

Creating Effective Online Discussions

Discussion Ideas:

Choosing how we want students to engage with the course material will depend on what students should be able to do, know, or value as a result of participating in the discussion.

Discussion activities can require students to:

- Reflect on their personal experiences and points of view
- Complete a task and report their findings
- Propose alternate solutions to a scenario and respond to “what if” questions
- Join teams to compare and contrast models
- Critique an article, movie, or documentary
- Simulate role play and debate
- Curate relevant resources

Discussion Logistics:

How can my discussion result in a productive learning experience?

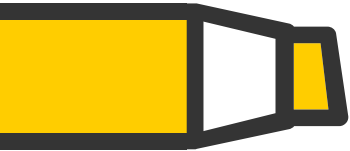
- Establish Ground Rules for Interaction
- Provide Clear Instructions and Communicate Your Expectations
- Set Early Deadlines for Postings
- Create Small Discussion Groups
- Assign Grades
- Use a Rubric to Grade Online Discussions

Using ICON (Canvas):

Canvas, the Learning Management System powering ICON, offers step-by-step guides on how to create, edit, set, manage, and grade discussion forums. Here is what you need to get started!

- [How do I create a discussion as an instructor?](#)

For more ICON "How To" guides, visit the [Canvas Instructor Guide](#) page



Effective Online Discussion Prompts

Does your prompt promote critical thinking?

- Create prompts that challenge students to go beyond information recall to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information.
- Guide your students in discovering and connecting relationships between concepts and ideas. Encourage students to integrate pieces of knowledge together.
- Ask them to make judgments based on specific criteria.

Have you crafted meaningful student interaction?

- Require students to make **follow-up posts** that continue the conversation beyond their initial post and incorporate responses into the discussion grade.
- Define the **number of response posts** students should review, how many responses they should make.
- Provide **follow-up questions** or reply prompts. For instance, consider asking students to compare/contrast their findings, to explain similarities/differences they observed in their approach to solving a problem and ask each other follow-up questions.
- Create and **stagger mini-deadlines**. Hold students responsible for posting responses by a certain deadline. Encourage students to visit the forum more than just once.