

Responding to Introductory Posts

Students in online classes often report feeling isolated and alone, which leads to them disengaging and even dropping out of the course. Positive feedback and relationship building with students in the classroom is known to increase participation and student performance. Similarly, research shows that online students have higher satisfaction with a course and their instructor when they feel connected and seen (Boettcher & Conrad, 2016).

Instructors can help create this sense of connection and visibility with students by:

- greeting students
- sharing a personal connection to the course material
- using student names
- using personal anecdotes to further illustrate points
- thanking students for their contributions

It is important to create a sense of community for each online class. It is also important to realize that, as the instructor, you have a greater influence on developing the class community than anyone else. It is therefore essential to the overall success of the course that you maintain your presence in the online classroom.

Respond to Introductory Posts

Launch student introductions by posting your own introduction to the class as a model for students to follow. This might include where you live, your connection to the course material, some interests or hobbies outside of the course, and what you are hoping to accomplish in the course. Ask students to post their own introductions using yours as a model. After doing this, it is important to check the discussion forum regularly and make sure that you respond to every student post. You may even set a reminder for yourself to check for new posts and respond to them.

In each response to an introductory post, you can welcome the student to your class, thank them for posting, and add a note that connects personally to something the student shared in their post. You can also help foster community building by making connections between students who share things in common, for instance, if two students live in Arizona, or several students note baking as a hobby outside of the class.

All of these personal responses help students feel seen by you and demonstrate that you are invested in their experience and success.

Sample Response Posts

The following table includes sample introductory posts by students and sample instructor responses to the introductory posts.

Student introductory posts	Instructor response posts
Hi, I'm Amanda. I live in a small town outside of Denver, Colorado, with my two daughters and our three dogs. I'm excited to be learning about accounting software in this course as I'm also a bookkeeper for our small business of selling bird seed.	Hi Amanda, welcome to the course! Thank you for posting and letting us know more about you. I'm glad to hear that you already have a practical use for this course content. What type of bird seed does your company sell? I grew up bird-watching with my dad in Vermont.
Hello. My name is Devon. I just earned my undergrad degree in economics. I was a grocery clerk for a large company and was promoted to the inventory database when I graduated. I'm hoping this class will help me learn new ways of using my degree in this career.	Hi Devon, thank you for taking the time to post here. Welcome to the class and congratulations on your undergraduate degree and your promotion! Which school did you attend? I think this course will help you identify even more professional areas that you can use your experience and your education.
Hi everyone, I'm Hasan. I have been in accounting for several years, although my company uses outdated software so I'm hoping to find new ideas here that I can take back to the office. I currently live in Michigan with my wife, who is also an accountant.	Hi Hasan, welcome and thanks for posting! I'm sure you'll find a lot of useful information in this course that you can take back to the office. Did you know that Jeremiah in this class is also an accountant in Michigan? You may be helpful resources for each other.

Source

Boettcher, J. V., & Conrad, R. (2016). *The online teaching survival guide: Simple and practical pedagogical tips* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.