

Responding Respectfully during Discussion

Wait time Students need time to think, and 7–10 seconds of wait time after a question is asked communicates that deeper thinking beyond the first rhetorical response is being called for. This also allows those who need more time to process a question or to articulate an authentic and thoughtful response to participate. This is especially important after a critical thinking question is asked.

“What do you think,” and Why do you think?” Instead of “Why” questions The lessons use open-ended questions such as “What do you think?” and “Why do you think?” or “What do you feel?” questions and not “Why” questions. “Why” questions put students on the spot and assume a right answer. The former questions encourage divergent and critical thinking.

Responding in ways that show respect and encourage divergent thinking The facilitator responds in ways that are neutral yet affirmative rather than evaluative and judgmental in both the words used and the tone. Responses such as “Okay,” “All right,” and “Thank you,” rather than “Awesome,” “Perfect,” and “Exactly” show equitable acknowledgement without evaluating the response. Paraphrasing what the students say is another way to show that the facilitator is listening and acknowledging the responses.

Multiple responses to questions Facilitators accept at least three answers to every question and more whenever possible. This shows that the facilitator is not looking for one specific answer and encourages divergent thinking among students. If students have trouble coming up with three, the facilitator may offer some of their own.