

Develop a protocol for synchronous discussions (chat)

Unguided chats are rarely effective in accomplishing learning goals. There should always be a designated moderator for a chat, someone that is in charge of guiding and regulating the discussion. In many instances, the instructor will serve as the moderator. When students are working together in a chat room to complete a small group assignment, a student can serve in this role.

Chats can be moderated in a variety of ways and there is not necessarily one best way. Below is a sample showing one method in which the moderator starts the conversation and then calls on participants when they indicate they have something to contribute. The students use symbols to attract the moderator's attention:

? means the student has a question

! means the student has a comment to add

... means the student is still typing; no one should interrupt at this point

. at the end of a line means the student is finished with a comment

Sample Moderated Chat

<Student Moderator> The assignment asks us to share our individual responses to the video clip that we viewed and then answer the set of questions as a group.

<Jane>?

<Tom>!

<Student Moderator> Ok. First Jane, then Tom.

<Jane> I was wondering how we'll go about answering the questions as a group. Will we all share our ideas with one another or divide up the questions and answer them individually?

<Stan>!

<Student Moderator> Jane, that's a good question...

Let's wait and determine a specific process once we've share our reactions, questions, etc. to the video clip.

<Instructor> Tom, then Stan.

<Tom> The video clip was interesting, to say the least....

I think I have more questions now than I did before I watched it!

I had never heard of the term "millennials" before watching this clip; were any of you familiar with it?

<Student Moderator>My twins were born in 1997, so I'm familiar with this term as well as "nexters." Stan, go ahead.

<Stan> The video left me thinking that motivating a "millennial" is going to require a lot of effort on my part....

Their needs/styles are so different from mine, and I'm not that much older than this generation.

<Student Moderator> O.K. Motivation is one thing we'll want to address in the first part of our assignment. Other comments, reactions related to motivating the millennials?