Leading Online Discussion: General Tips and Tricks

By Caity Kelly, PIE GA
Zoom Session Guidelines

• Please mute your microphone when you are not speaking

• Be aware that other attendees can see you if your webcam is turned on

• If you are having trouble seeing our screenshare, try selecting the gallery view on Zoom

• Try not to talk over other attendees if you are making comments/asking questions; please use the hand raising function or inform us in the chat that you would like to speak

• Please silence your phone/email as other participants may be able to hear notifications
Nice to meet you! 😊

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- Current GA for the Program for Instructional Excellence
- Master’s student in the Instructional Systems and Learning Technologies program
- Former online TA/online class instructional design intern
My Presentation Agenda

♦ Explore tips and styles for creating and facilitating asynchronous online discussion in the classroom.

♦ Explore techniques for facilitating effective synchronous discussion sessions.

♦ Discuss discussion techniques you might utilize in your online classroom.
Types of Discussion

- Asynchronous
  - Single prompt style
  - Multiple prompt style

- Synchronous
  - Zoom
Asynchronous: Single Prompt Style

The instructor creates one discussion prompt to which students generate responses.

The question may include one or multiple parts.

Some instructors prefer to set Canvas discussion settings so that students must post a response before they can view other responses.

Write thorough directions with clear requirements and deadlines for participation.
Sample Single Prompt Discussion

All Sections

Directions

The discussion is divided into two portions: An initial response to the prompt and a minimum of two peer responses. You must participate on at least 2 separate days this week. The initial prompt is due by Wednesday of this week. The 2 peer responses are due by Sunday of next week.

1. Initial Prompt: Summarize a small section of the reading/learning materials that particularly interested you. What thoughts did this section bring up for you? Do you have any practical examples or critiques of the information? What questions did this section bring up for you?
   A. What academic and/or work experiences have you had that can build your resume/CV for graduate school? If you have not had many experiences, what types of opportunities might you seek to build your CV/resume?
   B. Look into FSU resources for finding jobs, internship, organization, and research opportunities. Share links to at least 2 resources in this thread and describe how they might be helpful to your peers.

2. Peer Responses: You must submit a minimum of 2 peer responses. Responses should consist of more than simply “I agree” or “great job.” You should expand upon their post with your own thoughts and/or ask critical thinking questions to continue the conversation.
Asynchronous: Multiple Prompt Style

The instructor creates several discussion prompt options and allows students to explore those that interest them.

Use the discussion prompt space to write directions; reply to the discussion prompt space to start multiple threads that your students can follow.

Write thorough directions with clear requirements and deadlines for participation.
Module 1 Discussion Board: Undergraduate Preparation

Use this forum to discuss the topics below pertaining to overall graduate school processes and undergraduate preparation. Posts are graded pass/fail. If you reference any course materials, please cite them. To receive full participation credit, students must post:

1 Initial Post: Choose at least one of the prompts listed below and respond to the questions/ideas in the prompt. Your response should be thorough and draw upon your own experiences/thoughts as well as information from the course materials. You are welcome and encouraged to respond to more than one prompt. See the syllabus for discussion board guidelines.
   - Due Wednesday, 2/05, 11:59 P.M.

1 Peer Response: Post a response to at least one peer that expands upon the questions about their initial post response. You are welcome and encouraged to respond to more than one peer.
   - Due Saturday, 2/08, 11:59 P.M.

Note: You do not have to respond to every question in the prompt--focus on ideas that interest you.

Examples
Discussion directions (top left)

Multiple discussion prompt options (lower right)

Caitlin Kelly
Oct 8, 2019

Several of our materials this week discussed various opportunities/experiences undergraduate students may pursue in order to give themselves a competitive edge for getting into graduate school. What are some valuable opportunities you have experienced? Jobs? Internships? RSO's? Research?

If you have not had any experiences, what are some opportunities that you are aware of--on campus or in your community--that might be of interest to you?

Use this thread to brainstorm ideas for your Initial Thoughts Paper (due Saturday, 2/08).

Jake Vorhees mentions several strategies for networking with professors to secure letters of recommendation and other helpful connections for pursuing higher education. Which of his tips do you currently practice? Would you add any tips to his list? Do you have any “DON'T” tips to add to his list of “DO” tips? Aside from faculty, what other professionals might you want to network with?
DO:

- Provide clear instructions for satisfactory participation
- Assess participation based on the instructions/criteria provided
- Provide an example of a high-quality discussion response students are novices to online discussion
- Show some involvement in the forum, depending on your students’ need for scaffolding
- Link to tech support for your discussion board medium (likely Canvas)
- Link to netiquette/online civility guidelines in your course syllabus

General Asynchronous Dos & Don’ts
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DON’T:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dominate the discussion; give students time to converse with each other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discuss sensitive information via discussion board—adhere to university policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcomplicate your discussion tool; use a tool that fulfills your students’ needs</td>
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Synchronous Discussion

You will most likely use Zoom integrated through Canvas.

- Note: Zoom enables FSU FERPA/HIPPA compliance

Great for review sessions, summarizing “main points” of the unit, or activities better performed live.

Be careful with assigning required synchronous sessions—consider student schedules and the time zones.
DO:

- Set an agenda for each synchronous session; know the main points you want to cover
- Have any files/documents you need pulled up and ready
- Set rules/guidelines for sessions—particularly if webcams are enabled
- Mute your computer notifications and remind students to do the same
- Test your technology prior to meeting time
- Link to tech support for the synchronous tool

General Synchronous Dos & Don’ts
DON’T:

- Have sensitive student information or your private information pulled up during sessions
- Discuss sensitive student information during the group session—adhere to FSU policies
- Ignore distracting audio/visuals from students; practice muting mics and stopping webcams if needed
- Do other tasks while you are presenting
Questions? 😊
Check out our TA support forum!

Support Forum Highlights:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=id3Kxjrrj8k

Enrollment Link:
https://canvas.fsu.edu/enroll/JB4D8K

Evaluation Form:
https://fsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8HOfBUkLJKiskkJ