



# Perspectives

## Workshop

FACILITATOR GUIDE



In partnership with



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## Authors

**Raffi Grinberg | Caroline Mehl**  
Constructive Dialogue Institute

**John Sarrouf | Danielle Isbell**  
Essential Partners

# Tips for Facilitating Dialogue

Adapted from a document by Robert R. Stains, Jr.

As facilitators in the classroom or anywhere on campus, there are many ways you can support students and community members to have meaningful and creative conversations. The following are a few ideas and practices facilitators can use to help students succeed.

## Preparing/planning

Facilitation begins long before people enter the room. In addition to requiring students to complete the Perspectives program online, consider the different ways you can prepare people for what they will do together: this may include asking students in advance of discussion to respond to prompts in journals, or to bring reflections from the reading to class. The more people know what to expect, the more at ease and willing to participate they will be. You, yourself, can prepare by creating intentional dialogue questions for discussion.

## Presenting purpose and process

Part of your job as a facilitator is to briefly present the purposes of the dialogue or the learning goals for the session, and the process you will use to get there (in this workshop guide, we share some ideas you can use). The more people know what they are in for, the more at ease they will be and the more willing they will be to join. Having the intention of staying open and curious will help people stay open and curious—even when it gets hard.

## De-center yourselves

The more you speak, the less others do. Every choice we make will help people focus on each other or on ourselves. During dialogues and discussions, you want people to focus on each other and de-center yourselves from the process. Often this requires you to hold your expertise “lightly,” or else your authority will dominate the discussion.

## Multi-partial

Rather than being biased, and rather than being completely impartial, have a sense of being “multi-partial:” simultaneously caring for people from different perspectives, cultures, etc. As instructors, students will be looking to you to learn how what they are saying is landing with you—do you agree or not—so be aware that how you react will impact what is possible for others to say.

## Silence

Be comfortable with silence. In the silence comes reflection, creativity, and space for less vocal students to speak.

# Facilitator Guide

## Outline:

Introduction and agreements  
5 min

Conversation starter  
10 min

Review  
10 min

Launch the conversation  
5 min

Phase 1:  
Understanding another viewpoint -  
in pairs  
10 min

Phase 2:  
Discovering your moral foundations -  
in pairs  
10 min

Phase 3:  
Moral reframing -  
in pairs  
10 min

Wrap-up  
5 min

## Notes

- ● This text is meant to be read out loud to students. Standard black text are notes to you.
- Text in blue boxes are tips for instructors.
- Text in red boxes are tips for students.
- Total time: 1-1.5 hours. If you have additional time constraints, feel free to condense this guide however you see fit.
- Feel free to adapt this workshop to best suit the needs of your group. If you do use these materials with a group, please let us know how it goes! We would love to work together to improve it for future facilitators based on your experience.

## Preparation

- Assign your students to complete the online Perspectives program before conducting this workshop. You can create a unique access code for your students using this “dashboard” program: [constructivedialogue.org/app/dashboard](https://constructivedialogue.org/app/dashboard) (the program will also generate instructions you can send to your students).
- Print one copy of this facilitator guide for yourself.
- Print copies of the student handout for all of your students. The handout can be found [here](#).
- Set up the room in a way that is conducive to dialogue. The workshop includes group discussion as well as paired discussion. We recommend a circle of chairs that can easily be turned towards one another for the paired activities.

## Introduction and agreements

5  
min

● Today we'll practice what we learned in the Perspectives program face-to-face.

We are aiming to create a space where we not only have a diversity of opinions present, but where people will be willing to share and voice those opinions. Imagine you have an unpopular opinion. What ground rules would you want to have in this room in order for you to feel comfortable sharing it?

Solicit input from the class and write down what they say.

Tip: Think about what agreements are already implicit in your classroom—do students raise their hand to be called on, does the instructor stand and lead discussions?—those are communication agreements! Re-evaluate them now.

Then, if any of the following points are not mentioned, you can suggest a few of them:

- Treat every member of the class with respect, even if you disagree with their opinion

Tip: If people use the word “respect” or “trust,” push them further on it. What is meant by trust? What would trust look like in the room? What would respect look like? What actions would violate either one of these?

