

"GSAs are a place for us to talk openly about things that we usually can't talk about at all."
-Student

Leading a Discussion

- **Know your topic.** Think about the goal of the discussion, and write down questions to guide the discussion. Familiarize yourself with the questions you write down.
- **Listen actively.** Make eye contact with participants in your discussion. Sit at their level.
- **Keep the discussion moving.** If people seem disinterested, do something to wake everyone up. One person I know did a somersault across the circle when the discussion was dragging. Cut off rambling speakers gently.
- **Don't be afraid of silence.** Wait and see what happens. Silence can open up a space for people who are shy to participate.
- **Agreement can be boring.** If everyone agrees, challenge the view that's being discussed with a counterpoint.
- **Write out your goals.** Decide what you want the participants to take from the discussion, and then try to bring that out by asking questions.
- **Make it comfortable for people to participate.** Prevent people from putting down or laughing at someone's ideas. Encourage and be supportive of peoples' thoughts and contributions.

