



Moderator Guidelines for Blackboard Discussions

General Guidelines

- Anticipate and plan the discussion process – develop a set of questions that will elicit discussion about the subject at hand. Start with one open-ended question and let the discussion develop. Follow up with other questions to promote flow and direction.
- The purpose of discussion is to explore and clarify. Students are not expected to have the subject area cornered ahead of time. As a matter of fact, ambiguity and/or lack of understanding are pre-requisites for the discussion process.
- Use language that promotes class ownership of the discussion. (What do you all think? Can anyone relate to this? Can some of you provide an example?)
- Acknowledge the value of both right and wrong contributions. We learn from our and others' mistakes. Acknowledge the courage it takes to take risks and be wrong.
- Avoid conflict-reducing techniques such as majority vote, coin flips, bargaining.

Language for specific situations

Furthering discussion

- Any other ideas?
- Why is that?
- How come?
- Why did you come to that conclusion?
- Do others agree with this?

Unclear message

- “I'm not sure I follow you completely, would you rephrase your statement so I might understand your approach?”

Possibly wrong track

- If what you suggest is true, then how would you explain...
- For this situation, have you ever considered that...
- How is this related to...
- Can you give some examples?
- How do you reconcile this with...
- What does this new information tell us?
- Where does this lead us?
- I was trying to elicit something else, not x, but y.
- What's the single assumption behind every remark that has been made up to now?
- Suppose I said $x=y$, what would you say?
- Am I capturing your reasoning?
- Is that a fair paraphrase?
- I'm glad you expressed that point of view because it gives me a chance to observe that...