

The Mod Playbook

Presented by

DISQUS



So you've signed on as
a Moderator...





To help get you started,
we've put together
some **best practices**.

(This thing you're reading right now!) 🤖

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To start, what does a
great community even
👁️👁️ look like?



Our Community Philosophy

Disqus Channels are places for people to talk about things that matter to them. They should be friendly, open, and easy to use.

Each channel gathers around a central topic (it could be fashion, movies, or tech), and should aim to foster great conversations.

The best discussions teach you something, make you laugh, or make you think.

It's your job to help those discussions flourish.



But to make a community
thrive, there have to be
certain rules in place.





Rules...?

Don't worry, they're
pretty straightforward.

There are 3 types of rules
for Disqus communities:

Terms of Service (TOS)

Basic Rules

Home Rules

Terms of Service

Our TOS apply to **every person** that uses the Disqus product, on any site. They cover a lot technical and/or legal situations.

If you're being really bad and all else fails, we invoke these. It's our version of **Federal law**.



Basic Rules

The Basic Rules also apply to anyone using Disqus, but cover more community-focused behaviors.

Spam

Impersonation

Direct threat of harm

Personally identifiable information posted without consent

Inappropriate profile content

These are not allowed across all counties of Disqus. This is our version of **State Law**.



Home Rules

Home Rules apply to all communities on disqus.com.
Like the channel you're leading!

It's like when you visit a friend's house, and they ask
you to remove your shoes before coming inside.
They're our, well, **house rules**.



Home Rules

tl;dr

1. Stay On-topic
2. No Self-promotion
3. Choose Your (Curse)
Words Wisely
4. Don't Be a Jerk
5. Don't Copy and Paste
6. English Only

Home Rules

Stay On-Topic

Be sure your topic matches the general theme of the channel. For example, all discussions on Talk Shop should pertain to fashion and beauty. Not sure if you're posting to the right channel? Check the channel's About section, or recently-added topics to get an idea of what subjects are appropriate.

No Self-promotion

A discussion or comment that contains only a link to your blog, a product, or your article on another site will almost always be removed.

Home Rules

Choose Your (Curse) Words Wisely

Comments that contain profanity are automatically held for moderator review before being posted. Depending on the context of the comment, it may be removed. Profanity used to insult, antagonize, or inflame will always be removed.

Don't Be a Jerk

Personal attacks and harassment will not be tolerated. Sexist, racist, misogynist, homophobic, and broad, offensive generalizations about groups of people are simply not allowed. Comments or discussions written intentionally to provoke will also be removed.

Home Rules

Don't Copy and Paste

If you didn't write it, or haven't properly cited the article you're quoting, don't post it.

English Only

We currently only support English-only discussions on Disqus channels. Non-English comments and discussions will be removed.



Those are the fundamentals.
Now, let's dig into the
specifics of your role.

Good **m**oderation is
key for a successful
community.

Moderators Should Be:

 Empathetic

 Articulate

 Respectful

 Patient

 Objective

 Enthusiastic

And they should be well
versed in a handful of
situations and **features**.

Moderation Situations



- Removing Discussions
- Removing Comments
- Blacklisting Users
- Intervention
- Escalating Issues

Removing Discussions

There are two types of discussions that require removal: **off-topic** and **self-promoting/spam** discussions.

The process for removing both is the same:

1. Post a canned response
2. Close the thread
3. Remove the discussion



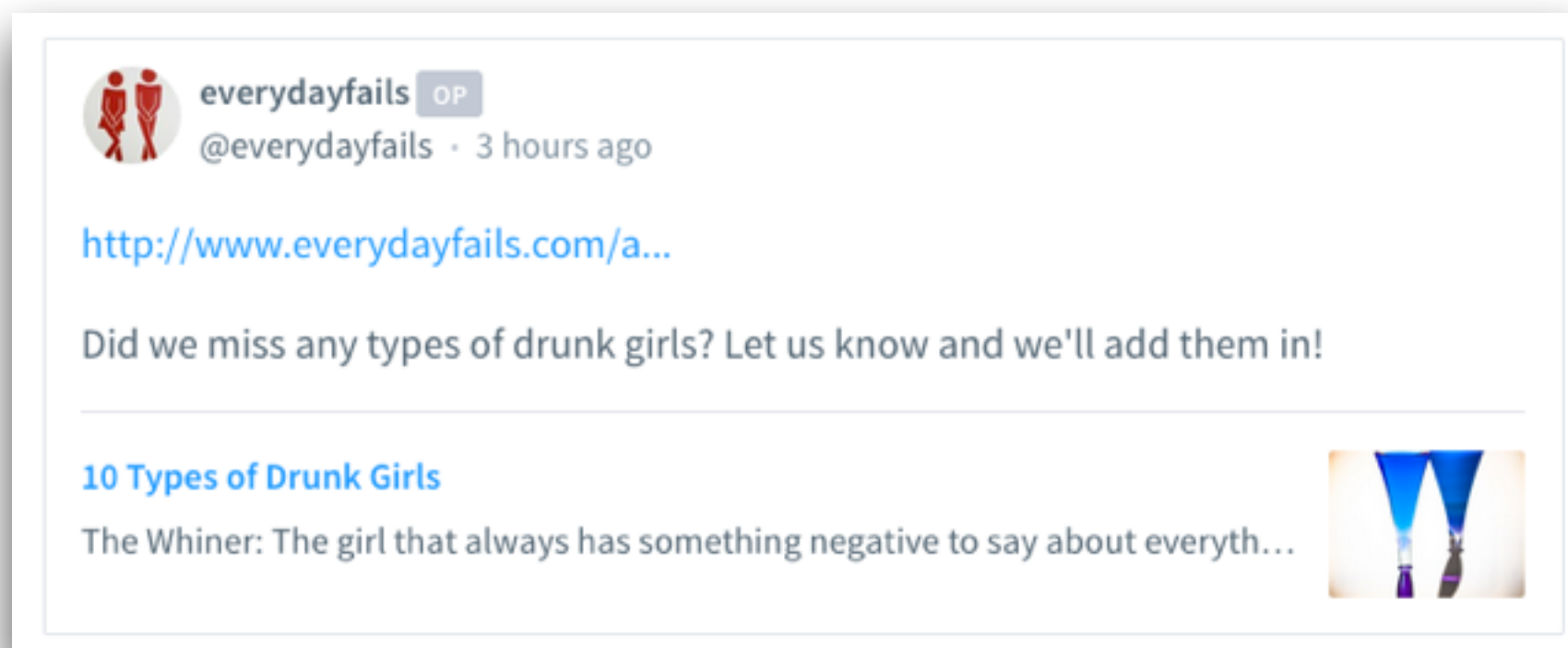
Spotting Self-promotion

(continued)

1. If you strip out the thing that's being shared, does it still make for a good discussion?

2. Is the creator's profile a name of a brand, business?

- ▶ Check website link on their profile
- ▶ Look at previous history of comments



Spotting Self-promotion

3. Is the discussion just a link to an external article/site?

Then it's probably self-promotion.

4. A really long discussion (500+ comments) that is written like a blog post may have been copy-pasted from elsewhere.

To check, copy a distinctive paragraph or group of sentences and search for it in Google.

Handling Off-topic Discussions

A user is earnestly trying to start a good discussion, but they're on the wrong channel.

1. Leave a comment redirecting them to the appropriate channel.
2. Close the thread, but don't delete it right away — give them a chance to recreate their discussion easily.

