Concept Application: Choose Two Application Activity

To complete the Active Learning Cycle, assign problems and/or scenarios to provide students with opportunities to apply the content and skills they have learned. Below is a format you can follow or adjust to ensure students apply what they have learned.

Choose Two Discussions

The purpose of this activity is to complete the Active Learning Cycle by asking students to apply the content and skills they learned during the concept exploration and concept introduction stages to authentic scenarios, problems, or case studies. To provide additional motivation for students, give them a choice to respond to the scenario, problem, or case study they find most interesting.

1. Create several (four to six) discussion forums, each with a different problem or scenario designed to have students apply what they have learned from the assigned learning resources.

2. Have students reply to the discussion forum by a defined date. To encourage a wide variety of responses, use the discussion forum settings that require students to post before they can read additional posts.

3. Establish a deadline for students to post comments or questions to at least two of their peers who responded to the same discussion forum. In order to broaden students' thinking, ask them to post comments and questions to peers who had different responses than their own.

4. After the deadline for peer replies, post a reply to each group's discussion forum to ensure accuracy, clarify where needed, and/or summarize concepts.

Conclude the application activity with an announcement or email to the full class with a summary of the most complete responses to the prompts, problems, or scenarios.

Guide to Effective Questions

This chart describes the types of questions you can ask and the value of each question type. It also provides examples that you can use as a model for developing your own questions.

Type of Question	Description	Value	Examples
Open	Open questions have unlimited responses that are usually longer and more detailed than closed questions. They often ask for opinions or feelings.	These lead students to think analytically and critically. A good open-ended question should stir discussion and debate in the classroom, sparking enthusiasm and energy in your students.	Why did the biologists decide to design their experiment in this manner? What is the most effective way to solve this equation? What role did Queen Elizabeth play in this story?
Closed	Closed-ended questions have a complete answer.	They elicit limited responses and are typically short, "yes" or "no," factual, or multiple-choice answers.	What cities were impacted by the Civil War?
Factual	Factual questions can be answered directly from the text.	They are useful when you want readers to base their comments or to support their opinions with facts from the text under consideration.	What year did the invasion of London take place? What is one strategy for solving this equation?
Inductive	Answers to inductive questions are found in the text; however, they are not stated directly.	These require students to interpret information found in the text.	How does the author really feel about the use of DNA in trial cases? How do you know? In the author's mind, which of these arguments is most compelling?
Analytical	Analytical questions ask students to connect the text to other texts, ideas, or situations through analysis.	They ask students to go beyond the text and analyze the relationship between the text and other situations.	How are these similar, different, or related?
Opinion	Opinion questions ask students what they think, how they feel, or their individual thoughts about a topic under discussion.	The use of opinion questions is a safe way to get students to participate in discussions. It is important to make sure students understand their opinions need to be supported with evidence and evaluated on the basis of that evidence.	That's an interesting thought. What led you to that conclusion? How might you change your thinking if you took x, y, or z into consideration?

ACUE

Admission Ticket

This technique requires that a student accomplish a writing task that cannot be completed without having read the assignment. In order to receive participation credit, the student must submit the writing. The admission ticket works best if it is required for every class and students get in the habit of writing one. An efficient way to use this technique is to assign students a question that requires them to carefully read the assigned reading. Students write their answer to the question on one side of a 3 x 5 card and hand it in at the start of class. Alternatively, this assignment can be turned in online prior to the start of class.

Sample
The Autobiography of Malcolm X

How does Malcolm X explain why he has "had enough of someone else's propaganda" (p. 373)? How does this description contribute to the power of the text?

Possible Response: *Malcolm X states, "'I'm for truth, no matter who tells it. I'm for justice, no matter who it is for or against. I'm a human being first and foremost, and as such I'm for whoever and whatever benefits humanity as a whole'" (p. 373). Malcolm X uses repetition to emphasize how he is "for" anyone who is being truthful or just, without prejudging who is saying the words. This repetition contributes to the power of the text by showing Malcolm X's commitment to these ideals of justice, truth, and benefit to humanity.*

Admission Ticket Template

Text: _____

Question: _____

Response: _____

_____

_____

_____

Preparatory Quiz

What is a preparatory quiz?
A short, typically online, quiz that students have to complete prior to the start of class. The questions usually contain one fact-based question from the reading, one inductive question, and one question asking them to summarize the reading.

