

# plazza

## — Quick Start Guide —

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## *What Is Piazza?*

Piazza is an online platform that facilitates interaction among students and instructors in an efficient and intuitive manner. We started as a way to help students who were stuck on homework problems get unstuck with the help of their classmates, TAs and professors.

Over time, with valuable feedback from thousands of instructors, the product has evolved to become a centralized place for instructors to conduct all class related communication where -

- you can answer students' questions once for all students to see
- your students can engage with classmates in online discussion
- you can post class related announcements
- you can post class files, resources and the class syllabus
- you can conduct polls to get a sense of where students stand
- you can receive/send private messages from/to students on more sensitive subject matters

## *What Makes Piazza Different?*

### ***An Intuitive Product***

Students actually use Piazza, they love it. This difference stems from how we built Piazza. We've personally met with and spoken to thousands of students and instructors. The result is a beautifully intuitive and simple product that students love and use.

### ***Real Time Activity***

All activity happening on Piazza is pushed to users in real time - you see new posts and updates as soon as they happen.

## ***The Power of the Community***

Piazza leverages the power of the community – student answers are collaborative spaces for all students to build a single high-quality response; Instructor answers are collaborative spaces for all instructors to build a single high-quality response.

## ***Fine Level Controls***

Instructors have fine-tuned levels of controls – no matter what your use-case is, Piazza will likely have a setting that will address your needs.

## ***24/7 Customer Support***

Customer support that we pride ourselves on – email us anytime at [team@piazza.com](mailto:team@piazza.com) and we'll get back the same day, and more often than not, within the hour.

## ***Introduction to Our Product***

### ***Class Q&A***

#### ***Participation & Anonymity***

On Piazza, students can ask questions, and instructors and fellow classmates can answer. You can allow your students to participate anonymously, to encourage participation from even the shyest students.

At the time of posting a new question, students can select whether they want their question to be public (for the rest of the class to see), or private (for only instructors to see). Instructors can make public questions private and vice versa.

#### ***Collaborative Editing***

Questions and answers on Piazza are community-edited – a student can edit another student's question, as well as the collaborative students' answer (note the position of the apostrophe). An instructor can edit a student's question, the collaborative instructors' answer, as well as the collaborative students' answer.

A history slider at the top of each post lets users see how the question and answer have evolved over time. If instructors do not approve of any posted content, they can edit the content and disable the history, or delete the content altogether.

### ***Follow-up Discussions***

Questions also have a separate follow-up discussion section where follow on questions can be hashed out in a more unstructured manner. Follow-up discussions are initially marked as unresolved and can be marked as resolved by anyone who thinks the follow-up has been addressed. Content from the follow-up discussions are often incorporated back into the community-edited question and answer above to build a single high quality question & answer combo.

### ***Workflow Tips***

Instructors can easily distinguish which questions need their attention by looking for unanswered questions (highlighted in red) or questions with unresolved follow-up discussions (marked in red as well).

Questions clearly indicate whether they have an instructors' answer and/or a students' answer. And with a single click, instructors can endorse the students' answers, giving the student(s) who answered a virtual 'pat on the back', and letting the other students know that the answer is approved. Collectively, this allows instructors to prioritize questions that have neither an instructors' answer nor an instructor-endorsed students' answer.

## ***Resources, Files & Announcements***

### ***Course Page***

Your Course Page on Piazza is the place to manage announcements, course information, course resources, your syllabus and more. Think of it as your class website. Course Pages were built by popular request since many instructors wanted to use Piazza as a complete replacement for all things class-related.

All content hosted on these pages belongs to the user (please refer to our Terms of Use for more information), but in short, we promise not to steal your files or do anything sneaky with them.

## ***Resources & Files***

On the Resources tab of the Course Page, you can host class resources such as lecture slides, homework files, and so on. And space is unlimited, so upload to your heart's content!

By default, resources you upload are public (viewable by non logged in users), so if you wish to make them private (only viewable to logged in users), you can adjust the setting from your Manage Class page.

## ***Class Announcements***

Instructors can post announcements to their class by posting a note (not a question) on Piazza. Notes do not need an answer, and are often a great way to update the class of a change in office hours, a typo in the homework, and so on.

When posting a note on Piazza, you are presented with the option to send email notifications to your students immediately as well as to post the note to the static announcements section on the Course Page.

