

# ENGLISH DISCUSSION SKILLS



Source: [www.icrid.org](http://www.icrid.org)

**In this unit, you will learn to:**

- a. identify the skills you need in an English discussion,
- b. use the appropriate expressions for different skills in an English discussion, and
- c. develop your ability to talk in a formal-academic situation in the form of an English discussion.

This section is designed to help you to improve your ability to engage in meaningful discussions in English. It is also meant to encourage you to develop the self-confidence to be able to present your opinions to a group of people. There are also several expressions commonly used in a discussion that you can study and practice to improve your language ability.

Sometimes in a forum you need to discuss several things. Why do we have a discussion?

- To understand a subject or topic area more deeply.
- To explore ideas and exchange information.
- To expand and clarify your knowledge.
- To improve your ability to think critically.
- To improve your language skills.
- To increase your confidence in speaking.
- A discussion can change your attitudes and ideas.
- A discussion can help a group make a particular decision or come to a conclusion.
- A discussion gives you the chance to hear the thoughts and ideas of other students.

Source : [//student.unsw.edu.au/discussion-skills](http://student.unsw.edu.au/discussion-skills)

## Part 1. Asking and Saying Opinions

The first two skills to acquire to be able to have a discussion is your ability to present ideas and ask for an opinion. Here are the expressions that you can use:

NO	FUNCTIONS	EXPRESSIONS
1.	Presenting ideas	I think.. In my opinion...

		I believe that... In my (humble) opinion... I firmly/strongly/absolutely believe that...
2.	Asking for an opinion	What do you think of... What's your opinion of... What's your position on... I'd like to hear your view on...

**Task 1**

*Listen to your instructor then practice saying the expressions above.*

**Task 2**

*Use function number one, say what you think of the statements below:*

1. Smoking is a basic human right, smokers should be given freedom to smoke cigarettes everywhere.
2. Girls should grow their hair long so that they do not resemble boys.
3. Men are more superior than women.
4. It is impossible to have free education for all citizen.
5. Indonesian families should be limited to have only two children each.

**Task 3**

*Work in pairs, take turn to ask for and express opinion of the following statements/topics:*

1. Your campus parking area.
2. The book collection in the main library.
3. The new curriculum.
4. The importance of English.

**Part 2. Stating Agreement/Disagreement, Persuading, Interrupting**

The next skills are related to your ability to state that you agree or disagree. Here are some expressions that you can use to state your arguments:

NO	FUNCTIONS	EXPRESSIONS
3.	Agreeing	- <i>Strong agreement:</i> 1. I completely agree with you. 2. I'm of exactly the same opinion. 3. I'm in total agreement. 4. I couldn't agree more. - <i>Neutral agreement:</i>

## Discussion Skills

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		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I agree.</li> <li>2. I think you're right.</li> <li>3. I think I can accept that. (informal)</li> </ol> <p>- <i>Partial agreement:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I agree in principle, but...</li> </ol> <p>Basically, I agree with you, but...</p>
4.	<b>Disagreeing</b>	<p>- <i>Strong disagreement:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I totally disagree with you.</li> <li>2. I strongly oppose that.</li> <li>3. I disagree entirely.</li> </ol> <p>- <i>Neutral disagreement:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I can't say that I share your view.</li> <li>2. I'm not totally convinced by your argument.</li> </ol> <p>- <i>Tactful disagreement:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I get your point Mr. Rukmana, but have you considered ....</li> <li>2. You have a point there, but...</li> <li>3. To a certain extent I agree with you, but...</li> </ol> <p>- <i>Softening Strong Disagreement:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Frankly, I disagree with you entirely.</li> <li>2. With all my respect, I completely disagree with you.</li> </ol>
5.	<b>Getting people to agree / persuading</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You should try to see it from different point of view.</li> <li>• It should be better for you to consider the idea/fact that...</li> </ul>
6.	<b>Interrupting politely</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May I interrupt you for a moment?</li> <li>• Sorry to interrupt, but...</li> <li>• I don't want to interrupt but...</li> </ul>
7.	<b>Asking someone not to interrupt</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• And if I could say a few words without being interrupted...</li> <li>• With respect, let me continue my points that...</li> </ul>

### Task 4

***Listen to your instructor pronouncing the expressions then repeat after her/him!***

### Task 5

***Work in pairs, choose one of the topics below then discuss it with your partner. Decide, first, who agrees and who disagrees with the statement.***

1. Young people shouldn't live together before marriage.
2. Mobile phone should be allowed in class.
3. Celebrities should be responsible for the product they advertise.
4. Football players and artists are paid too much.