How do I use it?
Put responses to the short-answer questions into a PowerPoint presentation to share with the class. You can show students a quality response and ask questions such as "Why did I like this answer?" or "What key points in the reading did this student capture?" You also might want to share anonymous responses that are not quite as strong and ask "How would you improve this?" or "How might you take this farther?" The quality responses give students a model of what you're looking for, and the responses that are not quite up to par provide guidance on how to improve a submission.

Preparatory Quiz Template

Please respond to the following questions about last night's reading, _____:
- Ask a factual question based on the reading.
- Ask an inductive question that requires students to use information from the text to make an inference.
- Instruct students to summarize the text below:

Sample Preparatory Quiz

Please respond to the following questions about last night's reading, The Gettysburg Address:
- What does Lincoln describe as the impact of those who fought at Gettysburg?
- What is the unfinished work that those listening to the speech are asked to achieve?
- Please summarize the Gettysburg Address below:

Self-Grading Guide for Class Discussions

The following guide contains my assessment criteria for your participation during class discussions. Please consider your participation during today's discussion by checking "yes" or "no" for each of the statements below, and then complete the summary.

Statement	Yes	No
I. Demonstrated Engagement		
(a) I listened attentively and made eye contact with the speakers.		
(b) I provided a response that demonstrated my interest in the speaker's contribution.		
(c) I summarized my key takeaways or insights from the discussion.		
II. Posed Questions		
(d) I asked a classmate to clarify or elaborate on his or her point.		
(e) I posed a question about the causes or impact of an issue.		
(f) I asked a question that caused my classmates to consider a different perspective.		
III. Added Comments		
(g) I pointed out a connection between my classmates' ideas, course topics, or course learning outcomes.		
(h) I summarized or recapped a key point from today's discussion or a previous discussion.		
(i) I used a classmate's contribution as a jumping-off point to present a new idea.		
(j) I introduced a counterargument into the discussion.		
IV. Added Resources		
(k) I reminded my classmates of a relevant resource from the syllabus or course site that would add to the discussion.		
(l) I presented a new website, reading, or video that would add to the discussion.		

Response Summary

Count the number of statements that you responded "yes" to. Circle the category below that best describes your participation today.

"Yes" Count	0	1-2	3+
Level	"Hesitant Contributor"	"Developing Contributor"	"Effective Contributor"
Instructor Feedback	Please try to contribute next class! If you have any concerns about participating, please discuss them with me.	Good work today! See if you can challenge yourself to add 1-2 more comments or questions next time.	Great job! Thank you for participating today. Please continue participating at this level in future classes.

Fishbowl Discussion

The Fishbowl Discussion format motivates students to complete class reading assignments and empowers students to be in charge of their own discussion.

Three or four students are randomly selected to sit in a small inner circle with the rest of the class seated in a larger outer circle. The small group conducts a 20-minute discussion with each other while the rest of the students listen, take notes, and later pose questions and comment on what they have observed.

What Are the Benefits?

The Fishbowl technique requires the instructor to take an observer role, empowering students to take responsibility for the discussion. Students build on their ability to effectively communicate with each other. The small group allows even the quietest students the opportunity to participate. The format also encourages deeper levels of conversation among the students in the inner circle.

Preparing for a Fishbowl Discussion

Assign an article(s) for students to read prior to class and explain the Fishbowl structure. Share your specific expectations (checklist or rubric) designed to assess both the students having the discussion in the inner circle and the students listening to the discussion and preparing to ask questions and share comments in the outer circle.

