

# HOW DO I HELP STUDENTS TO COLLABORATE ONLINE?

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## Why is Collaboration Important in Online Communities?

To build a successful online community, students need the tools to interact and have conversations. Through conversation, we learn about each other, ourselves, the topic, how to get along, and make group decisions. Though time and geography limit some of our conversations, the power of engaging groups through different technologies builds a community. Students report that their satisfaction with online courses is directly related to instructor presence, and the collaboration and sense of community they experience. In a successful online learning community, students support one another and help each other accomplish what they might not have on their own. When the students interact and direct their efforts toward a common goal, collaboration exists.

**HBO** Hybrid • Blended • Online

**TOOLKIT**

## What Tools Does *Blackboard Learn* Offer to Facilitate Online Collaboration?

*Blackboard Learn* offers four communication tools for self-reflection, collaboration, and communication. The discussion board, blogs, journals, and wikis tools allow you to provide rich assignments and evaluate students in authentic ways where students can share and create knowledge.

Each of the four interactive tools can serve distinct purposes. You can use one or all of them in your course, and they can work well in combination. Select the tools that meet your course goals and allow students to interact in the most efficient ways. Students can incorporate rich media into their posts to entice and inform others.

- **Journals:** Students can express their thoughts, questions, and concerns to you privately using private journals. Journals are useful ways for students to ask questions about the content, record their observations, and submit early drafts of a graded assignment for your guidance and feedback.
- **Discussions:** Students can express their ideas with their classmates and with you, gathering feedback and help with refining their opinions and plans. Discussions are useful ways for students to post ideas for projects and papers and ask classmates to weigh in, analyze a topic and discuss it in detail, and share opinions and ideas about discussion topics.
- **Blogs:** Students can interpret what they learned; showcase their grasp of the material, and present information to their classmates. Blogs are useful ways for students to analyze and add information to a topic over the course term, deliver arguments and supporting evidence, share resources and research on a topic with the class, and provide commentary on a subject.
- **Wikis:** Students can create course content together using wikis. Divide students into pairs or groups, or generate work as a class unit. Because each course member is a trusted source of information, everyone may edit and organize the content. Wikis are useful ways for students to work together on lab experiments and research, contribute to a course glossary, share resources and information, expand current information on a topic, share pictures, articles, and media related to lessons and explain why they were chosen, and more.

Note that additional tools may also be available to you depending on what tools your institutions subscribes to, including live chat and video conference using tools like Blackboard's Collaborate or Google Hangouts.

### How do I get started?

Using Blackboard's tools for collaboration, your students can interact with each other in different ways to ask questions, share research and information, analyze and debate topics using informed and persuasive arguments, complete group projects and papers, and more. You can learn more about Blackboard's social learning tools for collaboration at:

**English:**

[http://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1\\_2014\\_04/Instructor/o8o\\_Collaboration](http://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_2014_04/Instructor/o8o_Collaboration)

**Spanish:**

[http://help.blackboard.com/es-es/Learn/9.1\\_2014\\_04/Instructor/o8o\\_Collaboration](http://help.blackboard.com/es-es/Learn/9.1_2014_04/Instructor/o8o_Collaboration)

**Portuguese (Brazil):**

[http://help.blackboard.com/pt-br/Learn/9.1\\_2014\\_04/Instructor/o8o\\_Collaboration](http://help.blackboard.com/pt-br/Learn/9.1_2014_04/Instructor/o8o_Collaboration)

## References:

help.blackboard.com:

([https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1\\_2014\\_04/Student/090\\_Tools/Journals](https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_2014_04/Student/090_Tools/Journals))

([https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1\\_2014\\_04/Student/090\\_Tools/Wikis](https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_2014_04/Student/090_Tools/Wikis))

([https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1\\_2014\\_04/Student/090\\_Tools/Discussion\\_Board](https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_2014_04/Student/090_Tools/Discussion_Board))

([https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1\\_2014\\_04/Student/090\\_Tools/Blogs](https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_2014_04/Student/090_Tools/Blogs))

[https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1\\_2014\\_04/Instructor/080\\_Collaboration/000\\_Best\\_Practice\\_Interactive\\_Tools\\_in\\_Action](https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_2014_04/Instructor/080_Collaboration/000_Best_Practice_Interactive_Tools_in_Action)