



Group Discussion Guidelines

Many aspects of projects involve small or large group discussions, such as choosing a project theme, finalizing a driving question, research and investigation, and planning a culminating event. Use these guidelines during group discussions to ensure the group stays on track and everyone has a chance to participate. Consider sharing them with the facilitator (may be staff or a student leader) and participants before a discussion begins as a way to build consensus around group norms. Ask for input around additional guidelines that could be added to this list.

Participants:

- Listen, even if you do not agree
- Allow all speakers to finish what they're saying
- Agree or disagree with ideas, without making it personal
- Allow for silence; let people think
- Use "I" statements (speak only for yourself)
- Stay on topic and task
- Give everyone a chance; don't hog time
- Be brief
- Appreciate people for participating, even if you don't agree with their ideas

Facilitator:

- Ask for clarification, examples, or illustrations of points
- Reframe participants' points to ensure proper understanding
- Summarize occasionally and ask what more needs to be addressed
- Don't force participation – allow opportunities for small group sharing