

How to Lead a Discussion in an Online Classroom

It's now 4:45pm. By 6pm, you'll be able to:

- Describe how different technologies shape online discussions
- Explain how online discussion enhances learning outcomes
- Select the type of technology that best matches your goals
- Assess the effectiveness of your online discussion assignment

Brainstorming Activity: “Speed Date”

Find a seat in one of the opposite-facing rows of chairs. You will have two minutes to discuss the following questions with your partner before the “bell” sounds. Then, one row of students will stand up and move down one chair to discuss the questions with the next partner.

- 1) How does leading an online discussion differ from leading an in-class discussion?
- 2) As a T.A., have you ever lead on online discussion?

How to Organize Online Discussion

- Set Expectations and Ground Rules
 - participation: frequency, length, response time
- Plan and Structure Online Discussion
 - roles: question, respond, summarize, comment
- Connect Online Discussions with In-Class Activities

How to Spark the Conversation

Asking good questions: The LAW Model

L = What you **L**earned: “Identify one important concept you learned from this activity.”

A = How does it **A**pply: “Apply what you learned from this activity to some aspect of your life.”

W = What are you **W**ondering: “What question(s) has the activity raised for you?”

(The LAW Model graphic cited from Cornell Center for Teaching Excellence website)

How Technology Choice Shapes Online Discussion

- Written or verbal? (Piazza v. Skype)
- Formal or informal? (Blackboard v. Twitter)
- Recorded or evanescent? (Skype v. Google Hangout)
- Public or private? (Facebook v. Facebook's claims)
- Synchronous or asynchronous? (Blackboard v. Wordpress)

Online Discussion: Technology Tour

How to talk the talk: A “discussion board” hosts multiple online “discussion threads”, often organized by topic.

Questions and prompts typically open threads. Users can then respond to the original prompt and/or reply to other users’ responses. “Course management systems,” like Blackboard, can host discussion boards and threads.

- Blackboard: Cornell-supported discussion threads
- Piazza: Cornell-supported discussion threads
- Google Hangout: study groups

Application Activity: 4-Minute Paper

Take out a piece of paper and pencil, and respond to the following questions for 4 minutes. Then stand up, and find two new people to discuss your answers for another 6 minutes. Class conversation will follow.

- 1) Think about a class you are teaching or would like to teach. Describe 2 learning goals for this course, using specific, measurable terms.
- 2) Explain how incorporating online discussion could help your students to reach those goals. What technology best supports those goals?

Reflection Activity: “Think-Pair-Share”

Take 2 minutes to consider the following questions and make notes. Next, discuss your responses with someone new for 4 minutes. Afterwards, the class will talk as a group.

- 1) How would you assess an online discussion?
- 2) What are the challenges might arise, and how could you overcome them?

Online Discussion References

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(Online Discussion References cited from Cornell Center for Teaching Excellence website)