



Guidelines for Effective Dialogue

Everyone wants to be heard, but a conversation cannot be had if everyone is talking over one another. Use the tips below to help navigate difficult conversations:

DIALOGUE <i>the mutual understanding of each other's points of view</i>	DEBATE <i>the argument of my position over that of another</i>
I listen to learn . I take seriously someone else's point of view.	I listen to counter . I am closed to someone else's ideas.
I listen for strengths , so that I may affirm and learn someone's point of view.	I listen for weakness , so that I may discount and devalue someone's point of view.
I speak for myself . I use my own experiences and point of view. I try to examine my own assumptions.	I speak for others . I assert my assumptions about others' experiences and motives in an effort to vindicate my point of view.
I ask questions to clarify and increase my understanding of someone else's point of view. (I try to suspend judgment and give my conversation partner a fair hearing.)	I ask questions to control the conversation, or to confuse my conversation partner. I look for ways to affirm my point of view. My goal is to win the debate.
I allow my conversation partner to complete a thought. I wait until they are finished to respond.	I interrupt my conversation partner or change the subject.
I concentrate on others' words, feelings, body language, and other modes of communication.	I concentrate on my response or my next point.
I respect others' experiences as true and valid for them. I desire to learn from these experiences to come to new understandings of my own.	I interpret others' experiences as naïve, incorrect, or distorted (while championing my own). I desire to bring my conversation partner to my point of view.
I respect others' feelings.	I distrust feelings as manipulative.
I honor silence.	I use silence to my advantage.
I look for ways to extend the conversation.	I look for ways to end the conversation.

Adapted from resources developed by [Scarboro Missions](#).

Read more at icjs.org/debate-vs-dialogue