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During the pandemic, SJSU permanently expanded its catalog of online courses. Now more than ever, discussion posts are vital to online and in-person courses. This type of assignment usually consists of the professor giving the class a prompt to which students must respond and possibly reply to other responses. For asynchronous courses, these assignments act as the active dialogue between you and your peers. For synchronous courses, they typically act as homework assignments to ensure that you think critically about and keep up with the course content. Discussion posts vary in length, writing style, and overall structure from class to class, but this handout aims to provide a list of best practices to keep in mind.

A discussion post will often ask you to respond to a prompt based on a previous reading, course material, or piece of media you are analyzing. It is also helpful(5ak(5ak(5ak(r)-20(i)7(na)7T1 728-6(i)7(l)7eo0(t)7

Posts must be above 300 words and devoid of grammatical and spelling errors. Demonstrate your knowledge of the readings, but you may relate its topics to your personal experience. Be sure to define and explain the terminology you use in your post.

Submit your post by Thursday night; you will have until Sunday to respond to your peers.

Generally, keeping your main point or argument at the beginning of your discussion post is advisable. This allows your reader to follow along with your writing rather than be confused and attempt to figure out on their own how all your points come together. This is a shorter writing assignment, and this idea is contrary to a traditional paper's funnel introduction. Where typical introductions have a narrow, debatable claim (your thesis) at the end to ease readers into your

Zaria also uses sources with questionable legitimacy (e.g., unscholarly sources), and she does not cite any of the information she is pulling from.

### *Focused*

While other topics and knowledge can be useful for some discussion posts, especially those with open-ended questions, sometimes you need to address the reading itself to demonstrate your understanding. Ensure that everything relates to your main point; otherwise, your readers (e.g., your peers, your professor) may be confused.

**Mateo** - Today, 3:13 PM

Social media has a negative effect on our society. Do you know what else does? Violent video games. Youth are more impacted by playing violent video games than by using social media. For example, the shooter who was responsible for the mass murder at Sandy Hook Elementary played *Call of Duty*.

**Kiara** - Today, 9:54 PM

Mateo, although you brought up a good point that violent video games negatively impact our society, the topic is about social media usage. Your thoughts led me to think about how violence can be related to social media; while watching the evening news on NBC, I have heard stories about teenagers who get bullied on social media sites, such as Facebook. For example, some classmates continued to post mean, hurtful comments on her Facebook page. Sadly, some of these teenagers have committed suicide because they could not handle the harassment. Therefore, I believe that social media can have a negative effect on our society.

While Kiara does bring the discussion back on track, Mateo derails it to talk about something different. By doing this, he does not display his knowledge of the reading or other sources. Focused writing is all about staying on topic and removing any unnecessary information. Allow your readers to follow you through your post. Allow them to participate in your response to the discussion by being able to follow it. Consider using signal phrases—such as those provided below—and other techniques to lead your reader from one part to another.

### *Useful Signal Ph*

*Professional*

Be respectful when responding to the prompt and to others. Acknowledge and respect that people have different opinions. Do not use a discussion post to take jabs or complain about the course.

***Hasan*** - Today, 8:59 PM





Here are some responses to a simpler prompt. Can you identify the most professional response out of the four options below?

Topic: What is your favorite sandwich?

**Kai** - Today, 12:33 PM

Sandwiches are the best! Togo's has the most amazing sandwiches ever. Their ingredients are always fresh, and the employees are polite and friendly. I would recommend Togo's over Subway any day!

**Alex** - Today, 2:57 PM

LOL. This topic is awesome. But I have to disagree with all of u guys. Peanut butter and jelly is the bomb! U all r trippin if you dont think PB&J is the best.

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