Using Discussion Boards

The use of discussion boards is a broad topic; one page doesn’t even scratch the surface regarding their use in an online course. Consider this as an introduction to a few considerations in discussion board use, and then use the resources provided to delve deeper based on your interests and needs.

There are definitely noticeable differences between an online discussion board and its face-to-face equivalent classroom discussion:

Quality of Post: Discussion posts are reflective in nature. Postured properly, posts and responses exhibit more care and thought than classroom discussion. Research and class readings are more frequently cited.

Equality: Students who are silenced by overly vocal classmates have an equal voice in the online discussion. Students who are shy by nature or dislike the attention and focus of their classmates during a face-to-face class are able to express their thoughts more easily through online discussion.

Learning Style: Face-to-face discussion favor verbal learners; discussion forums favor visual learners.

Time: The amount of time needed to prepare and manage discussion posts is often greater for both instructor and student.

As with most aspects of an online course, planning and preparation for discussion boards are critical to its success.

Tips

1. Provide a Rubric
To convey what makes for a good discussion post and to quantify how a student’s participation will be scored you should provide a rubric. Examples that you can use as a starter can be provided to you.

2. Netiquette
Provide a Netiquette document to set students’ expectations about the formatting, content, and style of discussion board writing.

3. Initial Post Due Date
To promote discussion and set time management expectations, post the date/time that an initial post is due on the discussion board. The date should allow for enough time for completing readings required for discussion, but also allot time for thoughtful classmate responses to the post.

4. Response Posts Due Date
Be specific about the number of posts that a student should respond to and when the replies are due.

Next Stop: Visit the Using Threaded Discussions page in the faculty Course Development section at Lindner College Online.

(This is a faculty-only page and will require your credentials to access).