

# Sycamores At A Distance

Faculty Edition

## Benefits of Blackboard Discussion Boards

A screenshot of a Blackboard Discussion Board interface. It shows a list of forums with columns for 'Display Order', 'Forum', 'Total Posts', 'Unread Posts', and 'Total Participants'. The forums listed are: 1. Introduce yourself (18 posts, 18 unread, 9 participants), 2. Term priority (15 posts, 15 unread, 8 participants), 3. Essay questions (11 posts, 11 unread, 6 participants), 4. Taking effective notes (9 posts, 9 unread, 8 participants), 5. Learning style (11 posts, 11 unread, 7 participants), 6. Mentors (12 posts, 12 unread, 8 participants), 7. Critical thinking (13 posts, 13 unread, 7 participants), and 8. Stress management (11 posts, 11 unread, 9 participants). Below the table is an 'OK' button.

- Builds a sense of community for students
- Allows time for in-depth discussion
- ◊ Students have plenty of time to compose their thoughts before participating in discussion
- Develops thinking and writing skills
- Students are able to review and respond to posts by other students, facilitating more learning



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## Open Educational Resources

In 2001, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology announced that it would publish its entire course catalog online as a program titled MIT OpenCourseWare. The following year, the institution took all learning materials (textbooks, lectures, etc.) from 1,800 courses and made them public. Because they were published online, these resources were free to use and were available to anyone who had access to the internet. Not long after, hundreds of other colleges and universities began to follow in MIT's footsteps.

The Hewlett Foundation, which has been providing funding for OERs since their very beginning, define open educational resources as "teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use and re-purposing by others. Open educational resources include full courses,

course materials, modules, textbooks, streaming videos, tests, software, and any other tools, materials, or techniques used to support access to knowledge."

Although OERs are now over a decade old, there are still professors (and other instructors) who do not completely understand what they are.

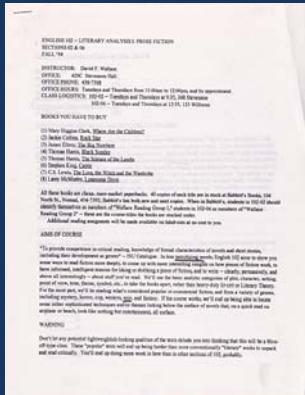
What is really shocking, is the number of students that do not even know that they exist. Three of the most common

OERs used are OER Commons, the Khan Academy and Academic Earth.



# Items that are necessary for a complete syllabus:

- Course information (Title, number, section, etc.)
- Course description
- Instructor/ Professor's contact information
- Course objectives
- Learning outcomes
- Course content and outline of schedule (may be used in a calendar format)
- Course resources
- Important course policy information (policy for late work, missed exams and/or quizzes, extra credit, etc.)
- Grading scale



## Open Educational Resources, Continued

### OER Commons

OER Commons acts as a library to other open educational resources. The website feels almost like a search engine, such as Google or Bing. Launched in 2007, it allows instructors (and students) to discover any available materials. Resources on this website can be filtered using keywords. After searching for keywords, results can be in the format of readings, activities and/or labs, assessments, textbooks, lecture videos, etc. Although many universities and colleges contribute to the material on the website, individuals can also contribute to content.

### Khan Academy

The Khan Academy is an educational website created by MIT and Harvard Business School graduate Salman Kahn in 2006. The website offers thousands of videos which contain information ranging anywhere from biology to economics.

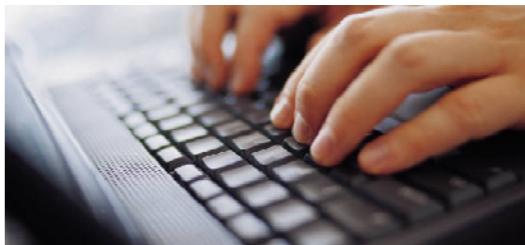
Approximately 3.5 million learners use this website at least once a month. The website consists of videos that were posted to YouTube by Kahn while he was tutoring his younger cousins. Many of the videos have been translated into languages 30 languages, including Spanish, Mandarin, French, and German. As they learn, participants will be rewarded with points and badges.

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### Academic Earth

An educational website called Academic Earth was launched in March 2009 by Richard Ludlow, Chris Bruner, and Liam Pisano. This OER consists of free videos of lectures at universities such as UCLA, Harvard, Stanford, and Yale. Topics of the videos include: Astronomy, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Economics, Engineering, English, Entrepreneurship, History, Law, Mathematics, Medicine, Philosophy, Physics, Political Science, Psychology, Religion, and Statistics.

Instructors can use OER as a way to get inspiration for teaching methods and learn more about the topic themselves. These resources are especially valuable to students, as they are able to gain a different perspective on a particular subject.



### Indiana State Earns High Scores in 2013 National Survey

- **80% of students rated their experience at ISU as good or excellent**
- **81% of seniors said they would choose to attend Indiana State again for college**
- **80% of seniors think that ISU helped them think critically and analytically**
- **73% of seniors believe that ISU helped them become better writers**



# How to Develop a Positive Relationship with Online Students

One of the most difficult aspects of being an online instructor is developing a relationship with your students. You will rarely see these students, if ever. Therefore, it takes a bit more effort.

Because your

relationship will more than likely exist completely online, you will not have the advantages of face-to-face interaction. The following are tips to maintain a positive relationship with students.

- **Make a clear, thorough syllabus.**

Your syllabus is often your first source of communication with a student. Because students will not immediately be able to ask a question by raising their hand, it is essential that the guidelines provided in the syllabus are thoroughly explained. If you must, have another professor read through your syllabus to check for mistakes.

- **Give time to your students.**

Set aside a specific amount of time (this can be as little as 30 minutes, or as much as an hour) to sit down daily and look through your emails and, if used in the course, discussion boards. Do all that you can to respond to student emails within twelve hours, twenty-four hours being the maximum.

- **Occasionally use emoticons in emails.**

Because you are not meeting with a student face-to-face, emotion can be misinterpreted. Although emoticons are not considered professional, sometimes they may be needed. Using emoticons within an email will help convey the emotion that you are attempting to get across. :)



- **Trust your students.**

If a student misses an assignment and simply emails you saying something along the lines of "I simply forgot" or "My internet connection was out," it is likely that the student is actually telling the truth. If the student uses this excuse several times, they are more than likely just not completing the work. However, if your syllabus includes a section explaining late work policies, this should not be an issue.

- **Be kind and polite.**

If a student does well on an assignment, email him/her and let him/her know that you recognize the effort. If you find that a student is having a difficult time in your course, refer them to a tutor, but always be polite while doing so. Also, there are few things that students enjoy more than extra credit opportunities. Include a few assignments or events that students can attend for extra credit.

- **Grade assignments/exams in a timely manner.**

Students do not want to wait a month to find out what grade they received on an assignment, and they definitely don't even want to wait two weeks to see how they did on an exam. If possible, have assignments graded within one week. If this is not possible, email students letting them know when you will be finished.

