

Tips for Participating in an Online Discussion Forum

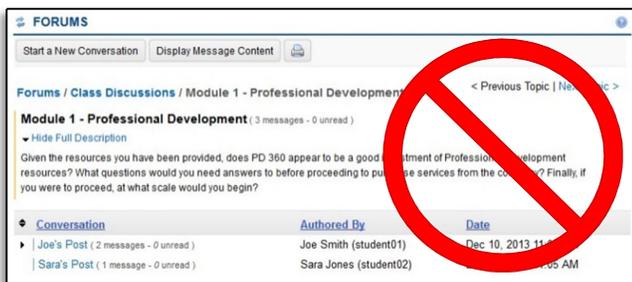
Have you been asked to use an online discussion forum for the first time? If utilized correctly, discussion forums can provide a powerful learning experience for both students and instructors. This document contains tips to help you successfully participate in an online discussion.

It's important to follow the etiquette guidelines and assignment instructions set by your instructor.

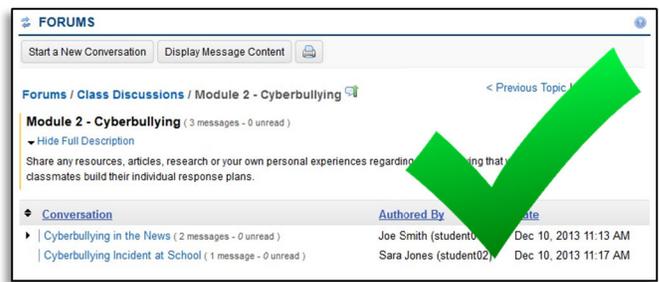
Tips for Successful Discussion Participation

Create a meaningful subject line.

The subject line of your post should be meaningful and informative. This helps readers quickly identify posts they want to read and respond to. Don't just call it "Joe's Post." Call it something relative to the topic you're discussing. In this example, we used "Cyberbullying in the News."



In this example, the students called their posts by their names.



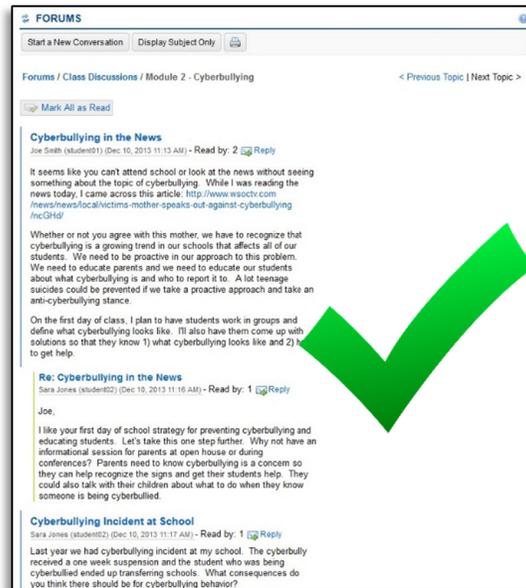
In this example, the students have correctly labeled the Subject line of their posts.

Write thoughtful statements and questions.

The goal of discussion is to learn from one another and share unique perspectives. If you simply respond with "I agree" or "I disagree", then that doesn't keep the conversation going. Spend some time thinking about what points you agree or disagree with and write about those. If you want to know why someone feels a certain way, ask them some questions to stimulate the discussion.



In this example, the students have only commented, "I agree" and have not enhanced the discussion.



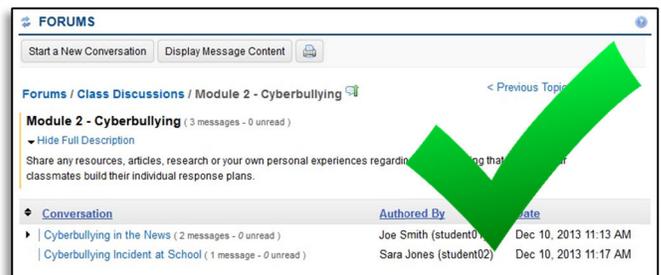
In this example, students have posted and responded with thoughtful discussion.

When the topic changes, start a new conversation.

As the conversation changes topic, it's important to start a new conversation by clicking on the "Start a New Conversation" button. It's okay to use the "Reply" links when responding if your comment or question is related to the previous conversations. This will ensure that the discussion board stays organized for everyone.



In this example, students have posted everything in a single conversation.



In this example, students have started new conversations because they've posted about different topics.

Participate throughout the entire discussion period.

The value of discussion comes into play when everyone participates throughout the entire discussion period. Check back often for new posts by your classmates. Try not to post before the discussion period begins so that you know exactly what your instructor expects. Try not to post near the end of the discussion period because other students may not have enough time to respond.