Introductions and first impressions are important. This is as true for online courses as it is for face-to-face ones and perhaps even more so. **Instructor introductions** help to provide a connection between student and teacher that is sometimes more difficult to achieve in an online learning setting. **Student introductions** help alleviate the sense that online learners are “alone out there”. Student introductions are particularly important if your online course includes collaborative work such as the use of discussion boards.

**Instructor Introductions**
Your instructor introduction can be offered in the Announcements, Syllabus or Start Here as either text or video. Be sure to include essential information such as: name, title, expertise, preferred method of communication, etc. Adding a little more information, however, such as hobbies, teaching philosophy, or a photograph, will help your students realize that there is a real person behind the content that they see in their course.

**Student Introductions**
Student introductions are most easily accommodated through the creation of a forum in your Bb Discussion Board area. Each student should post an introduction—usually with information suggested by the instructor such as their region, hobbies, progress through the program, etc. Please see the suggestions area for some ideas for facilitating student introduction in your course.

Even in online courses—perhaps especially in online courses—developing a sense of community promotes engagement and engagement promotes student learning. Posting introductions is one way to help build community and foster engagement in your online course.

*Ideas for this article came from the Quality Matters Program, a benchmark for online course design.*

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**TIP:** Include not only a deadline for posting student introductions, but provide a deadline for reading and responding to other posts (e.g. “respond to two other introductions by midnight on Tuesday”).