- Allow people to finish speaking
- Make space for other people to share
- Note that opinions and stories expressed in this room today will remain confidential
- So this is the list of agreements that we came up with to support you having an open and engaged experience. Do these work for you? Can you all agree to these and allow me to remind you if we stray from them?

My commitment to you is that you will not be graded on your opinions; nothing you voice here will impact your grade in this class.

Tip: If you do want to evaluate students based on participation, you might say: “Evaluation will not be based on content of interaction, but on the effort and civility demonstrated.”

We'll begin with a quick conversation starter, followed by a chance to dig into what we learned from the online program. Then, we'll break into pairs.

## Conversation starter

10  
min

Consider using one of these activities. The purpose is to let students share something that matters to them, so that the members of the group will associate one another with deeper values and experiences than just the opinions that are shared later on. For those who don't know each other well, these activities will allow them to build trust and connection; for those who know each other well, this will be an opportunity to learn something new and get people curious about one another again.

If your group is small enough for everyone to have time to share (under approximately 15 people), you can use one of these prompts:

- What is something in your community that you're committed to? It can be a cause, a hobby, a job, a group, etc.
- Who in your life has inspired you to choose the direction you are taking right now in your studies?
- What object or image do you own that would help people understand something you really care about?

Invite people to think for 30 seconds, then to share with the group for 30 seconds (2-3 sentences).

Tip: Acknowledge that this question could be answered at length, but that it is essential not to take too much of the group's time. If you let one person go too long, it will be difficult to cut others off. If students exceed the 2-3 sentence timeframe, consider using a timer and stopping them when it goes off. You can do it lightly and with humor: "Remember it's 2-3 sentences, and that doesn't count run-on sentences!"

If your group is larger—more than 15 people—you can use one of the icebreaker exercises included in the appendix (pages 15 and 16).

## Review

5  
min

Divide the group into pairs, in which they will converse for the rest of the workshop.

Tip: You might want to think in advance about how you plan to divide the group, so that the process goes quickly. If possible, try pairing students that seem to have little in common.

First, invite each pair to speak for 3 minutes about the following two questions:

- What was one idea from Perspectives that has stuck with you?
- What's one question you're still grappling with?

Invite the group back into a circle and ask people to report out from each pair.

- You can share takeaways on 1-2 important topics that weren't covered by the group.

You can view a summary of the main concepts in Perspectives at [constructivedialogue.org/perspectives](https://constructivedialogue.org/perspectives).



## Launch the conversation

5  
min

● We will now begin a structured conversation that will take place in three short “phases.” For this conversation, you will remain in the same pairs.

Choose a viewpoint you hold that you are able to explain reasonably well. I recommend that you choose a view related to a political topic or something that is the subject of current debate on campus; but if you prefer, you may instead choose a relatively uncontroversial opinion (such as a sports team you favor or a book you like).

Tip: If people are having a hard time choosing, remind them it is just an exercise. If they are totally blocked, you might ask them, “What was the first thing that came to your mind?” If they are struggling to choose whether to be serious or fun, you might challenge them to go deeper for the sake of the exercise. If they are worried about having an unpopular opinion, you might explain that that is the whole point of the experience and that you are all practicing together now so that you feel comfortable engaging with unpopular opinions throughout the upcoming semester or year.

The viewpoints that you and your partner choose do not need to be on the same topic. Thus, our conversation may not be a true disagreement. The goal of today is to practice the skills for constructive disagreement in a more neutral setting—so that whenever you find yourself in a disagreement in the future, you’ll be prepared to make it constructive.



## Phase 1: Understanding another viewpoint – in pairs

10  
min

● The goal of this phase is to understand the other person's perspective as thoroughly as possible. For the next 10 minutes, follow the instructions for Phase 1 on your handout.

Instructions (this will appear on the students' handouts):

Start with one person, and go through these steps. Then switch.  
(⌚ 5 minutes per person)

Ask your partner to state their viewpoint.

