



Online participation

Have you come across a unit that is run partially online or maybe even completely online? More and more units are adapting to both face-to-face and online methods to deliver content. This blended approach may look different depending on the unit or the content that is being presented. Successful online strategies aim to facilitate students in:

- student-led discussions.
- finding and discussing web resources.
- helping each other to learn (peer assistance) (Pelz, 2010).

You still need to show similar active participation skills in an online discussion just as you would in person, in your class. However there are some nuances that will allow you to get the most out of your class.

Netiquette

A word that you will undoubtedly come across is 'netiquette'. This term refers to the written or unwritten rules that you should abide by when participating in online platforms. The University provides an online page for [general netiquette](#). In brief, the following key elements are important:

- be polite and avoid the use of bad, inappropriate, or offensive language
- respect others' points of view
- be aware of [cultural differences](#), and
- be careful with humour and sarcasm (Western Sydney University, 2015).

Getting started with Discussion Boards

A good place to start with using online Discussion Boards is to watch [How to Use Blackboard Discussions](#) (video, 4:02) from the creators of vUWS. It's a short video that orientates you well on how to use Discussion Boards in a vUWS site. If you still have questions and need further information the University has the [vUWS Student Support Site](#) (login required) with helpful documentation and links on using Discussion Boards.

Video conferencing

Technology is always improving, and online conferencing platforms similar to Skype are starting to be implemented in teaching. Western Sydney University uses a platform called [Zoom](#). Getting to know how to use this platform early will be helpful, as you'll undoubtedly need to access it at some point through your course. The resource [Communicating your ideas](#) (PDF, 75 kB) for face-to-face classrooms is also relevant for video sessions.

More information

- Visit the [Study Smart Digital Literacy](#) page, especially [Digital learning and development](#) and [Communication, collaboration, and participation](#)
- Visit the [Study Smart vUWS site](#) and complete the module and self-quiz in the Digital Literacy section, called Online Learning: A guide for students
- Take the online quiz: [What type of digital learner are you?](#) (University of Exeter)

References

- Blackboard Inc. (2013). *How to use blackboard discussions*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxjOU5sXmns&list=PLontYaReEU1seUE3ACG3sEc3zR7Br7URU&index=5>
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