Facilitating the Fishbowl Discussion

1. Write student names on individual slips of paper and place them in a bowl.
2. Place four desks in an inner circle in the center of the room with the other desks in a circle around them.
3. Randomly pull four names from the bowl and have those students sit in the four center desks with the information they prepared for the discussion (based on your expectations). Remind both sets of students how you will be assessing the Fishbowl Discussion.
4. Give the students in the center circle 20 minutes to discuss the article(s), using their prepared materials. Limit your own talking so students feel empowered to listen attentively to one another and keep the discussion going.
5. After 20 minutes, ask students in the outside circle to appropriately contribute to the conversation using your expectations as a guide.

Strategies to Build Student Engagement in the Fishbowl

It can be a challenge to fully engage all students in both the inner and outer circles in the discussion. Here are a few strategies to help build motivation and engagement:

- Have students prepare a list of questions that could be asked about the assigned reading(s). Students in the inner circle will use them during their discussion, and you can collect them from students in the outside circle for grading.
- Provide a problem for students in the inner circle to solve using content from the reading(s). When they have finished their discussion, ask students in the outer circle to critique their problem-solving strategy.
- Provide articles that represent two different sides of an argument and ask students in the inner circle to debate the argument. Have students in the outer circle discuss the strengths and weaknesses of both sides of the argument.
- Make your expectations for students in both circles clear by providing a rubric or checklist and providing feedback early in the semester.
- Provide written feedback on what the students in the Fishbowl did well and what could be improved.
- Have students in the Fishbowl complete a self-reflection regarding their participation.

Sequencing Questions Toward Higher Order Thinking Online

Single Forum Discussion

Some online instructors create a single discussion forum for each week of their course and require that students post and reply to each other throughout the week. In these cases, instructors will want to post a multi-part question or sequence of questions requiring responses to each part.

Here is an example of sequenced questioning for a single discussion forum that explores a new topic (Boettcher & Conrad, 2016). Although the questions in this example are designed to have students demonstrate foundational understanding, the questions are sequenced to be gradually more challenging. To score this type of discussion, use the General Grading Rubric and assign a relatively low point value.

> **Instructions to Students:**
>
> To receive full credit for this discussion forum post, you must respond to all three parts of the discussion forum prompts. Remember that your participation is also based on your interactions with your classmates. See the Discussion Rubric for details.
>
> **Part 1:** State your response or reaction to the reading. In other words, answer the question, "What do you think about the author's ideas?" or "What do you think about the topic?"
>
> **Part 2:** State why you think what you think. Provide citations from the reading that you are responding to, and include other references or resources that explain or support your perspective.
>
> **Part 3:** State what you wish you knew more about in relation to the topic or what problem, challenge, or application the topic generates.

Sequenced Forum Discussions

Another approach is to develop a set of discussion forums throughout the week with progressively more cognitively challenging questions. You can use the same General Rubric for Online Discussion Forums and change the point value based on the cognitive level required to address the question.

Below is an example of a set of sequenced questions in separate discussion forums with progressively more cognitively challenging questions.

Discussion Forum #1 (Prior Knowledge) – At the beginning of the week or new unit, post a forum question that prompts students to think about their current belief or knowledge about a topic or issue. This activates prior learning and encourages them to explore their thinking about the topic. This initial exploratory post can focus on personal reactions or past experience with the topic and not require deep thinking or reading. For example,

> *What knowledge, opinions, or previous experience do you have with this topic?* (Open Question)

The student responses provide you with information about what students already know, do not know, or are confused about regarding the topic. This information can inform how you approach the next activity.

Discussion Forum #2 (Comprehension) – After the due date for an assigned reading or other course activity, post a forum with discussion questions that require students to demonstrate understanding of the assigned content. For example,

> *Compare and contrast the arguments made in the first article to the one made in the second article.* (Comprehension Question)

> *Summarize the concept in your own words.* (Comprehension Question)

Discussion Forum #3 (Higher Level Thinking) – This forum may require students to apply knowledge to, analyze, or evaluate a concept, problem, case study, or real-world situation. For example,

> *How would you apply the concept described in the article to resolve a real-world problem?* (Application Question)

> *Choose one main concept from this week's module, and explain how it would need to be modified if it were to be applied to a completely different context.* (Analysis Question)

> *Evaluate the potential positive and negative outcomes that could result from your suggested application.* (Evaluation Question)

Help Students Develop Productive Questioning Skills

Providing guidance to students about asking productive questions may not only enrich their discussions, it can also help them develop this important lifelong skill for collaboration, management, leadership, creative processes, and interpersonal relationships. Below are some question types that may be useful to students for engaging in their small group discussions. Provide this or a similar resource, and explain to students that asking productive questions is a key life skill as well as a critical component of effective participation in the online discussion forums.

