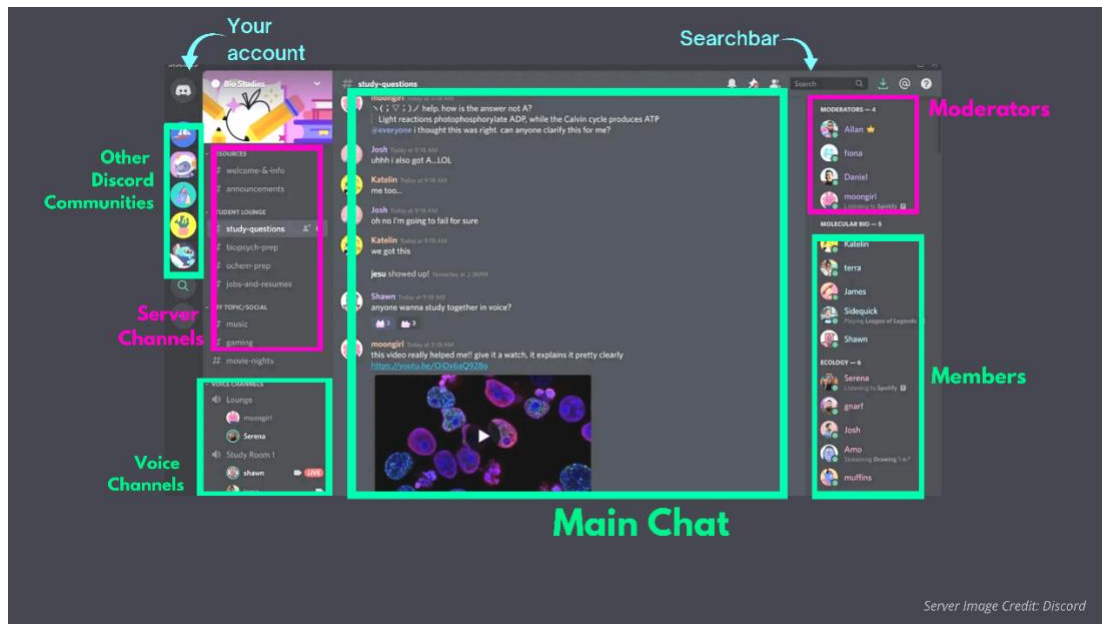




Helpful Tips and Strategies for Integrating Discord into your Course

This resource was designed to help those who are interested in using Discord within their course, though some of the strategies mentioned might also prove useful for other social media platforms used in academic settings. Included are some suggestions, guides, and tools that are intended to foster safer and more inclusive online environments for instructors and students alike.



Above: A screenshot of a typical Discord server showing layout of key functions in highlighted boxes.

What is Discord?

Discord is a social platform that initially began as an online space for gamers before gaining popularity with students across the world during the COVID-19 pandemic. The program lets individuals to connect with one another via web browser or phone app, allowing them to communicate through instant messaging, video calls, and voice chat. Discord consists of many different servers (online communities) created by the users, each server featuring its own order and rules of operation created and maintained by the group moderator(s).

Pros & Cons of Utilizing Discord

Pros:

- Facilitate deeper engagement
- Promote immersive learning through continued discussion outside of conventional learning spaces (e.g., labs, lecture halls)
- Reduce number of emails with repetitive questions from students

Cons:

- Increase risk of harassment, particularly directed at members of underrepresented groups ([here's why](#))
- Require more time and effort to set up and solve technical difficulties

Helpful Suggestions for Setting Up a Class Discord Server

- Browse Discord template options tagged with terms like “class” and “education” to find pre-made servers to use or gain ideas from ([template site](#)) ([quick how-to](#))
- For smaller classes, create unique invite links that expire after single uses ([here's how](#))
- Create a separate channel for each course section or, for increased security and controls, create a separate server for each course section
- Create channels for different weeks or topics, to help organize the online space
- Create an “Introduction” channel for students to introduce themselves
- Create a “Rules” channel to outline what will and won’t be tolerated on the server, with clarity
- Create a “General” channel where students can chat openly about a variety of things
- Set up “Rule Reactions” – a membership screening tool that requires users to “Read & Agree” to the guidelines you set in order to access the community ([here's how](#))
- Assign “member” roles to students, and revoke member access to channels during exam periods to prevent cheating

