

Don't Summarize: *Weave*

(adapted from Salmon, G., (2003), *e-moderating: The key to teaching and learning online*, 2nd Edition, London: RoutledgeFalmer)

One of the key roles of an instructor in leading online Discussion Forums is to summarize complex or rambling discussions to help highlight the real substance they contain. Salmon (2003) suggests instructors should do more than just summarize, they should *weave* the postings into a more meaningful outcome by applying their own content expertise. Salmon suggests the following guidelines for *weaving*. (Steps have been adapted.)

1. Collect all the contributions into one message via your course software or a word processor.
2. Read through quickly and color code the key themes you see.
3. Create a list of the themes, with titles.
4. Identify the themes that unify the postings.
5. Identify the points of disagreement.
6. Summarize each of the themes in a sentence or bullet point or two. Give examples and attribute the originator in the forum.
7. Add your positive and reinforcing feedback.
8. Add your criticisms and point out omissions.
9. Add your congratulations about the work of the participants.
10. Add your (meta) comments or teaching points that take learners beyond the postings to the ideas and skills you want them to achieve, but which weren't yet clearly represented.
11. If you want to continue the discussion, ask specific but open-ended questions.
12. Delete the original postings to make the "weaving" easier to read.
13. Post the weaving in the discussion forum with a clear title and invite further comments and corrections.