Strategies for Taking Notes in Class

Technical Instructions and Example

Using a Virtual Campus (Brightspace) Discussion Forum for Sharing and Comparing Notes

This resource is a guide for faculty to create an anonymous forum in Virtual Campus (Brightspace) that allows students to share and improve their course notes.

Overall Objective

To support students in note-taking. To improve content retention by comparing and analyzing their own notes with those of their peers, based on the principle of repeated cognitive activation.

Step-by-Step Directions for Creating an Anonymous Forum in Virtual Campus (Brightspace)

1. **Enable the Discussions tool**
    - In your Brightspace course, go to **Manage Course**, then **Communication**, and click **Discussions**. [tlss-discussion]
2. **Create the Forum**
    - Click **New** → **New Forum**.
    - Enter a title, e.g., "Note Sharing and Comparative Analysis".
    - Enable the **Allow anonymous posting** option so that students can post anonymously. The instructor can still moderate the forum. [tlss-discussion]
3. **Configure options**
    - Require students to start a thread before they can view others' threads to encourage personal contributions.
    - You can enable post moderation (the "must be approved by the moderator" option).
    - Set the forum's visibility according to your schedule (always visible or within a date range). [tlss-discussion], [tlss-discussion-plus]
4. **Create a topic within the Forum**
    - Click the arrow next to the forum title and select "**Add Topic**."
    - Give it a clear title, e.g., "Week 5: Your Course Notes."
    - Add a clear description of the assignment instructions (see next section).

5. **Post and Monitor**
    - Save the topic.
    - Moderate according to the selected options, monitor engagement, and encourage discussion.

Suggested text for the topic discussion



Welcome to our forum "Week X: Note Sharing"

Share your class notes from this week here **anonymously**. Read and compare your classmates' notes:

- **Similarities**: What do you notice in common?
- **Differences**: What enriches, clarifies, or complements your own version?
- **Comprehension**: Summarize the key concepts or messages that become clearer based on your note comparison.
- **Questions**: Share at least three questions in the forum with your classmates and professor to get their perspectives.

Objective of this activity:

1. Identify key points you may have missed.
2. Enrich and reorganize your notes with new perspectives.
3. Clarify missing or confusing elements.
4. Reinforce your learning through repetition and comparison—which promotes knowledge integration (repeated brain activation).

Instructions:

1. Post your notes in the format of your choice (e.g., bulleted list, diagram, concept map, etc.).
2. Comment on at least two posts by your peers, highlighting **some similarities and differences**.
3. Reflect on your level of understanding of the material and on the questions you would like to post or ask your peers and the instructor.
4. Following the forum, revise your personal notes and prepare to return to them in class or in a group discussion.

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Additional Teaching Tips

- **In-class debrief**: After the online phase, hold a debrief in class where each student shares a key insight gained from the comparison.
- **Schedule**: This forum can be held weekly, promoting spaced practice and repeated reinforcement.
- **Assessment**: You can link the forum to a grade in the Brightspace gradebook, leave it ungraded, or award participation points or an "educational engagement badge."

Neuroscientific Foundations: Brain Activation and Neuroeducation

- According to Steve Masson (UQAM), **spacing out learning sessions** and **revisiting the material** promote better knowledge integration ("brain activation"). [labneuroed…espace.com]
- The ***Laboratoire de recherche en neuroéducation*** (Neuroeducation Research Laboratory), led by Steve Masson at UQAM, is specifically exploring these mechanisms. [neuroqam.uqam.ca], [www.labneur...cation.org]
- See also the webpage to learn more about the fundamentals of note-taking.

To learn more, watch Steve Masson's videos (in French) on the **Savoir Média and UQAM** channels. [la-platefo…venson.org]

Resources for Setting up Virtual Campus (Brightspace) Discussion Forums

In the right-hand menu of your Virtual Campus (Brightspace) course, consult the resource guides as needed for additional information on creating and moderating discussion forums.

Conclusion

This anonymous forum is a simple yet powerful tool for fostering collaborative knowledge-building, repeated cognitive engagement, and empowering students in their learning.

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