Discussions

As in a face-to-face course, instructors may want to engage their learners in discussions and group activities. Online discussions require planning.

- Instructors should model the language and format of discussions that they seek from learners.
- Instructors may also establish a water-cooler "general questions" space that is open for all learners. The water-coolers allow learners to ask questions, allows instructors to answer questions, and allow learners to seek out feedback from their peers; it is a unified meeting place for clarification. This area may also be named "muddiest point," if it operates as a space for learners to indicate where the current material confuses them the most.
- It is important to monitor this space regularly to provide replies. Learners often come to these spaces with many questions. Considering these questions in advance can help both learners and instructors to gain the most benefit from this activity.
- Some considerations include the following;
    - What will learners discuss?
    - For what purpose?
    - What guidelines will they follow?
    - How many times is a learner required to speak? Allowed to respond?
    - What language conventions will learners follow (e.g. No text-speak? Text-speak allowed? Grammar? Punctuation? Spelling?)?
    - What civility guidelines should learners expect?
    - How long should the post be? How many words?
    - Are learners allowed to repeat another learner's answer?
    - Do learners need to respond to more than one post? If so, how many?
    - Are discussion responses high- or low-stakes?
    - How long is an original post?
    - How long is a response as opposed to an original post?
    - Do learners cite research when posting to a discussion? What kind? How?
    - When discussions change, where will learners look for the new discussion prompts?
- Discussions can also be broken into smaller sections or rooms.
    - What will each group of learners discuss?
    - For what purpose?
    - Will groups share their responses to the prompt? At what point?
    - Is there a deadline for concluding discussions?

Encourage learners who may have challenges with communications to seek assistance either from ITS or from the Center for Disability Resources.

Sources and Relevant Links

- Discussion Boards
- Lock a Discussion Board
- Linking Discussion Boards
- How to Search Discussion Posts
- Printing Discussion Threads
- Subscribe to a Discussion Forum or Thread
- Grading the Discussion Board
- How to Collect Discussion Posts
- Discussion Board Thread Not Available for Students
- Ordering the Discussion Board Forum List