

# Online Discussion Guidelines for Students

Participation in the weekly discussions is critical for maximizing learning experiences. Students must be part of an online community that collectively interacts through discussion, to enhance and support the group's academic performance.

In order to facilitate the weekly discussions, your instructor will:

- Play an active role in the conversation (posting on at least 3 days).
- Share ideas and ask questions to encourage critical thinking.
- Foster professional, polite discussion.
- Comment on student posts to help deepen student learning.
- Remove posts that are offensive or inappropriate at their discretion.

Part of the assessment criteria for online courses includes evaluating the quality and quantity of your participation in the weekly discussions. Expectations for participation in online discussions are outlined below.

NOTE: Please review the discussion rubric for specific grading criteria.

## Expectations

### 1. Engage in a dynamic discussion which lasts throughout the week.

- Post your initial comments to each discussion question by the due date posted in your course to receive full credit for participation in the initial post's timing. Monday is the first day of the discussion for each week.
- Reply to the posts of other students and the instructor on multiple days during the week. To receive full credit for participation in the distribution of discussion responses, you must respond to at least two other students on two separate days, along with posting your initial discussion response for 3 days.

## 2. Advance the knowledge of the group on the topic at hand with substantive posts.

- Your initial response should address the entire question, problem, or situation as presented for discussion. It is not necessary to copy and paste the discussion question at the beginning of your initial response.
- If appropriate, gather research beyond the course materials provided to support your initial response.
- When making posts with research, cite your research, in-text, using APA formatting.
- Be succinct. The discussion is meant to be an informed conversation, not a research paper.
- When relevant, support statements by including prior knowledge, work experiences, references, websites, resources, etc. (give credit and use APA citations when appropriate).
- When appropriate, extend the topic by introducing a new idea or adding to the idea after the initial discussion question has been addressed.
- Ensure posts and replies are thorough and thoughtful. Posting "I agree" or "Good post" without adequate commentary is not sufficient.
- Ask questions of fellow students and the instructor, as needed. Try using phrases such as:
  - "What would happen if..."
  - "Could this be ethical in all situations, such as..."
  - "How would this rationale work when..."
  - "That is a unique way of looking at this because..."
  - "This made me wonder if..."

## 3. Build a learning community through professional interaction.

- Revisit the discussion and respond (if necessary) to what others (both students and the instructor) have commented on to your initial response.
- Read what has been previously posted by others to avoid repeating comments or questions.
- Respond to a variety of individuals, not just one person, to develop rapport.
- "Agreeably disagree" with ideas, not individuals. Avoid phrasing challenges in a way that may be interpreted as a personal attack.
- Be open to being challenged or confronted with your ideas and assumptions. Healthy debate is encouraged.
- Be polite, positive, and professional at all times:
  - Avoid slang (e.g., "newb" or "dude").

- Do not curse or make insulting or inflammatory statements.
  - AVOID USE OF THE CAPS LOCK KEY – THIS IS CONSIDERED SHOUTING.
- Ensure posts are free of grammatical, formatting, or structural errors:
  - Use standard spelling of words and avoid “text speak” (e.g., you vs. u, LOL, BTW)
  - Pay attention to the spell check feature and correct any mistakes.
  - Use standard font style (Arial, Open Sans, Calibri, Helvetica), and color (black).