A Guide to Getting Started in a New Community

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5 steps to get involved in online communities (intro yourself, answer others' questions, ask your own questions, etc.)

Step 1
Familiarize yourself with the do's and don'ts of the community before diving straight in. Maybe take an hour or even a week to understand the culture of the community before interacting.

Step 2
Fill out your profile completely. If you have a website related to your writing, make sure to link it in your profile. Some communities also allow you to link to your website in your signature, so take advantage of that, also.

Step 3
Introduce yourself. Every community has an area that welcomes newbies. Take the time to write a post that introduces you by name and interest. Talk about what you hope to glean from the site. Also discuss your writing-related accomplishments or ambitions.

Step 4
Get involved. The best way to do this is by answering others' questions. Don't immediately start asking questions. It's not about you, it's about community and the give and take.

Look for easy questions that you may already know the answer to, and provide as much value as you can. By establishing yourself as an active community member, you're more likely to get continue to use this community.

Step 5
Ask questions. Now that you've answered some questions, you probably also have a few of your own. Be sure to search first to make sure that your questions haven't already been answered before.

Above all, have fun! Writing communities are an excellent resource that should always be about valuable exchange. If it stops being useful to you, disengage.