

Tips for Facilitating a Discussion

A leader **ACTS** to facilitate discussions by:

Acknowledging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge each person who speaks during a discussion. “Thanks for that insight, Linda.” • Also watch for non-verbal signals (groaning, sighing) and acknowledge it. “If I understand your sigh, Steve, you’re hoping we will make a decision soon.”
Clarifying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify what members say. “Let me see if I understand what you are saying.” • Clarify what members are feeling. “You’re frustrated by this issue....”
Turning	Turn questions back to the group rather than always answering yourself. “What do the rest of you think about that?”
Summarizing	Summarize what members have said. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “So far, it seems what we are saying is....” • “Mary, could you summarize the key points of our discussion so far?”

A leader uses the right type of questions for the situation.

<i>Purpose of Question</i>		<i>Examples</i>
Open	Warm up the group; prepare minds for the topic; speculative, thought-engaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What do you look forward to as we begin this project?” • “In what ways does this topic interest you?”
Launch	Generate group interaction; explore what we know, feel, and think we should do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What can we learn from these results?” • “What steps can we take to overcome this issue?” • “Does anyone have experience with something similar?”
Guide	Spontaneous depending on what is happening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You seem to be asking..., is that correct?” • “How would you respond if someone asked you that question?” • “Sara, that sounds like a painful experience, what helped you through it?” • “That’s a good point. Are there other thoughts?”
Summarize	Acknowledge members participation while maintaining direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Andy, if I heard you correctly, your conclusion is...” • “Are we saying...?” • “How could we summarize our decision?”
Apply	To get beyond informing and into transforming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How will that affect how we implement our plan?” • “What changes will you make this week as a result of our discussion today?” • “What difference does this make to you and me?” • “How could remembering this passage help you reflect Christ’s light to others?”