

# Rules of Discussion

## Overview

As a Grantham student, you are expected to actively engage in discussions each week as a way to help you and your classmates work through ideas, ask questions, and collaborate to reach a better understanding of the topic(s) being explored in the class. This guide provides a general overview of how discussions work at GU to help you to make the most out of your discussions (and earn a better grade!). After reading this, if you have any additional questions, please contact your instructor.

## General Tips

1. Do not think of the discussion as a way to *show what you already know*, but rather as *an opportunity to learn something you don't know*. Think of the discussion forum as a learning tool, not as simply another writing assignment.
2. In each of your posts, ask questions, share your ideas (even if they aren't fully developed yet), and work with your fellow students and your instructor to reach understanding.
3. Accept that even your best ideas might be challenged. You don't have to accept ideas that differ from your own, but you do have to accept that other people may think differently. Keep in mind, in discussions you cannot be wrong so long as you can support your position. We often learn much more by discussing what we don't know than the things we do.
4. Read the directions carefully; make sure you address each of the discussion requirements thoroughly.
5. Never type in all-caps—writing this way is the written equivalent of yelling. There should never be a situation where you have to resort to yelling at your instructor or classmates.
6. Use correct grammar – your contribution will be evaluated on how well you communicate your thoughts. Don't let poor grammar or spelling hurt the communication of your ideas.
7. Be kind—ideas are meant to be challenged, but don't be too aggressive or negative. Make your responses constructive.

## Managing Your Discussions

Each week, you will be asked to make a minimum of three posts (one initial; two responses) to each discussion forum. Here is a suggestion about how to schedule your time each week:

1. Read the discussion topics(s) early in the week, but don't respond right away. Use these to help you focus your reading and study.
2. Review your instructor's weekly announcement for any tips he or she may have for you. This is important!
3. Work through the readings and lectures for the week. Take notes as you read. Write down any questions or comments you have.
4. By Sunday of the week (the earlier the better), submit your initial post to the discussion forum. Use your notes to help you assemble your post. Make sure you address all of the requirements/questions asked of you in the forum directions.
5. Read the initial posts of your fellow students and/or instructor. Make a constructive comment and ask at least one question in response to at least two posts that interest you. Make sure you do this early enough in the week for your classmates/instructors to answer your questions.
6. Respond to questions asked of you. Think more about learning through the discussion than simply defending your preexisting ideas (though you can do that too).

Suggested Sequence for Academic Success	
Day of the Week	Task
Wednesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the discussion topics(s) and weekly assignment directions.</li> <li>• Review your instructor's weekly announcement.</li> </ul>
Thursday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work through the readings and lectures for the week. Take notes as you read.</li> </ul>
Friday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue working through the readings and lectures for the week. Take notes as you read.</li> </ul>
Saturday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write and submit your initial post to the discussion forum. Start thinking about your weekly assignment.</li> </ul>
Sunday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin reading and responding to your fellow students' posts. Begin crafting your weekly assignment.</li> </ul>
Monday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finish responding to posts and any questions asked of you. Finish your weekly assignment and begin revising it.</li> </ul>
Tuesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finish revising your weekly assignment and submit it. Check to make sure you have done everything asked of you for the week.</li> </ul>

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q. How do I post to the Discussion Forum?

1. For your initial weekly post:
  - Click the "New Thread" button
  - Type in your post
  - Click "Save"
2. For your responses:
  - Open the discussion to which you are replying
  - Click "reply"
  - Type in your post
  - Click "save"

### Q. When do I post?

You are expected to post at least three times in each discussion:

1. Your initial post should be 75-150 words addressing the topic(s) as stated in the directions. (Due by Sunday each week)
2. A response to at least two of your classmates' or instructor's initial posts for a minimum of two response posts. (Due by Tuesday each week)

Though it isn't always required, it is good form to answer any questions directed toward your post(s). Check the discussion directions to determine if this is a requirement.

### Q. What do I post?

You are expected to respond "substantively" in each discussion. This means that you should work hard to make your initial post relevant to the topic and insightful. This also means that you should make

thoughtful responses and ask leading questions in your responses to other posts. Picture the class being held in a classroom, sitting in a circle. The instructor has asked a discussion question, and you are responding to that question or another student’s response.

A substantive initial post:

- is between 75 – 150 words (but may go longer)
- contributes to the discussion in a meaningful way

A substantive response post:

- is typically half the length of the initial post
- makes a thoughtful, constructive comment on the post
- asks questions that further the discussion

When replying:

- Use the other student’s first name.
- Explain why you agree or disagree; add some examples to support your position.
- Feel free to relate personal, academic, or work experiences that may add to the discussion.
- Your post should ask a question. (i.e. ask to clarify something, or ask a “what if…” question).
- Remember netiquette – be polite.
- If you can, refer to the class readings and/or lectures.

## Q. Can you provide examples of good initial and response posts?

Type of Post	A Good Post	A Not-So-Good Post
<b>Initial</b>	I have to admit, before reading about No Child Left Behind (NCLB) this week, I never really thought much about it. According to the readings, NCLB is meant to hold schools and teachers to a higher standard as a way to improve the education system in America (p. 124). As it turns out, it seems that schools simply resort to teaching the test questions rather than teaching students how to understand the class topics. I think learning is more than just memorizing facts; we have to figure out what those facts mean, and NCLB seems to have overlooked that in its design. From my understanding, it seems like NCLB is a failure, and we should probably start looking at other ways to improve our schools. One question: Why is it that the schools that are underperforming get less money when they clearly need more to improve? That confuses me. It seems backwards.	No Child Left Behind is meant to hold schools to a higher standard. It didn’t work, so there really isn’t much to talk about here. We need to do something different.
<b>Response</b>	David,  You make some good points here, but I disagree. I think NCLB is a good concept that holds schools responsible for educating their students. What’s wrong with that? The problem isn’t the policy; it’s the way teachers managed it. In answer to your question, why should bad schools get more money? Shouldn’t the good schools be recognized for their efforts? What if it was set up the other way—wouldn’t schools try to be bad to get more money?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I agree.”</li> <li>• “I disagree.”</li> <li>• “Good job! You rock!”</li> <li>• “I can tell you have never really thought about this. It shows. You can’t blame the policy when it is the teachers who failed here. Seriously, wake up!”</li> </ul>