

Participation in class discussions – scoring and examples

Posted messages should be **substantive** – helping the discussion move forward. There are a variety of ways to do this, including:

- Providing concrete examples, perhaps from your own experience
- Describing possible consequences or implications
- Challenging something that has been posted in the discussion – perhaps by playing “devil’s advocate”
- Posing a clarifying question
- Suggesting a different perspective or interpretation
- Pulling in related information from other sources – books, articles, websites, other courses, etc.

Your participation score for a given week will be based on the number and quality of messages you post to that discussion, up to a maximum of 5 points. Participation will be evaluated in terms of quality as well as quantity, using a scale that is based on “Bloom’s taxonomy,” which outlines a hierarchy of cognitive skills:

Cognitive Skill	Description
Evaluation	Judging the value of information as it might be applied in a particular situation.
Synthesis	Creating something new by combining different ideas.
Analysis	Breaking something down into its individual parts for deeper understanding.
Application	Using a general concept to solve a particular problem.
Comprehension	Understanding the information being communicated without necessarily relating it to anything else.
Knowledge	Remembering or recognizing something without necessarily understanding, using, or changing it.

Each posted message will be scored in one of three categories: 0 points (non-substantive), 1 point (knowledge, comprehension, application), or 2 points (analysis, synthesis, evaluation).

One-point messages will be relatively common. Two point messages, however, will be more difficult for you to post because that kind of message will require deeper, more critical thought about the content – which is why those messages will earn a higher score. Also, please understand that this is not an exact science. We will have to make some judgment calls, and the lines between these categories will seem pretty thin at times. The examples that follow will help clarify the categories. The examples are actual posted comments from previous semesters.

Examples of 0 point messages

These messages are **non-substantive**. They may indicate agreement or disagreement with a prior message, but they are too general to help move the discussion forward.

Example 1 – “Good idea for assessing whether people know what to do.”

Example 1 is a 0 point message because it's simply a compliment to the student that posted the original message. It doesn't move the discussion forward or add anything substantial to the discussion.

Example 2 – “I have to agree. Having a SME or experienced designer look at the work is of tremendous help. It is so easy to assume things, and leave out steps here and there. It is certainly not as easy as it looks, and I can see where this process makes for a much better learning experience for the participants.”

Example 2 is a 0 point message because the student is simply agreeing with a statement made by another student. This message does little to move the discussion forward.

Example 3 – “I disagree with your definition of soft technology. Can you please tell me how you came to that conclusion?”

Example 3 is a 0 point message because, although the student disagrees, he doesn't expand on his question by saying why he disagrees.

Examples of 1 point messages

The focus here is knowledge, comprehension, or application – the lower half of Bloom's taxonomy. These messages add to the discussion by clarifying information or showing how it can be applied in a particular situation, but they don't break down individual thoughts and ideas to create something new or criticize an idea based on based on new thoughts.

Example 4 – “As far as having used behavioral objectives, I've used them to advertise the training and again at the beginning of training in order to explain to employees what they're going to learn. For instance, an example of a behavioral objective in training for managers would be: "At the end of the class, participants will be able to define the steps in the disciplinary process." In describing the behavior, I agree that using action verbs such as define, rather than a verb like understand lets the employee know that he/she will actually be able to do something at the end of the training.”

Example 4 is a 1-point message because the student displays knowledge of behavioral objectives and she gives an example (application).

Example 5 – “As an example, I work with someone who is an instructional designer, yet he's one of the slowest in adapting new elements and methods to our work. My point is that although his background is in the training field, he just couldn't seem to transition and apply that to Web-based training. Perhaps his individual capacity just isn't tailored to developing this type of training application.”

Example 5 is a 1-point message because this student shows comprehension of the definition of the term “capacity,” as it's used in Gilbert's Behavioral Engineering Model, and is applying that definition to an example at her work.

Example 6 – “Perhaps the next important thing to consider is: Does the measurement we make (or invent) have meaning? Can it be applied in a useful manner or is it just more information? Can this measurement be used to produce or improve results?”

Example 6 is a 1-point message because the student is asking questions to move the discussion forward. Notice that the questions in this message are more specific than the question in Example 3. If this student had attempted to answer her own questions by providing some solutions on how to ensure measurement was useful, she may have earned 2 points.

Examples of 2 point messages

The focus here is analysis, synthesis, or evaluation – the upper half of Bloom’s taxonomy. These messages add to the discussion by identifying important relationships, putting ideas together in some unique way, or offering a critique as a point of discussion.

Example 7 – “I believe that learning is more effective if we allow learners to create their own behavioral objectives. Like Driscoll, I believe that "Learners are not empty vessels waiting to be filled, but rather active organisms seeking meaning." Bearing in mind that we are all products of our own experiences; be it socioeconomic, gender specific, cultural and/or family related, I firmly believe that the learning needs of learners should always be the force which guides the instructional development process and the crafting of meaningful behavioral objectives. Therefore, differentiated instruction is of paramount importance if we are to provide meaningful learning environments, which emulate challenge, variety, creativity and innovation. Consequently, a synergistic blend between Bloom’s Taxonomy and Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences must be found if learning is to be truly effective.

Example 7 is a 2-point message because the student is combining ideas learned from various resources into a new thought.

Example 8 – “I agree with the statement "learning is generally less effective when only the learners create the objectives", However, I would not wish to lump ALL learners into this category, whether they are intellectually gifted or not. I believe that in much instruction the student is an integral part of defining the objective, especially in skills training, or efficiency of operations. If a company has been producing X product in the same manner for an extended time, it is reasonable to believe that new employees have been trained in that "tried and proven" method of production. However, as times and markets change, production techniques must also change. The student (employee) who is being taught the same "old" method would invariably attempt to modify the technique to increase efficiency of the production. If the student is stifled by being held only to the objectives stated in the training, no improvement will be made and the company will ultimately suffer.

Example 8 is a 2-point message because the student is disagreeing and making a contrary argument, based on an evaluation of the idea expressed in a previous message. He's responding in the upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Example 9 – “I’m a Thomas Gilbert fan and I saw a parallel here with Gilbert’s Behavioral Engineering Model and what Rossett is calling barriers. Barriers, of course, could include anything, including supervisor resistance (data and incentives), lack of

alignment between training and actual work (knowledge), lack of tools (information), lack of information (data).”

Example 9 is a 2-point message because the student is identifying relationships between ideas presented by Gilbert and Rossett. Another thing to notice here is that messages don't have to be long to earn 2 points. But they do have to show a level of analysis, synthesis, or evaluation.

Finally, as a general guideline, make sure your posted comments are **CRISP**:

- Considerate.** You may have strong views and will want to express those views. That's great. But remember that others may have equally strong views that are the polar opposite of your views. Feel free to question, challenge, or disagree with anything in the discussion, but do so in a respectful, considerate way.
- Reflective** An asynchronous discussion may lack the spontaneity of a live discussion. But this can be an advantage. There is more time to think before responding. Take the time to think about the ideas that have been expressed (in the readings and the discussion) from the perspective of your own experience. Then add your own comments and insights.
- Interactive** Remember that you're a participant in a discussion and talk **with** one another. During boot camp, you learned how to respond to posted messages and how to cut and paste parts of previous messages into your message. Use these methods. The idea is to be **interactive**, not just active.
- Succinct** Get to the point. Short, focused message are usually more effective than long comments.
- Pertinent** Comments and questions should be related to the discussion topic. There will be times when you want to talk with someone about something unrelated to the topic. That's fine. But the place to do that is the Hallway or the BSU Campus Student Union. When you enter into a weekly discussion, please remember that you're in a classroom, not a chat room.