

10 TIPS FOR COMPLETING SUCCESSFUL LEARNONLINE DISCUSSIONS



- 1. Understand grading expectations.** Review the participation requirements within your Course Syllabus. The [Student Handbook](#) also provides important grading policies including a participation rubric for clarity on how grades are allocated. There is no opportunity to “make-up” participation so it’s important to stay on top of it. If you’re not sure where you stand in terms of participation, ask your instructor for his/her informal input half way through the course.
- 2. Jump in.** Although it can be nerve-wracking to be the first to post, especially for first-time students, it’s important not to delay getting started. The course moves quite quickly; daily participation, including holidays/weekends, will help you manage the overall work load.
- 3. Keep it conversational, but applied.** Treat your contributions as if you’ve been called upon to share your thoughts during a face-to-face class. Using the discussion prompt as a guide, clearly and concisely provide your perspective integrating what you know from your own practice with what you’ve learned in the course. Regurgitating what you’ve read/watched or what someone else has already said won’t improve your grade.
- 4. Share resources/case examples ethically.** We welcome sharing of publicly-available resources; however, if you are sharing something internal from your organization, obtain permission to share within the course. Maintain confidentiality of your clients (and colleagues, friends, or relatives); if you share a case example, omit/disguise any identifying information and use a pseudonym.
- 5. Ask questions.** Move the discussion forward by asking questions to other students and your instructor. Not sure about terminology or perspectives? Your instructor will be facilitating and monitoring the discussions throughout the course, so don’t hesitate to ask for clarification.
- 6. Remember it’s not all about quantity.** Overwhelming or dominating the discussions with your contributions will not improve your learning experience and may impair that of others. Aim for at least 2 posts within each discussion thread over 2 days that the topic is open. Avoid “mini essays” – aim for 1-2 brief paragraphs.
- 7. Avoid “cheerleader” posts.** Although brief, positive comments (e.g., “Really great comment, Cindy” or “I really enjoyed the readings for this topic”) are helpful in building rapport online, they don’t contribute substantially to the discussion. In order for these kinds of posts to count towards your participation grade, be sure to build on “cheerleader” posts by asking further questions, identifying how you’ll apply what was shared, etc.
- 8. Avoid “drive-by” posts.** Making significant posts just as a topic is closing (or after it closes) will not adequately fulfill course participation requirements. Similar to showing up to a class very late or after everyone has left for the day, you won’t have the opportunity to engage in a meaningful back-and-forth dialogue/discussion.
- 9. Be respectful.** LearnOnline students come from a wide variety of backgrounds in terms of education, work experience, and other demographics; this diversity contributes to a rich learning environment. Beyond just your interactions within the discussion forums, you may need to work with another student for your assignment(s). To maximize your learning experience, aim to ensure that all of your interactions are positive.
- 10. Advise the instructor if you’ll be offline.** You must notify course instructor(s) if you are going to be “offline” for more than 48 hours. After 48 hours the course instructor, or other administrative staff, will contact you via email. If no response is received to that email and there is no additional activity on the course site for a further 24 hours, we will assume that you decided to withdraw from the course. Therefore, if you are offline for more than 72 hours you will be un-enrolled. Because these courses are relatively short and intensive in nature, you cannot afford to be away from the course for very long.

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