

We Need to Talk:

Tips for Participating in Class Discussions

Before class



Prepare to contribute:

- Do the readings!
- Write down any questions you have as well as what you find interesting.
- Make notes about the author's point.
- Consider making notes about how the reading applies to this course, other courses and your experiences.
- It's hard to read an article on your phone—try printing it out or saving it to your laptop so you can easily refer to it during class.

During class



Be aware of the different ways you can participate:

- Have your readings and the notes you made before class in front of you for easy reference.
- Ask questions—check out the conversation starters side bar for ideas.
- Disagree with others in a respectful way.
- Relax. Try not to worry about what others think. Lots of people are nervous about participating. It's a great chance to learn and grow.
- Speaking up in class isn't the only way to show that you can be part of the conversation; making eye contact, nodding in agreement, and actively listening keep you connected.

After class



Reflect on your experience:

- Be proud of yourself for speaking up, and think about how you might change things up next time.
- Meet with your professor or TA if you're having difficulties or want feedback.
- Look for outside resources to get tips on public speaking.

Conversation Starters

- "I really liked _____ about the reading."
- "The part that resonated most with me was _____."
- "It's interesting that you interpreted that point as _____. I actually interpreted it as _____. What do others think?"
- "This idea made me think of _____."
- "I agree with that point because _____."
- "I also thought _____ (regarding a classmate's idea) because _____."
- "I am not very clear on _____. Did anyone else understand it better than I did?"
- "I felt the general idea of the article was _____. To me, that makes me think about _____."
- "I don't necessarily feel like the results support the author's conclusion because _____."