



## Maximizing Use of Online Communications Groups

*Instructional Technology Development / Information Services – SAC 284, Lincoln Park*

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Here are some suggested online activities for your class. Adjust any of these for class size and learning outcomes.

### Collaborative Writing

- Plan to randomly divide the class into four person teams (divide total number of students by 4 to determine number of teams).
- Prepare index cards labeled Red 1, Red 2, etc, Green 1, Green 2 and so forth. for each team.
- Prepare a message with directions as follows: "Your task is to write a collaborative story with anonymous co-authors. The person with #1 writes the beginning, #2 builds the story, #3 expands and #4 writes the ending."
- Paste this message into each of the starter messages labeled "Red Story", "Green Story" and so forth for the number of teams.

Remind the students to be sure they are adding their message to the correct message starter (Red, Green etc.) and to refresh or reload often to see when new messages are posted. This activity comes with lots of learning moments and some good fun. Enjoy!

### Structured Debate

Consider a weekly debate topic. Multiple questions provide opportunities for all students to participate.

- Assign students to teams (pro and con). Numbers may vary but probably no more than 5 students per team.
- Post a message to the discussion group explaining the rules for the debate. This way everyone has a chance to see the rules and refer to them on-line.
- Create a new main message. In the title identify the key topic of the debate.
- Paste the debate question (that you have written carefully in advance) into the message window.
- Preview and post the message.
- Impose a time constraint, for example, "All messages pro and con must be posted by end of the week."

Have the students not participating in the debate review the discussion and vote to decide who "wins." Participation points are awarded to both teams and bonus points to the winners.

### Discussion Leaders

In courses where there is considerable reading, assign an individual or a group to lead the discussion of the particular reading assignment.

- Assign individual/group to thoroughly read the article/chapter etc. at least one week in advance of the discussion.
- The task for discussion leader is to pose questions related to the reading and respond to student questions/comments related to the reading assignment.

Instructor may monitor and contribute as necessary but students are responsible for posting the messages and ensuring their responses are placed in the appropriate thread.

### Problem Solving

- The message to the discussion group could be text or a link to an HTML document or an audio file or a video file or an image.
- The task for the students is to solve the problem being presented. If the class size is large then use groups working independently or perhaps competitively.
- As in Structured Debate, post the rule and procedures for the problem solving activity so all participants will be starting with a shared document.