Adapted from timesaver speaking activities

**Task 6**

**Work in small groups of 3-4 persons to discuss one of the following topics. Decide first which group agrees and which one disagrees with the statement. The disagree group may take the first turn to talk.**

1. TV has more bad effects than good effects toward children.
2. Plagiarism is difficult to omit.
3. Direct presidential election is a waste of country's finance.

**Part 3. Asking/Dealing with Questions, Clarifying, Checking Comprehension, Suggesting/Responding to Solutions**

Here is the rest of the expressions you can use in a discussion. Practice the expressions below.

NO	FUNCTIONS	EXPRESSIONS
8.	Asking questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Would you mind telling me...</li><li>• May I ask about....</li><li>• Would you mind if I asked...</li></ul>
9.	Answering questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thank you for the question sir,...</li><li>• Let me answer that question.</li><li>• Hmm, that was an interesting question. Let me try to answer it.</li></ul>
10.	Responding to answers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yes, I see.</li><li>• Thanks / thank you, that's clear now.</li><li>• Ok, thanks. (informal)</li></ul>
11.	Clarifying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Correct me if I am wrong, but..</li><li>• When you say..., do you mean that...</li><li>• Are you saying that....</li></ul>
12.	Checking listener's comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Did you get my point?</li><li>• Do I make myself clear?</li><li>• Are you with me?</li></ul>
13.	Identifying problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The thing is..</li><li>• The problem is..</li><li>• It's obvious that..</li><li>• It seems that...</li></ul>
14.	Suggesting solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I think / believe we need to / should...</li><li>• I strongly recommend that...</li><li>• In view, the only viable solution is...</li><li>• I propose that...</li><li>• What about...(informal)</li></ul>
15.	Responding to solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This proposal has my full support.</li><li>• I totally agree.</li><li>• I see no objection to that.</li><li>• I'm afraid I can't support the proposal.</li></ul>

## Discussion Skills

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|  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Frankly, I think that's out of the question.</li></ul> |
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### Task 7

**Work in groups of 3-4 people, lets play the game "Desert Island". Read the situation, have a discussion, then report the result to the class. You have 10 minutes to do the activity.**

**Situation:** You are stranded on a desert island in the pacific. All you have is the swimsuit and the sandals you are wearing. There is food and water in the island and nothing else. Here is the list of thing you may find useful. Choose the eight most useful items and rank them in order of usefulness.

- A box of matches
- Magnifying glass
- An axe
- A bottle of whiskey
- An atlas
- Some metal knitting needles
- A transistor radio with batteries
- A nylon tent
- A camera with five rolls of films
- Ointment for cuts and burns
- A saucepan
- A knife and fork
- 20 meters of nylon rope
- A blanket
- A watch
- A towel
- A pencil and paper

### Task 8

**Divide the class into 2 or 3 groups. Each group will play as the board of directors with the employees being considered are the opponent group's members. Take 8 minutes to discuss the decision in the group then openly announce it. The person being laid off may argue and state his/her disagreement with the group mates back him/her up.**

#### ROLE PLAY SITUATION:

The company is losing money. As the board of directors and managers you are thinking of laying-off some of the staffs. Some of them being considered are:

1. ....(your opponent group member's name)...(lazy and incapable of doing his/her jobs, the director's little brother/sister)
2. ....(your opponent group member's name)...(unpunctual, bad drinking habit, great negotiator)
3. ....(your opponent group member's name)... (not sociable, solitaire, computer expert)
4. ....(your opponent group member's name)...(careless, playful, company strategy expert)
5. ....(your opponent group member's name)...(unhealthy, retiring soon, has 6 children, wife's deceased, director's brother in law)

6. ....(your opponent group member's name)...(complainer, money oriented, very experienced bookkeeper)
7. ....(your opponent group member's name)...(stubborn, temperamental, the leader of the company labor union)
8. ....(your opponent group member's name)...(drug user, most highly paid, very skillful accounting manager)

Decide only 3 persons to be laid off, state your reasons.