



Steps to Effective Participation in Group Discussions



Listening

Note key points
Take heed of any points or any questions that accrue that you would like to discuss or clarify.

Ask someone to watch you while you listen
This is great way to determine your body language when you are listening and what kind of message this conveys to others.

Put your phone down!
Give the speaker your full attention. Don't become distracted by technology as this will create a barrier between you and your listener.

Listen actively
This involves listening with all of your senses and demonstrating your attentiveness to your interlocutors. You will be able to take in a lot more this way.

Provide non-verbal feedback as you listen
Nod your head or maintain eye contact to indicate your full attention and to encourage the person speaking. This doesn't necessarily indicate agreement with what is being said, but provides a platform of mutual respect between speakers.



Speaking

Use openers
If you aren't sure how to get your words out, try openers such as 'I agree that..' or "That's a good point, but..."

Don't be afraid to clarify
If you feel that what you have said is confused or not understood, let the group know that you are happy to clarify.

Don't dominate the conversation
Provide opportunities for others to speak and be mindful if you are spending a disproportionate amount of time speaking.

Take your time
If you are nervous, then take your time when speaking. This will allow you time to get your thoughts in order and put them into spoken word. Be mindful of your volume too!

Aim to contribute
Make a decision to speak during a group discussion and stick to it. Even if your contribution is small, it is still a contribution. You can contribute more each time you discuss something to build your confidence gradually.