Canned Responses

Off-topic:

“Hi @username, this comment is being deleted because it has veered off-topic. Opinions are cool, but we just ask that comments relate to the topic. Please review the Home Rules before rejoining. Thanks!”

“Hey @username, this sounds like it could be a really interesting discussion, but since this is off-topic to [Love Stinks] — a community for discussions on dating and relationships — I’ll be closing the thread. Feel free to re-post this to to [Squid] instead!”

Canned Responses

Self Promotion:

Hi @username, I've closed this discussion for self-promotion. Self-promotion is fine but if you're just submitting your links without intending to start a discussion, the thread will be closed. Please review our Home Rules. Thanks!

BAI



Removing Comments

Comments should be removed because:
they're **spam**
violate community guidelines
are **nonsensical**.



When to Remove Spam

(Hint: always)

Is someone offering to help you make \$40/hr by working at home?

1. Blacklist the user
2. Mark the comment as spam



When to Remove a Comment

(That isn't spam)

Does the comment include:

personal insults

racist remarks

sexist remarks

Is the comment:

upsetting users

attacking another user

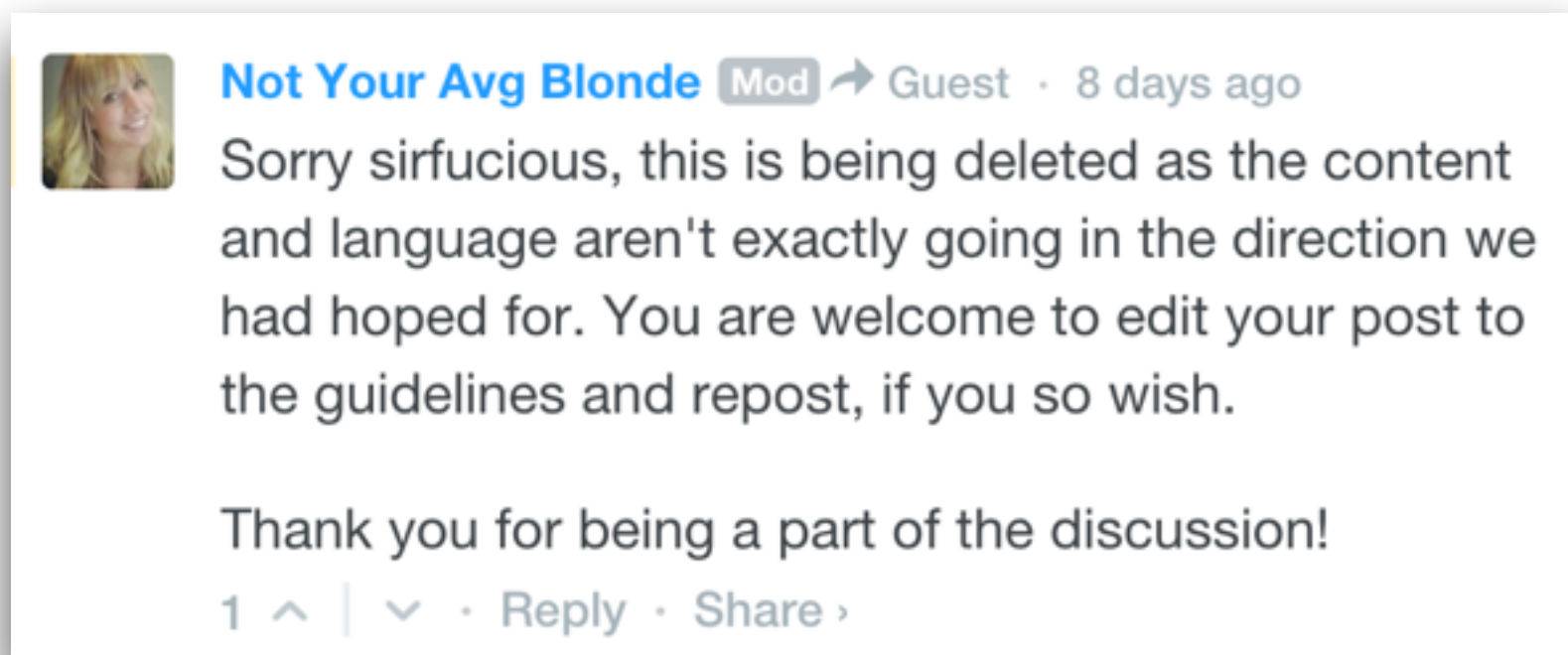
flagged multiple times

REMOVE IT

But, First!

Reply to the commenter to let them know why the comment was removed.

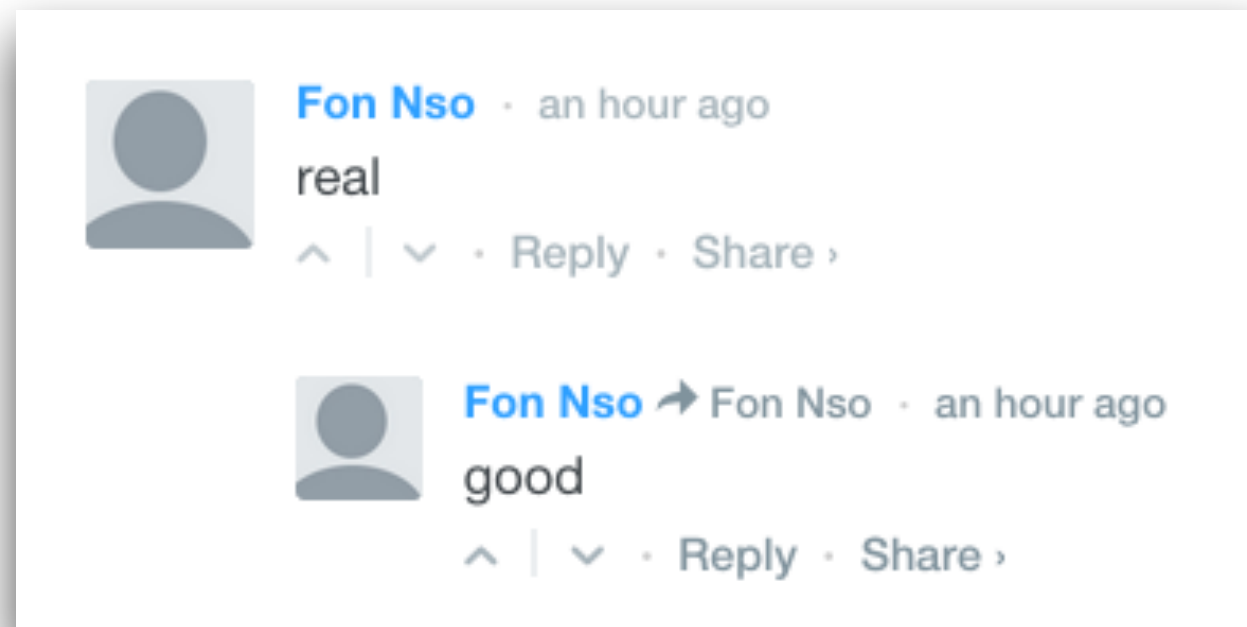
Great example of being human, while enforcing rules:



Then delete the comment.

If bad behavior persists, ban them.

What Do Nonsensical Comments Look Like?



Just delete these, no warning necessary.

