings.
- ☐ Provide direct instruction if students are struggling to understand the material.
- ☐ Teach students how to appropriately respond to disagreements or possible misinterpretations. Set the tone for higher-level discourse that allows for different points of view in a respectful environment.
- ☐ Post thoughtful answers that contain more questions and move the conversation forward, thereby sustaining the flow of the conversation beyond a simple question/answer rhythm.

Online Discussion Rubric

Use this rubric to self- and peer-assess participation in online discussions.

	4	3	2	1
Content	I post relevant, thought-provoking, researched comments and questions.	I post relevant, thought-provoking comments and questions.	I post generally relevant comments along with occasional irrelevant or superficial remarks.	I often post irrelevant or superficial comments.
Interaction	I respond to my classmates' posts with comments and questions that enrich, deepen, and extend the conversation.	I respond to my classmates' posts with comments that deepen and extend the conversation.	I respond to posts with relevant comments and questions.	I respond to posts with superficial or irrelevant comments.
Participation	I post well before deadlines and interact with a wide variety of my classmates.	I often post before deadlines and interact with different students.	I post by deadlines and interact with different students.	I sometimes do not meet deadlines, or interact with just one or two students.
Online Etiquette	I always observe the conventions of online etiquette, and thoughtfully and respectfully consider others' ideas.	I observe the conventions of online etiquette and always treat other posters with respect.	I sometimes do not follow the conventions of online etiquette, but I always treat other posters with respect.	I sometimes treat other posters disrespectfully.
Writing	My writing is clear, lively, and free of errors.	My writing is clear and free of errors that distract from meaning.	My writing is vague and occasionally difficult to understand because of errors.	My writing is full of errors that make it difficult to understand.

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