

EFFECTIVE DISCUSSIONS:

A Checklist for Activating & Managing Group Discussions & Seminar Sessions

The following list of effective language to use in discussions was compiled from various sources including material produced for United Nations meetings. Skim through the booklet and notice the various categories for consideration when involved in a meeting, seminar or discussion. Under each category, highlight one or two lexical phrases that you have rarely used before. Choose these phrases to use during your seminars or tutorials.

OPENERS AND CLOSURES			
Greetings:	Hello everyone.⇒		⇐ Hello/ Hi.
	Good ____ Ladies & Gentlemen. ⇒		⇐ Good morning/ afternoon.
Beginning:	I would like to begin by...		I would like to make a few remarks ...
	There are 3 points I'd like to make...		I would like to comment on...
	I would like to mention briefly...		The most important points seem to be...
Ordering:	First of all, we must bear in mind...		To begin with...
	At the outset,		Firstly, ...Secondly, ...Finally, ...
A New Point:	I would like to turn briefly to...		The next issue I would like to focus on...
	Turning to...		The next item we should consider is...
Adding:	In addition, ...		I might add that...
	As well as... , there is also...		Not only... , but also...
	Furthermore, ...		Moreover, ...
An Example:	Let me give an example...		To illustrate this point, let's consider...
	A case in point is...		For example, ...
Balancing:	On the one hand...but on the other...		Although... , we shouldn't forget...
	Whereas... , we have to remember...		In spite of... , I still think...
Generalizing:	On the whole, ...		In general, ...
	Generally speaking, ...		By and large, ...
	All in all, ...		All things considered, ...
Preferences:	I'd rather... than...		I prefer... to...

	I tend to favour... as opposed to...		The main advantage of... is that...
Closing:	Well, it's getting late... ⇒		⇐ Yes, perhaps we should rap up...
	Well, I think that covers everything...⇒		⇐ Alright then, if there aren't any other questions...
Concluding:	Let me conclude by saying...		I'd like to conclude by stating that...
	Allow me to conclude by highlighting that...		In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that...
	That concludes our business for today.		Thank you Ladies and Gentlemen.
	I look forward to our next meeting.		Good talking to you.

INITIATING CONVERSATION

Do you realize that...? ⇒		⇐ Really?
You know,... ⇒		⇐ Hmm. That's interesting.
Have you heard about...? ⇒		⇐ Hmm. I hadn't heard.

GIVING FEEDBACK

I see. / I understand.		I'm sorry, I don't quite understand.
Yes, it's clear.		I'm sorry, I'm not sure I get your point.
Right./ Makes sense.		Pardon?

OPINIONS AND GETTING PEOPLE TO EXPAND

Asking for an Opinion:	What's your opinion of...?		How about you?
	What do you think of...?		Really? / Do you really think so?
	Have you ever...?		Would you say that...?
Asking for a Reaction:	What's your position on...?		Could you elaborate (on that)...?
	I wonder if you'd like to comment, Jane?		What's your take on this, John?

	I'd like to hear your views on...?		Ms. Smith, what do you think about...?
Giving Strong Opinions	I firmly believe that...		I'm absolutely convinced that...
	There's no doubt in my mind that...		I'm certain that...
Giving Neutral Opinions	I think that...		In my opinion...
	As I see it, ...		As far as I'm concerned, ...
	From my point of view, ...		From my perspective, ...
Giving Tentative Opinions	It seems to me that...		I would say that...
	As far as I'm able to judge, ...		I think it would be fair to say that...
Avoiding Giving an Opinion	I'm not really sure...		I suppose it depends on your point of view
	It's difficult to say...		I'm afraid I don't know much about it.
Bringing in to Answer Question	Perhaps Taka would care to answer that.		I think Ms. Li is more qualified to deal with this question.
	If I may, I'd like to ask my colleague Mr. Wang to reply to that.		I'd like to ask my partner Ms Davis to give us her views on that.
Bringing in to Present a Point	Mrs. Right would you care to comment?		I think Jim would like to make a point.
	Mr. Smith, would you like to come in here?		I'd like to call on Jane to present her views on...
Summarizing	To sum up, there seems to be...		Briefly, the main points that have been made are
	Well, if I could just sum up the discussion...		To summarize, I think we're in agreement on ...

