

What body language will help me to facilitate discussion effectively?

- Maintain eye contact with the student who is speaking.
- When you are talking, make eye contact with the whole group.
- In a smaller class, consider occupying one of their seats (to join the discussion instead of to place yourself outside of it).
- In a larger class, consider walking around the classroom in order to be closer to different groups of students.
- Place yourself beside or behind the more talkative students.
- Aim for an open posture and head nods, indicating a positive response to your student's contribution.

What can I do to prepare students for a discussion-based course?

- Involve students in discussion on the first day of class.
- Share your expectations for participation, both verbally and in the syllabus.
- Explain how participation in discussion will be graded (if at all). Provide a rubric that describes expected levels of participation, etc.
- Begin with simpler questions to help students gain confidence speaking in class.

What should I do to help increase the effectiveness of my questions?

- Formulate your questions ahead of time, so they are clear.
- Display each question on the board or screen at the front. Writing them out after you've asked them verbally is a nice way to give students some processing time before the discussion begins.
- Identify the purpose of your discussion, and how each question fits into that purpose.
- Think about the different directions the discussion may go, and be prepared with additional questions/thoughts in response.
- Frame each question by linking it to the previous question and to the overall purpose of your discussion.

What should I do when I receive an incorrect or misguided response?

- Ask the student to explain their reasoning (e.g., "That's not quite right, but can you tell me what led you to that?")
- Ask the rest of the class to add their thoughts (e.g., "That's a good start; does anyone else have thoughts on this?" or "That's not quite right; can anyone explain where the problem is?")

What if my question is met with silence?

- Do *not* answer it yourself. Instead, try to diagnose the problem.
- Make sure you have waited long enough. Give students at least 5 seconds to process your question. For more complex questions you may need to wait up to 20 seconds before someone has an answer.
- Give students 60+seconds to talk with a partner or write their response out, then return to the large group.
- Clarify your question.
- Ask questions to help guide students toward the insight needed to respond to your original question.
- Remind students that incorrect answers are acceptable – and/or that there is no right answer to the question you have asked.

What if a few students dominate discussion?

- Explicitly ask for different contributors. Say something like,
 - “Let’s hear from someone who hasn’t had a chance to contribute yet.”
 - “Let’s hear from someone in that part of the room.”
 - “Let’s wait until there are a few more hands.”
- Try to position yourself beside or behind more talkative students, to make eye contact with you more difficult for them.
- Assign roles to students, such as “class critic”, and have more talkative students take on a role that requires them to be silent for some portion of the discussion.
- Incorporate time for students to think about their answers to questions ahead of time – either before class or during.
- Incorporate “cold-calling”, but make sure students know it is okay to pass, not know the answer, or to provide the wrong answer. Consider also providing students with the opportunity to let you know, outside of class, if the prospect of being called on like this is too stressful for them.

What can I do to help students recognize the value of our discussions?

- Begin by identifying the purpose of the upcoming discussion. Tell students what you are hoping they will learn or sort out.
- Summarize key points and takeaways periodically during the discussion – and finish discussion with a list of key takeaways.
- After allowing the class to follow a tangent, explain to the class why you allowed it to take place, and what the connection is to the main point.
- Give students a few minutes to write down what they have learned in this discussion.