

# RESPONDING TO DISCUSSION POSTS

Discussion board posts replace in-class discussions. Response posts offer opportunities for **collaboration**, **writing improvement**, and **self-assessment**. You will also develop better **critical thinking** and **communication skills** and increase your **understanding** of the topic about which you are writing (Calonia, 2022; Office of Digital Learning, n.d.). Responding to peers may seem daunting initially, but this guide aims to help you get started on your responses.

Strong ideas are not built in isolation. When we respond to others, our own ideas become more compelling because they are positioned in response to other claims (Graff & Birkenstein, 2017, p. 163).

**NOTE:** For help crafting initial discussion board posts, consult Academic Coaching's guide on writing [discussion board posts](#).

## HOW TO RESPOND TO DISCUSSION BOARD POSTS

1. **Review the Prompt for the Discussion Board Post** – Make sure you understand both the content and practical requirements.
  - a. Understand assignment criteria
    - i. What was the original prompt?
    - ii. What are the assignment guidelines for your response? Refer to the syllabus, instructions, or assignment rubric.
  - b. Be objective
    - i. Initially, consider the post from a neutral perspective. You will examine and express your opinions later.
2. **Read the Posts** – Review your peers' initial posts.
  - a. Evaluate their thesis statement – What is the central claim presented in the initial post?
  - b. Support – How does your peer support their claim? What evidence do they use?
3. **Respond to Peers** – Provide constructive criticism and build on arguments.
  - a. Reiterate the point you plan to build on.
    - i. Restating your peer's statement reduces ambiguity in your response and reflects your understanding of what your peer said.
  - b. Three basic ways to respond: **agree**, **disagree**, or **both** (Graff & Birkenstein, 2017, pp. 56-67). To effectively build on an argument:

- i. Don't simply **agree** by echoing your peers' assertions.
  1. Agreeing does not make your position "unoriginal"—it often gives your argument credibility (Graff & Birkenstein, 2017, p. 63).
  2. Bring something fresh to the conversation by pointing out "unnoticed evidence" or "unnoticed implications" that your peer did not mention (Graff & Birkenstein, 2017, pp. 61-62).
- ii. Provide reasons for why you **disagree**.
  1. Don't simply reject an argument—add something to the conversation and turn your response into a counterargument.
  2. Keep respect in mind. Debate ideas but do not attack character:
    - a. "**My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you**" (*New International Version*, 1973/2011, John 15:12).
- iii. **Agree and disagree simultaneously**.
  1. Simultaneous agreement and disagreement makes "your argument complicated and nuanced" (Graff & Birkenstein, 2017, pp. 64-65).
  2. Remember to frame your argument using a parallel structure and be as straightforward as possible in your writing.
- c. Include references and citations in your response posts.
  - i. Referring back to the material will strengthen your claim and demonstrate that you understood the material.
  - ii. **Do not forget to include citations and references** – refer to the appropriate style guide for your course (MLA, APA, or Turabian).

#### ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOUR RESPONSE

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- How did your classmate's ideas differ from yours?
- Did your classmate raise a point you hadn't previously considered when writing your post?
- Did you support your assertions and explain your reasoning (Teaching & Learning Resource Center, n.d.)?

**PRACTICE NOW**

## References

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