****

Communicating on Slack:

Getting the Most from Your Course

& Making Your Contributions Accessible (1/23)

Welcome to these tips on how you can use Slack to get the most from your course and how you can meet MLA Slack accessibility standards in your communications.

# Why Slack?

MLA includes Slack in its Instructor-led courses because it can make courses more effective and more interesting. Slack:

* promotes sharing of ideas and resources among students and instructors
* allows everyone in a course to benefit from the answers to student questions
* promotes dialogue that deepens understanding
* facilitates one-to-one communication
* creates an easily accessible record of communications
* extends learning outside of class and even past the end of a course

# Opening Slack

You will receive an invitation to join your course’s Slack workspace 5-7 days before the course begins or later if you register later. When you get your invitation, please sign in, and say hello in the **#general** channel. If your workplace doesn't support Slack, an option is to use it on your phone or home computer and check messages and post at your convenience.

Download the Slack app, which allows you to set notifications:

[Slack for Windows](https://slack.com/downloads/windows) [Slack for Macs](https://apps.apple.com/us/app/slack-for-desktop/id803453959?mt=12)

[Android app](https://slack.com/downloads/android) [iPhone app](https://apps.apple.com/us/app/slack/id618783545)

# Using Slack

Every instructor will use Slack a little differently, but all will use it for communications with individuals and the class as a whole

**#general** is the most important channel in the course workspace

* You are automatically added to it.
* Your instructor will use it for announcements, assignments, resource sharing, discussion questions, and all communications related to the course learning outcomes. If they set up additional channels, they will explain their purpose in #general.
* You use it to ask questions, share ideas and resources, and participate in discussions.

## Direct message (DM)

To DM an instructor or a classmate, click on their name. A DM message can only be read by you and the recipient.

Please use #general for questions about the course, so everyone can benefit from the answer.

# Getting the Most from Your Course

With Slack, you can engage the course material and interact with instructors and fellow learners in ways that reproduce and go beyond what is possible in a face-to-face class. You can:

* Post questions to the class
* Answer questions
* Share resources and ideas
* Share experiences related to the course
* Do whatever else you can imagine that will benefit yourself, classmates, and instructors

# Accessibility Guidelines

Making communications accessible is a responsibility of students and instructors. If your instructor informs you that a student has requested accessibility accommodations, please follow these guidelines.

## Making Images, GIFs, & Links Accessible

If you share images, GIFs, or links, here is how you can help (from [How to boost accessibility in Slack](https://slack.com/resources/using-slack/how-to-boost-accessibility-in-slack&utm_medium=promo)). If you are only typing text, carry on as usual.

### Provide a short description of images you share

* 1. Upload an image file
  2. Click on the image to expand it. A new window will open.
     + Windows: In the top left corner of the window, select “Edit file details.”
     + Mac: In the bottom right of the window, click the three dots (...) and select “Edit file details.”
  3. Add a brief description of the image, edit the file name if you’d like, and select “Save Changes.”
     + An example of a good description:

A group of people sitting in front of a computer.


* 1. Post the image. Clicking the ALT box will show your description

### Add captions to GIFs you share

* 1. Type /giphy #caption “write description here” [giphy search term] in the message compose field.
  2. You may need to select shuffle until you find the GIF you’re looking for.
  3. When ready, select Send.

### Use descriptive text for links you share

* 1. Avoid “click here” and such-like as the link text.
  2. Be descriptive and describe what happens next, e.g., [NC State University Homepage (opens in new tab)](http://www.ncsu.edu/)
  3. When ready, select Send.
* **Use the formatting toolbar or markup instead of emojis to format your messages**
  1. Instead of using emojis, [use Slack’s built-in formatting toolbar or markup](https://slack.com/intl/en-gb/help/articles/202288908-Format-your-messages) to add formatting to your messages.

If you have questions about using Slack or suggestions for improving this document, contact the MLA Education Department with questions, corrections, or suggestions: [medlib-ed@mlahq.org](mailto:medlib-ed@mlahq.org).