



# Tips for Introducing Online Discussions

FIRST-YEAR WRITING PROGRAM

**Make your expectations for quality and participation in online discussions explicit to students.**

Ensure that students understand what the assignment entails, and how often they are expected to participate. Create an example of an ideal post and point out its strengths.

**Tie learning goals to task-related activities on the discussion board.** For example, assign a class debate where students practice constructing arguments, presenting evidence, and responding to counter-arguments.



**Create an assessment rubric.**

Provide a brief list of key performance traits that correspond to a rating scale. Rubrics can ultimately make the process of grading written work easier and more objective.

**Link online discussions to class discussions and other face-to-face activities.**

Invite students to post homework-related questions to their peers on the discussion board, and encourage them to respond to one another online.

Follow-up on selected questions during the first few minutes of each class session.

**Define the assignment in light of your overall lesson plan.**  
Factor in time for moderating discussions and assessing student work.