FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY
LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES

Forward thinking. World ready.

Best Practices for Discussion Boards in Bb

1- Use a forum for every week/topic of discussion

Using a different forum for each week (or topic) will make the discussion boards more organized and have a clear structure. Using only one forum for all class discussions and topics can result in slow loading of the pages in Bb.

A weekly forum will need to be created for each discussion. Students must be allowed to create threads. So make sure this setting is checked!

2-Provide Clear Instructions and Expectations

Having clear instructions and expectations from the very beginning sets the class discussion on the right track. Even if you have the directions and expectations mentioned in the syllabus, putting them in the description box helps students to know what they are expected to do and, most importantly, it will avoid confusion.

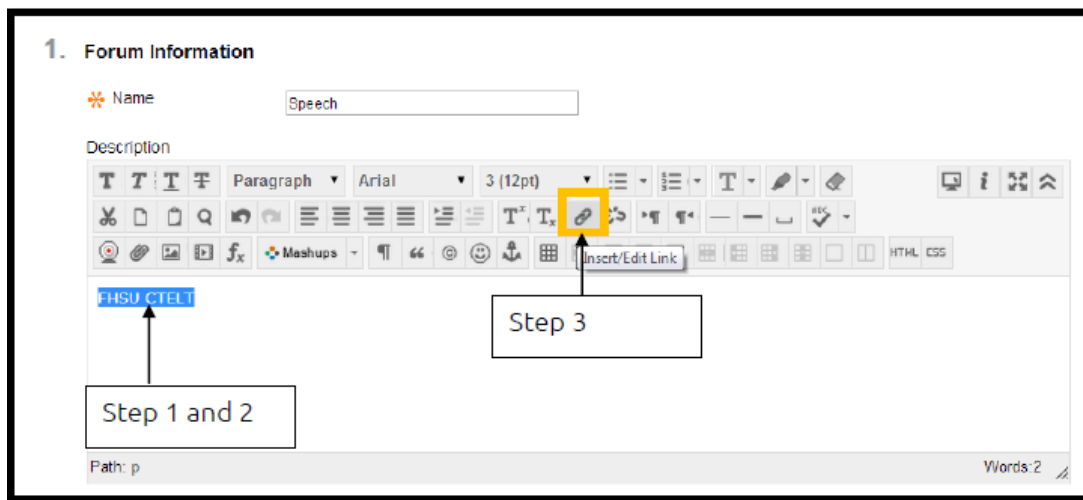**3-Set hyperlinks (and external web URLs) to be open in a new page:**

It's always a good idea to have two browser windows open when posting hyperlinks to Blackboard. One window can be the website from which you are copying and pasting the link. The other browser window should be your Blackboard course.

All links in Bb Should be set to open in a New Tab/Window

Step 1: Create an item, a thread in the Discussion Board or an Announcement.

Step 2: Type the title of the website.

Step 3: Highlight the text you wish to make into a link, then click the Hyperlink button in the second row of buttons. It looks like a chain link.
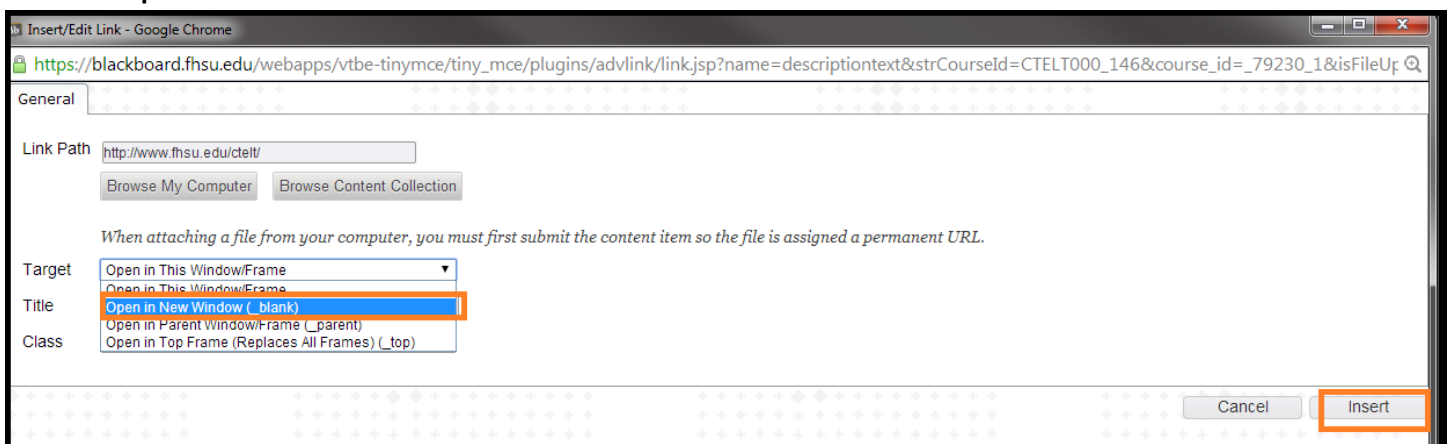

Step 4: The Insert/Edit Link page will open in a pop-up window.

Step 5: Paste the entire URL (web address) into the Link Path box.

Step 6: Change the Target to "Open in a New Window"

Step 7: Select Insert to save the link.

Other best practices can be:

4. Ask questions that stimulate actual discussion, not simply replies.

Avoid asking questions that will generate the same answer from every student. Instead, ask students to find examples/persuade others of something/evaluate websites they've discovered/etc. Thought-provoking discussion prompts can encourage students to apply what they are learning and extend those ideas beyond the text or the course itself.

5. Require students to participate in discussions as a way to signal that their ideas are important.

It is also good to expect (i.e., require) students to respond to the ideas of their peers constructively and critically. Include an example of a "good discussion post" and a "good response" along with some criteria for grading so that your expectations are clear.

6. Use the "Participants must create a thread in order to view the other threads in this forum" option.

This feature ensures that students will present their responses before reading what others have posted and simply summarizing those.

7. Do not allow anonymous posts.

There may be circumstances in which anonymous posting is appropriate (sensitive topics of discussion, for example) but consider this carefully before opting to turn it on.

8. Allow students to subscribe to forums.

When you check this option, students receive notification e-mails when someone replies to what they've posted in the forum. This can encourage additional conversation as students respond to one another's ideas.

9. Be responsive and present in the discussions.

It can be difficult to balance between "hovering" and being "absent" in the discussions. Allow students to respond to one another freely, and you then can participate in the conversation with guidance, encouragement, or even some devil's advocate questioning.

10. Consider establishing one forum simply for "general" questions.

Encourage students to help one another by responding to general course questions. This can be a good place to clarify expectations for assignments, as well.