

# International Forum

## Recommended Meeting Guidelines<sup>1</sup>

(4th. revision)

### **For The Chairman / Facilitator of Group Discussion**

An effective group discussion depends on a leader or facilitator who can guide the assembly through an open process by encouraging *civil* argument and make sure that *every member* participates.

A truly good meeting happens when attention is paid to the following items:

1. Choose an interesting topic, research it thoroughly, gather support material.
2. Prepare and submit the topic, agenda, supporting materials and issues for discussion in English, well before the meeting, by email or other means: to Nishimura san, hikarimth@yahoo.co.jp, not later than the 'Tuesday' before the meeting, distribute the same documents at the meeting.  
Substitute topics are permissible, if circumstances require it.
3. Meeting location: as advertised in the newsletter.
4. Running the meeting (Chairing / Facilitating).
  - a. It is essential to start and end on time. (16:30 to 18:30).
  - b. Provide for self introductions, explain the topic's general concept, ask everyone to read portions of the supporting material, explain the main aspects to clarify salient points.
  - c. Start the discussion by defining subjects and important terms; introduce issues for discussion.
  - d. Ask a starter question to kickstart the discussion, or bring a controversial statement to grab immediate attention.
  - e. Be non-directive encourage opposite view points from the members. Control your own biases, don't impose your views on the group or embarrass them when not siding with you.
  - f. Encourage all members to participate and speak freely. Discourage that the discussion is not dominated by only a few people.
  - g. Summarize or clarify important points or arguments, to ensure everyone understands a point that was just made, or the sides of an argument.
  - h. Avoid raising new points outside the topic or avoid dwelling only on one aspect; keep it brief and concise. Don't let one point of view override others, unless it's based on facts and logic.
  - i. Watch the time, adhere to the agenda and keep the discussion on track.
  - j. Wrap the session up in time to provide a short summary.

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5. Submit the summary preferably in English, by email or other means: to Nishimura san, hikarimth@yahoo.co.jp, not later than the 'Tuesday' before the next meeting. 'Notify Nishimura san if delayed'.

### **Follow up**

Have informal time before and after the meeting for people to talk and socialize. Remember, sometimes "*the meeting after the meeting*" is where people get attached to the group--and also get their best ideas to bring to the next meeting. Canvas future topics!

### **Help to establish the basic principles**

The basic principles of a group discussion are recommended best practices that help to keep the discussion on track, and prevent it from deteriorating.

1. Everyone should treat everyone else with respect, don't enter into inappropriate language or arguments.
2. Don't direct your arguments to the person – only at ideas and opinions. Disagreement should be respectful – no ridicule.
3. Respect each other's opinions. Don't interrupt. Listen to the whole ideas of others – actually listen, rather than just running over your own response in your head.
4. Respect the group's time. Try to keep your comments reasonably short and to the point, so that others have a chance to respond.
5. Consider all comments seriously, and try to evaluate them fairly. The ideas and comments of others may change your mind, or vice versa; it's important to be open to that.
6. Don't be defensive if someone disagrees with you. Evaluate both positions, and only continue to argue for yours if you can substantiate your point of view.
7. Avoid inappropriate non-verbal communication, e.g. volume of voice, intonation, facial expression, eye contact, postures and gestures.
8. Everyone is responsible to follow and uphold the basic principles.

### **Footnote:**

*It is understood that many attendants are already fully aware of the above points of procedure and conduct, but those people should encourage new- or casual attendants to be acquainted with the content.*



## Comparing Dialogue, Discussion and Debate

### What is the difference between Dialogue, Discussion and Debate\*

Dialogue, debate and discussion are three words that are often confused when it comes to understanding their meanings and usage.

Strictly speaking, there is some difference between the words.

*The word debate* is generally used in the sense of deliberation with an element of argument.

*The word discussion* is used in the sense of detailed conversation with can be free of arguments.

*The word dialogue* is used for a collaborative discussion without argument.

### What is a Deliberative Dialogue

*'connect to solve the issue'*

Deliberation Dialogue (DD) is used when a group of people work on a problem as if to solve it. It is basically a conversation to examine the perspectives of others by evaluating the pros and cons with the aim to achieve a consensus decision.

DD is reserved for complex, difficult matters where it appears there are no easy answers. Moreover, issues may undergo constant development if going beyond any individual's understanding.

DD leads to mutual understanding of differences and ways to act even with those differences. It's about asking questions and listening with an open mind that lead to understanding, the goal is not to win, but to find, amongst other things, a collective point of view.

In DD the goal is to find common ground that may remain open-ended.

*"We deliberate not about ends, but about the means to attain ends."*

- Aristotle -

*What to do:*

- *Observe, explore identities and differences, listen what you hear.*
- *Describe your perception in you own words.*
- *Act with awareness, rather than acting on automatic pilot.*
- *Suspend judgment.*
- *Inquire and explore assumptions.*



## **What is a Group Discussion**

*‘challenging different views’*

Group discussion meetings normally center on particular real life topics with the goal to establish clarity and comprehension as well as answering posted questions conclusively.

A discussion should therefore be a ‘competent deliberation’ that is rooted in knowledge, uses multiple perspectives, establish clarity, comprehension and generates ideas to solve a problem.

Discussion in larger assemblies may be broken down into smaller groups or pairs to enhance interaction between participants; their responses are shared with the full group during final evaluation.

In a group discussion everyone is given a voice to exchange views and generate ideas.

Group discussion are conducted with marginal provocation (arguments), but if conflict arises it can have dysfunctional consequences.

A discussion is not held as a competition to judge a person’s speaking or communicative ability.