## ***Polls/In-Class Response System***

Piazza lets you post polls as a way to gauge the pulse of the class. Professors often use polls to learn about the background of their students, to understand time or location preferences among students, to conduct quick quizzes, or even to seek real-time feedback during class of whether students are following the material or not. When used for in-class responses, there is no hardware component required and they can be used as a (free) replacement for clickers.

Our smartphone apps are free for instructors and students and can be downloaded from the app store.

## ***Participation Statistics***

On Piazza, you can view detailed class participation information to learn more about your students. The student participation report (visible on your Class Statistics page) lets you see which students frequently ask questions, answer questions, or simply read posts. Once sufficient class activity has begun, you can download these statistics at any time and use the underlying data to award participation points to your students.

# Getting Set Up

## ***Creating Your Class***

Creating a class is straightforward and usually takes just a couple minutes, but please feel free to reach out to our team if we can help with any set up! (by emailing [team@piazza.com](mailto:team@piazza.com))

- From our homepage [www.piazza.com](http://www.piazza.com), click on the 'Instructors Get Started' prompt.
- From there, select your school. If you don't see your school already using Piazza don't worry - you can create a new school right then and there.
- You'll be directed to a page with a default term selected. Verify the term is the correct one before continuing.
- Next, enter your course name, course number and estimated class enrollment (don't worry about an exact number).
- And you're done! You will receive an email with a verification link. If you're new to Piazza, click the link in the email to finish setting up your account. Otherwise, simply proceed to log in and you will be taken to your new class.

Note, in some cases, you might find that a fellow instructor at your school already created a class with the same course number as the one you are trying to create. That's not a problem, you can simply choose a different course number (one option is to append your last name to the course number).

Again, please don't forget we're here to help with any set up! (Just email [team@piazza.com](mailto:team@piazza.com))

## ***Configuring Your Class***

There are a number of ways you, as an instructor, can configure your class. Visit the Manage Class page to change or view the various settings:

- Allow instructors to self-enroll via the class signup link, by providing a valid school email address

- If your school has an email domain, you can apply an access code on top of the school email domain requirement (by emailing us at [team@piazza.com](mailto:team@piazza.com)). If your school does not have an email domain, you can set an access code directly from this page
- Keep the default folders (for organizing class content), otherwise edit them to better suit your class structure (or disable folders altogether)
- Allow private or anonymous student posting options
- Enroll fellow instructors by pasting in their email addresses or sending them the enrollment link

## ***Enrolling Your Students***

From your Manage Class page, you can enroll students in one of the following ways:

- Paste in students' email addresses (in any format), and we'll automatically extract just the email addresses, and send the students Welcome Emails.
- Upload your student roster file
- Copy the class signup link and send it out to your students. Students will need to provide a valid school email address if your school has an email domain associated with it, otherwise they will need to provide an access code which you can find on the same Manage Class page.

Note, during Add/Drop period, you can use our add/drop roster feature by checking the box that enables add/drop support prior to copying in students' emails or uploading your student roster. This feature can be helpful during the first couple weeks of the term when the student roster is continually changing.

## ***Creating Your First Post***

It might be a good idea to create an introductory note, welcoming your students to Piazza.

Click the New Post button in the top left of your Q&A dashboard to create a question, note, or poll depending on what you'd like to post.

And that's pretty much it! You should be all set.

## *Tips For a Successful Class*

Professors tell us that the most effective way to encourage students to use Piazza is to discourage them from directly emailing the teaching staff with questions.

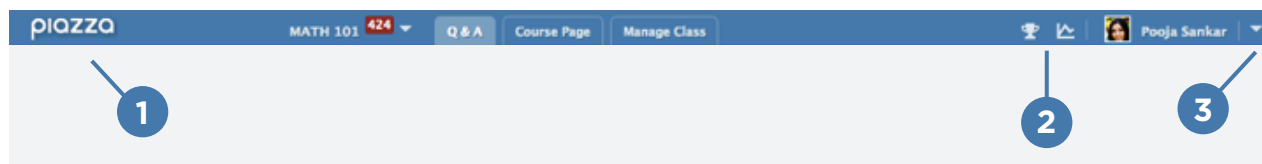
Some professors even tell their students that they will not answer questions by email (where other students cannot benefit from the instructor's response) and will only answer questions on Piazza. That is the sure shot way to get your students engaged on Piazza. Soon, students get hooked and then professors really start to reap the benefits of Piazza - one professor even telling us it saved him and his teaching staff 10-15 hours/week.

