

Advice from the Authors to the Students

We hope that you will enjoy the topics and activities in this book! Here are some tips and suggestions for using this book to improve your speaking skills in English.

Some people are naturally good at speaking about certain topics. The natural tendency of these extroverted people is to start a topic for discussion. These people have good skills in maintaining the discussion, too. Other people are more quiet and reserved. They may have many ideas to add to the topic, but their natural tendency is to listen. These introverted people are participating in the discussion, too, but in a different way. Regardless of your personality type, you CAN be an active participant in discussions in English. You CAN become a better speaker in English.

In order to improve your discussion skills in English, here are some tips that we strongly recommend.

1. Learn everything you can about the topic because people who are good discussion participants have solid background knowledge of the topic;
2. Learn the vocabulary associated with that topic because you cannot discuss a topic well if you do not know the basic vocabulary for that topic;
3. Learn to use key phrases that allow you to initiate topics (see examples on page xx);
4. Learn to use key phrases that allow you to maintain discussions (see examples on page xx);
5. Learn to use key phrases that make others talk because a discussion NEVER involves just you—without other people you have NO discussion (see examples on page xx);
6. Learn to be a good listener by showing respect for others in your group, which means that you should let everyone have the floor and you should not interrupt others;
7. Learn to be tolerant of others' ideas because it is this VARIETY of ideas that makes a discussion interesting;
8. Do all of the homework assignments in this book because research in foreign language studies shows that homework activities that require you to

write out your ideas will greatly improve the quality and quantity of the language that you produce in class discussions the next day.

Here are some examples of key phrases to use to improve discussion skills.

To initiate a discussion

- What do you think about _____?
- Do you think _____ is a good thing?
- This topic makes me mad. (explain why)
- I can't believe there are people who think . . . (Explain your position.)

To state your opinion

- I think _____ is a good thing.
- I don't think _____ is a good thing.

To maintain a discussion

- Are there any other ideas on _____ ?
- Who else agrees with (name)?
- Does anyone else have anything to add to what (name) just said?
- Can anyone else think of another reason to support this idea?
- You know, that's an interesting point that you've just made. (Offer your own opinion now.)

To bring someone else's ideas into the discussion

- (name), what do you think about _____ ?
- Does anyone else have anything to add?

To assess agreement

- OK, so how many people are in favor of _____ ?
- How many people agree with what (name) just said?
- OK, is this what the rest of you think, too?

To indicate agreement

- I agree with (name).
- I agree with what (name) just said.
- I think that's right. (Explain your own position now.)

To indicate disagreement in a polite way

- I understand what you (or name) are saying, but I think . . .
- I understand what you (or name) are saying, but I wonder if you have considered (another reason or another idea).
- Hmm. . . . That's interesting, but I wonder if you have considered . . .

To contrast two views on an issue

- Most of us agree that the best decision is to _____ . What are some of the reasons that other people might have for disagreeing with this?
- OK, we've heard one side of the issue. What is the other side?

To summarize a discussion

- OK, we're almost out of time. Where do we stand on this topic?
- OK, so what is the consensus of our group?
- Do we have a consensus?
- It looks like we'll have to agree to disagree on this topic because our opinions are too far apart.