

## IDEAS FOR USING DISCUSSION FORUMS

The obvious way to use the discussion forums is to post questions (open-ended) and ask students to respond. But there are other ways in which the forums can be used.

- 1. Icebreakers:** If you're teaching online, it's critical to build community, a safe space, among students. One way to begin is to ask each student to introduce himself or herself through the discussion. Students do not need to limit themselves to text. They can upload images of themselves to go along with their intro or create and post video introductions.
- 2. More Icebreakers:** Another option of breaking the ice is to pair students up and ask them to interview each other and post their findings to the discussion forum. You can provide a few questions to get them started but let the students come up additional questions.
- 3. Multiple discussions:** Depending on the number of students in class, you may want to break students in to 3-5 groups and ask each group different questions. First, they respond to the assigned question. Then they can respond to any of the other group discussions (responding to a classmate or responding to the original question.)
- 4. Student-led forums:** Again, depending on the number of students in you class, you can either assign one student per week or multiple students per week to develop questions based on the readings, current events, etc. and moderate the discussions. (You would need to add the question on behalf of the student.
- 5. Group Projects:** Individual forums can be set up for use by each group working on a project. You can scaffold the project so each group has to contribute to their discussion forum 4-5 times through the semester with updates. (In Blackboard, you can create [Groups](#) that have access to discussion forums, blogs, wikis, fileshare, etc.)
- 6. Media-rich discussions:** The online (asynchronous) portion of your course can become text-heavy very quickly. Students need to read articles, chapters, as well as their classmates' lengthy postings. Instead of writing responses, ask students to post video responses. Responses can be recorded on their laptops, smartphones or tablets, uploaded to YouTube and then [embedded into their discussion thread](#). *Note: in order to keep the YouTube video private, it's best for students to keep videos "unlisted" and tag-free.*