Tips & Tricks for a successful class

1. Reducing inbox clutter

Redirect student emails to Piazza

When students email instructors with individual questions, the teaching staff may find itself answering the same questions over and over. When a question is posted on Piazza, it only needs to be answered once.

When students post on Piazza, everyone benefits. Students like knowing that others have the same question, and when it is answered on Piazza, it's answered for everybody.

Ask students to post their questions to Piazza instead of emailing you directly. Some instructors choose to respond to emailed questions by redirecting the students to Piazza. Others like to copy questions from emails or office hours and post them directly on the site so the answer can benefit the entire class (and save you some time!).

Replace your class distribution list

Piazza makes it easy to post announcements to the entire class anytime. By posting announcements on Piazza, you can see any responses to the announcement all in one place rather than letting them fill your inbox.

To post an announcement, click **'+ New Post'** and select the '**Note'** tab, which lets you create a post that does not require a response. To make the announcement to the entire class immediately, regardless of their email settings, just check the box labelled **'Send immediately to the entire class.'** All members of the class will receive an email notification of the post right away. It's a great way to get important information out fast.

Use private posts to communicate with other instructors

Piazza's private posts make it easy to keep all instructor dialogue in one place. When creating a new post, check the box labelled '**Make this a private question.**' When an instructor adds a private post, only other class instructors can view it. Look for the blue **'Private'** label in the question feed on the left.

Students can also create private posts. When a student creates one, only that student and the class's instructors can view the post. Student-created private posts are useful for asking questions when the student is unsure whether the material may be shared with the entire class.

If the post contains information that the entire class would benefit from, an instructor can always make the private post public using the menu that appears left of the question's title in the question feed.
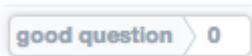
1. **Setting the tone for the class:**

Post announcements the first week of class

As soon as you have enrolled your class, let students know you are active on Piazza by adding a couple announcements. The first few posts are a great opportunity to share basic information about the class, like when office hours are and how you can be contacted. Many instructors also like to lay out the ground rules for posting questions and answers on Piazza.

   Add a new post by clicking **'+ New Post'** at the top of your screen and filling in the details. Select the **'Note'** tab if you are posting an announcement and don't require a response.

Endorse and encourage student responses

   Click **'Good Question'** or **'Good Answer'** to encourage students to ask questions and respond to classmates' questions.

Encourage collaborative editing

Piazza questions and answers are like Wikipedia - anyone can contribute to them. Collaboratively edited questions and answers are far easier to read and comprehend than a long thread of comments.

The answer to each question is divided into a students' answer (for all students to edit) and an instructors' answer (for all instructors to edit). When you read a good students' answer, click **'Good Answer!'** to endorse it—this helps encourage students to answer others' questions. Plus, when students see the checkmark over the students' answer icon in the question feed, they know that that endorsed students' answer is just as good as any instructors' answer.

Another good way to encourage students to edit the students' answer is to refine what other students have written. Anyone can view the contributions individuals made to the response by using the Question History slider that appears above the question after several edits.

Go for visual posts

We know from experience that visual posts can communicate concepts very effectively. Embed images, attach files, and format math and code to make posts clean and easily understandable. Easily include blocks of pre-formatted code by selecting the pre button in the question editor, and include inline code snippets by selecting the tt button for teletype text.

For mathematical equations, click the **Fx** icon to access a LaTeX editor.

$$Q_k < (1/n)^k \frac{n!}{(n-k)!k!}$$

hello world!

See Piazza formatting page for more details on how to format your posts.
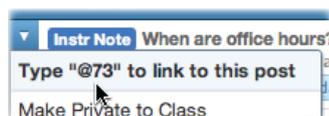
2. Keeping the class on track:

Manage your class folders

Folders make it easy to filter questions by a particular assignment or topic. Classes start out and stay more organized when instructors create folders for a class before it starts.
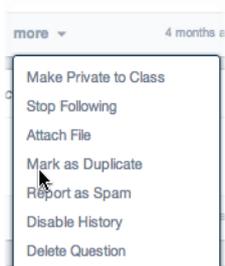
Default Folders

hw1 hw2 hw3 hw4 hw5 exam project logistics

Specify your class's folders in your manage class page. Click on the **'Manage Class'** link at the top of your screen.

Link to other questions

Create a hyperlink to another post by typing the **'@'** symbol followed by that post's number (e.g. @102). Find a post's number by looking in the URL, or by hovering over the arrow to the left of the question's title in the question feed.

Mark questions duplicate

If you notice that a question has been asked before, mark it as a duplicate question to avoid confusion. Select the **'Mark as Duplicate'** option in the duplicate question's more menu and follow the directions. To limit the number of duplicate questions that arise, as soon as there is a significant number of posts in your class, we'll do our part to keep things organized by requiring students to search existing posts before adding their own.

Edit or delete anything

As an instructor, you have full editing capabilities over all class content. You can also delete posts via the **more** menu or question feed drop down menu. Students do not have the ability to delete posts.