Tip: Make it as specific as possible. For example, instead of saying "I believe in free speech," you might say, "I believe that a student group should be allowed to invite whomever they choose to speak on campus." Instead of, "I believe in environmental responsibility," you might say, "I believe that the university should divest its endowment from companies that are harmful to the environment." This might take a few tries of stating your view; your partner can help you! The more specific you get, the easier it will be to dig into it later on in the conversation.

Ask questions to try to understand the other person's viewpoint.

Here are some questions you can use:

Tip: Asking questions doesn't mean you have to be passive—listen actively and become genuinely curious!

- When did you first come to hold this opinion about this topic?
- Who or what source was most influential on the formation of your opinion?
- Was this always true for you or has your thinking shifted in any way over time?
- Is this true for you in all circumstances and if not, when might it vary?

## Phase 1: Understanding another viewpoint – in pairs (continued)

- Can you share a story about a time when this was important to you?
- What are some questions you have about this that you would like to know more about?
- How does this impact the way you live and the choices you make?

Synthesize and restate the view of your partner in as much detail as you can.

Tip: Partners can correct one another until both sides have an accurate understanding of the other's perspective.

● Throughout this phase, focus on practicing this communication skill from Perspectives: show sincere interest. Listen attentively and ask good questions. If you disagree with the viewpoint your partner shares, try not to get upset. Instead, remember what we learned about growth mindset and the value of intellectual humility. You can treat this as a useful opportunity to explore their perspective in order to learn from the other side.

Tip: If in this Phase students are having side conversations, you can ask the entire group to pause their dialogues and look at you, then restate the above tips around specificity and curiosity to guide students back on track.

## Phase 2: Discovering your moral foundations – in pairs

10  
min

● The goal of this phase is to understand what values—and moral foundations—undergird your partner’s position. For the next 10 minutes, follow the instructions for Phase 2 on your handout.

Instructions (this will appear on the students’ handouts):

Start with one person, and go through these steps. Then switch.  
(⌚ 5 minutes per person)

First, work together to identify your partner’s values and where they come from.

Tip: You can ask your partner some of these questions:

- If you had to name a value that underlies your viewpoint, what would you call it?
- Where did that particular value come from for you?
- Who or what in your life influenced this value in you?

Second, work together to identify which of the six moral foundations your partner’s viewpoint builds on. Remember that one view can build on multiple moral foundations.

You can refer to the summary page included in the appendix (page 17) for a quick overview of the 6 moral foundations. The students also have this summary page in their handout.

● Throughout this phase, focus on practicing this communication skill from Perspectives acknowledgment. When working together to identify one another’s moral foundations, acknowledge when your partner makes a good point; if you disagree, acknowledge that you understand why they might have thought that.

Tip: If you notice a conversation between students becoming heated, come over and try to de-escalate by emphasizing that this workshop is about understanding, not persuading. Remind people to try to rein in their elephants. If anyone is struggling with acknowledgment, it might be useful to have them repeat back what they are hearing. For example: “So you believe that... And that comes from your value of...” This way, people at least feel like they are being heard (even if they don’t feel understood).

## Phase 3: Moral reframing – in pairs

10  
min

● The goal of this phase is to prepare to engage with someone who holds a view that differs from your own. For the next 10 minutes, follow the instructions for Phase 3 on your handout.

Instructions (this will appear on the students' handouts):

Start with one person ("partner A"), and go through these steps. Then switch (to "partner B").  
(🕒 5 minutes per person)

Work together to identify one good counterargument to partner A's viewpoint.

- For example, if partner A said, "I believe that a student group should be allowed to invite whomever they choose to speak on campus," the two of you might identify the following good counterargument: "What if the student group invites a non-intellectual who peddles in provocation rather than discourse? That would be detrimental to the learning environment of our university."

Tip: Try to identify a good counterargument, not a caricature of the other side. This might be difficult if both of you agree on partner A's viewpoint.

- If you're really stuck, you can go to <https://www.procon.org/debate-topics.php> and look up your topic to find some arguments.
- If your topic isn't listed on that website, try Googling a statement the other side would make, like "Student groups shouldn't be able to invite anyone to campus" and read a reputable article that comes up.

