

MOODLE LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: ORIENTATION FOR STUDENTS – Special Topics: Forums

In an online course, class discussion takes place in writing in areas called forums (or discussions). Please remember a few simple rules when responding to a discussion question:

Acknowledge that virtual communication is real and human.

You do not talk to a computer; rather you interact with your classmates and instructor through your written responses to posts on your course site. You create a sense of presence by personalizing your responses and reading those posted by your classmates. This dialog offsets the feeling of isolation, and the more you participate the more you will feel involved and motivated.

Create mental pictures of classmates.

From what you say and how you say it, you develop your electronic personality, the person you become when you are interacting with others. You get to know your classmates and instructor in the same manner. It is from these written images that you "see" one another. While you should have fun, remember to keep your responses appropriate to the college classroom setting.

Take advantage of the online environment.

Since no one can see you, there are no stereotypes. Also, you are not affected by visual feedback or interruptions from your classmates. In addition, you won't be intimidated by individuals who speak faster than you because you can take all the time you need. You can think your ideas through, reflect on the assigned topics and materials, and write and edit your responses before you post them for your class to read and consider.

Be a "noisy learner," one who is active and creative and talkative.

You must not only "go to class" but also say something. Because your presence is not visible, if you don't respond to discussion board posts, e-mail, or chat room dialog, it is as if you are not in class. This requirement differs greatly from the traditional classroom, where you can often just show up, sit down, and listen. Through your online discussions you gain new ideas from your peers, and they learn from you as well.

Explore your comfort level.

How is this online environment different for you? Just as you would in a face-to-face (f2f) class, talk with your classmates and instructors about your fears and insecurities as well as your successes and surprises. The difference is that you are

doing this through writing. As you share your feelings, you are also building a sense of community.

Be polite and respectful.

Sometimes students feel that because they are not visible, they can say whatever comes to mind. A topic or comment that is not applicable in a traditional classroom is not appropriate in an online discussion either. Remember you are talking with real people. Being polite and respectful is essential to create a productive and supportive learning environment. In this setting, you will feel valued by your classmates and instructor, and your work will have greater value as well.

Timing and word choice may cause communication problems.

Because there are lapses between the time posts and responses are made, it is important to ask a clarifying question if you are not sure what your classmate or instructor meant in a message. Conflicts may arise. This is not necessarily bad. However, resolution of conflict takes patience and work.

Speak up if you are having problems.

The only way for your instructor to know you are having problems is if you say so. State exactly what is causing the difficulty so the solution quickly can be found. Exchanging messages with your classmates also is helpful. Someone else may understand something you do not, and you may have the information that someone else needs. When it's your turn to explain something, you not only help a classmate but also reinforce your own knowledge of the subject.

How to Contribute to the Discussion of Ideas

Before you respond...

- Understand the expectations and norms for respectful interaction, as well as how to follow directions for completing the assigned tasks.
- Think in paragraphs, not sentences! Avoid overly brief responses. You cannot deal with a complex issue in a quick sentence or two. You want to show that you have given a matter serious thought.
- Read carefully what your classmates and instructor have posted.
- Reflect on what you have learned and what impact this information has on your beliefs and behavior.
- Mark or make notes of the points you wish to answer or discuss or question. Remember that a question is as valuable as an opinion in the course of discussion. It shows that you are trying to understand others and be understood.
- Remember that your opinions must be backed up by your text, online readings, points made during discussions, library and Internet sources, experts in the topic, as well as your own experience.

When you write your response...

- Introduce your comments with a quick summary of the discussion or point, such as "As I understand it," Stating the central idea shows that you are trying to understand and what you have learned.
- Be sure it is clear to the class and your instructor when you are summarizing and when you are giving your opinion. Examples: "According to the author of the text,"; "I disagree with Robert's statement that ...I because...."
- Keep your comments topic-related and to the point.
- Use a variety of responses.
- Elaborate upon, justify, or support ideas
- Include quotes from your readings
- Point out a classmate's comment relates to one your made earlier.
- Ask for feedback in relation to a point you state that might be controversial or misunderstood.
- If the discussion topic is based on readings, follow these steps:
 - Study course lectures, articles, text readings, and linked materials.
 - Find the author's central point and restate it in your own words.
 - Decide what your opinion or reaction is to what is stated.
 - Write your response, using examples and quotes for support.

