

BLM 1 – *Maintaining a Safe Space Online*

Rate the Behaviors and Defend Your Reasoning

Below is a list of 10 behaviors. Read through them carefully and select the three you feel are most important for maintaining a safe space online. Once you have selected the three behaviors you feel are most important, explain why you think these behaviors will keep online discussions respectful and supportive.

Post your top three behaviors and your rationale online for your classmates to read. Then read and reply thoughtfully to at least two other members of the class online. Compliment strong points made, ask questions, and build on the ideas shared. (See the section below on *Responding to a Classmate's Comment* for prompts and sentence starters.)

10 Online Behaviors

- Actively engage in the conversation taking place online.
- Read and think deeply about my answer before responding.
- Address my classmates by name when responding to their ideas.
- Maintain an appropriate tone and stay on topic in order to further the discussion.
- Respectfully disagree with ideas. I will not attack my peers because they have different beliefs or opinions.
- Be open-minded. I believe I can learn from the diversity of perspectives in this class.
- Attempt to think “outside of the box” in order to present new ideas and perspectives.
- Respect the privacy of my peers.
- Support my classmates in their learning process.
- Encourage discussion by asking interesting, thought provoking questions.

Responding to a Classmate's Comment

In order to have a threaded discussion with your peers you will need to respond to their posts. Responding online is a complex skill: it requires the writer (person posting) to read, analyze, interpret, and synthesize information as well as, plan and write a reply. Online communication can be misinterpreted because you cannot read peoples’ body language, their tone of voice, or their facial expressions. The following points are suggestions for responding online:

- Address people by name. Using people’s names when you respond to their postings creates a friendly online tone.
- Read questions and conversational postings carefully to avoid unnecessary confusion. Avoid skimming. Respect the time your peers have spent articulating their thoughts.
- Compliment your peers when they contribute original ideas and post strong responses.
- Ask questions. If anything is unclear or you want further information or insight on a topic, just ask. If you have a question, there are probably other members of the group who are confused and need further clarification as well.

- Be considerate. Remember that your peers cannot see your body language or hear your tone of voice, so you need to keep your language direct and respectful.
- Avoid slang, jargon, and sarcasm.
- Stay open-minded. There is no right or wrong in a discussion – a variety of perspectives adds depth and substance.
- Respond instead of reacting. Do not write a response if you are angry or upset. Instead, wait until you have had time to calm down and collect your thoughts.
- Critique the content, not the person.
- Reread your messages before sending them to ensure that your ideas are clear.
- Back up your ideas with examples, evidence, or information to strengthen your statements. Do not present your personal opinions as fact
- Answer all questions addressed directly to you. Be courteous and prompt in responding. Consider thanking the person for their question.
- Make “I” statements when respectfully disagreeing. Sharing an opposing opinion or idea is important in discussions – using I statements conveys your feelings and thoughts rather than focusing on the other persons’ response.
- Avoid emotional punctuation, like exclamation points, unless you are complimenting an idea shared. Do not use all caps when writing. It is interpreted as yelling.

Strong Sentence Starters:

- Rebecca's comment made me think about...
- Although Thom made a strong point that _____, I think...
- I respectfully disagree with Kelly’s statement that _____
- I really appreciate Deborah's insight into...
- Seth, thanks for sharing.....
- I had not thought about Leigh's point that...
- Great point, Angela! Have you considered...
- Even though Katie's point is valid, I tend to...
- Building on Dustin's statement that...
- Darian highlighted some key ideas when he said...
- Bree-Anna, do you agree or disagree