



# Challenges and Ideas

The challenges and ideas below will help staff and students gain facilitation and participation skills for group discussions. To use as an activity, cut the challenges and ideas into cards and mix them up. Give each person one card and ask them to find the matching challenge or idea.

<p><b>Challenge</b> Participants do not contribute or are hesitant to contribute to the conversation.</p>	<p><b>Idea</b> Don't put people on the spot or "force" participation. Suggest or provide opportunities for talking in pairs, threes or small groups for periods of time.</p>
<p><b>Challenge</b> One person dominates the conversation.</p>	<p><b>Idea</b> Ask the rest of the group for ideas or comments. Acknowledge the person's contributions and invite others to respond.</p>
<p><b>Challenge</b> A participant makes vague statements.</p>	<p><b>Idea</b> Ask for clarification, examples or illustrations of points. Encourage rephrasing and summarizing, asking "Is this an example of what you mean?" or similar questions.</p>
<p><b>Challenge</b> Participants become tense or argumentative.</p>	<p><b>Idea</b> Reframe the point the person is making to be sure they feel heard. If needed, acknowledge strong feelings, and revisit the group agreements about how to discuss through disagreement.</p>
<p><b>Challenge</b> Everyone seems to have said all they have to say.</p>	<p><b>Idea</b> Ask for group consensus. If none, summarize what has been said and encourage the group to narrow their choices.</p>
<p><b>Challenge</b> The discussion goes off topic.</p>	<p><b>Idea</b> Ask for summaries of what's been said so far, and ask what more needs to be discussed.</p>
<p><b>Challenge</b> Participants begin to goof around.</p>	<p><b>Idea</b> Call for a stretch break; move on.</p>
<p><b>Challenge</b> Some people are not participating.</p>	<p><b>Idea</b> Break into small groups, pairs or other divisions and assign clear discussion questions.</p>