Handling Non-English Content

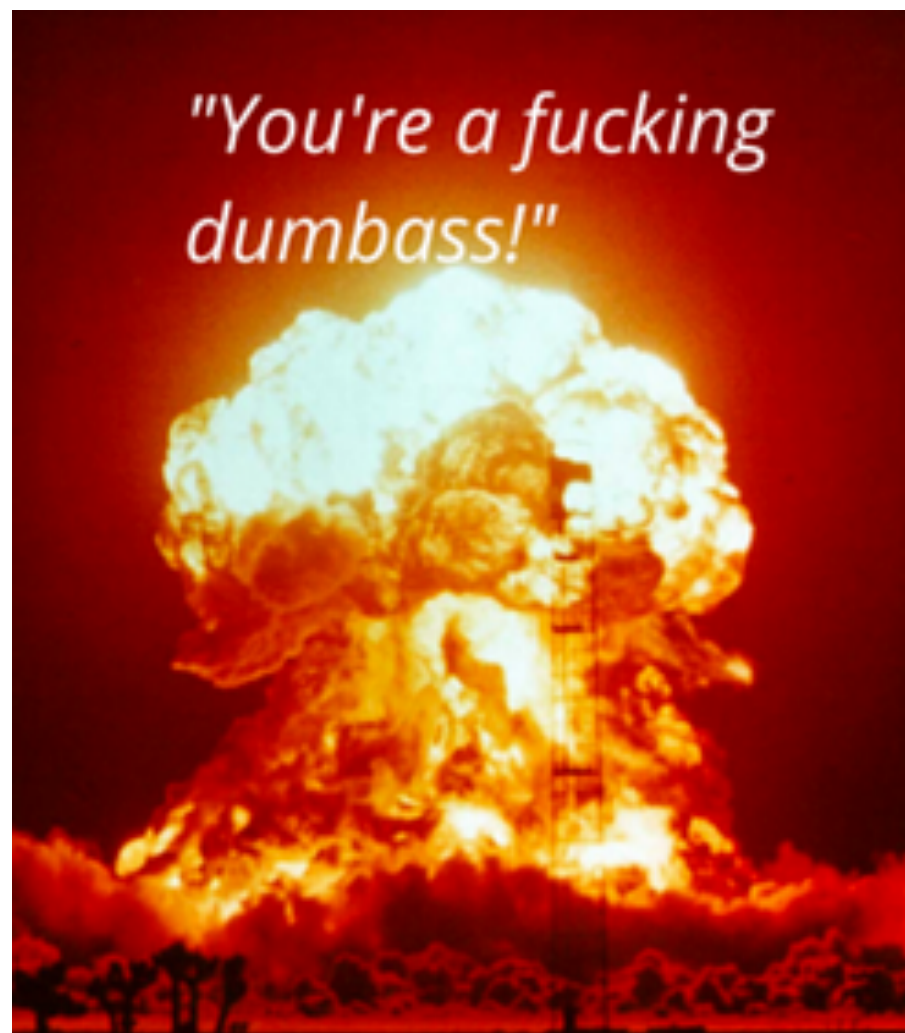
As Disqus is only able to operate in English currently, remove any non-English comments or discussions.

Optionally, you can also post the following canned response:

“Hi @username, thanks for creating a discussion! Just a friendly reminder that we are an English only site, so this discussion will be closed. Feel free to take a look at the Home Rules before re-joining the discussions.”

How to Judge Profanity

Curse words are acceptable so long as the intent is not to personally attack another user.



vs.



How to Judge Profanity

Exceptions:

In some communities there may be a case where swear words negatively detract from the type of community you're striving to build. For example, a parenting or health channel.

How to Handle:

In general, curse words are okay.

But, excessive use of curse words or profanity used to attack should be removed. A warning should be issued in both cases.

When to Blacklist a User

Is the commenter a spammer?

Blacklist them.

Is the commenter disruptive or posting inflammatory comments?

Warn them once.

If behavior persists, blacklist them.



When to Intervene

You should step in when two or more users are having an argument that is:

inflammatory, off-topic, contains **personal insults**, or **violates guidelines** in some way.

1. Reply to all users involved that their comment, along with the rest of the subthread, will be removed.
2. Remove all comments from the subthread, including your own.



When to Escalate

1. Is it a situation you don't know how to approach, or don't feel comfortable getting involved in?
2. Do you think a more serious TOS violation is taking place?
3. Is there bulk spam that needs extra attention?



How to Escalate

1. Ask other mods for advice in the #channel-mods *Slack* channel.
2. Reach out to your Disqus employee contact directly.



Now you know *when* to
moderate. Let's talk
about *how* to m😊oderate.

