

### **Participating in Class Discussions**

Discussions allow you to encounter new ideas, to hear other people's thoughts, and to communicate your own ideas. Participating in class discussions is a valuable part of the learning process and will enhance your learning as well as your fellow students' learning.

1. *Contribute to overall discussion*
  - a. Speak up when you can ask a useful question, comment on what has been said, supply additional information, or provide potential correction to a prior statement.
  - b. Speak to the group, not to specific individuals, and make sure your comments relate to the current discussion.
  - c. Do not interrupt your instructor or fellow classmates.
  - d. Do not monopolize the conversation.
2. *Speak early and be brief*
  - a. The longer you wait to contribute in a class discussion, the more difficult it becomes and the more likely it is that someone else will say what you had intended to say.
  - b. Saying too little is better than saying too much. Your instructor will ask you to explain further if he or she thinks it is necessary.
3. *Organize your remarks*
  - a. Write down comments or ideas as you think of them so that you can refer to them when you speak.
  - b. Before you speak, connect what you plan to say with what has already been said in the conversation.

### **Asking and Answering Questions**

Asking questions is essential to gain a thorough understanding of a topic, and answering questions gives you an opportunity to evaluate how well you have learned or understood course content. Do not be afraid of asking an obvious question or answering a question incorrectly.

1. *Ask questions clearly and concisely*
  - a. Most instructors welcome questions.
  - b. If you tend to get nervous, write your questions down before you ask them.
  - c. Do not apologize for having a question. Questions are a good and normal part of the learning process.
2. *Think before answering questions*
  - a. Think through what you want to say before you raise your hand; this practice will decrease the likelihood of rambling and increase the level of critical thinking you present.
  - b. Answering questions with well-thought-out answers will identify you to the instructor as a serious, committed student.

### **Working on Group Projects**

1. *Take a leadership role*
  - a. Every group needs a leader. Unless some other competent group member steps forward, be willing to take a leadership role.

- b. Direct the group in analyzing the assignment, organizing a plan of action, distributing responsibilities, and establishing deadlines.
  - c. Be aware of individual strengths and weaknesses, and try to divide tasks accordingly.
2. *Be an active, responsible participant*
  - a. Accept your share of the work, and complete it on time.
  - b. Encourage your fellow group members.
3. *Take action if your group is not functioning effectively*
  - a. Communicate directly with group members. Identify what the issue is, and brainstorm with group members about how to fix the problem.
  - b. Talk with your professor if there are issues with a group member not doing his or her share of the work.