Discussions may be open or close-ended.

*What to do:*

- *Assume an equal playing field.*
- *Establish clarity and understanding.*
- *Separate personal experiences from actual content.*
- *Center around content avoid related elements or ideas.*
- *Offer as many perspectives as possible.*



## **What is a Debate**

*'might is right'*

A debate is a verbal competition or contest between opponents engaging in arguments over a predetermined topic or proposition.

People debating will try to find flaws in the opponent's argument to beat the opponent and win the argument.

In formal debates or debating contests speakers alternate between the teams and have allotted time slots to speak and submit evidence base arguments to counter the opposite team's stance.

Teams are rated by one or more adjudicators who evaluate the performance of the teams by judging on intellectual might and convincing arguments.

Educational debates are used to provide and enhance skill in one's communication abilities, while others like parliamentary debates are merely theatre to appease the public, rather than the process of implementing legislation.

Debates are designed to win an argument rather than listening to understand something new, or from a different perspective. Instructions from the adjudicators must be obeyed. Debate implies conclusion.

### ***Some examples are:***

Parliamentary Debates, Debating Tournaments or Championship, Online Debates, Media Debates.

### ***What to do:***

- *Prepare your arguments, assume that there is a right answer.*
- *Listen to the other side, record and find flaws in their arguments.*
- *Connect your arguments.*
- *Present forceful opinions, abstain from personal experiences.*
- *Defend assumptions as truth.*
- *Prove the other side wrong, present a closed-minded attitude and a determination to be right.*
- *Defend your own-, or team's position and exclude other solutions.*
- *Consider that winning is the goal.*



## Preparation of Support Documents (Topic Essay - Agenda - Summary)

### Topic Essay & Agenda

The topic article can be an interesting write-up, excerpt or extract from the media or other sources.

Write the agenda with details of the topic & issues to be raised and discussed.

*What to do:*

- *Provide an article or write an essay and write an agenda.*
- *Provide references sources from the article or essay.*
- *Divide large paragraphs into smaller sections so everyone reads a part.*
- *Formulate questions based on issues to be raised.*



### Writing Your Own Essay

Research, outline and write a few pages of an interesting topic (thesis or argument with statement) with a *hook* that grabs the reader; suitable for discussion in the forum.

#### 1. **Heading**

Title: Title of essay (e.g. *Child Poverty in Japan*)

By: Name of writer

Date: Date

#### 2. **Introduction**

A quarter page introduction with the main idea, to provide an overview and background information. (1 to 3 paragraphs)

#### 3. **Body**

Develop the main ideas, with supporting evidence.

Analyze and interpret the evidence, state impact and implications.

(3 or more paragraphs, split up for easier reading)

#### 1. **Conclusion**

Restate and summarize the body's paragraphs. **Use this to formulate discussion questions.** (1 to 2 paragraphs)

#### 2. **Referencing**

All essays must contain references to source content, information and ideas of others.

Use book- or article titles and sources or website references, etc.

#### 3. **Discussion Questions**

Formulate questions arising from the main idea in the essay.

## Writing Your Summary

Write a few lines summarizing the main points.

### 1. **Heading**

Title: Title of summary (e.g. *Summary for Child Poverty in Japan*)

By: Name of writer

Date: Date

### 2. **Body**

Summarize the main ideas and results of the discussion / debate.  
(1 to 2 paragraphs)

### 3. **Footnote** (optional)

Invite people to comment on the meeting or your performance.  
(*You would be required to supply your contact details*)



### **References:**

<http://www.monashdebaters.com/downloads/Schools%20Training%20Guide.pdf>

<http://monashdebaters.com/training-resources/training-handbooks/>

[https://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/mdr\\_edition8.pdf](https://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/mdr_edition8.pdf)

<http://www.monashdebaters.com/downloads/MAD%20Training%20Handbook%202010.pdf>

<https://willworkforjustice.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/facilitation-formats.pdf>

<https://www.toastmasters.org/~media/e51a693193f749ae91fd79f6db839534.ashx>

<https://my.rotary.org/en/document/manual-procedure-035>

<http://www.lionsclubs.org/resources/EN/pdfs/1a2.pdf>

<http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/em4903e/em4903e.pdf>

<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/group-facilitation/group-discussions/main>

<https://teaching.unsw.edu.au/group-work-structuring-group-discussion>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26380202>

<http://amca.com/amca/wp-content/uploads/Dialogue-The-Power-of-Understanding.pdf>

\*Extract from Ratnesh Nagda, Patricia Gurin, Jaclyn Rodriguez & Kelly Maxwell (2008), based on “Differentiating Dialogue from Discussion” a handout developed by Diana Kardia and Todd Sevig (1997) for the Program on Intergroup Relations, Conflict and Community (IGRC), University of Michigan; “Comparing Dialogue and Debate,” a paper prepared by Shelley Berman, based on discussions of the Dialogue Group of the Boston.

<http://www.differencebetween.com>

### **1 Revisions**

Version	Date	Description
<i>1<sup>st</sup> revision</i>	<i>2017/10/01</i>	<i>‘Preparation of Support Documents’, ‘Dialogue, Discussion, Debate’, ‘Comparing Dialogue, Discussion and Debate’</i>
<i>2<sup>nd</sup> revision</i>	<i>2017/10/07</i>	<i>Chair Items, Ground Rules, Title</i>
<i>3<sup>rd</sup> revision</i>	<i>2017/11/11</i>	<i>Chair Item-5, Ground Rules → Basic Principles</i>
<i>4<sup>th</sup> revision</i>	<i>2017/01/09</i>	<i>Chair Item-5, Basic principles, rewording</i>