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### Three Tokens (V) (OS) (OA)

Prior to class distribute 3-5 tokens to each student (any kind of cardboard card, playing cards, Legos, stones, etc.). Once class or a certain part of class discussion begins, students "spend" their discussion tokens each time they speak, placing them in a "recycle" container or at the top of the table in front of them. Once they have used all their tokens, they no longer may add comments to the discussion. This activity helps control students who tend to dominate discussions; they will consider more carefully when a comment is worth making. Quieter students have more space to talk and are motivated to engage. If implementing this in an online setting, you could give students 4 tokens (such as Compliment, Comment, Connection, and Question) and they should preface their discussion contribution with which token they’re using.

Adapted from description available at <https://citl.indiana.edu/files/pdf/Dictionary-2014-Equal-Participation-Strategies.pdf>

### Circular Response (V) (D) (OS)

Students sit in a circle so that everyone can see everyone else, and each person in turns takes no more than 3 min. to talk about an issue or a question that the group has agreed to discuss. Speakers are not free, however, to say anything they want. They must make a brief summary of the preceding speaker’s message and then use this as a springboard for their own comments. In other words, what each speaker articulates depends on listening well to the preceding speaker as much as on generating new or unspoken ideas. Students must respect the following six ground rules:

1. No one may be interrupted while speaking.
2. No one may speak out of turn in the circle.
3. Each person is allowed only 3 min. to speak.
4. Each person must begin by paraphrasing the comments of the previous discussant.
5. Each person, in all comments, must strive to show how their remarks relate to the comments of the previous discussant.
6. After each discussant has had a turn to speak, the floor is opened for general reactions, and the previous ground rules no longer apply.

A variation on this activity is to denote 2 or 3 students to not participate, but rather, to listen carefully to all contributions, taking notes where necessary, and to end the exercise with a synthesis of the discussion’s highlights. They recount key points and recurring themes, giving everyone involved some sense of the whole.

As described in *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms* (2nd Edition) by Brookfield & Preskill, Chapter 4, Section 7 (Kindle Version).

### Affinity Mapping (V) (D) (C) (L) (OS) (OA)

Give students a broad question or problem that is likely to result in lots of different ideas, such as “What could be some effective keywords when researching the topic of alternative energy?” or “What literary works should every person read?” Have students generate responses by writing ideas on post-it notes (one idea per note) placing them in no particular arrangement on a wall, whiteboard, or chart paper. Once lots of ideas have been generated, have students begin grouping them into similar categories, then label the categories and discuss why the ideas fit within them, how the categories relate to one another, and so on. If facilitating online, consider using a shared document to initially capture ideas and then have students work on re-arranging using headers.

Adapted from Gonzalez, J. (2015, October 15). The big list of class discussion strategies [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/speaking-listening-techniques/>.

### Think-Pair-Share (V) (D) (L) (OS)

Think-Pair-Share is a short activity designed to engage students in thoughtful consideration of a topic, and may serve effectively as a warm-up to instruction and class discussion on new course material. First, students individually ***think*** for a few min. about a question posed by the instructor, then get together for a short period in groups of 2 (***pair***) to 4 students to discuss their thoughts, and 1 or more groups ***share*** the results of their discussion with the class or another small group. If facilitating in Microsoft Teams, use break-out Channels for the small group discussions. In addition to engaging with course content, students can reflect before speaking, and share their ideas in a low-risk situation before participating in full class discussion. Thus, both the quality of class discussion and students’ comfort in contributing to class discussion may improve. TPS also allows instructors to assess students’ initial knowledge and to modify instruction to bolster understanding and clear up misconceptions.

Adapted from description available at https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/resources/learning/learning-activities/think-pair-share

### Concentric Circles Dialogue (V) (D)

Students sit or stand in two concentric circles facing each other. Begin the session by asking students to introduce themselves to their partner. The session is a series of questions (generally 4-6) pertaining to each person’s experience of their religious or spiritual tradition. Participants frame their responses in “I” statements. Only one person may speak at a time. Each partner is asked the same question in a given time frame (2-5 min.). The facilitator designates partners to begin with the inside or outside circle, and gives a signal when it is time to switch partners. After both partners have answered the question, the inner or outer circle moves around the circle until each participant has a new partner. With each rotation, ask deeper questions. *Sample questions:* What is your religious/spiritual tradition and what are you most proud of from that heritage? When and how did you first become aware of religious differences? Today, what is your greatest fear in interreligious dialogue? What do you hope to gain from interreligious dialogue? Lastly, evaluate the experience with the group: How was that exercise for you? What was most challenging? New insights?