Strategies for Instructors - Passive Role *(for instructors who do not intend to participate in on the server, nor interact with students over the platform)*

- Include expectations for online behaviour within your syllabus and first lecture (*see syllabus template*)
- Provide a list of rules/guidelines that the students or moderators may repost on their server (*see list below of suggested rules*)
- Suggest students add EDI-friendly bots (*see below*) to promote an inclusive and safe online environment (i.e., Carl-bot for pronouns)
- Take a few minutes during the first lecture to explicitly state that university regulations and codes of conduct still apply to online platforms (indications or reports of academic offenses or cases of harassment will result in heavy consequences)
- Outline some general community guidelines for the class that should also apply to any online communities associated with the class
- Let students know that they may reach out if they witness acts of cheating or harassment, or if they feel unsafe or targeted.
- Remind students of the impacts of cyberbullying and [cyberbystanding](#), and provide them with [specific actions](#) to take if they encounter these situations.

Strategies for Instructors - Active Role *(for instructors who will be active on the server, engaging with students online, participating in chat discussions, etc.)*

In addition to the strategies above, instructors taking an active role can:

- Set the permissions to allow only the moderator to change nicknames, and ask students to use their first and last name when joining ([here's how](#))
- Create an additional channel for “Updates” where only you have permission to post
- Create a separate server where students can post questions for instructors/TAs, and outline specific times for when you will be active to answer questions (Note: a separate channel can be created if you plan to participate in a more casual manner on the course Discord)

- Download the application and turn on notifications for specific things (students posting questions, profanity, etc.)
- Use the “Event” feature to schedule and notify users of events such as when you will be logged on to answer questions, when a test is, etc. ([here’s how](#))
- Assign moderator roles for TAs ([here’s how](#))
- Disable private messaging to prevent students from raising personal matters over Discord (suggest emails for private matters instead)

Using Bots in Discord Servers

What is a Bot?

Bots are tools on Discord that use artificial intelligence (AI) and can be added to a server to help manage and provide specific automated support. ([How to add a bot](#))

Bot Suggestions

- [Mee6](#) for welcome messages
- [Carl-bot](#) for a pronouns option ([quick setup guide](#))
- [YAGPDB](#) for general moderation & automod settings (e.g., muting, banning members for violations)
- [Censor Bot](#) to censor swear words (features a variety of “levels”)

Best Practices in Cases of Online Misconduct

Harassment is a violation of [Carleton University’s Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy](#). The policy defines harassment as conduct (including innuendo) that is abusive, demeaning, threatening, vexatious, or intimidating, or involves the misuse of authority or power. Such conduct exceeds the bounds of freedom of expression or academic freedom. Complaints of harassment will be addressed under the Carleton University Human Rights Policies and Procedures or other work harassment/violence prevention policies as appropriate.

Peer-to-peer harassment: Moderators and automod bots can mute or ban users who violate the server rules. Students who have experienced harassment, sexist or racist behaviour or and other unacceptable conduct outlined in [Carleton University Human Rights Policies and Procedures policies](#) can meet with [Equity Services](#) or [Ombuds Services](#) for advice.

Harassment targeting instructors: Instructors who have experienced harassment, sexist or racist behaviour or and other unacceptable conduct outlined in [Carleton University Human Rights Policies and Procedures policies](#) can contact the Manager, Student Conduct & Harm Reduction, Dillon Brady at dillonbrady@cunet.carleton.ca

Academic integrity offences: If a student is suspected of violating [Carleton University’s Academic Integrity Policy](#), an academic misconduct investigation is launched. The process for investigating potential misconduct is outlined under [Faculty of Science Academic Integrity](#).

Other Resources

[How Discord Works in 148,000 Milliseconds or Less](#) (video, 2 minutes)

This video provides a very brief overview of what Discord is and how it operates.

[My Students Started a Discord Server. Now What?](#) (web article, 5 min read)

In this article, a professor shares his positive experience using Discord for the first time. He also mentions his reasons for doing so and shares some practical tips he's learned through trial and error.

[Taking The University Community Online with Discord](#) (web article, 8 min read)

This web post discusses a pilot study conducted by the Computer Science Department at the University of Southampton, where Discord was found to positively impact learning. The article also includes a handy list of Discord terms with definitions.

[Using Discord to Improve Student Communication, Engagement, and Performance](#)

(Journal article, 5 min read)

This poster summary describes the research of a Computer Science instructor who was interested in the perceived experience and support offered by Discord, considering the other virtual platforms currently used by post-secondary institutions with similar capabilities.

