

Piazza at-a-Glance

Piazza is an online platform that leverages the power of the community to facilitate interaction among students and instructors in an efficient and intuitive manner. Student answers are collaborative spaces, so all students can contribute to build a single high-quality response.

Piazza can encourage your students to engage in *active learning*, and can support your position as their *guide-on-the-side*!

Features & Benefits:

- **Highlighting Feature Saves Time** – It's easy to quickly identify what you have not yet viewed so you know what to look at first. Professor Ming Chow says Piazza "...saves me 20-40 emails per day, easily." Read more at https://piazza.com/professors/show/ming_chow
- **Robust Editing & Tags for Organization** - LaTeX editor and support for code blocking and syntax highlighting helps SJSU Mathematics professor Slobodan Simic. He says "When you try to type a formula into an email, it can be confusing. But with Piazza, I really understand what my students are asking." And unlike other discussion boards, "...everything is nicely grouped based on tags for easy searching." Read more at https://piazza.com/professors/show/slobodan_simic
- **Participation & Anonymity Options**- Enable students to participate anonymously to encourage even the shy ones. Users can also decide if they want their question to be public (for the whole class) or private (for instructors only).
- **Wiki-Style Collaborative Editing** - Students can edit each another's questions, as well as the collaborative answers. Instructors can do the same, as well as "endorse" student answers.
 - **Follow-up Discussions** - a separate follow-up section allows ideas to be further discussed. These are initially marked as *unresolved*, and they can be marked "resolved" *by anyone* who thinks the topic has been fully addressed. This content can be incorporated back into the community-edited question and answer to build a single high quality question & answer combo.
 - **History Slider** – All users can also see how questions and answers have evolved over time. Instructors can always edit or delete content, and they can disable the history.
 - **Real-Time Updating** – a student (or teacher) can leave their browser open and watch an answer develop over time.
- **Post Announcements Using Notes** –unlike a questions, a note does *not* need an answer, so it's a great way to post announcements.
- **Polling/In-Class Response System** - Use polls to learn more about your students and their needs, to conduct quick quizzes, or for instant feedback while in-class to see how well they understand what you're presenting.
 - **Mobile Friendly/Smartphone Apps** – Download free apps for your Android or iOS devices from the app store.
- **Participation Statistics** - view detailed class participation information to see which students ask or answer the most questions, or just read posts.
- **Customization Options** – no matter how you want to use it, Piazza likely has a setting that can accommodate your needs.
- **Online and 24/7 Customer Support** – see all Piazza features, *with explanations of how each works*, at <http://support.piazza.com/>. You can email anytime team@piazza.com , and you'll get a response same day, often *within the hour*. Or call 800-818-4124.

Recommended Best Practices:

- **Set Intentions Early** - Many professors recommend making it clear that they will NOT answer questions by email. Make an announcement *and* post in your syllabus to use Piazza instead.
- **Post the Piazza Link** – Find the link on your *Manage Class* page, and then post it prominently in Canvas and on your syllabus.
- **Add Some Introductory Content** – Create a welcome note or details about an upcoming lecture etc.
 - **Consider Making a Video Tour** - One SJSU instructor strongly recommends making a short video tour of the Piazza space, and posting that video prominently in Canvas.
- **Skim for Unanswered and Unresolved Questions Regularly** (*highlighted in red*) – The highlighting feature helps you to easily distinguish and prioritize what most need your attention. (It’s one of the most popular efficiency features for students and instructors alike!)
 - **But Don’t Rush to Answer** - Professor Jennifer Schwartz (“...if you hang back, other students will jump in.”) and Professor Ron Lee (“...let it ferment for a while.”) both recommend resisting the urge to answer questions quickly. Given the opportunity and guidance, students *will* learn to help themselves and each other. Read more at <https://piazza.com/professors>
- **“Monitor the Chatter”** – Chemistry professor Jennifer Schwartz skims Piazza *before* the class lecture to see what needs to be addressed in-class. She says it’s a great way to “take the pulse of the class”. Read more at https://piazza.com/professors/show/jennifer_schwartz
- **Endorse Answers** – Give participants a virtual ‘pat on the back’ to let everyone know you approve their answer. (You can always edit to clarify or correct as needed.) This supports students helping themselves and each other to build their understanding, and *positions you as their guide-on-the-side*.
- **Reward Participation** - Encourage your students by letting them know you monitor and endorse active participation. You can also download the statistics, and award extra credit to the most helpful/active people.
- **Use Piazza for Small AND Large Classes** – SJSU Mathematics professor Slobodan Simic recommends Piazza *even for the smallest class*, saying "The students met twice weekly and discussed things in person all the time, but we’d still have extremely long threads going on Piazza. Even in a five or six-person class, it was great." Read more at https://piazza.com/professors/show/slobodan_simic

Set Up in 5 Easy Steps:

1. **Create Your Class** - From our homepage www.piazza.com, click on the ‘Instructors Get Started’ prompt.
2. **Configure Your Options** – For example, decide if you want allow private or anonymous student postings, and set other options.
3. **Add Piazza Link in Canvas** – Piazza is already integrated with Canvas. From *Settings*>>*Navigation*, you can add it to your course menu, or just add the link to your modules using the *External Tool* or the *External URL option*.
4. **Enroll Your Students** – Paste in students’ email addresses or upload your roster. You could also copy the signup link and just send that out as an announcement.
5. **Create a Post** - Create an introductory welcome note about using Piazza. There’s even content already in place to help you and your students get started!

Additional Resources:

- **eCampus Piazza Page** - <http://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/teaching-tools/piazza/index.html>
- **Piazza Toolkit for Professors** - <https://piazza.com/toolkit>