

DISCURSIVE SENTENCE STARTERS

Constructing knowledge together requires the use of a variety of “thinking moves.” These sentence starters support students to use and develop a repertoire of moves to make meaning, individually and collaboratively.

INTRODUCING AN IDEA

- I think . . .
- My view is . . .
- What I think this means is . . .
- I noticed that . . .
- My answer to the question is . . .
- What do you think about the idea that . . .

Sustaining My Idea

- My point is not . . . but . . .
- An example to show what I mean is
- Although some might object that, I would reply
- A limit or weakness in my idea is that . . . ; it remains valuable, however, because . . .

CHALLENGING AN IDEA

- I agree that ; however, I question whether because
- My feelings are mixed. On the one hand, I believe that x because ; on the other, I believe that y because
- At first I thought . . . ; now I think . . . because . . .
- I challenge the idea that . . . because . . .
- X is mistaken because they overlook As a result
- X’s statement assumes . . . which is problematic because
- By focusing on x, we overlook the deeper problem:

Supporting Another’s Idea

- I agree with x because . . .
- I really like the idea that x; this idea is also supported by . . .
- This is important because . . .
- An example that helps to prove this is . . .
- Another point of view that supports this idea is . . .

INVITING SILENT PEERS INTO DIALOGUE

- X and I talked earlier about X, could you share that idea you had?
- Maybe you could help us move forward here. What do you think?
- What do you think our next step should be?

Exploring an idea further

- These things are connected. Here’s how!
- One of the implications of this is that . . .
- If this claim is correct, then we need to . . .
- The assumption we are making when we say . . . is . . .
- While some believe x, others believe y; still others believe z.
- This idea helps us to understand the difficult problem of . . .
- This should be of interest to x because . . .
- An alternative explanation/interpretation is . . .

GUIDING THE PROGRESS OF THE GROUP

- To this point, we’ve focused on ; next, it might be useful to consider
- So we’ve established that Is that accurate?
- What questions have we answered? What questions remain?
- How does this relate to our goal?
- What steps have we taken toward our goal?
- We’re working well together by If we start . . . , it might help us to

Adapted from: They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing. Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, 2014.