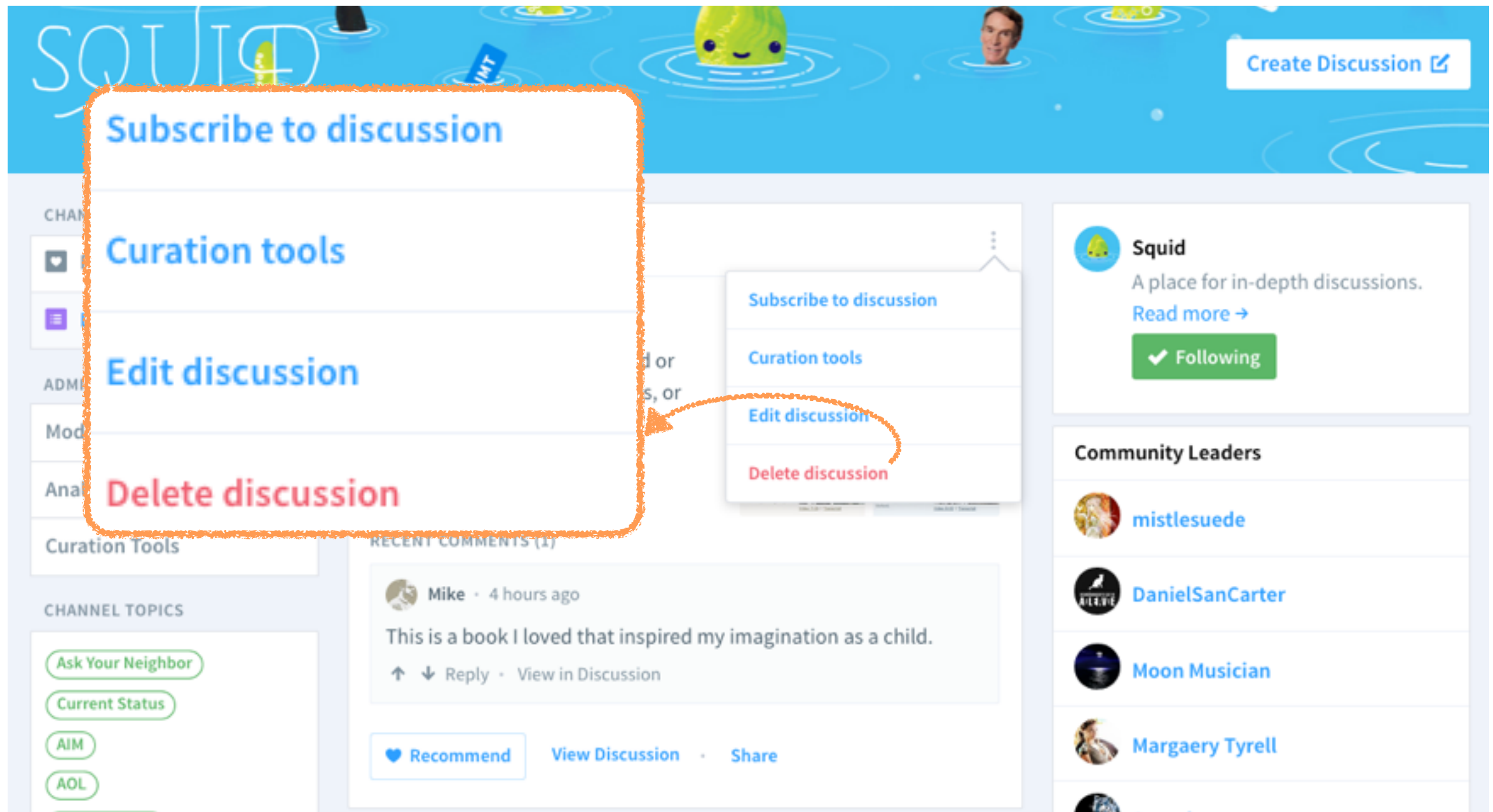
Moderation Features



- [How to Delete Discussions](#)
- [How to Close Discussions](#)
- [How to Remove Spam](#)
- [How to Blacklist a User](#)
- [How to Remove Comment Spam](#)
- [How to Mod by Email](#)

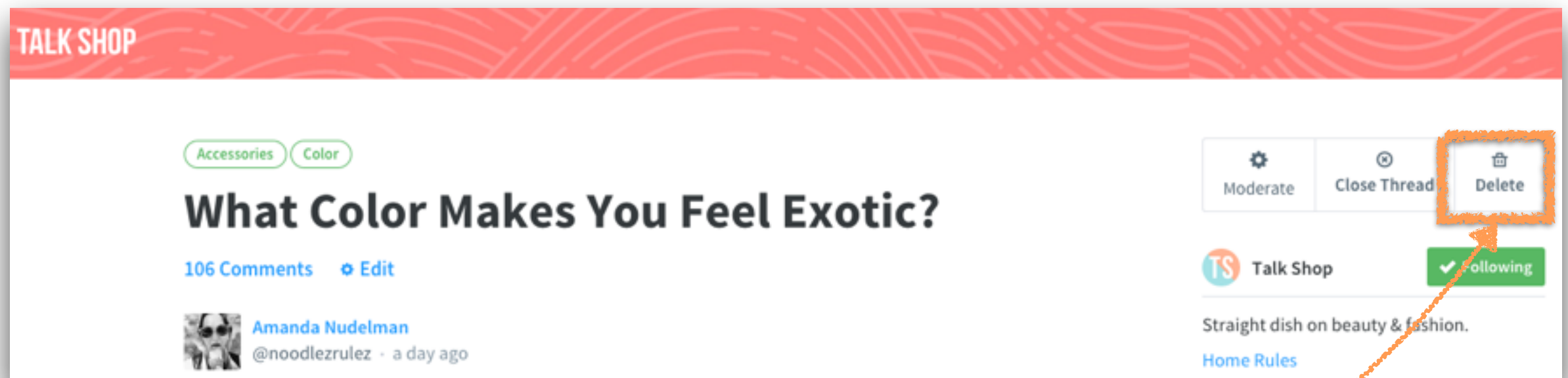
How to Delete Discussions

Method #1: Delete from main channel feed



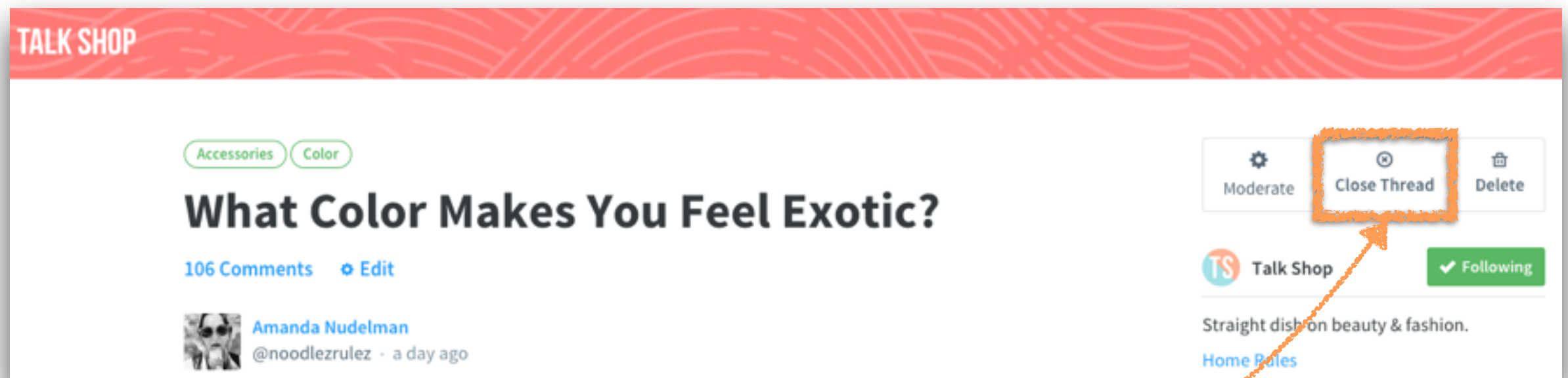
How to Delete Discussions

Method #2: Delete from discussion page



How to Close Discussions

Choose *Close Thread*, and voilà!



How to Remove Spam

There are two different types of spam:
discussion spam and **comment spam**.

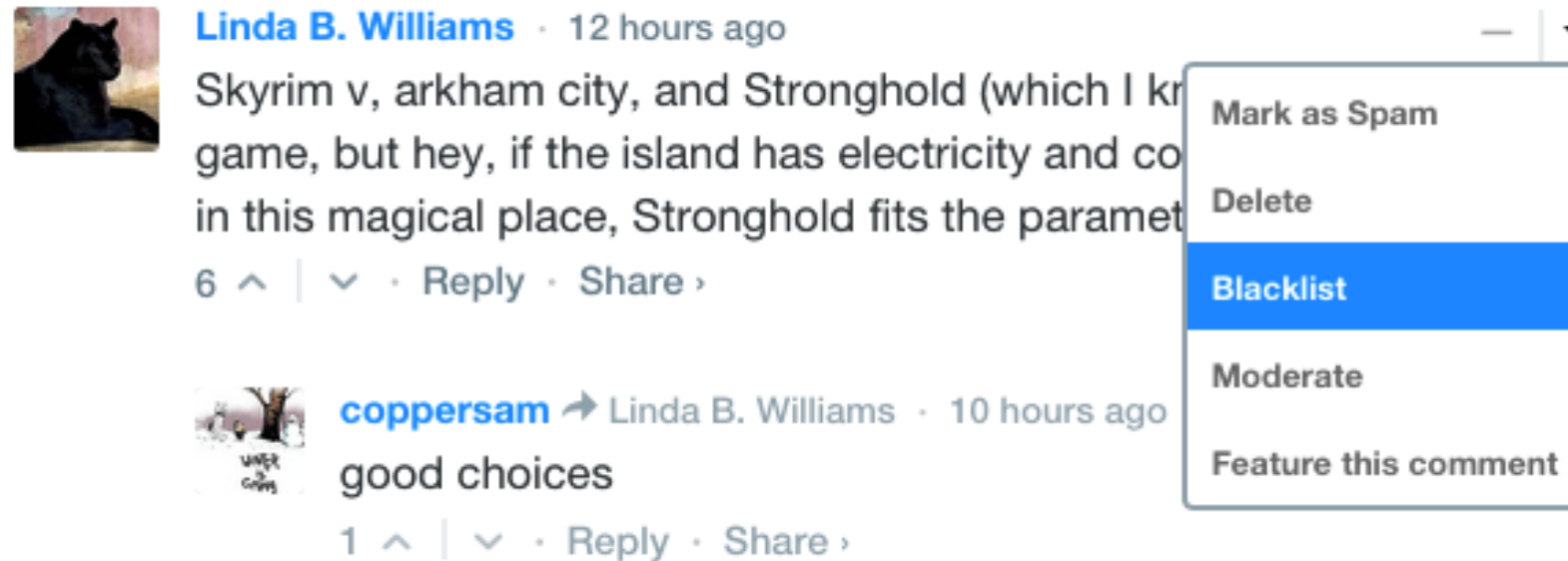
Discussion Spam: remove by deleting the discussion (see earlier slides).