*The questions will vary from the examples given here to match the curriculum.*

As described at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/teth.12141>

### Circle of Voices (V) (D) (L)

Ask 4 or 5 students to form a circle. The rest of the students are observing and taking notes. Provide up to 3 min. of silent time to organize thoughts. During this time, they think about what they want to say on the topic once the circle of voices begins. Then the discussion opens, with each student having up to 3 min. of uninterrupted time. During the 3 min. each person is speaking, no one else is allowed to say anything. It can help to just move sequentially around the circle (reducing stress of having to decide whether or not to try to jump in after another student has finished speaking). After everyone has shared, initially, open discussion begins with one rule: Participants are allowed to talk only about other people’s ideas.

As described in *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms* (2nd Edition) by Brookfield & Preskill, Chapter 4, Section 7 (Kindle Version).

### Concrete Images (V) (C) (OS) (OA)

It is obvious, of course, that discussions go better when specific references are made. Yet I think we often need help remembering the content of our text. A few min. at the beginning can guarantee that the sophisticated analysis we seek will be based on specific facts. Go around the table and ask each student to state one concrete image/scene/event/moment from the text that stands out. No analysis is necessary, just recollections and brief description. As each student reports, the collective images are listed on the board, thus providing a visual record of selected content from the text as a backdrop to the following discussion. Usually the recall of concrete scenes prompts further recollections, and a flood of images flows from the students. A follow-up question is to invite the class to study the items on the board, and ask: "what themes seem to emerge from these items?"; "what connects these images?"; "is there a pattern to our recollected events?"; "what is missing?" This is, obviously, an inductive approach to the text. Facts precede analysis. But also, everyone gets to say something early in class and every contribution gets written down to aid our collective memory and work.

As described in The Dreaded Discussion: Ten Ways to Start <http://www.indiana.edu/~tchsotl/part%201/part1%20materials/The_Dreaded_Discussion.pdf>

### Hatful of Quotes (V) (C) (L) (OA)

Prior to a discussion, the facilitator types out 5 or 6 sentences or passages from the text onto separate slips of paper (there should be duplicate copies). These are put into a hat and each student is asked to draw 1 of the slips out of the hat. Students are given a few min. to think about their quote and then asked to read it out and comment on it. The order of contribution is up to the students. Because the same quotes are used, students who go later can build on, affirm, or contradict what a peer has already said.

If facilitating online, have students use an online “random number generator” to pick a number between 1 and [the max number of quotes you’ve selected]. Assign each quote a number and each student’s random number equates to is the quote they will reflect upon.

As described in *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms* (2nd Edition) by Brookfield & Preskill, Chapter 4, Section 7 (Kindle Version)

### Complete a Sentence (D) (C) (L) (OS) (OA)

Ask students to complete whichever of the following sentences seems appropriate:

* What struck me about the text we read/lecture we heard/art we saw to prepare for the discussion today is …
* The idea that I take most issue in the text/lecture/exhibit is …
* The most crucial point of last week’s lecture is …
* The part of the text/lecture/exhibit that I felt made the most sense to me is …
* The part of the text/lecture/exhibit that was the most confusing is …

Have students share in groups of 4 or 5. Just have them jot notes about which responses they wish to hear more about. Once everyone has shared, students can ask questions regarding the statements that most intrigued them.

Adapted from *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms* (2nd Edition) by Brookfield & Preskill, Chapter 4, Section 4 (Kindle Version).

### Jeopardy (C) (OS)

Competition can motivate students to prepare for and participate in discussion. You can create a free board on Jeopardy Labs (<https://jeopardylabs.com>). Questions can be fact-based or application based. Students play as individuals or in teams. It is important to discuss why an answer is correct, as not all students may understand the reasoning for a response. Be sure to explain the game of Jeopardy, as it may not be familiar to all students in your class (including how to answer in the form of a question). Provide time limits for each question. Rotate which team gets to select the category/point value (or use buzzers to “ring in”). Allow other teams to “steal” the points if the first team gets the wrong answer.