Clarifying Questions Help draw out more information and dig deeper into the meaning or intention. Useful when you have a negative reaction to what someone posted, allows you to understand their perspective better.	*I am a little unclear about what you meant by that; can you provide an example?* *Can you tell me more about how you arrived at that perspective?*
Adjoining Questions Help expand the discussion by exploring different ways to think about or look at the problem, issue, or discussion.	*How would this apply to a different context?* *What are some other possible applications?*
Funneling Questions Help challenge assumptions and analyze the deeper issues.	*What is missing from our analysis?* *What would change if X changed?* *Is there another way to approach this problem?*
Elevating Questions Help broaden the discussion and connect to a bigger picture. Help build connections and identify larger trends.	*How do these issues tie together?* *How does this problem connect to larger issues?* *Are we asking the right questions?*

Source: Pohlmann, T., & Thomas, N. M. (2015, March 27). Relearning the art of asking questions. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from https://hbr.org/2015/03/relearning-the-art-of-asking-questions

Examples of Discussion Posts

One of the primary benefits of rubrics is that they communicate detailed information about instructor expectations. Sharing examples of discussion posts at different levels of achievement is another helpful practice for clearly communicating expectations.

Here is an example of a discussion post prompt from a psychology instructor.

Prompt: Referencing this week's reading, describe Freud's three basic types of anxiety (reality, neurotic, and moral), and reflect upon your own experiences with "being anxious." Provide examples (real or fictitious) of the sources of each type of anxiety; describe the situation in which you became anxious and the feelings and consequences of the anxiety. To receive full credit, your post must also be well-structured (introduction, body, conclusion), free of spelling and grammatical errors, at least 300 words, and have correct APA citations.

Criteria	Exceeds	Meets	Approaches
Description of anxiety types	Identifies and describes three types of anxiety with references to the reading (using APA style citations)	Identifies and describes two types of anxiety with references to the reading (using APA style citations)	Identifies and describes one or two types of anxiety
Examples	Provides examples of sources and consequences of each of the three types of anxiety	Provides examples of sources and consequences of two types of anxiety	Provides vague or no examples
Writing	Well-structured writing, free of spelling and grammatical errors	Well-structured writing with some spelling or grammatical errors	Poorly structured with spelling and/or grammatical errors
Word count	At least 300 words	Less than 300 words	Less than 300 words

This example discussion post exceeds expectations:

According to Freud, our personalities are composed of the id, ego and superego (Feist & Feist, 2009). The id refers to the impulsive self whose main focus lies within the concept of self-pleasure. The ego on the other hand refers to the realistic way of dealing with the id's demands. Lastly, the superego refers to the ideal self. It seems to find a balance between the "should" and "should nots"; it can be identified as our conscience. The interaction among these can sometimes lead to different forms of anxiety as one tries to please the other. In fact, according to Feist and Feist (2009), although "only the ego can feel or produce or feel anxiety" (p. 33), the id, superego and external world are all somehow involved in anxiety.

Anxiety can best be defined as "a felt, affective, unpleasant state accompanied by a physical sensation that warns the person against impending danger" (Feist & Feist, 2009, p. 33). There are three different types of anxiety each linked to a specific area of our persona.

The first type is neurotic anxiety, which can be linked to the id's impulses. It is the "apprehension about an unknown danger" (Feist & Feist, 2009, p. 34). I for instance experience what can be described as neurotic anxiety when I have some kind of job interview or something similar. I feel like this stems from the fact that having grown up with very strict parents, I constantly felt as if I was not good enough for their standards. Feeling as if my attempts to please them weren't ever good enough has led me to feel as if I simply can't ever meet authorities' standards. This leads to what is known as neurotic anxiety.