Comment Spam: blacklist user and mark as spam (see next slides).

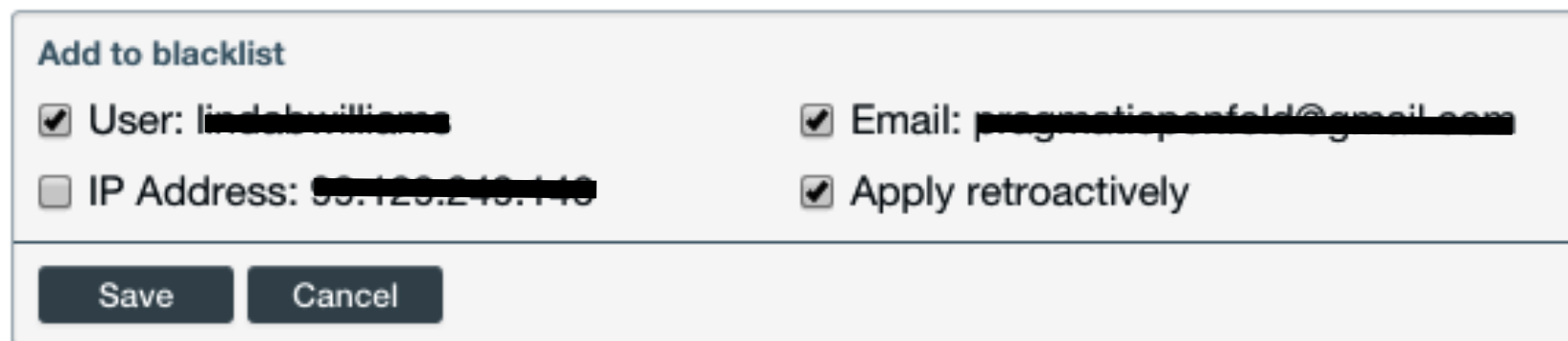


How to Blacklist a User

Method #1: Blacklist directly from the thread



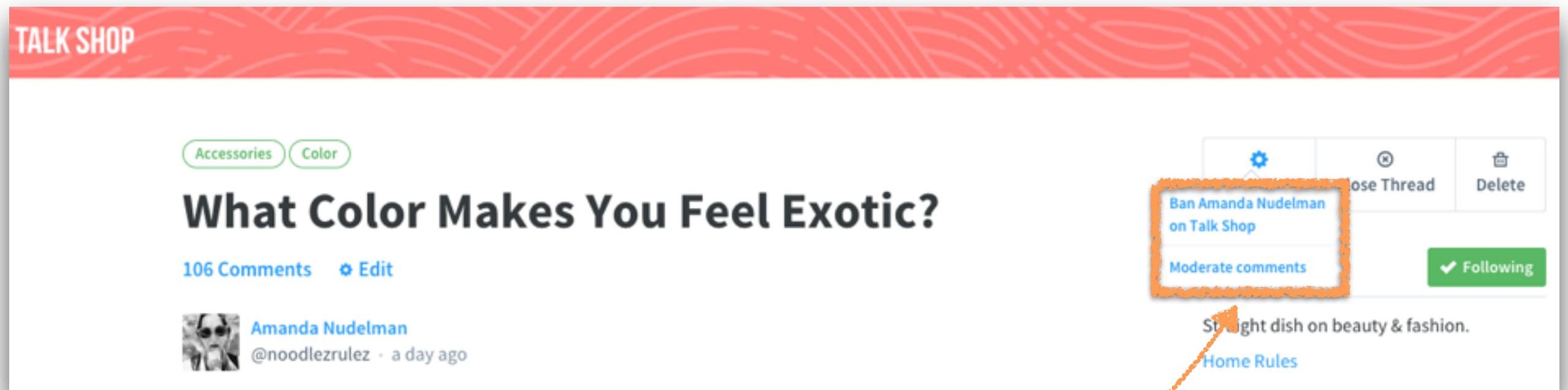
1. Select Blacklist from comment's dropdown menu

A screenshot of a dialog box titled 'Add to blacklist'. It contains four checkboxes with corresponding text: 'User: lindabwilliams' (checked), 'Email: [redacted]@gmail.com' (checked), 'IP Address: 99.129.249.140' (unchecked), and 'Apply retroactively' (checked). At the bottom of the dialog are two buttons: 'Save' and 'Cancel'.

2. Select **user**, **email** and **Apply retroactively**.
Click *Save*.

How to Blacklist a User

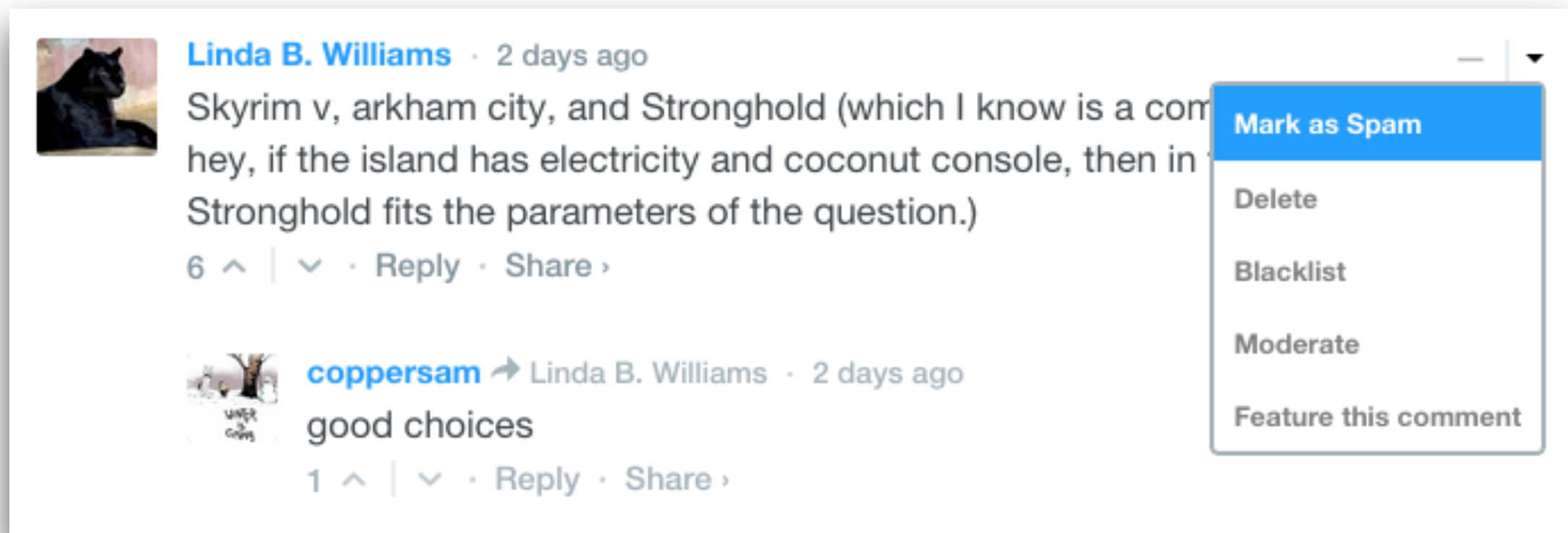
Method #2: Blacklist discussion creator from discussion page



1. Click *Moderate* button to reveal blacklist option.
(This is a good option if the discussion creator has not yet posted a comment.)