Based on past discussions with our professors, here are a couple of other tactics:

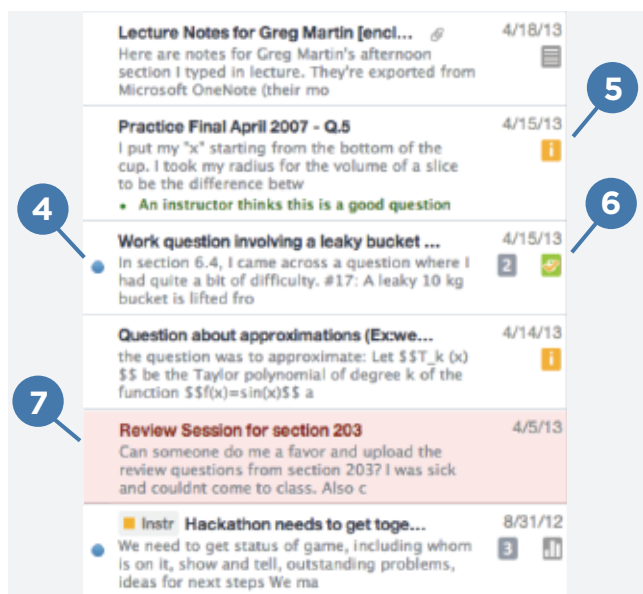
- Make an announcement on the first day of lecture that all questions should be directed to Piazza, either publicly (for all students in the class to see), or privately (for only instructors to see)
- Post the link to your Piazza class (which can be found on your Manage Class page) to your class syllabus and your class webpage.
- When you receive questions via email, remind students to ask on Piazza so other students benefit from your response and so you are not a bottleneck in getting the student an answer.
- Post some introductory content on Piazza - perhaps a welcome note, details about lecture, so on.
- Encourage students by letting them know that you will be monitoring and endorsing student participation.



# Key User Interface Elements

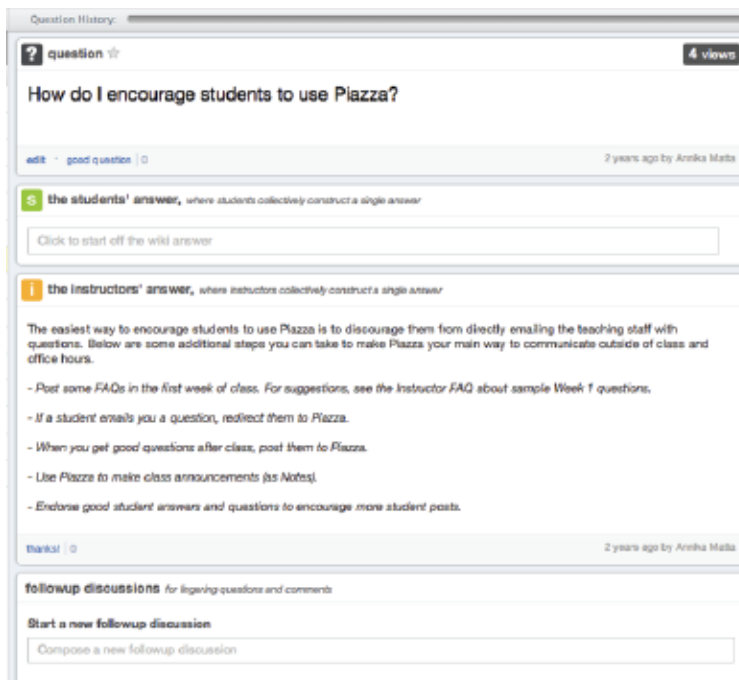
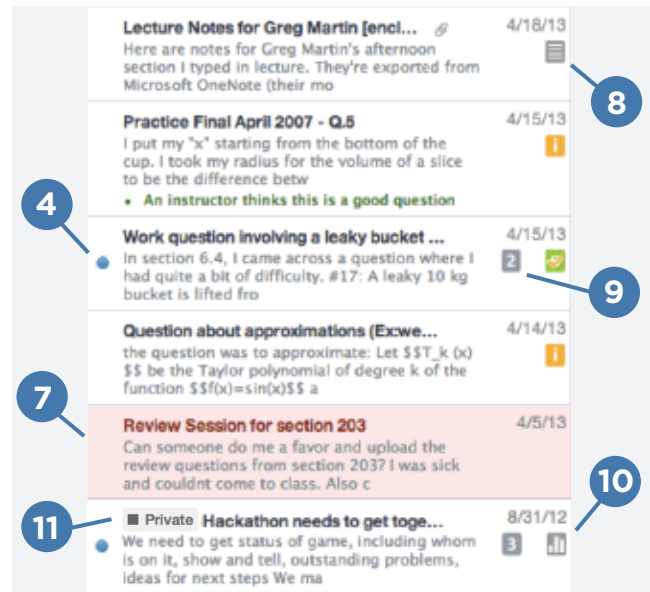


