



Leading Class Discussion

- Begin with a common experience (a demonstration, a short reading, etc.) and follow with questions. This will grab the class's attention and get them thinking about the topic you would like to speak on.
- Begin with an engaging question or an opinion based question. These are often good ways to spark larger discussions.
- Begin with controversy. Use a question or statement to play Devil's Advocate.
- Allow for pauses. Give your classmates ample time to think about their answers before cutting in. If there is still no response, rephrase the question or call on someone. Do not answer your own question.
- Don't ask yes or no questions or questions with one specific right answer. They can shut down discussion. Instead, ask open-ended questions that answer *why* and/or *how*.
- If you do ask a yes/no or right/wrong question, include follow up questions to dig deeper.
- Follow-up group member statements, but avoid leader-member dialogues. Remember that you are a facilitator and let the class answer and respond to statements.
- Limit the number of topics to be covered. Go in depth on a few key points rather than breezing over a hundred trivial details.
- Use discussion techniques (brainstorming, nominal group process, round robin discussion, etc.) to let group members communicate.

- Recognize the person who hasn't talked in preference to the one who has. Try to keep everyone engaged and participating.
- Use questions that probe for group member feelings, reactions, or perceptions.
- Avoid talking every time a group-member speaks. Allow for individual conversation.
- Be flexible. If conversation deviates from your plan but is relevant and successfully engaging the class, allow it to continue.
- Keep the group on track. Respectfully guide the conversation in constructive directions and refocus the class if comments become tangential or off-topic.
- Be encouraging. Verbally support participants and use positive nonverbal communications such as eye contact, nodding, and good posture.
- Listen attentively and be respectful - don't interrupt unless it is necessary to keeping the conversation on track.

If you want more information, check out the following
UMW Speaking Center handouts:

[Class Discussion Packet](#)
[Preparing for Class Discussion](#)
[Participating in Class Discussion](#)