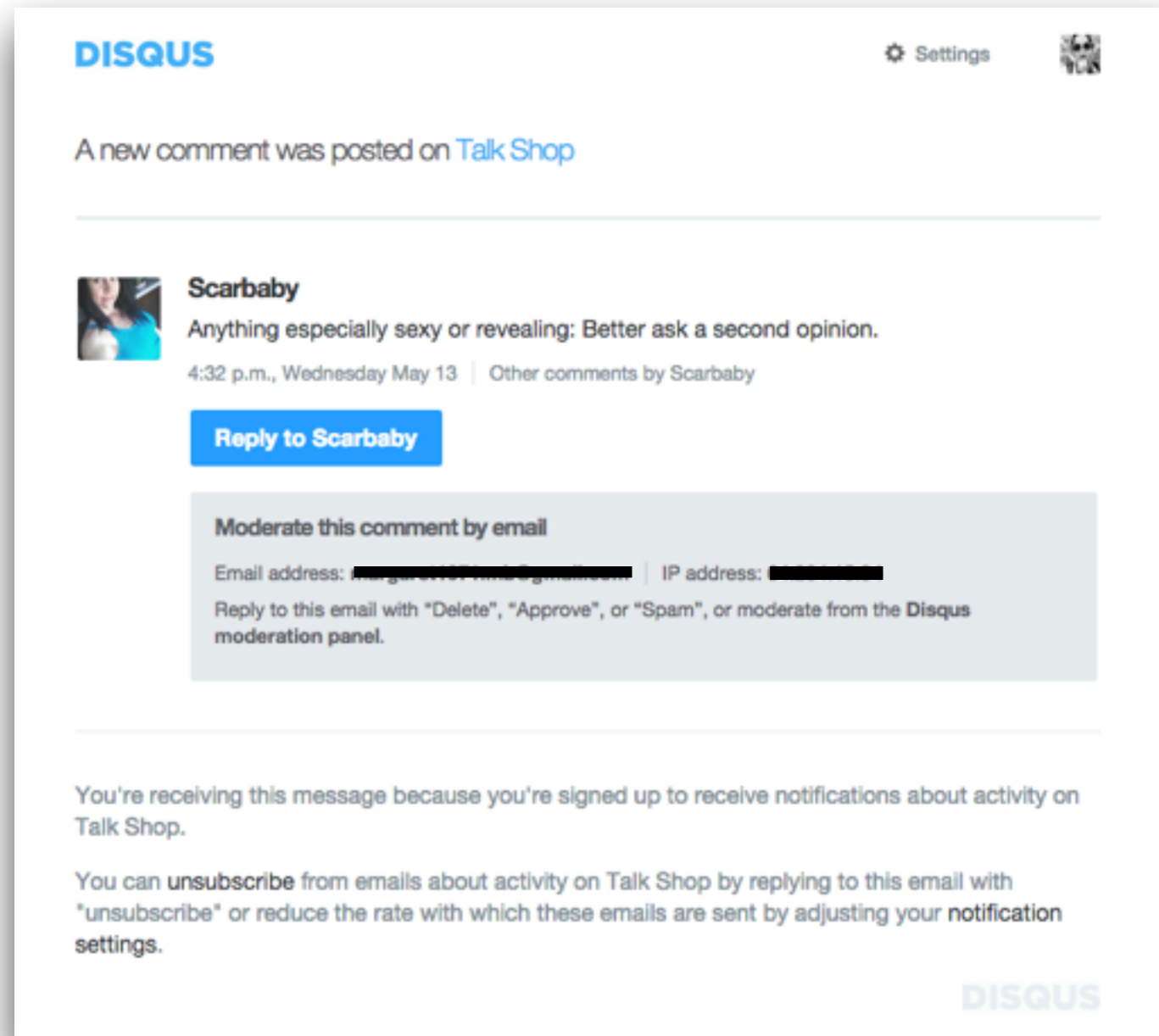
How to Remove Comment Spam

Method #1: Remove directly from thread



Select *Mark as Spam* from comment dropdown menu

How to Moderate by Email



Respond to any email with *delete*, *approve*, or *spam* to take action without visiting the thread or mod panel.

So that's the gory
moderation stuff.

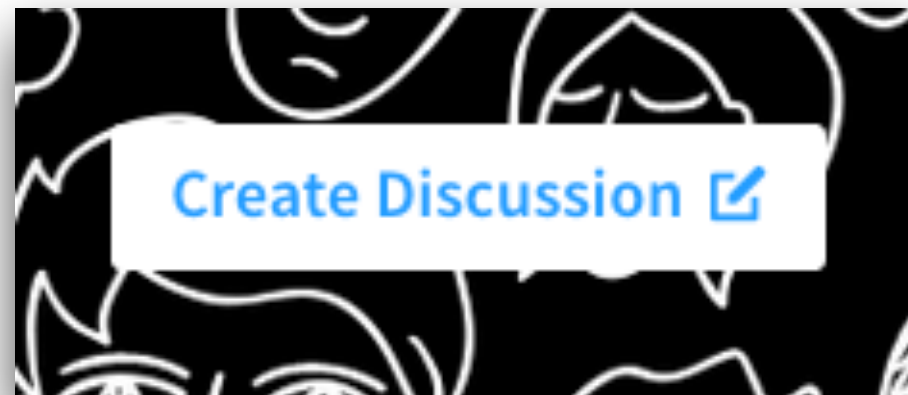
Let's talk about starting
great discussions.

Creating Discussions

- [How to Start a Discussion](#)
- [How to Choose a Category](#)
- [How to Add Images](#)
- [How to Format Text](#)
- [How to Invite People](#)
- [Get Notifications for New Comments](#)
- [How to Share a Discussion](#)



How to Start a Discussion



Create a discussion from the main channel feed,
or any discussion page.

