

Participating in Discussion Lists

Often called listservs (for the software that runs some of them), discussion lists are e-mail based forums on a particular topic. They can be an effective way to communicate with other literacy practitioners on a variety of topics.



There are three kinds of discussion lists:

- Moderated lists have a mediator who reviews and approves e-mails that are sent to members of the list.
- Unmoderated lists allow e-mails to be posted directly to the list without approval.
- One-way lists simply send information out to members, with no reply expected.

Joining a discussion list is handled by sending an e-mail message to the administrative address for the list. When you find a discussion list you'd like to join, you will need to carefully follow the subscription instructions. Once you've subscribed, you will receive an e-mail that provides you with all instructions for posting to the list, and unsubscribing from it, should you decide to leave. Keep this e-mail for your future reference. (It is considered to be good netiquette to unsubscribe from a discussion list when you go on vacation if you regularly use auto-replies to let people know you are away from e-mail.)

Tips for successful participation in discussion lists:

- “Lurk” or read without participating in a discussion list at first to get a feel for the tenor of the list, and what topics are currently hot. When you begin to participate, send a message to the group introducing yourself.
- Many discussion lists have a collection of frequently asked questions (FAQs) or an archive of past discussions. Review these first before posting a question to the list.
- Discussion lists can generate a lot of e-mail, especially when they have an active membership. Consider subscribing to a discussion list using the digest option, when available, to better manage your e-mail.
- Follow the same rules of netiquette that you would follow for e-mail correspondence.

There is a list of literacy-related discussion lists at:

<http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/discussions/discussions.html>