

# Top 10 Best Practices of Discussion Boards

1. Consider your objective for using a discussion board, design your board appropriately, e.g. staggered due dates. The key word is discussion! Encourage this type of interaction and collaborative thought.
2. Since this is supposed to be a discussion, try to make the assignment relevant and thought-provoking. Use current events or readings that challenge the student's beliefs or morals. (Here is the place for rabbit trails.) Encourage your students to think before they post.
3. Clearly communicate your expectations concerning participation in the online environment. (quality of thought, word count, due dates, language, grammar, creative titles, etc.) \*\* Because we teach many students who are familiar with online interactions, it might be useful to have them begin their posts in a word document. They should use the tools for grammar, spelling, etc. More importantly, this process forces them to think before they post. No brief responses!
4. Brush up on/learn netiquette; teach/refresh students on this, also.
5. Encourage students to be security conscious; they should never post any personal information within the discussion board.

## **The last five deal with teacher interaction/grading.**

6. Organization! Create a new discussion area for each week/assignment.
7. Grade holistically on the discussion board.
8. Monitor the discussion board closely, especially in the beginning. You should look for hesitant posters, discussion dominators, inappropriateness, and anonymous posts. More commonly, you should look for students who are still learning the difference between criticizing a person (you are a moron!) and challenging another's ideas (your previous post left me confused, so how about...).
9. Get feedback from students throughout the course and at the end of the semester. Don't be afraid to tweak your discussions to fit the needs or interests of the students.
10. Don't dominate discussions. While you should post some throughout the board, do not respond to every post/question. Go for the pepper approach; but don't play favorites.

My school website: [www.putnamcityschoolsonline.org/jbowie](http://www.putnamcityschoolsonline.org/jbowie)

## Sources:

1. [http://teaching.unr.edu/OTL/webct/facres/discussions/disc\\_tips.html](http://teaching.unr.edu/OTL/webct/facres/discussions/disc_tips.html)
2. [http://citg.babson.edu/docs/DB\\_best\\_practices\\_v2.pdf](http://citg.babson.edu/docs/DB_best_practices_v2.pdf)
3. [http://docs.moodle.org/en/Forum\\_module#Guidelines\\_for\\_Teaching\\_and\\_Learning\\_Forums](http://docs.moodle.org/en/Forum_module#Guidelines_for_Teaching_and_Learning_Forums)
4. <http://www.wpi.edu/Academics/ATC/Collaboratory/Idea/boardbenefits.html>
5. <http://www.wpi.edu/Academics/ATC/Collaboratory/Idea/boards.html>