

Considerations for Grading Discussions

You have 2 weeks for this discussion. Some students think they can make a single contribution, just hours before it is due, and get full score. Some students write a beautiful essay, and then get upset when they don't get all the points. Others post a few times, maybe over a few days, and get upset when they don't get the full score.

I use the analogy of a conversation. Do you walk in and say something, and then leave? Do you stay there making comments but ignoring any replies or questions? Do you stand there going yep, uh-huh, I agree, and other monosyllabic utterances?

Must you post every day? Of course not. But you should post regularly over the 14 days. Don't just post, participate in a thread. Better yet, start one of your own. But don't ignore responses to your posts. Respond to them, interact. Say something when you post. I had a student who posted 15 times, always saying I agree or the equivalent. He still received a score of 1!

I do look at the number of posts per person and an estimated average. Some students will have 30-40 posts, and it's hard to post that many times without saying something and participating in threads. Definitely worth a full score of 10. Someone else posts 10 times (on a couple of days) and is upset with a score of 5-7.

I had a student argue that he used the whole 2 weeks. He was kind of correct. He posted on the first day that did prompt a new thread (another plus I look for). Then on the last day he posted 2-3 more times. Just hours before the deadline. One of them wasn't in an existing thread, but all were too late for anyone to respond. This is a problem with all posts made on the last day.

A final consideration is are you making thoughtful responses. One indication is how condensed your posts are. I see students who post 5-6 messages in 30-40 minutes. Yes, it's possible they had read the threads, took notes, drafted their response, and were just typing it in. We all are short on time so would someone really do it that way? Even worse, I'll see someone post the same text in multiple threads, occasionally with simple modifications, others it's verbatim. I count all of them as one post. A related problem is repeating a statement in a thread. Expand on it. Do you really agree completely?

It takes me the most time to grade this discussion. I monitor it throughout the 2 weeks. I try not to respond, as it should be your thoughts. I may comment on a poignant statement, or to correct a misleading statement, or even to provide some factual information in response to a student. I do look at the statements in context as well as the collection of posts by each student.

Simply put- participate in the conversation, contribute.