Moral anxiety, on the other hand, roots from "conflict between the ego and superego" (Feist & Feist, 2009, p. 34). In other words, it is conflict between what our subconscious wants and what is actually morally acceptable. I guess this is the type of anxiety I feel when I tell a little white lie and all of a sudden I'm too anxious to sleep at night. Sure, it's not a huge deal; we've all been there and said, "Sorry I can't go, I'm not feeling well." This is my typical response when I don't want to hurt someone's feelings by admitting I just don't want to go. However, the idea that I lied usually eats at my conscience, because lying is not morally correct, no matter the circumstances.

Lastly, there is realistic anxiety, which stems from a possible yet realistic danger (Feist & Feist, 2009). For me, this comes when driving in the rain. There is a huge, very realistic danger involved with driving on a wet surface, especially in Texas, because it does not happen often and other drivers seem to not know how to drive in the rain. Therefore, I feel anxious when I am on the highway with them.

Many of us have experienced the types of anxiety that Freud described. Learning about the different types of anxiety and their causes can help us to understand ourselves and others when anxieties arise.

References

Feist, J. & Feist, G. J. (2009). *Theories of personality* (7th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Instructor Comments: The student fully responds to the discussion prompt instructions. Specifically, the student states the meaning of each of the three types of anxiety and describes the situation in which he becomes anxious as well as the feelings and consequences of the anxiety. The student references the definition of the anxiety feelings. The writing is well-organized, relatively free of errors, and utilizes APA citations.

This example discussion post meets expectations:

I enjoyed reading about the different types of anxiety. The definitions by (Feist & Feist, 2009, p. 34) of the three types of anxiety (reality, neurotic, and moral) provided a baseline for me to examine my occasional feelings of anxiety.

The anxiety type of realistic anxiety, defined as "a felt, affective, unpleasant state accompanied by a physical sensation that warns the person against impending danger" (Feist & Feist, 2009, p. 33) held particular meaning to me. It reminded me of the time that I was in a convenience store when a person with a gun held up the owner of the store. I could feel my heart pounding and trying to make myself invisible. Another time I felt in terrible danger was when I was driving on Interstate 75 and a car came out of the right and just careened across three lanes of traffic before landing on the grassy media strip. My heart was still pounding when I saw the car had not stopped, but was careening again across all lanes of traffic coming close to me. I managed to elude it by pressing the accelerator to the floor and getting out of the way. I felt anxious the entire rest of my drive home and could not relax the rest of the day.

Another type of anxiety, this time of the neurotic type is defined as "apprehension about an unknown danger" (Feist & Feist, 2009, p. 34). The only occasion that comes to mind for me that I have experienced is when I have awakened from dreams feeling terribly nervous and concerned, but not knowing why. That is all I have to say.

Instructor Comments: This post is quite good in the discussion about realistic anxiety but does not provide very much discussion about neurotic anxiety and does not address the third type of anxiety, moral anxiety, at all. The writing is clear and relatively free of errors, but the closing is inadequate. The post also falls short of the 300-word requirement.

This example discussion post approaches expectations:

I don't understand the link between the three types of anxiety and the id, ego and superego. And the three types of anxiety all blend into the same uneasy feeling of nervousness. I know that I have felt anxious about making good moral decisions, in following rules, but I haven't lost any sleep over it.

The anxiety type of neurotic anxiety, that might be defined as anxiety about nothing truly real or present, is common among many of my friends. They worry, worry, and worry some more, but without any basis for their worry.

If these anxieties are about the id, ego and superego fighting one another, I wish the examples were much clearer.

Instructor Comments: This post provides some general feedback on the reading but does not provide in-depth discussion about the three different types of anxieties and does not reference the readings. It is not well-structured and does not meet the 300-word requirement.

