

The Discussion Forum for Educators - Beginner's Tutorial

Please note that detailed instructions about the multiple features of this Forum can be found in the Forum itself.

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Introduction

Discussion forums are chronological records of people's discussions about a given topic. Here at the Prevention Education Resource Center (PERC), most of the discussions are about teaching prevention, public health, and interprofessional education. The basic idea is that one person makes a discussion forum post in one of the Categories. S/he is then responded to by another person who is also interested in the conversation. More people read these posts and join in the conversation. A discussion forum is like a mini town hall where lots of people come together and talk about something that interests them.

What's the difference between a chat room and a discussion forum?

A chat room is a place where you go and engage other people in real-time. You enter a room and other people are “visible” to you. Text scrolls upwards on your screen as individuals "talk" to one another. Once you leave a chat room, there is generally no historical record kept of the conversation.

Discussion forums are not "face-to-face" experiences like chat rooms are. The premise is the same, as people type their thoughts and others respond, but the difference is that each message written on a discussion forum has its own page and shows up alone. People then read that message and have time to think about and respond to it. Discussion forums are permanent records of the conversations, you can refer to everything days, weeks, or months after it was written.

How is the PERC discussion forum organized?

The Discussion Forum for Educators is organized based on categories of conversations. Users can post new topics under the following preset categories:

1. [Interprofessional Approaches to Prevention Education](#)
2. [Discipline-specific Integration of the CPPH Curriculum Framework](#)
3. [Undergraduate Public Health](#)
4. [Graduate Public Health](#)
5. [Health Promotion and Disease-specific Topics](#)
6. [International approaches](#)

7. [Student Forum](#)
8. [Other](#)

How do I find conversations that might interest me?

From the home page, click on the “Discussion Forum for Educators” link to go to the main discussion forum page. This is the page that has all of the categories grouped together. From here, you can search posts within a category by topics. When you open a topic, all replies to the topic will follow chronologically, with the most recent first.

When reading an actual post, you'll notice two links on the right-hand side of the screen named “View previous topic” and “View next topic” Clicking either one of these takes you to the previous or next topic in chronological order.

Forum Etiquette

Members should post in a way that is respectful of other users. Etiquette violations include spamming, personal attacks, vulgarity, profanity, defamation, and posting pornographic or generally offensive text, images, links, etc. Flaming or abusing users in any way will not be tolerated. Members are asked to respect the copyright of other users, sites, media, etc. Members should post in a way which is consistent with "normal writing". That is users should not post excessively long writings, use large numbers of emoticons, large, small or colored text, etc. Similarly users should not SHOUT by using ALL capital letters or use excessive punctuation (e.g. ! and ?) in topic titles or posts.

Writing (Posting)

On every message there are two links named “New Topic” and "Post Reply." If you select “Post Reply,” you will first be asked to log-in (if you haven’t already). Then a new page will come up which reprints the original post and provides you with a box to type your message in. Once you finish the message, just click "Submit Reply." Your message will show up as the first reply to the topic, in reverse chronological order.

If you select “New Topic,” a new page will come up which provides you with a box to name your topic and type your message in. Once you finish the message, just click "Submit." Your message will show up as the last topic in the category, in chronological order.

Why is a post’s topic so important?

The first post of a given thread establishes the topic by which all subsequent replies will be known. Once there's been a reply, the thread topic cannot be subsequently changed. It's therefore important to get the topic right from the outset. Make it as descriptive and as specific as possible. For example, “New public health rotation for med students,” is much better than something completely generic, such as “Newbie needs help.” Not only is it more likely to elicit a response, but it'll also make it much easier for all posts in the thread to be subsequently located.

What does "Unthreaded" and "Threaded" mean?

Unthreaded- Very simply, this lists posts in strictly chronological order.

Threaded - Threaded discussions are grouped according to a specific topic. For example, you might start a thread by posting on the topic of "vaccination." If people respond to your post,

theirs will read "Re: Vaccination" and so forth. All of the replies to your topic will be kept together. This makes it easy to follow each small discussion on a forum. The difference between threaded and unthreaded is that threaded takes the topic into consideration first, and the chronological order second.

How can I find out more about the people posting on this forum?

People who participate on the discussion forum have filled out a member profile. All you have to do is click their name when you read one of their posts and you'll be taken to their profile. When reading a post, you can also send private messages or emails to the author of the post.