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Slack in MLA Instructor-led Courses:

# Benefits, Tips, & Accessibility Requirements (1/23)

Welcome to this explanation of why we ask you to use Slack in your course, tips on how you can use Slack effectively, and guidelines for meeting MLA Slack accessibility standards.

# Why Slack?

All Instructor-led courses have this or similar text in their description:

You’ll start the course with readings and reflection questions available upon registration, and you’ll have homework and discussion questions between sessions and opportunities for discussion and questions during and after the second session.

We ask you to use Slack to provide opportunities for discussion and questions. It’s free, easy to use, and it:

* 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

# Accessing Your Slack Workspace

MLA staff set up a Slack workspace for your course about two weeks before the course begins. They invite you to join it and begin setting up your space.

Respond to the invitation and access Slack on your computer, tablet, or phone.

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

[Slack for Windows](https://slack.com/downloads/windows) [Slack for Mac](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)

About a week before the course starts, staff invite students to join the space and read, [Communicating on Slack: Getting the Most from Your Course & Making Your Contributions Accessible](https://www.mlanet.org/d/do/24236).

# Using Slack to Enhance Your Students’ Learning

# and Experience of Your Course

* Tell students in materials you send to Deb or in **#general** before class starts that:
  + You won’t use email. Students should DM you for private communications
  + You will post questions and answer questions in Slack
* Post a message in **#general** that welcomes students to your course and describes how you will use Slack
* Use **#general** for announcements, assignments, resource sharing, discussion questions, and all communications related to the course learning outcomes. If you set up additional channels, explain their purpose in **#general**
* Direct message students by clicking on their names
* Be positive and enthusiastic about Slack
* Invite students to post questions and resources in Slack
* Give assignments that require Slack postings
* Post resources that come up in class
* Pose questions that students can discuss after the course is over
* Have a little fun with Slack. Post cat pictures.

# Accessibility Requirements

What follows is nearly the same information shared with students. **MLA staff will let you know if a student has requested an accessibility accommodation**.

## 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 at [medlib-ed@mlahq.org](mailto:medlib-ed@mlahq.org) with questions, corrections, or suggestions.