How to Choose a Category

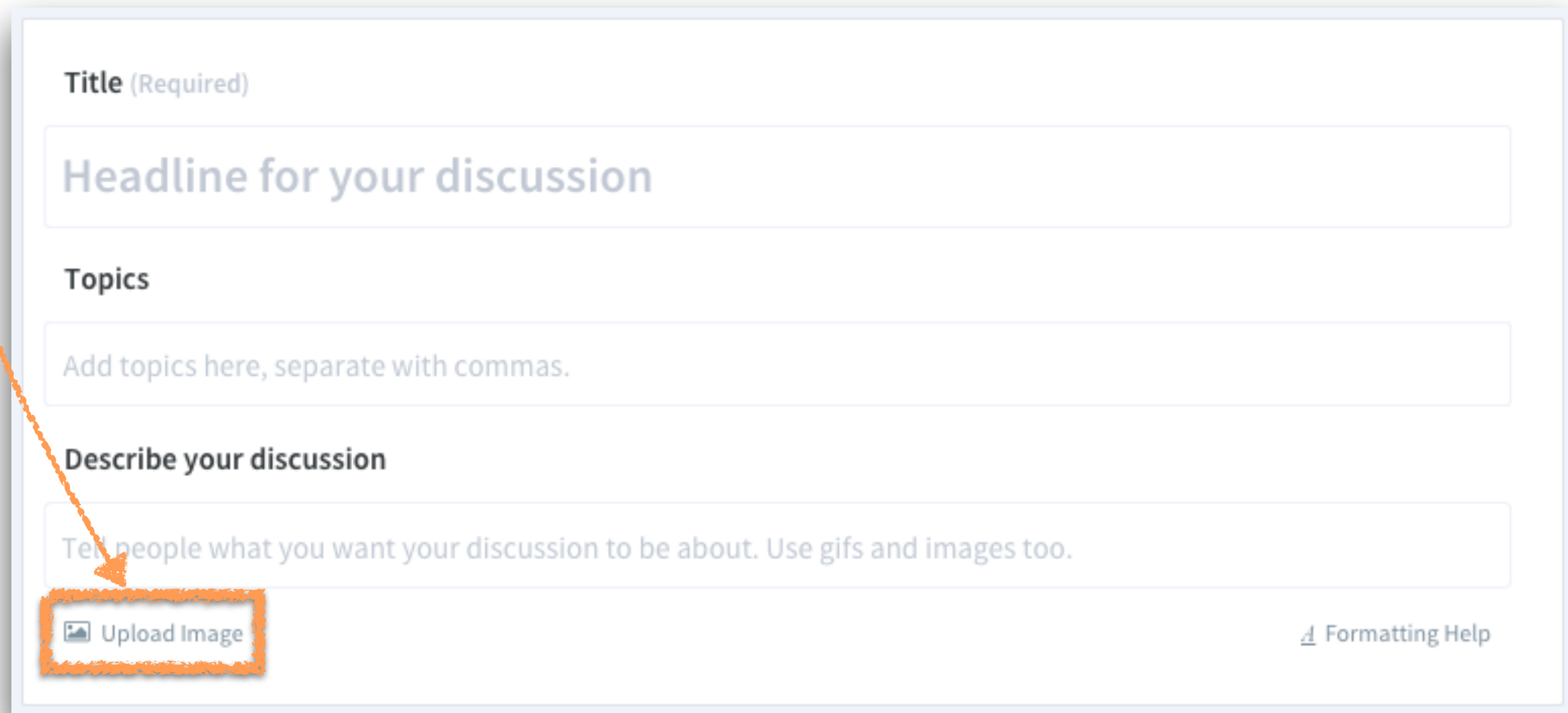
Choose Category ?

- ☐ **Single Life**
Share advice and questions on coping with, or celebrating, being single.
- ☐ **Being Together**
Ask questions and share tips on how relationships do and don't work.
- ☐ **It's Complicated**
Commiserate or provide clues about the mystery of modern dating.

Categories are meant to help frame your discussion.
Choose the one that best fits your topic.

How to Add Images

Method #1: Upload Your Own Image



The screenshot shows a forum post creation form. It has three main text input areas: 'Title (Required)' with a placeholder 'Headline for your discussion', 'Topics' with a placeholder 'Add topics here, separate with commas.', and 'Describe your discussion' with a placeholder 'Tell people what you want your discussion to be about. Use gifs and images too.'. At the bottom left, there is a button labeled 'Upload Image' with a small image icon. An orange dashed arrow originates from the top left and points directly to this button. At the bottom right, there is a link for 'Formatting Help'.

Title (Required)


Headline for your discussion

Topics

Add topics here, separate with commas.

Describe your discussion

Tell people what you want your discussion to be about. Use gifs and images too.

 Upload Image

[Formatting Help](#)

1. Click *Upload Image* to browse your computer for an image
2. Drag and drop an image

How to Add Images

Method #2: Use a web link



1. Find an image, and copy the image URL.

2. *Image best practices:* Google Image for linking to images, upload your own to Imgur, use Giphy to find the perfect GIF

3. The link should end in **.jpg** or **.png**.

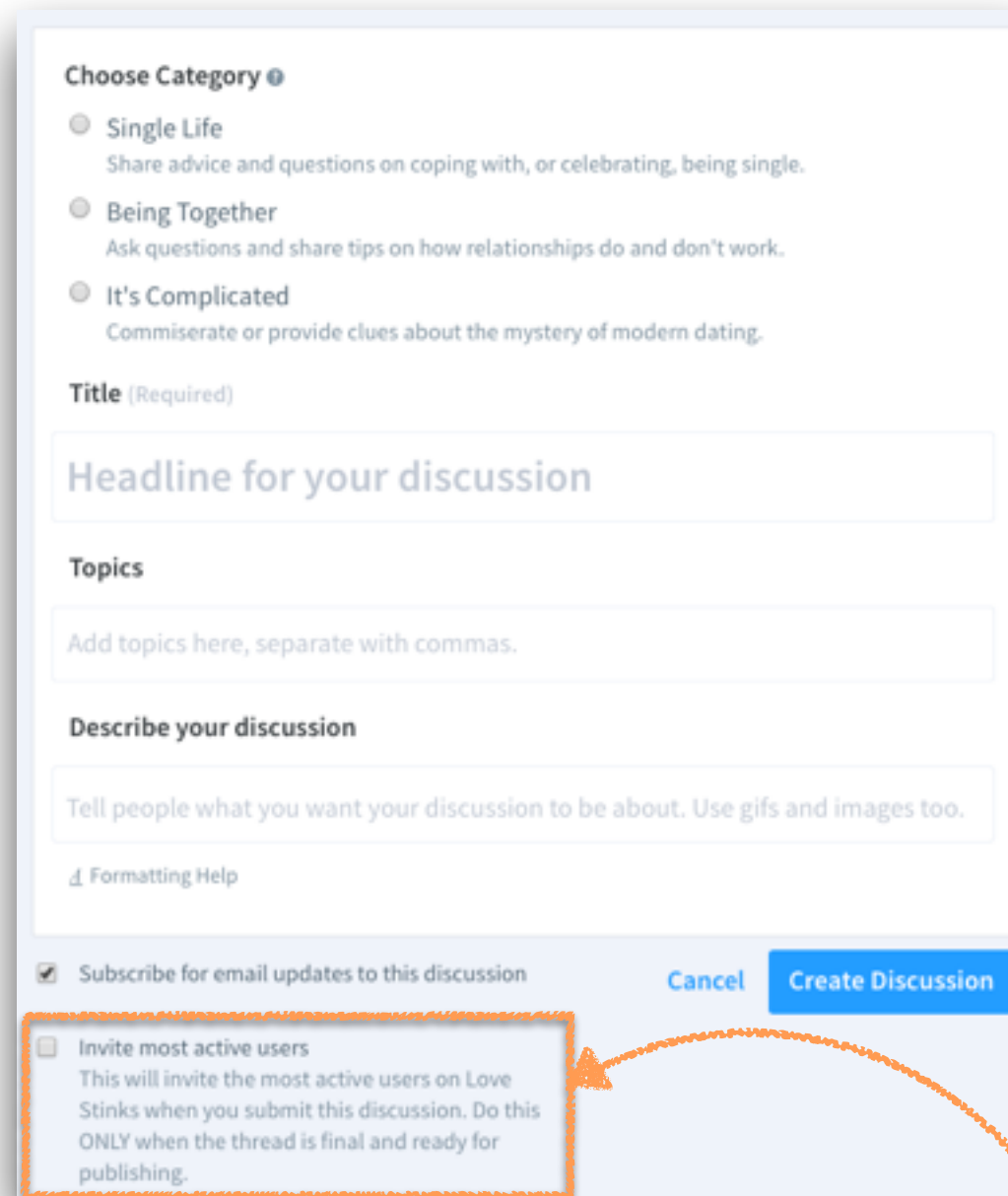
Example: <http://i.imgur.com/hGsihSp.jpg>

