

# Ohio Public Safety

## Resource Sheet



### How to Guide a Successful Discussion

Leading a discussion means stimulating the students to carry on the conversation without constant prompting from the instructor. Discussion activities allow students to contribute their knowledge and experience. Discussion requires use of the following techniques:

**1.** The ideal layout of the room is to have the chairs in a circle or half circle so that all participants can comfortably see each other and talk to each other with ease. The instructor should sit with the group and take on an appearance of a participant, rather than stand in front of the group in an authoritative manner. The instructor must avoid making judgmental statements, using a raised voice, pointing fingers, pounding on the desk, or domineering the conversation.

There are many questions listed in the Instructor Guide that can be used to initiate the discussion. The trick is to remember not to answer the questions that you ask or the questions that the students ask. Use the techniques below to guide the students through a successful discussion.

**2.** Deflect the question to involve more students by asking, "Who can answer that?" or "Do you agree with his/her statement?" or "What do you think?" "Why do you think the statement is true or false?" Ask open questions that require reflection, thought and analysis and that may have more than one answer. You can direct these deflected and open questions to specific students or to the group and wait for a response.



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**3.** Listen to what your students say so you can guide a discussion on the issue raised.

**4.** Use the “PAUSE” technique for effect, and to allow students time to formulate their answers. The “PAUSE” also draws attention to the question.

**5.** To stimulate response or participation, ask for a show of hands. This can determine the student’s experience or reaction to a certain topic.

**6.** To promote participation ask for an example. Examples can emphasize a point or principle. Examples bring out incidents that the students can relate to.

**7.** Acknowledge students for their comments, by name if possible, by restating, re-emphasizing key points they made. Say “thank you” or express appreciation for their participation, even if you disagree with their point of view. This encourages an environment for continued discussion.

**8.** Use closed questions to get back to the point when the discussion goes astray.

Closed questions seek facts. A specific answer is always required.