*Variations:* Have students (for homework) make a Jeopardy board for their classmates to play. Require that students provide a citation for their responses. Give bonus points to people/teams that ask questions that lead to deeper understanding.

### Fishbowls (V) (D) (OS)

In a fishbowl discussion, students seated inside the “fishbowl” actively participate in a discussion by asking questions and sharing their opinions, while students sitting outside listen carefully to the ideas presented. Students take turns in these roles, so that they practice being both contributors and listeners in a group discussion. A fishbowl discussion makes for an excellent pre-writing activity, often unearthing questions or ideas that students can explore more deeply in an independent assignment.

1. Select a topic and write an open-ended prompt.
2. Set up the room with two circles. Typically, the inner circle (the fishbowl) is made up of 4-12 chairs, allowing for a range of perspectives while still giving each student an opportunity to speak.
3. Allow students to prepare for the discussion by writing ideas and questions in advance (5-10 min.).
4. Discuss norms and rules with the students. For instance, will you call “switch” after 10 min. or 15 min.? Are students allowed to speak a second time before everyone else has spoken once? Also provide instructions for the audience. What should they be listening for? Should they be taking notes?
5. Debrief the exercise by asking students what they learned from the discussion and how they think it went. Students can also evaluate their performances as listeners and as participants.

Adapted from <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/fishbowl>

### Chat Stations (V) (D) (C)

Break students into small groups (max 4 students). Throughout the room, hang questions/problems/quotes on the wall (equivalent number of questions to the number of groups). Provide each group with paper to record their reactions to the question. Have students rotate throughout the room, spending time in their small groups at each question. Set a time limit for each station; have groups rotate simultaneously. The instructor/TA should move throughout the room to listen in to conversations. When a particularly interesting idea comes up, flag it and ask students if they’d be willing (later) to share with the larger class.

Once every group has visited every question, regather as a whole class. Discuss each question (one at a time), inviting each group to share an insight or summary of their reactions.

As described at Cult of Pedagogy <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eFUL4yP0vqo>.

### Peer Provocations (V) (D) (C) (OS)

A different pair of students, each week, are asked to develop a provocation and the lead class discussion.

Before Class:

The pair should meet with the instructor/TA as they develop their concept for the provocation. A provocation is meant to generate deep thinking before class (the provocation is sent electronically to the class a few days in advance). A provocation would likely include excerpts from a text and questions. The provocation is meant to be brief and spark discussion.

During Class:

The leading pair is expected to guide discussion and help the class explore the week’s content. The pair has autonomy to decide whether the class discussion will be a whole-group conversation, whether students will be in groups, or whether another facilitation technique (such as a debate) will be used.

*Note:* The use of a provocation followed by discussion is best modeled by the instructor/TA prior to having students lead class sessions.

As described in Designing, Scaffolding, and Assessing Student Discussion Leadership at <https://instructionalmoves.gse.harvard.edu/designing-scaffolding-and-assessing-student-discussion-leadership?admin_panel=1>.

### Generating Truth Statements (L) (OS) (OA)

Divide students into pairs or small groups. The instructions to each group are to decide upon three statements known to be true about some particular issue. "It is true about slavery that..." "We have agreed that it is true about the welfare system that..." "It is true about international politics in the l950s that..." "We know it to be true about the theory of relativity that...", and so on.

This strategy can be useful in introducing a new topic where students may think they already know a great deal but the veracity of their assumptions demands examination. The complexity and ambiguity of knowledge is clearly revealed as students present their truth statements and other students raise questions about or refute them.

The purpose of the exercise is to develop some true statements, perhaps, but mostly to generate a list of questions and of issues demanding further study. This provides an agenda for the unit. Sending students to the library is the usual next step, and they are quite charged up for research after the process of trying to generate truth statements.

If facilitating online synchronously, use Channels to break students into small groups. If facilitating asynchronously, the Group Discussion Board could work well.

Adapted from The Dreaded Discussion: Ten Ways to Start <http://www.indiana.edu/~tchsotl/part%201/part1%20materials/The_Dreaded_Discussion.pdf>