

Discussion Strategy: Conversational Moves

Adapted and developed from Stephen D. Brookfield and Stephen Preskill's book and workshop *Discussion As A Way Of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms. 2nd Edition.* Jossey Bass, 2005.

Conversational Moves

Cut out and laminate the conversational moves listed below and randomly distribute them among participants before a pre-arranged discussion session. Ask participants to practice their move in the discussion that follows. When the discussion is over distribute the entire list of moves so people can see the wide variety of ways that questioning, listening and responding can be practiced. Point out to participants that virtually all the moves listed are designed to strengthen connections among group members. Ask participant to recap how they tried to make the moves they were allocated. Think of these moves as training wheels for discussion. After your discussion group practices the moves with these artificial prompts for a couple of weeks you should be able to "remove the note cards" and have meaningful discussions by posting discussion moves on a wall as a reminder.

Specific Discussion Move #1	Ask a question or make a statement that shows you are interested in what another person says.
Specific Discussion Move #2	Ask a question or make a comment that encourages another person to elaborate on something they have already said.
Specific Discussion Move #3	Make a comment that underscores the link between two people's contributions.
Specific Discussion Move #4	Use body language to show interest in what different speakers are saying.
Specific Discussion Move #5	Make a specific comment indicating how you found another person's ideas interesting/useful.
Specific Discussion Move #6	Contribute something that builds on, springs from, what someone else has said. Be explicit about the way you are building on the other person's thoughts.
Specific Discussion Move #7	Make a comment that at least partly paraphrases a point someone has already made.
Specific Discussion Move #8	Make a summary observation that takes into account several people's contribution and that touches on a recurring theme in the discussion.
Specific Discussion Move #9	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?"
Specific Discussion Move #10	When you think it's appropriate, ask the group for a moment's silence to slow the pace of conversation and give you, and others, time to think.
Specific Discussion Move #11	Find a way to express appreciation for the enlightenment you have gained from the discussion. Be specific about what it was that helped you understand something better.
Specific Discussion Move #12	Disagree with someone in a respectful and constructive way.
Specific Discussion Move #13	Create space for someone who has not yet spoken to contribute to the conversation.