DISCUSSION BOARD TIPS

Discussion boards have the potential to support engagement with your students, stimulate thoughtful discussion and allows students to correspond with each other. However, discussion boards often need facilitating to be made useful. Below are some key tips to support you with using discussion boards effectively.

BE GENTLE

To help students use discussion boards for the first time, choose a simple, and light-hearted task. Something which can be completed easily but that has a purpose. This ‘ice-breaker’ will help them practice for more advanced discussion board techniques.

BE INSTRUCTIVE

Having a clear and simple structure and easy to follow instructions is the key to engagement.
- Do they need to reply or start a new thread?
- What should it be called?
- What do you want them to do with it?
- When does it need to be completed by?

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BE PRESENT

Make sure you are regularly visible in the online space to support continued engagement. Facilitate this by adding your own comments, feeding in your own examples of tasks (for guidance) to provide a model for their own versions.

BE EXPLICIT

Make sure to use clear titles and icons when giving out weekly tasks. For example, giving the task a title “Discussion board: task two” to ensure it can be found and that students know the type of task they need to complete.

BE ACTIVE

Be clear about your expectations. Explain how, why and when they need to participate and keep track of who does and who doesn’t engage with the task. Be active and follow up those who do not participate early on to find out why. This simple follow-up usually is the first step to identifying miscommunications or misunderstandings and can be rectified early on.