

Good academic practice in online discussions

Participate: This is a shared learning environment, so please do contribute. Reading the ideas of others is not enough; you need to share your own ideas and allow others to engage with them.

Be Patient: Read the whole discussion thread before replying - this way you will make sure you've got the whole picture, and avoid repeating something someone else has already contributed. Acknowledge the points made with which you agree; suggest alternatives for those with which you don't.

Be Brief and Clear: You want to be clear—and to articulate your point—without being preachy or pompous. Be direct. Stay on point. Don't lose yourself, or your readers, in overly wordy sentences or paragraphs. Remember that for some students English may not be their first language.

Use Proper Writing Style: Remember that this is a scholarly discussion. While levels of formality may vary, correct spelling, grammatical construction and sentence structure are expected. Avoid emoji, emoticons, text-speak and slang; these linguistic shortcuts are not part of the academic dialogue.

Cite your Sources: Another big must! If your contribution to the conversation includes the intellectual property (authored material) of others, e.g., books, newspaper, magazine, or journal articles—online or in print—they *must* be given proper attribution.

Also think before you attach files: do you have copyright permission to share this file? If you're not sure, you almost certainly don't!

Avoid YELLING! Using bold upper-case letters is bad form, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU ARE SHOUTING.

Respect Other Contributors: Criticism must be constructive, well-meaning, and well-articulated. Angry or personal responses directed at other contributors are simply unacceptable and will not be tolerated. The same goes for profanity. The academic environment expects higher-order language. If you would not say something to someone's face, do not say it to them when online.

Respect Diversity: The LSE community is diverse in many ways. Take responsibility for maintaining discussion forums as “principled spaces”, in which you reflect on your privileges when posting, and allow all voices to be truly heard.

Be careful to avoid language that could be construed as offensive toward others. Racist, sexist, and heterosexist comments and jokes are unacceptable, as are derogatory and/or sarcastic comments and jokes directed at religious beliefs, disabilities, and age.

Be especially careful when using humour or sarcasm in general, as it can easily be misunderstood and give offence. Do not assume that the reader is reading your words in the same tone of voice that you had in your head when you wrote them.

Check Before you Post: Review your written posts to ensure that you've conveyed exactly what you intended. This is an excellent opportunity to practice your proofreading, revision, and rewriting skills—valuable assets in the professional world for which you are now preparing. Try reading your post out loud before hitting the send button. This will tell you a lot about whether your grammar and sentence structure are correct, your tone is appropriate, and your contribution clear or not.

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