Suggestions for Server Rules and Guidelines

Whether by using a bot or Discord's built-in tools, creating a list of rules and guidelines enables you to set clear expectations for your students. Below is a list of suggested rules to consider including.

**Note: Longer lists might discourage students from reviewing the content carefully, so it is best to choose some of the points that are most helpful for your course, specifically (e.g., rules about hacking might be more applicable to programs that involve computer science and coding, where students might have more working knowledge of, or familiarity with, the concept at hand). Note also that the suggested list of appropriate peer-to-peer sharing may not be applicable in your course.*

- No inappropriate or sexually explicit profile pictures
- No inappropriate or offensive nicknames
- No inviting new people to join the server
- No inviting new bots (if you have a recommendation, please ask me)
- Moderators reserve the right to change nicknames
- Moderators reserve the right to delete or edit any posts
- Moderators reserve the right to use their own discretion regardless of the written rules
- No private/direct messaging moderators (please email the TAs or me with private matters)
- No nicknames with unreadable Unicode
- No NSFW or illegal content
- No piracy (this includes sharing links for illegally published textbooks)
- No political discussions
- No religious discussions
- No sexual discussions
- No bullying or harassment (towards other students, teaching assistants, or instructors)
- No encouraging harassment
- No questioning actions of the mods (email if there is confusion or a problem you would like to discuss)
- No personal attacks
- No offensive language
- No inappropriate language
- No racism, sexism, or hate speech of any kind

- No advertising
- No trolling
- No adding/changing/removing commands from bots (please email if there are problems or suggestions useful for the class)
- No annoying or disrupting others when using voice channels
- Offer help or clarification for others who are unfamiliar with Discord tools or language (judgement of others based on inexperience or age (i.e., ableism, ageism) will not be tolerated)
- Agree to disagree (allow others to express differing opinions and thoughts)
- No sharing answers or solutions (you may help each other understand the topic but sharing the answer prevents other students from learning the material)
 - Examples of appropriate peer-to-peer sharing/learning vary from course to course. In this course appropriate peer-to-peer sharing includes identifying the proper formula to use, identifying an incorrect or missing step in a person's work, brainstorming potential reasons behind a concept, suggesting helpful sites and videos for learning a concept, posting your own work showing only a specific step or process for illustrative purposes (note: this is very different from posting your work and solution for others to simply copy)
 - Examples of unacceptable peer-to-peer sharing: Posting or sharing the answers, indicating which answers are correct on assignments, sharing links to solutions, posting your own complete work for a question/solution

Sample Post: Email, Brightspace, First Lecture (also included in course outline template)

With the growing use of social platforms (e.g., Discord) on campuses, it is important to keep in mind that university codes of conduct still apply to the behaviours of students online. Please be considerate and respectful while engaging with peers and remember that we are all humans, and that your words matter. If any student witnesses or experiences harassment, I encourage you to reach out to me. Alternatively, you can contact [Ombuds Services](#) or [Carleton Equity and Inclusive Communities](#).

Online communities can be highly beneficial to students and can help to facilitate learning within the course. I encourage people to ask questions, learn from one another, and have open discussions about class material. That said, any acts of academic misconduct (i.e., cheating) will not be tolerated and will result in serious consequences ranging from a grade reduction to expulsion (see [academic integrity violations](#)).

- Examples of appropriate peer-to-peer sharing/learning vary from course to course. In this course appropriate peer-to-peer sharing includes: identifying the proper formula to use, identifying an incorrect or missing step in a person's work, brainstorming potential reasons behind a concept, suggesting helpful sites and videos for learning a concept, posting your own work showing only a specific step or process for illustrative purposes (note: this is very different from posting your work and solution for others to simply copy)
- Examples of unacceptable peer-to-peer sharing: Posting or sharing the answers, indicating which answers are correct on assignments, sharing links to solutions, posting your own complete work for a question/solution

I ask that you read and follow the list of guidelines below (moderators may re-post, if helpful):

General Rules & Guidelines

- *(Choose items from list above; add/edit)*

There may be specific situations not covered by these rules, and there may also be certain cases where a rule does not apply. If you are concerned, confused, or conflicted over something, please reach out to a TA or me through email for help. Let's do our best to support one another in this class and keep the online experience a safe, inclusive, and positive experience for everyone.