



# Writing a Discussion Post

## CONTEXT

Discussions play an integral role in the online learning environment. Discussion posts and replies serve as an opportunity for you to communicate your thoughts with your instructor as well as your peers. Ideally the posts you write should highlight and expand upon what is being taught in the course. Below you will find tips on how to create strong discussion posts.

## BEFORE YOU WRITE YOUR POST

- Read the discussion post directions carefully.
  - Make sure you fully understand what is being asked of you before you begin writing.
- Complete the required course work.
  - This includes reviewing lecture materials, doing the readings, completing assignments, conducting research, etc. so you fully understand what you will be discussing.
- Organize your thoughts.
  - It is important that everyone reading your post understands what you are saying so make sure your comments are well articulated and easy to read.
- Gather any resources that you want to use.
  - Using and referring to resources is a great way to provide credibility to your writing. When using resources make sure to cite them using APA formatting. (See below for APA in-text and reference examples.)

## INITIAL POST

- Choose the title of your post carefully.
  - Your title should capture your reader's attention and hint at what your post will be about.
- Make sure your post facilitates dialog.
  - Your post should allow your peers and instructor the opportunity to engage in a meaningful discussion with you. Some ways to solicit feedback:
    - Ask a thought provoking question at the end of your post.
    - Take a controversial stand on a topic.
    - Incorporate current events.
    - Incorporate your own personal experiences.
- Avoid spelling and grammatical errors.
  - You do not want anything to detract from all the hard work you put into crafting your post.



## RESPONSE POST

- Follow the discussion post rules.
  - If you are supposed to respond to several posts a week, make sure you do so.
- Give substantial information in your response posts.
  - Your response posts should never consist of just “I agree” or “Nice idea;” instead they should be thorough and thoughtful. Try adding something different or new to the conversation to keep the discussion going.
- Respond to posts that contradict or support your own ideas.
  - Responding to posts that interest you will make your post easier to write since it is a topic that is important to you.
- Try to respond to all of your classmates throughout the course.
  - When you show that you value your classmates’ thoughts, they will value yours and are then more likely to respond to your posts as well.

## FOLLOW UP

- Participate frequently in the discussion room.
  - It takes some time for a good discussion to build momentum so it is important that you keep track of the progress. Even after you have already written your initial post and response posts, you may find that you have more to add to the conversation.
- Do not disappear after you have written your posts.
  - Discussion rooms are meant to be lively and interactive. You want to keep the discussion flowing and you never know when somebody will respond to your post asking for clarification or asking you a question. Make sure to check in routinely.

## MODEL APA CITATIONS FOR CLASS MATERIALS

### Class handouts:

Woodworth, M. (2006). Psychopaths [Class handout]. Criminal Justice Program, Rasmussen College.

Matching in-text citation: (Woodworth, 2006)

### Lecture notes posted in the online course:

Cioe, J. (2006). *The normal distribution* [Lecture notes]. Retrieved from <http://rasmussen.learntoday.info/>

Matching in-text citation: (Cioe, 2006)

### PowerPoint presentation posted in the online course:

Cioe, J. (2006). Biological foundations of psychosis [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from <http://rasmussen.learntoday.info/>

Matching in-text citation: (Cioe, 2006)



## DISCUSSION POST LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING

- This is a general guideline for things to consider for your Discussion Posts. Which level do your posts represent?

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<p><b>Minimal Understanding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The instructor cannot really tell what you know and what you have learned.</li><li>• You have done the bare minimum to get the assignment done.</li></ul>	<p><b>Basic Understanding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You have included specific details from the readings and lecture in your posts.</li><li>• The basic assignment criteria have been met.</li></ul>	<p><b>Exemplary Understanding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You have included details and specific examples and the information added supports or illustrates your points.</li><li>• The instructor can tell that you have read the text, understand it, and can apply what you have learned.</li><li>• You are maximizing the learning process.</li></ul>
<p><b>Suggestions to Improve</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make sure you have addressed all aspects of the original discussion question.</li><li>• Review the reading and any lecture notes. Incorporate those into your posts.</li></ul>	<p><b>Suggestions to Improve</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Try using concepts, terms, and examples from other classes to show that you can relate knowledge from different disciplines.</li></ul>	<p><b>Suggestions to Improve</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask questions of your peers to support their understanding as well as your own.</li></ul>

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