How to Format Text

Linking text	<code>This is a link</code>
Line Break	<code>
</code>
Bold	<code>Defines bold text</code>
Block Quote	<code><blockquote>Defines a long quotation</blockquote></code>
Italic	<code>Defines italic text</code>
Strikethrough	<code><strike>Defines strikethrough text</strike></code>
Underlined	<code><u>Defines underlined text</u></code>

Text can be formatted in a variety of ways using HTML.
(If you need help, these HTML and Image formatting tips are found on the Create Discussion page.)

How to Invite People



Choose Category ⓘ

- ☐ Single Life
Share advice and questions on coping with, or celebrating, being single.
- ☐ Being Together
Ask questions and share tips on how relationships do and don't work.
- ☐ It's Complicated
Commiserate or provide clues about the mystery of modern dating.

Title (Required)

Headline for your discussion

Topics

Add topics here, separate with commas.

Describe your discussion

Tell people what you want your discussion to be about. Use gifs and images too.

[⌵ Formatting Help](#)

☒ Subscribe for email updates to this discussion

☐ Invite most active users
This will invite the most active users on Love Stinks when you submit this discussion. Do this ONLY when the thread is final and ready for publishing.

[Cancel](#) [Create Discussion](#)

Check the box to invite the most active users from the channel to your discussion. This helps get things started!

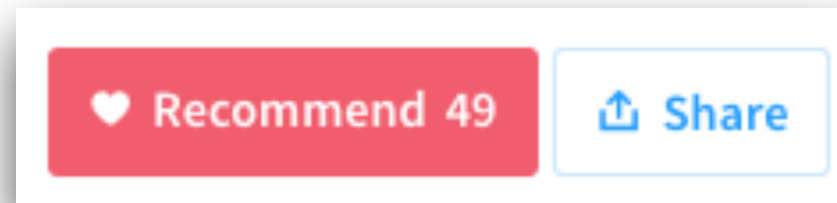
Get Notifications for New Comments



When you start a discussion, you have the option to receive email notifications for new comments.

This lets you know when it's time to join in!

How to Share a Discussion



Recommending a discussion shares it to your followers.
You should recommend every discussion you start!

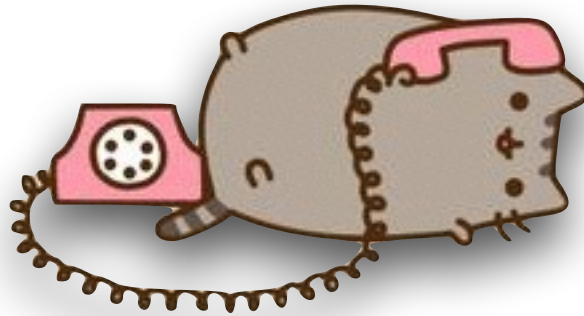
Sharing your discussion to your social media channels
(Twitter, FB, etc.) will encourage others to join in.

Discussion Best Practices

- What Should I Talk About?
- What's the Best Length?
- Should I Use an Image?
- How Do I Get People to Return?



What Should I Talk About?



Anything relevant to your channel!

The most important thing is to be **specific**,
and **include a question**.

(This helps people better understand how to join the conversation.)

What's the Best Length?



Discussions can be as short as a single question, or be a little longer to provide more context.

The discussion above is about 500 characters, or 100 words. We would consider this to be a **medium to long discussion**.

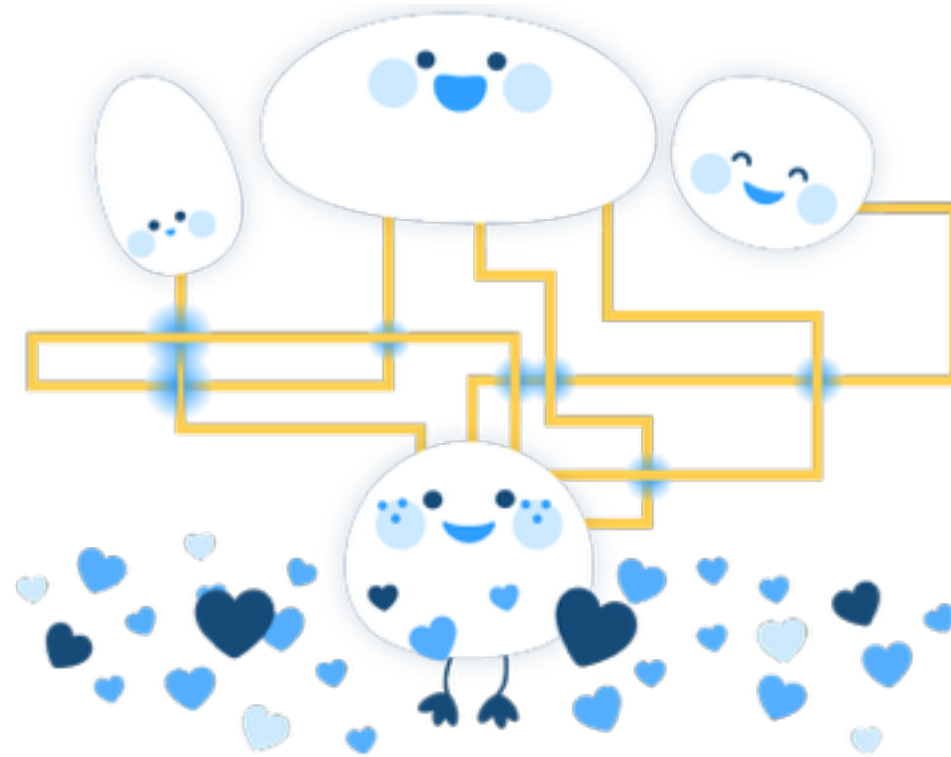
Should I Use an Image?



In general, images are a good idea. They add visual interest, and help draw attention on social media.

If you can find an image (or a gif!) that complements your discussion, **you should use it!**

How Do I Get People to Return?



Reply, reply, reply! Acknowledging a comment, by replying or upvoting, lets people know there is someone out there.

Thank them for joining the discussion if they're a new face. *Bonus:* the faster you reply, the more likely they are to return and post another comment.

How Do I Contact Disqus?

Channel Chat

First, try looking for help from other moderators in Channel Chat.

Email

If you cannot find an answer to your question, or you need to escalate a serious situation, email Disqus at channelhelp@disqus.com



Thank you for all your **great**
and **valuable** work!