

Let's Get Socratic!

When we're having a discussion, we want to think critically, or "get Socratic," in the spirit of Socrates. So how can you help make a great discussion happen? In response to the questions your teacher poses and the thoughts of your classmates, here's what you can do: Use some of the following strategies and questions to ensure curious, rigorous, and substantive discussion.

- 1. Question the question.** Explore the nature of the problem by asking questions such as, *How can we find out? What does the question assume? To answer this question, what other questions would we have to answer first?*
- 2. Offer evidence in support of an argument.** Make an argument and defend it with examples. Use your course texts or other resources to support your argument. *What is your argument? What examples from our course readings and resources could you use to defend it? Where did you get that idea?*
- 3. Offer reasoning in support of an argument.** Make an argument and defend with logical reasoning and claims. *What is your reasoning behind this argument? Could you break your argument into smaller points? What is the logic behind this point of _____?*
- 4. Clarify.** Ask for clarification with questions such as, *Can you find more specific illustrations or examples? What do you mean by _____? Could you put that another way? Can you say more about _____?*
- 5. Examine assumptions.** Examine others' assumptions with questions such as, *What are you assuming? Why have you based your reasoning on _____ rather than on _____?*
- 6. Investigate reasoning and evidence.** Investigate others' reasoning and evidence with questions such as, *What would be an example? Could you provide more logical, credible evidence to support your reasoning? What other information do we need? What led you to believe _____? How did you come to that conclusion? How does this rationale support that conclusion? Is there a logical fallacy in this claim?*
- 7. Explore viewpoints or perspectives.** Explore others' viewpoints or perspectives by asking questions such as, *How might other groups of people respond? Does anyone see this another way? How could you answer the objection that _____ would make?*
- 8. Probe implications and consequences.** Probe the implications and consequences of certain ideas by asking questions such as, *What effect would _____ have? What are you implying by _____? What is the significance of _____?*