Tips from Faculty for on-campus and online Discussions

The following were collected during one of our workshops on conducting discussions in a classroom and online. If you need help in creating discussions in your course, start with our manuals on:

- [Discussions Assignments](#)
- [Discussions: Journal Based Assignments](#)
- [Discussion Rubric: Best Practices](#)

Contact the CIE department (cie@brazosport.edu) for assistance in applying any of the following tips or advice items.

Face to Face

Have a grade component that adds to participation. You can tell students that their points are based on how many times they contribute in class.

Use partners or small groups instead of class discussions to help hesitant students.

Give them prompts ahead of time that they can prepare for as part of their preparation for class. They get credit for coming with the prompts answered and then are able to participate in the discussion.

Have students write their responses down. Ask them to show you a random response as they're leaving as part of their participation grade.

Be specific in your directions for what you want them to respond to and how you want them to participate.

Online Asynchronous

Make sure your directions are clear for what an appropriate post and reply should look like. Think about length and criteria for full credit. Consider using a rubric.

Set a separate deadline for the initial post. If you have them post by mid-week, it is easier for you to interact with the posts.

Make them post before they can see other posts. This keeps them from reading other students' posts and copying them.

Have them reply to at least one reply on their post. This motivates them to go back in and look at the replies.

Have a sample discussion post and reply so that they can see what your expectations are.

Give specific instructions for replying that keeps them from giving surface-level responses or copying another student (for example, making them find an article and post the link on another student's post).

Online Synchronous
Rather than having students reply using their camera and audio in an online Zoom meeting, use the chat feature. This allows students to participate at the same time and keeps students from dominating the discussion.

Have students take turns acting as chat monitor. They will follow the chat and let you know if there's anything you need to respond to.

Use breakout rooms in Zoom. This helps keep students from hiding.

Have prompts ready to go that you can show to students to help them engage with the class.