

Leading seminars/ discussions politeness competition game

What is wrong with all the phrase for leading discussions and seminars below?

Getting the session started

1. The others are late but it's time to start.

Background information and instructions for the discussion

2. Today you have to talk about...
3. As every idiot knows/ As you should all know,...
4. Everyone knows that old people...
5. Everyone's been arguing about...
6. You're probably wondering why you have to do this. Well,...
7. Don't let your partner do all the talking.

Getting the discussion started

8. Ready, steady, go!/ Let's do it!
9. (name), speak first please./ (name), you start.
10. Please let me speak./ Please stop speaking.
11. Hurry up!
12. Right! Next bit!
13. Tell us what you decided.

Giving feedback on the discussion

14. You didn't contribute enough.
15. Your arguments were nonsense.
16. Your PowerPoint was a mess.
17. I couldn't understand what you were saying.
18. I told you to.../ You were told to...
19. Next time, you have to...
20. ... was worse than last week.
21. I was shocked by...
22. Don't you remember what I told you last week?
23. ... wasn't as bad as last week.
24. Why on earth did you...?
25. ... was weak.
26. How long did you spend preparing? Five minutes?/ You obviously didn't prepare enough.
27. There was far too much...

Explaining what will happen after the session

28. Write a summary and email it asap.
29. Don't just forget all that when you write your essays.
30. You can find out if you passed or failed tomorrow.

Ending the session

31. Time's up.
32. Thanks for coming.

Answer: All of them are at least a little too direct or informal, and most are very rude.

Choose one of the phrases above. Compete to make it more and more polite/ formal, for example by making it longer with added indirect and other polite words. Give up whenever you can't get more polite, discuss which of those is probably most useful in real life, then do the same with other examples. Your teacher will tell you if/ when to use the help below.

Suggested words to add

You can use words from below to help with the task above. Some sentences above can take more than one word from below and others don't need any. Some words below can be used in more than one place above.

- a bit
- a few
- *a moment*
- at least
- at this stage
- attempt
- better
- can
- *could*
- don't know
- excuse
- guess
- hope
- hopefully
- I'd like
- if
- in terms of
- *just*
- let's
- majority
- maybe
- might
- most
- much
- no real
- not as
- not completely
- not enough
- not quite
- not really
- not very
- please
- probably
- quite a lot
- rather
- seem
- should
- some
- *sorry*
- we
- well
- would

Look at the suggested answers below and share at least one good example from your discussion that is not in that key.

Suggested answers

Getting the session started

1. The others are late but it's time to start. - Well, there are still a few people missing but I guess we should start.

Background information and instructions for the discussion

2. Today you have to talk about... - The topic of today's session is.../ We're going to talk about.../ What I'd like to discuss is...
3. As every idiot knows/ As you should all know,... - As you might already be aware,.../ I guess at least most of you already know...
4. Everyone knows that old people... - It is commonly thought that the majority of people over retirement age...
5. Everyone's been arguing about... - Recently, there has been quite a lot of controversy about...
6. You're probably wondering why you have to do this. Well,... - The reason I want to discuss this is to.../ Through this discussion I hope you can...
7. Don't let your partner do all the talking. - Please make sure that you all contribute equally to the discussion.

Getting the discussion started

8. Ready, steady, go!/ Let's do it! - So, as I explained, let's begin by...
9. (name), speak first please./ (name), you start. - (name) maybe we can start off by hearing your views./ would you like to kick off?
10. Please let me speak./ Please stop speaking. - *Sorry for interrupting, but.../ Can I stop you there and...?/ Sorry for not letting you finish, but.../ Could I interrupt you for just a moment?/ Before you go on, can we...?/ Excuse the interruption, but.../ Before you continue,...*
11. Hurry up! - Quickly finish that stage and then.../ Just one minute left before you need to...
12. Right! Next bit! - Moving onto.../ We seem to have finished that stage, so.../ Turning to.../ If no one has anything (else) to add at this stage,.../ It's (about) time to...
13. Tell us what you decided. - Could you tell us what your group decided?/ Can you report back on your decision?

Giving feedback on the discussion

14. You didn't contribute enough. - You could have contributed a bit more.
15. Your arguments were nonsense. - I couldn't make much sense of your arguments./ The arguments weren't very coherent.
16. Your PowerPoint was a mess. - You could work on your PowerPoint a bit more.
17. I couldn't understand what you were saying. - I had some problems following you.
18. I told you to.../ You were told to... - I don't know if you remember, but the instructions were to...
19. Next time, you have to... - Next time, make sure that you.../ Please make an effort to.../ Make a note to.../ You should consider.../ I would recommend...

20. ... was worse than last week. - ... wasn't quite as good as last week./ If anything,... was better last week.
21. I was shocked by... - I was rather disappointed to see that.../ ... wasn't really what I had expected.
22. Don't you remember what I told you last week? - If you think back to your feedback after the last session.../ You might remember that.../ As I instructed, you.../ Your instructions were...
23. ... wasn't as bad as last week. - You'd really improved...
24. Why on earth did you...? - There was no real need to...
25. ... was weak. - ... wasn't very strong.
26. How long did you spend preparing? Five minutes?/ You obviously didn't prepare enough. - You don't seem to have prepared enough.
27. There was far too much... - It might have been better with less...

Explaining what will happen after the session

28. Write a summary and email it asap. - Please write a summary of your position and email to me by midday on Friday.
29. Don't just forget all that when you write your essays. - Please use what you have learnt today when you write your essays on the topic.
30. You can find out if you passed or failed tomorrow. - Your marks will be posted on the noticeboard outside my office.

Ending the session

31. Time's up. - We seem to have run out of time, so we'll have to leave the discussion there.
32. Thanks for coming. - Thanks for all your great contributions today.

Ask about any phrases above which you don't understand, think should be more polite/ formal, etc.

Brainstorming stage

Without looking above for now, brainstorm at least two useful phrases into each of these categories. Suitable phrases which aren't above are also fine.

Getting the session started**Background information and instructions for the discussion****Getting the discussion started****Giving feedback on the discussion****Explaining what will happen after the session****Ending the session**

Compare with the phrases above, brainstorm more, then compare your extra phrases with another group.