

The Leaderless Discussion



Write about how thinking has changed and any new questions the discussion raised

Reflect on the discussion and how it has developed understanding

Repeat until all group members have shared at least one question

Share a question and explain why it interests you

Peers respond and share their thinking about the question during a 5 minute discussion.

Summarise the discussion in a sentence or two



Purpose

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This routine creates an opportunity for students to own and drive the direction of a conversation and important topics and concepts. It increases student involvement in discussion and brings their thinking to the forefront of their learning and understanding. Asking good questions is a central component of this routine.

Application

When and where can it be used?

Use this routine:

- To engage students in discussion about a topic or concept, driven by their own questions
- As a teacher to listen to and observe the ideas and concepts coming to the surface as they work to develop understanding.

Assessment

How can I use this routine as an assessment?

Situate yourself as an observer, focusing on which students are responding to each other's questions and how. The nature of questioning is often indicative of where a student's understanding presently stands

- Do questions exhibit depth and nuance or hover on the surface?
- Are students connecting to the responses of others?
- Do they elaborate on ideas being shared?
- Do they revise thinking based on the conversation?



Launch

What are the steps needed for starting and using this routine?

1. **Set Up** → identify a text, video or other provocation in advance. Allow students time to examine the provocation.
2. **Preparing Questions** → each group member creates and records two open-ended questions they believe will be interesting for the discussion.
3. **Selecting a Timekeeper** → appoint a timekeeper who will keep time, ensuring the group doesn't take any longer than 5 minutes per question.
4. **Initiating and Discussing** → one person reads their question and group members respond to the question sharing their thinking. Students may elaborate, offer another perspective, suggest a connection, reveal another layer to the question. Encourage students to ask '*What makes you say that?*'
5. **Closing a Round of Discussion** → person who posed the question summarises the conversation in one or two sentences.
6. **Repeat the Rounds** → another member reads their question and the steps repeat until all group members have shared at least one question.
7. **Sharing the Thinking** → group reflects on the discussion and identifies main ideas, themes, or connections that emerged. Write down how thinking changed and any new questions that arose.

Adapted from the work of Ron Ritchhart by

