

Lesson 4: Instructor Interactions in the Discussion

Welcome to Lesson 4: Instructor Interactions in the Discussion

Instructors on Packback manage the discussion at the meta-level; guiding the entire class by observing trends and then intervening through feedback that impacts the entire class.

With just a few minutes each week, instructors on Packback can perform a few high leverage actions that maximize student engagement in their discussion community.

Each week, instructors should start off their interaction with Packback by reviewing the week's top posts.

Each week the Digital TA analyzes and ranks all posts submitted during the last deadline period and sends you an email with the top six most highly ranked posts of the past week. Reviewing the post sent in this email is an easy way to select posts to interact with that week.

An alternative is to use our smart sort feature. Sorting will help you save time finding high quality questions in your community. While our default setting will show you the newest questions first, you can choose to sort by hot to find recent high quality posts or undiscovered to find great questions that have not yet received a response.

Once you've reviewed top posts, we recommend selecting three exemplary posts to feature each week. Featured posts are sent to your class in the form of a weekly digest and appear highlighted in a separate tab of the community. These featured posts help students see examples of what an excellent post looks like, and can allow you to gently guide the discussion by drawing students attention to topical and relevant posts.

If you ever get too busy or forget to review posts for a week, your Digital TA has your back, ensuring students will still see great example posts. If you don't select any posts to feature, your Digital TA will auto feature the top four posts ranked for that week.

To feature a post, click on any of the posts links from your weekly recommended post email or navigate directly to a page on Packback that you'd like to highlight. Click the options dropdown and select the feature option. The posts will now appear in the feature tab and be queued up to send them the weekly digest.

Once you've selected your Featured posts for the week, the single biggest way that you can scalably manage your community and improve student satisfaction is to leave "Praise" feedback on those featured posts.

On Packback, Praise feedback is public. By leaving Praise feedback on a Featured post, all the students in your community can see that you as the instructor are present in the discussion, and they're able to read your feedback.

And because Featured posts are highly visible, that makes your feedback highly visible as well. This allows the impact of your feedback to not just be limited to the student who receives it, but to any student who reads the post. This helps students understand what you think makes a great question or response and helps them build pattern recognition for how they should be writing their own work. To give feedback on a post, click the Options drop down and select give feedback.

In your Praise, explain what you found valuable about the students post and share your comments and why this post is meaningful for the rest of the class to read. Remember, every student in the class can see this feedback.

So, design your comments in a way that adds instructive value to any reader of the feedback. Students will then receive the weekly digest email, directing them to read the post that you featured that week.

If you would like to more directly guide the discussion, "Pinning" can allow you to set the tone of the discussion by highlighting a specific question and pinning it to the top of the feed. This makes the Pin question the first thing that all students see when they log into your discussion community. You can use "Pinning" both to highlight a student question or to post guiding instructions in your community.

With just a few minutes each week and these tools, you can scalably manage your course discussion in a way that leads to great course outcomes and student satisfaction.

In the next lesson, we'll discuss how to bring inquiry based learning full circle into other aspects of your course.