Discussion Guidelines

Be aware of how much you are contributing to in-class discussions. Try not to silence yourself out of concern for what others will think about what you say. If you have a tendency to contribute often, give others the opportunity to speak. If you tend to stay quiet, challenge yourself to share ideas so others can learn from you.

Listen respectfully. Don’t interrupt, engage in private conversations, or turn to technology while others are speaking. Use attentive, courteous body language.

Understand that there are different approaches to solving problems. If you are uncertain about someone else’s approach, ask a question to explore areas of uncertainty. Listen respectfully to how and why the approach could work.

Take pair-work or group work seriously. Remember that your peers’ learning partly depends upon your engagement.

Make an effort to get to know others. Introduce yourself to people sitting near you. Refer to others by name and make eye contact with them.

Speak from your own experiences. When it is your turn to speak, share briefly from your own experiences, using “I” statements. Incorporate others’ comments, acknowledging disagreements. Be careful not to generalize about people or experiences.

Keep in mind that we are all still learning and are bound to make mistakes in this setting, as anyone does when approaching a complex task or exploring new ideas. Be open to changing your mind, and make space for others to do so as well.

Re-read and think before you post in online discussions, since intentions behind a statement might not be clear. We are communicating only through text in the forums, it can be easy to misinterpret what someone is saying since we don’t see facial expressions and body language. Don’t make assumptions and don’t hesitate ask for clarification if something is unclear.

Be respectful during online discussions and conferences. Learning online is new to all of us and we may be stressed. Be patient and supportive of your colleagues. Treat everyone with mutual respect and keep discussions focused on the activities, course content, and evidence-based debate.

Adapted from the University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (http://www.crlt.umich.edu/examples-discussion-guidelines) and the Columbia Center for Teaching and Learning (https://ctl.columbia.edu/) updated 2.14.2002