

Conversational Moves

From Brookfield & Preskill, *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005).

- 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. Make this link explicit in your comment.
- 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 reoccurring 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?"
- At an appropriate moment, ask the group for a minute's silence to slow the pace of conversation and give you and others time to think.
- Find a way to express appreciation for the enlightenment you have gained from the discussion. Try to be specific about what it was that helped you understand something better.
- Disagree with someone in a respectful and constructive way.