

Best Practices for Async Discussions

With team members all over the world, it's important to learn how to have effective async discussions. Slack is great for instant messaging and quick interactions, but it's hard to have longer, deeper discussions.

Especially for important topics, like advocacy, we want to be sure everyone gets to participate in a meaningful way — no matter their timezone or how busy they are when the conversation started. Async discussions will allow *everyone* to contribute when *they* are ready, so be sure to leave the conversations "open" for several days to ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate.

Since Slack is our main communication platform, here's a suggested approach.

Challenges:

- **Out of sight, out of mind:**
 - You post something you need feedback on, and other people post something else right after, and your post disappears from sight...and anyone's mind.
 - Long posts make this especially hard because they take the entire "real estate."
- **"Detached" messages:** Someone responds in the chat (vs. thread), maybe even after someone posts something else, and the next person replies in the thread, making it difficult to follow the conversation.

Best practice (WIP)

1. **Starting** the conversation:
 - **Single question:**
 - Start with the 🗨️ emoji so people know this is a discussion and they are invited to participate
 - Keep the conversation open for a few days to allow everyone to respond at a convenient time for them (please respond by mm/dd/yy)
 - Keep the first message high-level and short, and provide more context in the thread if needed >> Let's not post long messages that will remove previous messages from people's sight
 - Unless necessary, x-out the link preview (they take a lot of "real estate" pushing previous messages out)
 - **For more complex discussions with multiple related but separate questions:**

- Same as above plus the following
 - Start with one post providing clear context (what's this about)
 - Add follow-up questions below the initial post: each question should be a separate post starting with the 🕒 emoji indicating that that's where people should add their replies or comments.
2. Since it's an async discussion, there is no need to answer right away, but everyone should respond in the thread. If you have an additional point (same topic, different discussion), start **a new discussion with the 🕒 emoji**.
 3. Keep initial thread messages short, especially if there are multiple, so they are easily visible without much scrolling.
 4. **Conclusion:** Once the response window is closed, the person who started the conversation should write a quick conclusion in a new thread.
 - Link back to different discussion points or comments for reference so people can easily get back to them.

Example:

- Intro post:
🕒 **Name the topic you'd like to discuss** (please respond by mm/dd/yy)
Provide some context. Maybe why you want to know about it, why it's important, and what is it for, etc.

Keep it short. If you need to provide more info, add it to the thread
- 🕒 **Question one**
- 🕒 **Question two, etc.**

What to avoid

1. Avoid posting unrelated messages during an ongoing discussion. If it's important, be sure to make the initial post short so the conversation above doesn't get lost, and post follow-up info in thread form.