## Phase 3: Moral reframing – in pairs (continued)

Work together to identify the moral foundation(s) underlying the counterargument.

Now, partner B should pretend to be someone who believes that counterargument (whether or not you actually believe it). Partner A should respond to the counterargument in a way that would resonate with the moral foundations underlying the counterargument.

- For example, partner A might say, “I also value fairness, which is why I think that...”

Tip: Partner A’s goal in this role-played “moral reframing” isn’t to convince partner B, but to be understood by partner B. Partner A can even say that explicitly: “I don’t want to convince you, I just want to help you understand where I’m coming from.”

- Throughout this phase, focus on practicing this communication skill from Perspectives: don’t criticize. When speaking with the opposing viewpoint, don’t begin with “you’re wrong and here’s why.”

Tip: If you are worried that people might struggle with thinking of an opposing argument (that they may not believe, or know much about), you might do a quick demonstration for them with someone. You can also walk around and help people who seem to be struggling, by joining in on one side or the other.

## Wrap-up

5  
minStep  
1

Take two minutes to journal on some of the following questions.

- What did you discover about your own moral foundations?
- Did your understanding of the opposing viewpoint shift? If so, in what way?
- What did you notice about trying to reframe your viewpoint in terms of someone else's moral foundations?
- What are you taking away from this workshop?
- How might you use these ideas and skills this semester?

Step  
2

After two minutes, invite people to share with the larger group, responding to these open-ended questions:

- What did you discover?
- What did you notice?
- What is one takeaway you want to continue doing (or thinking about)?

You can write down their answers on a large sheet.

Step  
3

If you are able to, come back to these takeaways one week later. Show the large sheet, and ask:

- What do you most remember from our workshop?
- Which ideas have stuck with you the most?
- Were any of you able to follow through with continuing to do one thing?

# Appendix

## Perspectives Moments

### How to use the principles of Perspectives to foster a dialogic classroom continually (not just during the one-time workshop).

“Perspectives Moments” are the moments in our classrooms when we really need to lean into the skills learned from the Perspectives program and workshop. This is where the learning continues, grows, and is put to use as it is most needed. Imagine the moments when your students get stuck—when people stop listening to one another—or when the question leads to knee-jerk divisiveness. Imagine the moments when students are stating their elephant’s response as the whole truth, or when their elephant is rampaging through the aisles and desks. The moments when people are silent and the risk of answering has become too great.

These are the moments to refer back to Perspectives! Here are six Perspectives Moments that you can always have in your back pocket, to keep the conversation open, curious, and inclusive.

#### Think, write, pair, share

If your students are stuck in their thinking, become silent, or start rejecting each other’s ideas automatically, slow things down. Ask an expanding, open-ended question. Set a timer for two minutes. Have people put their pens to their paper and free-write until the two minutes are up. Then, have them get into pairs and ask them to share their thoughts (for two minutes each). When people are done, come back to the group and ask for insights, discoveries, or dilemmas.

### Identifying your foundations

We want people to become really adept at identifying the moral foundations present in different viewpoints. When the class is stuck, have people take out a piece of paper and make a list of the moral foundations that are most present in their belief. How are the foundations connected to each other? Which one is most important to them? Why is it so important? Then, consider asking people to find someone with beliefs that rely on different moral foundations and converse.

### What is the question?

The most important thing to do when the conversation gets stuck—staying curious—is also the most difficult thing to do. Staying curious requires slowing down, engaging your desire to remain open, and cultivating a stance of wanting to know more about viewpoints that are different from yours. If people are stuck in silence or certainty, ask them to stop and write down three questions:

1. What genuine question can I ask the other person that would help me understand what they believe and why they believe it?
2. What question do I wish someone would ask me to help me feel more deeply understood?
3. What question could we ask in the class right now that would open the conversation?

### Minding the gap

Conversations get stuck when they contain assumptions about other people and what they believe. In a disagreement, it is easy to jump to conclusions. In the heat of it, our own feelings of being misunderstood are real and painful. People end up saying things that may have been meant one way, but landed in a very different way. In those moments it is important to bring attention to the gap between intention and impact—and there is almost always a gap. Ask people to clarify what they meant to say, and what they understood someone to say. For example: “When you said... I heard you saying... Is that what you meant?” Or, “I meant to say... What did you hear me say?”

