

Guidelines for Discussion Responses

Before you post your response to the Discussion, consider the following guidelines:

One way of facilitating learning for everyone, and creating an inviting classroom climate in our course, is to respond thoughtfully to people in the class. Some of the postings in a course require a lot of effort and thought, and when they are done well, they are beneficial for everyone. Effective feedback is concrete, specific, and useful; it provides actionable information. When our communication refers specifically to our colleagues' work, adds to their contribution, and goes beyond mere, 'Thank you' and 'Great activity,' it facilitates learning.

How can we best facilitate learning? We can do so by acknowledging that we appreciate our colleague's ideas, but also by adding our input, expanding on their ideas and raising questions. We will all benefit more from a few thoughtful and in depth responses, than from quick and brief responses to many colleagues.

The structure below may serve as a framework that reminds us of the elements we may want to include in our responses.

- Acknowledge what was well done
- I like the story you shared about (...)
- You are making good points (...)

- Brief summary of points
- The experience you described is (...)
- The activity you selected is (...)
- In your reflection, your statement about (...) caught my attention because (...)

- Questions to guide your feedback
- What about this response relates to my experiences?
- What questions do I have for my colleague about their response?
- What specific items in the posting can I reference, in order to support my colleague, and/or offer constructive assistance?
- What additional information can I share with my colleague from my experience or my readings?
- What solutions can I suggest for a challenge my colleague has noted?
- What can I do to move this discussion into a larger and/or deeper realm?

It is also important that we maintain a supportive and professional tone. It is a difficult, but important task. Online communication can be easily misunderstood or misconstrued.

Note: Your instructor may modify the procedure for replying to colleagues in one or more modules. For instance, the Instructor may require that you post a single reply that follows the guidelines above or other specific requirements in terms of length and content in a forum of your choice. Please ensure to read all of the course news and/or emails sent by your instructor.