Reasons why your response may not be effective

1. You didn't follow the directions for the assignment.
2. You strayed off the topic.
3. Your response was incomplete and did not include all information requested.
4. Your response was not clear, accurate, precise, or relevant.
5. Your response was too brief.

Moodle Forums

A note on Forums...

There are two ways to post to a discussion forum in a course. You can find them under a link in the Activities area, or you may see a forum listed in a topic or weekly section (in the body of the Moodle area).

There may be a called "News Forum" or may have been named something else like "Announcements" or a combination of both and is the link is found near the top of the content area. In the main forum you will only be able to read posts; this is the main announcement forum for the course.

In topic or weekly sections, you may see a forum listed for discussion assignments and activities, or for questions posted by students.

Example:

17 January - 23 January

Week One

Each week, you will need to read the Weekly Announcement first, then the Weekly Lecture. Any other materials needed for each week will be listed below these two items.

-  Welcome Letter
-  Student Orientation to Online Courses Handout
-  Week One Announcements
-  Week One Lecture
-  Week One Discussion Forum
-  Writing Help Handouts

In the Activities block, the "Forum" link will list all discussion forums in the course. To access a forum, click on the appropriate link on the course front page or from the Activities block.

Post a new discussion topic to a forum

You may be required to participate in a discussion forum. Enter the forum by clicking on the appropriate link and click "Add a new discussion topic".

sodle V1.9.8+ > Miscellaneous > rpENGL_2620_E01_5p11 > Forums > Introduce Yourself

During the first week of classes, I expect you to introduce yourself in this forum—who you are, what your background is, why you're taking this class online, if you would like a study partner, etc. From experience as an online student myself, I can tell you that it's tough to take a course where you never email or call any of your classmates. You need a community of one or two other people whom you can call or email with questions. I can't force you to exchange phone numbers, but if you find someone with whom you have something in common (or you like that person's responses on the discussion board), email that person.





















Add a new discussion topic

Type an appropriate Subject and enter text into the Message textbox.

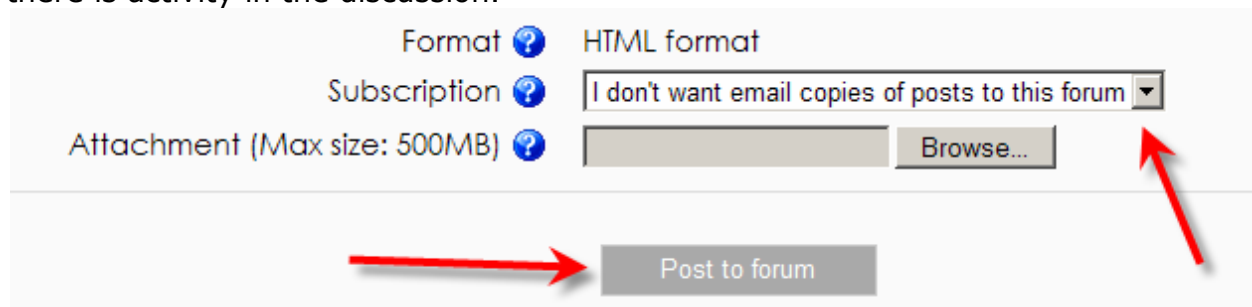
Your new discussion topic

Subject* Hello, I'm a student at RPCC

Message* ?

Trebuchet 3 (12 pt) Normal Long **B** *I* U ~~S~~                    

copies of posts. Subscribing to a post means you will be sent an email anytime there is activity in the discussion.



Format ? HTML format

Subscription ? I don't want email copies of posts to this forum ▼

Attachment (Max size: 500MB) ? Browse...

Post to forum

You will have 30 minutes to edit the post once you post it on most course sites. To delete a post within the edit time period, enter the post and click Delete.



Replying to a discussion forum topic

You may be required to respond or reply to a discussion forum posted by your instructor or another student's post. In order to reply to a post, you must click the link of the discussion and click the reply link. Most instructors consider a good post as one that:

- references something discussed in the main topic
- is worded in such a way as to invite further responses
- includes proper sentence structure

Be sure to check for the requirements of each forum before posting or replying to them.