

Leading Class Discussions & Using Think, Pair, Share

Some General Suggestions for Leading Discussions

- Set clear ground rules and expectations for class discussion.
- Ask students (individually or in groups) to introduce readings, generate questions, critically respond, etc.
- Use discussion questions that are clear, specific, focused, and refer to specific evidence or portions of the text you're discussing.
- Use small groups and the whole group strategically (see the think-pair-share advice on page 2 of this document).
- Model good discussion contributions and behavior yourself.
- Point out good behavior by students.
- Take "sense of the group" comments at the end.
- Pair discussions with brief reflective writing opportunities.

A few suggestions on creating clear ground rules and expectations for discussion:

- Come to the discussion of these guidelines with some of your own.
- Encourage students to reflect on productive experiences with class discussion and to describe how and why those discussions were productive.
- Some common guidelines that Megan frequently uses include:
 - Understand that classmates might be coming from a different place than you are.
 - Avoid "you" statements. Use "I" statements instead.
 - Do the reading before you talk/write about it.
 - Read generously first. Offer critical feedback second.
 - Assume positive intentions whenever possible.
 - If someone calls you out or calls you in (because they've been hurt or offended by something you said/wrote), listen, acknowledge the hurt, and offer a thoughtful resolution.
 - Claims and arguments require evidence; personal experiences and community knowledge both count as evidence, though these are not the only kinds of evidence.

How to use Think-Pair-Share (by Taylor Weeks)

- Decide upon the text to be read and develop the set of questions or prompts that target key content concepts.
- Describe the purpose of the strategy and provide guidelines for discussions.
- Model the procedure to ensure that students understand how to use the strategy.
- Monitor and support students as they work through the following:

(Think) You (as the teacher) begin by asking a specific question about the text. Students “think” about what they know or have learned about the topic.

(Pair) Each student should be paired with another student or a small group.

(Share) Students share their thoughts with their partner/group. Teachers expand the “share” into a whole-class discussion.