



# Discussion Skills

"I learned more ways to communicate my ideas."

Jason

## GOAL

To identify specific behaviors that make discussions more productive.

## OBJECTIVES

### **Activity 1: Share Information (5 minutes)**

- To draw students in and help them focus their attention on the learning process.

### **Activity 2: Astronaut Training Game (25 minutes)**

- To identify the need to share ideas in order to do a task.
- To complete a team job on which players must cooperate.

### **Activity 3: Productive Discussion Behavior (5 minutes)**

- To reflect on how information was shared in the game.
- To identify specific productive discussion behaviors.

### **Activity 4: Discussion Guidelines (5 minutes)**

- To introduce discussion guidelines.
- To practice using discussion guidelines.



## PREPARATION

- Activity 1: Select a story to tell or read. This and each subsequent lesson is designed to begin with a brief piece of information for students that might be nice to have, but is not essential. This serves to help students calm down and focus their attention on the instructional activities going on in class. Other options to open class include using an inspiring quote, a riddle, or a diagram puzzle for which you give the answer at the beginning of class the next day.
- Activity 2: Decide how to assign students to groups of five. You want the groups to be as evenly matched in ability as possible. If groups of five leave some extra students, you can assign an extra as the partner of a group member and have the two function as one. Alternatively you can have four in a group and tell one student to work two briefing sheets. It's not a good idea to have fewer than four in a group for this activity because concentrating information makes the puzzle too easy.
- Activity 3: For each group of five students, make one set of the five briefing sheets for the Astronaut Training at Spaceville puzzle (pp. 28 to 32).
- Make one copy of the Astronaut's Training Schedule, page 33, for each student.
- Activity 4: Make one copy of page 34, Discussion Guidelines, for each student.

## ACTIVITY 1

### Share Information

**5** MINUTES

### STEP 1

Tell or read the story you selected for today with the class.

Share



## ACTIVITY 2

### Astronaut Training Game

**25** MINUTES

### STEP 1

Introduce  
Activity



Tell students they will be working in groups of five to solve a puzzle. Assign the groups and seat each group together at a table. Give each student a copy of page 33, Astronaut Training Schedule.

Explain that you'll give each member of a group one briefing sheet with some information about the training schedule for astronauts at Spaceville.

**Say:** "Each briefing sheet has some information on it which your group may or may not need for solving the puzzle. You are to figure out the order in which the space crews take Driving Moon-Rovers Training.

**"Nobody else in your group has the information on your sheet. You may share your information with the others in your group by**



telling them what's on your sheet. You may not show anyone else your briefing sheet. You may not pass your sheet around. You may not let anyone else read it.

"The game is to share information and use it to fill out the chart I have given you. When the chart is completed you can answer the question above the chart. That's all I'm allowed to tell you now."

**STEP 2**

Astronaut Game

You will need one complete set of the five briefing sheets for each group. Give each person in a group one of the five sheets in their set. Make sure that each group has all five of the briefing sheets that make a set, which are pages 28 to 32. Have students begin.

Move around the room encouraging the students. If after about 15 minutes groups are still struggling, give them enough hints to insure that every group solves the puzzle. The answer is: 1) Mon. - Challenger, 2) Tues. - Apollo, 3) Wed. - Enterprise, and 4) Thurs. - Gemini.

**ACTIVITY 3**

**Productive Discussion Behavior**

**5** MINUTES

**STEP 1**

Discussion

Have students arrange their chairs in a circle and lead a discussion about the game with the following questions.

**Ask: "What are your impressions of the activity we just finished?"**  
Accept all responses.

**"What had to happen in order for your group to fill in the schedule chart?"** (R: share information, let others know what was on your sheet, figure out from the information available what went in the blank squares)

**"What would have happened if one or more people had not shared their information?"**  
(R: could not have filled in the chart)

**Say: "When there's a problem that effects a group of people, the**

**best way to get a solution is to have everyone involved share their information, insights, and ideas. Sharing information, then, is a critical skill to have. Let's look at the way your group shared information."**

**Ask: "What kinds of things did your group do that helped you complete the chart?"** (R: listened, worked together, took turns sharing information)

**"What kinds of things did the person sharing information do that helped others get their information?"** (R: spoke clearly, shared all the information, looked at others)

**"What kinds of things did those who were listening do that helped them get the information the other person was sending?"**



(R: looked at the person, didn't interrupt, paid attention, wrote down what was said)

"Are there other things your group could have done that would have made it easier to either give information or get information?" Accept all responses.

Say: "Another way to say that you exchanged information would be to say you had a discussion."

"Discussing is one way information gets exchanged. Sometimes hearing another person's ideas sparks you to think of a new idea or solution you'd

never considered before. If other people hadn't said their thoughts, the new ideas might never have occurred to you. In a discussion, we need the benefit of everyone's best thinking if we are to get the best solutions or outcome."

Ask: "How does all this about sharing information and discussion skills apply to you?" Accept all responses.

"What did you learn from this activity?" Accept all responses.

"How could you use what you now understand about sharing information to set yourself up to succeed in other situations?" Accept all responses.

# ACTIVITY 4

## Discussion Guideline

5 MINUTES

### STEP 1

Introduce Discussion Guidelines

Give each student a copy of page 34, Discussion Guidelines.

Say: "The discussion behaviors you have just identified are summarized on this page. We'll review each of these areas and the specific behaviors listed on the Discussion Guideline."

#### "LISTENING

"Productive discussions depend on the exchange of ideas. To understand all the points being made, it is essential that you listen to what each person has to say. An important part of listening is allowing the other person to finish before you begin speaking. The specific items in this area are listening to what

another is saying, and allowing another to finish before you start speaking.

