

Conversational Moves

Write the following directives separately on notecards and distribute them to students. Asking students to participate in discussion in these intentional ways may help a reticent student to speak, show students the range of positive behaviors that go into good discussions, and help students to comprehend and analyze content.

Ask a question or make a comment that shows you are interested in what another person has said.

Ask a question or make a comment that encourages someone else to elaborate on something that person has said.

Make a comment that underscores the link between two people's contributions.

Use body language (in a slightly exaggerated way) to show interest in what different speakers are saying.

Make a comment indicating that you found another person's ideas interesting or useful. Be specific as to why this was the case.

Contribute something that builds on or springs from what someone else has said. Be explicit about the way you are building on the other person's thoughts.

Make a comment that at least partly paraphrases a point someone has already made.

Make a summary observation that takes into account several people's contributions and that touches on a recurring theme in the discussion.

Ask a cause-and-effect question—for example, "Can you explain why you think it's true that if these things are in place, such and such a thing will occur?"

Find a way to express appreciation for the enlightenment you have gained from the discussion.

Disagree with someone in a respectful and constructive way.

[Adapted from Stephen Brookfield and Stephen Preskill, *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms*, 2nd ed (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005).]