### Take a walk

Nothing opens the mind like a good walk. Classrooms can sometimes feel confining, stuffy, crowded, and sedentary. All of that can impact people’s thinking and ability to listen. Declare an Perspectives Moment and tell people to go for a walk—either on their own first and then in pairs, or just in pairs. Have them talk about what they notice about the conversation: what is working and what is not. Or, ask them to come back with one thing they really wish they understood.

### Nothing but questions

When people are making accusations, assumptions, declarations, provocations, and judgements—declare an Perspectives Moment called “nothing but questions.” During this time, people cannot tell others that they are wrong or challenge a statement. They must only ask truly curious, honestly offered, and open-ended questions of one another. People can answer the question, but then they have to ask a truly curious, honestly offered, and open-ended question of someone else. And so on.

# Icebreaker Activities

## “Speed Dating”

7  
min

The purpose of this exercise is to help people connect with one another and feel more related and known by at least three other people. It should also be fun!

Ask your students to form two lines facing each other. Each person will partner with the person standing across from them. Every two minutes, they will all move one step to their right so everyone ends up with a new partner.

Write the questions (below) on the board, or place a list of the questions at each table. Set a timer for 2 minutes and have the pair take turns asking the first question—each person has one minute to answer. When the timer is up, ask pairs to switch and find new people whom they know less well. Restart the timer and have them answer the second question. When the timer goes off again, have them find a new partner, set the timer and ask the third question.

You can select three of the following five questions, or make up some of your own.

1. Choose one thing you are expert enough at that you could teach. How did you learn it?
2. Choose one thing you would like to learn. Why? What does it mean to you?
3. Choose one person you would like to spend the day with. Why?
4. Share the reasons you chose this school.
5. Where would you be now if you had decided not to go to college?

## “Stand up if”

7  
min

**For Part 1** of this exercise, read the following prompts out loud (the order and the specific prompts can be of your choosing). Have students stand up if the prompt is true of them. Have them take a seat again before the next prompt is read.

### Part 1 prompts:

- Have been on an airplane
- Love to drive
- Left behind a sibling at home
- Harbor a grudge
- Love to dance
- Play a sport
- Play an instrument
- Had to travel longer than a day to get here
- Love the winter
- Are good at telling jokes
- Are an only child
- Love to cook
- Speak more than one language

**For Part 2**, have all students stand spread out in the middle of the room. As you read the prompts, people will move more to one side of the room or to the other depending upon which options are truer for them. Read the prompt and place each option on opposite sides of the room. For example, "I feel I am living my best life when I am (A) spending more time alone (indicate one side of the room) or (B) spending more time with others (indicate the other side of the room)."

### Part 2 prompts:

- Living my best life when I spend more time alone / spend more time with others
- Love change / dread change
- Talking to think / thinking to talk
- Value structure and authority / no one tells me what to do
- Live exactly where I want to live / would like to live anywhere else
- Like to return to the same place / seek out new places to explore
- Prefer the beach / prefer the mountains
- Read the book / watch the movie
- Early bird / night owl

# The Six Moral Foundations



## Care:

Empathy,  
compassion,  
protecting others  
from harm



## Fairness:

Justice and  
rights

Political left:  
Fairness as  
equality, linked  
to compassion

Political right:  
Fairness as  
proportionality,  
where people  
should be  
rewarded in  
proportion  
to what they  
contribute



## Liberty:

Freedom, rights,  
rejection of  
constraint and  
oppression

Political left:  
Focus on victims;  
overcoming  
oppression by  
dominant groups

Political right:  
Focus on  
individual  
rights and  
freedom from  
government  
coercion



## Loyalty:

In-group loyalty,  
patriotism,  
self-sacrifice  
for the group



## Authority:

Respect for  
traditions,  
established  
institutions,  
and legitimate  
authorities;  
valuing order  
and stability



## Sanctity:

Reverence for  
that which is  
pure/sacred