Adapted from Wright, L. How to write a good discussion board post. Retrieved from
https://psychstartup.wordpress.com/2013/12/09/how-to-write-a-good-discussion-board-post/

Discussion Forum Rubrics

The primary goals of online discussion forums are to build community and support learning. Quality discussions offer students opportunities to expand and clarify knowledge, encourage critical thinking, build communication skills, articulate and defend positions, and consider different points of view—skills that will serve them well for a lifetime. This is why discussion forum participation is important and often represents a significant part of a student's grade. Providing students with a discussion forum rubric helps them understand, and therefore better meet, your expectations for thoughtful participation in these important learning opportunities. To further clarify your expectations, provide students with examples of postings that receive full, partial, or no credit with explanations of why each posting received a different level of credit.

Note, you may adjust point values for a discussion rubric if the number or type of questions are more challenging.

Below are some general types of discussion forums, the types of questions aligned to each type of forum, and suggested point values. In addition, we have included an example of an effective discussion rubric which outlines 1) the importance of timely responses and active participation, 2) the requirement that responses be thoughtful and complete, and 3) the requirement for student responses to benefit the entire learning community.

Types of Discussion Forums	Types of Questions	Point Value
Concept Exploration Discussions These discussions are useful for getting students' reactions to an engagement trigger at the beginning of a module; activating prior knowledge; or exploring a new question, topic, or idea.	Open-ended questions that ask for students' reactions, opinions, or thoughts about a topic. For example: *What knowledge, opinions, or previous experience do you have with this topic?*	Low point value
Concept Introduction Discussions These discussions are a good way to check for student understanding of the module readings and/or microlectures as well as to share initial reactions or questions.	Questions or prompts that ask students to use their own words to summarize, generalize, infer, compare, etc. For example: *Compare and contrast the argument made in the first article to the one made in the second article.*	Moderate point value

Types of Discussion Forums	Types of Questions	Point Value
Critical Thinking Discussions These discussions should fully engage students in critical thinking about course readings and other resources, encouraging connections to their own lives or the real world.	Questions that require students to apply, analyze, evaluate, create, or synthesize the module content. For example: *How would you modify the program described in the article so that it would be applicable to a broader population?* (Application) *Choose one main concept from this week's module, and explain how it would need to be modified if it were to be applied to a completely different context.* (Analysis) *Evaluate the potential positive and negative outcomes that could result from your suggested application.* (Evaluation) *Propose a modification of the model such that risks of implementation would be reduced.* (Creation)	High point value

General Rubric for Online Discussion Forums

Below is a general rubric for discussion forums, which can be adjusted for varied types of discussions with the appropriate point value assigned to that discussion forum.

	Exceeds (Points TBD)	Meets (Points TBD)	Approaches (Points TBD)	Does not include (Points TBD)
Timely and active participation	Posts initial response before due date. Posts, replies, and asks questions four or more times throughout the week.	Posts initial response by the due date. Posts, replies, and asks questions two to three times throughout the week.	Posts initial response after the due date. Posts, replies, or asks questions one time throughout the week.	Posts initial response after the due date; or does not post response.
Thoughtful and complete response to question(s)	Fully responds to the question(s). Post is supported by connections to the reading *and* real-life examples.	Fully responds to the question(s). Post is supported by connections to the reading *or* real-life examples.	Partially responds to the question(s). Provides vague or incomplete connections to the reading or personal and real-life examples.	Does not post response; or response is vague, off topic, or a repetition of ideas.
Thoughtful contributions to community learning	Poses thoughtful questions or novel ideas to peers that generate new ideas and group discussion.	Asks questions or posts thoughtful responses to generate a single peer's response.	Posts minimal or vague responses to peers that do not motivate a response (e.g., *"I agree with you, Sherry!"*).	Does not post response and/or reply to peers.

For more examples of discussion board rubrics, visit: Chen, B., deNoyelles, A., Thompson, K., Sugar, A., & Vargas, J. (2014). Discussion rubrics. In B. Chen, A. deNoyelles, & K. Thompson, (Eds.), *Teaching online pedagogical repository.* Orlando, FL: University of Central Florida Center for Distributed Learning. Retrieved from https://topr.online.ucf.edu/discussion-rubrics/.