- 1 The logo brings you back to your Q&A home screen. Class drop down lets you switch to your other classes on Piazza as well as initiate the creation of a new class or the cloning (duplicating the class for the following term) of an existing class. Q&A, Course Page, Manage Class tabs let you switch between class discussion, the static resources & announcements section, and the instructor dashboard to manage enrollments and class settings.
- 2 After sufficient class activity, you will see icons that lead you to your class report and class statistics page.
- 3 Clicking the drop down takes you to your personal account settings (username, password, preferred email address and email notification settings). It also lets you easily contact us if you encounter any problems with Piazza, turn helper tooltips on or off, and log out.



- 4 The blue dot indicates whether the post is read or unread. You can mark it unread after reading it, if you'd like to come back to it later.
- 5 The orange 'i' icon indicates that the question has an instructors' answer. The green 's' icon indicates that the question has a students' answer.
- 6 The orange checkmark over the 's' icon indicates the instructor has endorsed the students' answer.
- 7 The red post indicates the question is still unanswered.

- 8 The note icon indicates the post is a note, the 'instr' icon indicates an instructor posted the note.
- 9 The grey number indicates how many updates to the post have happened since you last viewed that post.
- 10 The poll icon indicates the post is a poll.
- 11 Private tag implies post is private to a select set of students and instructors.



The question itself, a section for students to collaboratively enhance the students' answer, a separate section for instructors to collaboratively enhance the single instructors' answer, and a space to discuss clarifications in an unstructured manner that can be incorporated back into the single question and answer above.

You can find a detailed list of all our features with explanations of how each works at [piazza.com/features](http://piazza.com/features).

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

### ***Will Piazza Always Stay Free?***

Piazza is and will stay free to instructors and students. We started the company on the belief that nothing should come in the way of learning. We continue to believe that. We also believe in protecting our user's information, and would never sell it or do anything to betray your trust.

Instead, we launch parallel products that benefit other parties beyond the world of academia - in the enterprise world. Our revenue source comes from there and we promise to work as hard as we can to keep it that way.

### ***Is Piazza FERPA-Compliant?***

At Piazza, we take students' privacy very seriously. Universities have verified our compliance with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations, and we never sell students' information to third parties.

With Piazza:

- Students' email addresses and course enrollment information are accessible only to instructors of the class.
- A student can post so she remains anonymous to her classmates, or even to the instructor if the instructor allows that option.
- Students may ask their instructors to enroll them in a class using a non-identifying e-mail address, and may use a pseudo-name.

### ***Does Piazza integrate Into Learning Management Systems?***

Thanks to popular request from our professors, we have added support to integrate into various Learning Management Systems. With such an integration, students need not remember a separate username and password.

Please email us at [liti@piazza.com](mailto:liti@piazza.com) if you'd like more information on how to integrate into your school's Learning Management System or to learn whether such an integration already exists.

## ***Why the Name Piazza?***

The name Piazza comes from the Italian word for plaza--a common city square where people can come together to share knowledge and ideas. We strive to recreate that communal atmosphere among students and instructors.

## ***Demonstrating Piazza to Others***

Finally, if you enjoy Piazza so much so as to want to demonstrate it in front of other faculty, you have a couple options.

### ***Use Your Class***

You can demo your own class via your class' demo link (which you can obtain from your Manage Class page). Students names are made anonymous in the demo version of your class, so you need not worry about exposing personal information about your students.

### ***Use One of Our Subject Specific Classes***

We have obtained permission from a number of professors to use their classes for demo purposes. Visit the Real Classes section on our home page [www.piazza.com/signup](http://www.piazza.com/signup) to see a list of all demo classes, by subject area. Please note that using any of these demo classes in your browser will automatically log you out of Piazza, so you may want to use a separate browser to view demo classes in parallel with Piazza (or just log back in afterwards).

### ***Use Our Presentation Slides***

We've put together some slides that you may find helpful in your presentation to other faculty. You can access these slides here: [https://piazza.com/pdfs/piazza\\_slides.pptx](https://piazza.com/pdfs/piazza_slides.pptx)

***More Questions?***



800-818-4124



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