

# Effective Discussions

One of the major core skills in English is *communicating effectively*. We practice this skill in reading, in writing, in analysis, and in **speaking**. One of our big goals in this unit is to learn to participate effectively in discussions, a skillset you will need to use throughout your high school and post-secondary careers.

This is a checklist you can use to help you improve your speaking skills. It's a good idea to have it with you as you engage in discussion, so that you can **deliberately** practice these skills and get better as you go.

We will be practicing these in small groups before we take it to the larger classroom.

## Be Prepared

always come to a discussion with something to say. prepare organized notes (point-form is good! include evidence!) so that you can ask questions or respond to them quickly.

## Be an Active Listener

listen carefully as people speak, and try to ask them specific questions based on what they have been saying. treat their words as the "topic of discussion" when you answer. above all, don't interrupt!

## Build on Ideas

don't just wait your turn to say *your* thing. as you are listening to other people, add on to their ideas and keep their topic going.

## Use Open-Ended Questions

ask questions that can be answered with more than just "yes" or "no". good question starters include "what do you think about...?" / "which one do you prefer? why?" / "what do you think about this *other* thing?"

## Speak Clearly

make sure that you speak loudly and clearly. everyone in your group should be able to hear and understand you. if someone needs clarification, provide it - maybe they didn't hear what you were saying!