#### "BODY POSTURE

"When you participate in a discussion, an attentive body posture keeps the discussion going because it physically indicates your interest and involvement. Attentive body posture means leaning forward toward the speaker, following the flow of conversation with your eyes, and not doing distracting behaviors like playing with your pencil or tapping your foot. Specific items in this area are leaning forward to the speaker, visually following the flow of discussion, and resting hands on desk or lap."

**"EYE CONTACT"**

*"To understand what another is saying, it's helpful to look them in the eyes. It helps you, the listener, pay more careful attention. It also helps speakers by letting them know you're interested. When you're the speaker, it's just as important for you to maintain eye contact with those who are listening because it helps them pay attention to what you are saying. The specific items in this area are having eye contact with the speaker, and having eye contact with the other person while you speak."*

**"SPEAKING"**

*"Each person has something worthwhile to add, so each person should state their idea, opinion, or view. The discussion is more productive when speakers keep to the subject. When speakers lead the group away from the point with comments that don't relate to the topic, the discussion bogs down. The specific items in this area are expressing opinion and ideas, asking questions to clarify information, and staying on the subject."*

**STEP 2****Use  
Guidelines**

Tell students that during many of the discussions in this class they will use Discussion Guidelines. They will tally positive behaviors they exhibit. Each time they do one they will make a tally mark on the line by that item. They should make lots of marks by each item during any one discussion. They will be making these marks as they do each behavior, not at the end of the discussion.

Explain that at the end of these discussions you'll ask them to think about all the positive behaviors they used and then jot down a brief sentence about what they liked best about their own discussion behavior that day. Point out this part on the bottom of the sheet.

**STEP 3****Approaches  
to  
Guidelines**

Explain that because they may find it confusing to mark the Discussion Guidelines while they follow the discussion, the first few times they will mark in only one section; later they'll use the whole sheet.

Tell students that at first you will prompt them about tallying, but that soon they'll be so good at it that they won't need prompting.



## ASTRONAUT TRAINING AT SPACEVILLE

### Briefing Sheet One

You may share the information on this sheet with your group.  
You may NOT show this sheet to anyone else.

Docking Spacecraft is the training the Gemini crew likes best.

On Friday all crews participate in physical fitness exercises.

The Challenger crew has their Moving in Weightlessness training the day before the Gemini crew each week.

The Challenger crew has the best performance record in training so far.



## ASTRONAUT TRAINING AT SPACEVILLE

### Briefing Sheet Two

You may share the information on this sheet with your group.  
You may NOT show this sheet to anyone else.

The Gemini crew members are older than the members of the other crews.

The training period at Spaceville is 14 months long.

On Mondays the Enterprise crew takes part in the training that the Gemini crew likes best.

Collecting Scientific Samples is the training that the Challenger crew has every Wednesday.



## ASTRONAUT TRAINING AT SPACEVILLE

## Briefing Sheet Three

You may share the information on this sheet with your group.  
You may NOT show this sheet to anyone else.

Driving Moon-Rovers is the last of the space work training for the Gemini crew each week.

Each space crew has a different training that is their favorite. The schedule just happened to work out so that each space crew has their favorite training on Tuesdays.

The Apollo crew is the world's first all-female space crew.

The Apollo crew is in Docking Spacecraft training on Wednesdays.





## ASTRONAUT TRAINING AT SPACEVILLE

### Briefing Sheet Four

You may share the information on this sheet with your group.  
You may NOT show this sheet to anyone else.

The next mission scheduled to launch is Gemini.

The Enterprise crew has Collecting Scientific Samples on Tuesdays.

On Wednesdays the Gemini crew participates in Moving in Weightlessness.

The Enterprise crew has flown three missions together already.



## ASTRONAUT TRAINING AT SPACEVILLE

### Briefing Sheet Five

You may share the information on this sheet with your group.  
You may NOT show this sheet to anyone else.

Each crew is known by the name of its upcoming mission.

The Apollo crew thinks Driving Moon Rovers is by far the best training.

During the early phases, many of the astronauts get sick during the Moving in Weightlessness training.

The Enterprise crew has been on the most missions, even though their crew members are younger than the members of any other crew.

## ASTRONAUT TRAINING SCHEDULE AT SPACEVILLE

Spaceville is an astronaut training site that specializes in preparing space crews for flights to the moon and planets. Spaceville trains space crews in four areas.

- Docking Spacecraft
- Moving in Weightlessness
- Driving Moon-Rovers
- Collecting Scientific Samples

Four space crews train at Spaceville at a time. Space crews receive training in the areas listed above four days a week. They train on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Each crew trains in a different one of the four areas each day of the week. The schedule is the same each week.

Your task is to answer the following question.

**IN WHAT ORDER DO THE CREWS GO THROUGH THE DRIVING MOON-ROVERS TRAINING EACH WEEK?**

	Docking Spacecraft	Moving in Weightlessness	Driving Moon-Rovers	Collecting Scientific Samples
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				



# DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

**LISTENING** \_\_\_\_\_ listening to what another was saying  
\_\_\_\_\_ allowing another to finish before I speak

**BODY POSTURE** \_\_\_\_\_ leaning forward to the speaker  
\_\_\_\_\_ visually following the flow of discussion  
\_\_\_\_\_ hands resting on lap or on desk

**EYE CONTACT** \_\_\_\_\_ looking at the speaker  
\_\_\_\_\_ looking at others while I speak

**SPEAKING** \_\_\_\_\_ expressing opinion, idea  
\_\_\_\_\_ asking question to clarify information  
\_\_\_\_\_ staying on the subject

**What I liked best about my discussion behavior today is:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_