

Discussion Post Tips

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1. Read and re-read the discussion prompt

- Be sure you know what it is asking of you.
- Look for any attachments and read them carefully.
- Does it mention particular sources you should use or consult? For example, does it ask you to refer to research support for your ideas, to respond to the posts of colleagues, to reflect on your own experience?
- Generally, academic discussion posts are meant to be less formal than research papers, but If you can cite research sources or quote the literature (or your colleagues), you will be practicing academic honesty and adding power to your posts.

2. Prepare adequately

- Be sure you have read any required readings and the posts of colleagues who got there before you did.
- When reading, make notes about things that could inform your posts.
- Focus on a small number of big ideas. Rambling is too easy and it will lose your readers.

3. Write, but don't hit "submit"

- Treat your initial writing as a draft. It is a good idea to do the initial writing in a word processor.
- Stay focused on your key points and strive for clear and logical analysis of the problem (or reading) and a strong synthesis of your own thoughts on the topic—that is, write like the scholar you are.
- Write in complete sentences. Keep them brief. Avoid or at least minimize typographical emphases (CAPS, **bold**, *italics*, underlining). If appropriate, include hyperlinks to sites you want to refer to.

- Consider including questions or speculations that will encourage your colleagues to respond to your post.
- Include references if you have used any external sources (including colleagues' posts).

4. Review and revise.

- Read your entire post as if someone else wrote it, i.e., read critically.
- Check the tone of your post. You want it to be honest and rigorous, but you don't want it to be rude or offensive (it is surprisingly easy to offend people when they cannot see your facial expressions.) So, respond to colleagues honestly but generously.
- Be sure you have followed any applicable guidelines (see above).
- Make sure it is clear, easy to understand and stays on point.
- One good way of writing reactions to others' work is to tell them how you understood or interpret what they said or what questions the post raised for you. This allows you to respond academically without seeming to be unduly critical.

5. Submit.

- Copy and paste your post to a document for your own records. (If you prepared a draft with a word processor, you just saved a step.)
- Wait patiently for responses from your classmates.

Above suggestions, largely based on my own practice, were also informed by guides provided by

Walden University

<https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/assignments/discussionpost/writing>

eLearners website

<https://www.elearners.com/education-resources/online-learning/how-to-write-an-a-discussion-posting/>

Megan Fung, Penn State World Campus

<https://blog.worldcampus.psu.edu/writing-tips-preparing-effective-discussion-post/>

An additional source, full of advice on how instructors may promote better online discussions is at <http://designingforlearning.info/ecoachingtips/ecoaching-tip-7/>.