AGREEING AND DISAGREEING			
		"You took the words right out of my mouth."	"I take exception to..."
		"We're on the same wave-length."	"Your argument doesn't hold water."
Strong Agreement	I completely agree.		I'm in total agreement.
	I agree entirely with your point of view.		I'm exactly of the same opinion.
Neutral Agreement	I agree.		I think we're in agreement on that.
	I think you're right.		I think we can accept your position on that.
Partial Agreement	I would tend to agree with you on that.		I agree in principle, but...
	By and large I would accept your views but...		Although I agree with most of what you've said, I find it difficult to agree with your point about...
Softening Strong Disagreement	Frankly, ...		To be quite frank, ...
	To put it bluntly, ...		With respect, ...
Strong Disagreement	I totally disagree with you.		I don't agree at all.
	You're completely mistaken.		I disagree entirely.
Softening Neutral Disagreement	I'm afraid...		I'm sorry, ...
	With respect, ...		I respect your opinion, of course, however...
Neutral Disagreement	I don't completely agree with you on that.		I really can't agree with you on that.
	We'll have to agree to disagree.		I'm not totally convinced that ...

Tactful Disagreement	I agree up to a point, but...		You have a point there, but...
	I understand your point but have you considered...?		I can see your point, but surely...
INTERRUPTING			
Interrupting	May I interrupt for a moment?		Sorry to interrupt, but...
	If I may interrupt you for a minute, I'd like to		I don't want to interrupt, but...
Taking the Floor	Could I come in at this point?		Could I say something about...?
	If no one objects, I'd like to say a few words about...		I have a point to make here.
Commenting	I wonder if I could comment on the last point?		Could I say something about...?
	I'd like to add something here, if I may?		Before we go any further, may I point out that ...
Coming Back to a Point	As I was saying...		Coming back to what I was saying...
Preventing an Interruption	Perhaps I could return to that point later on...		If I might just finish...
	If you would allow me to continue...		If you would be so kind as to let me finish...
Pre-empting an Interruption	There are two points I'd like to make.		First I would like to... and then I would like to comment on...
	Very briefly, ...		I'd just like to ...
CLARIFYING			
Asking for Confirmation	Would I be correct in saying that...?		Correct me if I'm wrong, but...
	Am I correct in assuming that...?		When you say... do you mean...?

	Are you saying that...?		So What you're saying is...?
	Do you mean...?		If I've understood you correctly, you're saying that...?
Asking for Repetition	I'm afraid I don't understand what you mean.		I'm sorry, I didn't quite follow what you said about ...
	Could you repeat that?		Would you mind saying that again?
	There has been another what?		Would you mind repeating that?
Correcting Misunderstandings	I'm afraid there has been a slight misunderstanding.		I think you misunderstood me.
	That isn't quite what I meant.		With respect, that is not what I said.
Rephrasing	Perhaps I haven't made myself clear. Basically what I'm trying to say is...		Let me put it another way...
	Allow me to rephrase that.		To be more specific...

QUESTIONING

Asking General Questions	Would you mind...?		I was wondering if you...?
	I wonder if you could...?		May I ask you...?
Asking for Further Information	Could you be a little more precise?		Would you care to elaborate?
	Could you expand on that?		Could you give us some more details?
Playing for Time	That's a very interesting question.		That's a difficult question to answer.
	You've raised an important point there.		I'm glad you asked that question.
Saying Nothing	Well it's rather difficult to say at present.		I'm afraid I'm not in a position to comment on that just yet.
	Let me get back to you on that one.		Well in fact, the real issue is...

Questioning	It depends what you mean by...		I'm not quite sure what you mean by that.
	I'm afraid I don't quite follow.		I don't think it's quite as simple as that.
PERSUADING			
Asking Questions	Do you realize that...?		I was wondering if you'd thought of...?
	Has it occurred to you that...?		Wouldn't it be a good idea to...?
Adding Information	There are a few points you should bear in mind...		There are other considerations. For example...
Challenging	If I were you...		It would be in your own best interest to ...
	I wonder if that view is justified in light of...		I don't think you fully appreciate the fact that...
Expressing Reservations	I have certain reservations about...		I'm rather worried about...
	I'm afraid such a decision might lead to ...		Under no circumstances should we come to a hasty decision on this.
Reassuring	There's no cause for concern.		Let me assure you that ...
	No need to fear...		I can assure you that...
CHECKING TO SEE THAT YOUR AUDIENCE IS FOLLOWING YOU			
Are you with me?			Okay so far?
Is that clear?			Make sense?