

Leading a Discussion

Help the Group to Feel at Ease

- Arrange the group comfortably in a circle, semicircle, U or hollow square, so they can see each other.
- See that everyone knows everybody else.
- Encourage informality and good humor
- Permit friendly disagreement, but on the point under discussion, not between personalities.
- Keep spirits high. Let everyone have a good time. Don't let the discussion drag on or get boring.

Give Everyone a Chance to Talk

- Draw out less talkative members by questions or asking them for suggestions. If possible, call them by name.
- Be careful of the person that tries to monopolize the discussion. Interrupt the "speechmaker" tactfully and lead the discussion to another person. If necessary, remind them of the limited time, or suggest they cut it short until others have had a turn.
- Call on individuals when you see they are ready to talk, rather than going around in a circle.
- Lead rather than dominate the discussion by easing yourself into the background when groups get into the swing of it.

Keep the Discussion on Track

- If the discussion gets sidetracked, bring it back to the main subject by suggesting there are some more important points which need to be covered in the limited time.
- Stretch a point to give individuals credit for ideas developed in the discussion.

Summarize Periodically

- Stop occasionally to review the points that have been made.
- If you feel that some important point is being neglected, mention it.
- Close with a quick summary covering the group's conclusions so that everyone will realize the important facts brought out in the discussion.
- If appropriate, point out questions left to be thrashed out later.