**Learning Through Discussion**

*Why are discussions important? Why are they a powerful way to learn?*

1. **They deepen understanding.**
   * When you are having a discussion, you are exploring and explaining ideas and concepts in your own words. When you explain ideas and information in your own words, you are processing and clarifying those ideas, making them your own and deepening your understanding.
2. **They help you develop independent, critical, and creative thinking**.
   * When you are part of a discussion and sharing your thoughts and ideas, you are thinking for yourself and not just repeating what somebody else has said. When you actively participate in the conversation, you are putting forth new ideas, explaining and supporting them, asking questions, deciding whether you agree or disagree and explaining why. This develops the independent thinking that is needed to think critically and creatively.
3. **They open up a world of new worldviews and perspectives.**
   * Participating in discussions with your peers, friends, family and others reveals a world of different opinions, perspectives and worldviews. Discussions provide you with the opportunity to become more socially aware and responsible, to hear not only the ways in which other people see, understand and experience the world as you do, but also the ways in which their perceptions and experiences are different. They help you build empathy, appreciate differences, build relationships, and understand problems—that there are multiple ways ~~than~~ to see them and solve them.
4. **They help you develop active listening skills.**
   * Being part of a discussion group helps you develop active listening skills. Actively listening means being focused on and understanding what is being said. Active listening is a relationship skill that helps you connect and work with others, to understand what other people believe, know, think and feel. When you pay attention and listen to others with care, you get a clearer understanding of their thoughts, feelings and needs.
5. **They help you build confidence and develop effective communication skills.**
   * Participating in both formal and informal conversations gives you the opportunity to take positive risks, explore concepts and try out new ideas and theories as well as express your opinions. When you take these risks and share your thinking, you often receive immediate feedback which helps you clarify, refine and even expand your ideas. This helps you develop both confidence and effective communication skills.
6. **They are a powerful way to learn**
   * When you actively engage in discussions, you retain and remember more information. You are able to not only confirm what you have already learned, but also clarify any misconceptions or misunderstandings you may have. You can also connect the present knowledge to past learnings to increase and deepen your understanding.

Prompts for Discussions

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| --- | --- |
| Make a Prediction:   * I predict that… * I bet that… * I think that… * Since this happened (fill in detail), then I bet the next thing that is going to happen is… * Reading this part makes me think that this (fill in detail) is about to happen because… * I wonder if… | Ask a Question:   * Why did… * What’s this part about… * How is this (fill in detail), like this (fill in detail * What would happen if… * Why… * Who is… * What does this section/quote (fill in detail) mean… * Do you think that… * I don’t get this part here… * I am confused about… |
| Clarify Something:   * Oh, I get it… * Now I understand… * This makes sense now… * No, I think it means… * I agree with you, this means… * At first I thought (fill in detail), but now I think… * This part is really saying… | Make a Comment:   * This is good because… * This is hard because… * This is confusing because… * I think that… * I like the part where (fill in detail), because… * I don’t like the part where (fill in detail), because… * My favourite part so far is (fill in detail), because |
| Make a Connection   * This reminds me of … * This part is like… * The character (fill in name) is like (fill in name) because… * This is similar to… * The differences are… * I also (describe something in the text that has also happened to you)… * I never (describe something in the text that has never happened to you)… * This character makes me think of (fill in detail), because… * This setting reminds me of… * This situation reminds me of… * I heard about (fill in detail), somewhere else before… | Some Responses to Another Member’s Comments   * Maybe we could try… * If I understand you correctly, your idea/suggestion is that…. * What I was trying to say was …. * The key ideas/main points so far are… * Can you tell us more about... |

Small Group Discussion Criteria

**Considerations for online live discussions:**

* Mute your mic until you are ready to speak.
* Allow the speaker to complete their thought before responding or asking a question.
* Consider holding your questions in the chat feature.

**Preparation:**

* Come prepared for the discussion;
* Do your readings;
* Bring your ideas/comments/responses/questions written on post-it notes.

**Participation:**

* Participate fully and respectfully;
* Say what’s on your mind;
* Don’t be afraid to share;
* Make eye contact with the other members of your group (in face to face discussions);
* Stay focused and on task;
* Respond to other people’s ideas, respectfully;
* Listen to one another;
* Don’t interrupt;
* Ensure speaking time is distributed equally; try not to take more than your share of time;
* Encourage quieter members to speak—everyone should participate.

**Comprehension and Response:**

* Challenge yourself to offer your ideas;
* Provide specific details to support your ideas and to elaborate on another’s ideas;
* Make connections to personal experiences, to other’s ideas and to past and current events;
* Ask insightful questions (e.g. suggest inferences, extend others’ ideas, relate events to important themes).

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING: SELF-AWARENESS

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION ON SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION

**Preparation**

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| --- | --- |
| What have you been doing well? | What do you need to work on? |

**Participation**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What have you been doing well? | What do you need to work on? |

**Comprehension and Response**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What have you been doing well? | What do you need to work on? |