Self-Grading Guide for Online Discussions

The discussion forums in this course are key learning opportunities for you and your peers. To make the most of this opportunity, it is important that each member of our learning community contributes actively and thoughtfully. In order to help you reflect on your participation and contributions to our discussions, please complete the self-grading guide below for each week's discussion forum(s).

Step 1: Honestly reflect on each statement below, and check "yes" or "no" as appropriate.

Statement	Yes	No
I. Timely and Active Participation		
(a) I posted on or before the due date for initial response.		
(b) I posted at least three times throughout the week.		
II. Thoughtful and Complete Responses to Questions		
(c) I fully responded to the question(s).		
(d) I supported my ideas with connections to the reading and/or real-world events supported by examples.		
(e) I enhanced the discussion by making connections to previous course content and/or presenting novel ideas and insights.		
III. Thoughtful Contributions to Learning Community		
(f) I posted thoughtful questions or responses to my peers' posts that extended our conversation.		
(g) I posted thoughtful questions or novel ideas that generated more group discussion.		

Step 2: Count the number of statements to which you responded "yes," and circle the category below that best describes your participation. Read the instructor feedback.

"Yes" Count	0-2	3-4	5+
Level	"Hesitant Contributor"	"Developing Contributor"	"Effective Contributor"
Instructor Feedback	Please try to contribute more to the next discussion! If you have any concerns about participating, please discuss them with me.	Good work! See if you can challenge yourself to add one or two more thoughtful comments or questions next time.	Great job! Please continue participating at this level in future classes.

Step 3: What is one thing you plan to do different next time to enhance your learning from discussion board participation?

Create Small Groups for More In-Depth Online Discussions

Discussion forums are the heart and soul of online courses, because they constitute the virtual physical space where students interact, learn from, and build community with each other (Boettcher & Conrad, 2016).

Instructors can create small online discussion groups to increase student-to-student engagement helping them become more self-directed and collaborative with their peers. Small groups can be assigned challenging problem sets, case studies, real-world scenarios, or complex issues to work on and respond to as a group. These forums should be more informal communication spaces where students can openly discuss their ideas without concern for being evaluated although you may visit each forum to be sure all group participants are engaged and working together. Group responses can then be posted to a full group discussion board to be assessed using an appropriately modified version of the General Discussion Forum Rubric. Once you have formed a set of small groups, you might consider keeping them together to do these types of activities throughout the semester.

Below are three basic ways to form groups for online active learning. Instructors should choose the group membership method based on the type or purpose of the activity.

Grouping Type	Uses	Methods
Random	Quick, efficient, and fair Provides opportunities to work with a variety of other students Ideal for informal discussion groups and short assignments (Barkley, Major, & Cross, 2014).	Use simple and transparent techniques such as grouping by - alphabetical order of first or last names; - counting off by the number of groups you want to form (e.g., if you want three groups, the first person on the list goes in group 1, second person goes in group 2, third person in group 3, fourth person in group 1, etc.);or - using the learning management system (LMS) function to create a randomized small group.
Instructor-Determined	Allows for strategic grouping of students based on similarities or differences in characteristics such as content knowledge, skills, or demographics Ideal for assignments that	**Data Sheet**: At the beginning of the course, ask students to fill in a survey that identifies their major, career interests and experience, digital skills, demographics, work style, and scheduling availability for group work. This information can be used to group students according to similar interests or to enhance the diversity of a group (Barkley, et al., 2014).

	are ongoing, project groups, or controversial discussions	**Likert Scale Rating:** To create groups with diverging opinions about a controversial topic, ask them to reply to a question using a Likert Scale to determine their opinion on a topic to form groups.
Student-Selected	After students have had the chance to work with or participate in discussions with two to three different students or groups of students, you may want to allow them to create self-selected groups.	Use the LMS or a Google Doc to create a sign-up sheet for a preset number of groups with a maximum number of spots. You can also create sign-up sheets based on a particular topic or task so that students might choose their group based on the topic. Reminding students of the learning benefits they reap from working with students who are different from themselves is recommended.

Adapted from Barkley, E. F., Major, C. H., and Cross, K. P. (2014). *Collaborative learning techniques: A handbook for college faculty* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.