HABITS OF A GOOD DISCUSSION LEADER

1. BUILD STUDENT CONFIDENCE BY NORMALIZING DIFFICULTY

- "This topic can be challenging, so feel free to tell me to slow down, repeat, or give more examples."
- "It's easy to miss the connections here. Should I go over it again?"
- "Let's consider what we already know and see how we can build on that."

2. GET STUDENTS TO TALK TO EACH OTHER

- Put students into groups of 2-5. Smaller groups usually enhance participation from all group members.
- Have students work together to analyze, predict outcomes, articulate hypotheses or arguments in their own words, or relate concepts to their own lives or previous coursework.

3. USE WAIT TIME

- Wait at least 3-5 seconds before expecting student responses.
- Study students' faces confusion or comprehension.
- Tell students about wait time so they know their purpose.
- Tell students to think through the question and jot down notes before answering.

4. WORK THE ROOM

- Notice who has and has not contributed to the conversation so far and encourage participation from new people.
- Chat with students before and after class.
- Walk around.
- Plan activities that correspond to the space and technology students have access to.

5. ASK FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS THAT PROMOTE CRITICAL THINKING

- "What evidence do you have to support that response?"
- "What brought you to this perspective?"
- "Tell us how you got that answer."
- "Can you imagine how someone from a different background might react to your statement?"

6. NOTICE SIGNALS OF DISTRESS FOR SENSITIVE TOPICS.

- "Emotions are a bit high; let's take a break."
- Ask students to write or draw their feelings, assumptions, and positions.
- Remind the class of ground rules and respectful language.
- Allow students to leave if overly distressed.

7. REDIRECT STUDENT QUESTIONS TO THE CLASS

- "That's a good question, would anyone like to try answering that?"
- "Who has an example that illustrates their explanation?"
- "That is one perspective, can someone else offer another perspective?"