



SKILLS

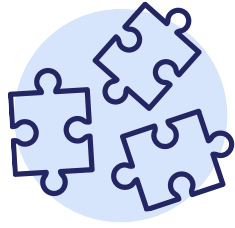
What goes into a R.E.A.L.[®] Discussion?

R.E.A.L.[®] Discussion is a system to help make your class discussions engaging and equitable! It is based on four skills: **Relating, Excerpting, Asking, and Listening**. Once you know these skills, you will see that they are useful not just in class discussion but for life in the real world as a friend, leader, citizen, and professional.

Each skill has two habits (i.e. E1 and E2), broken out on the next page. In this section we will explain what each looks like and how you can use them to make the most of class discussions.

SKILLS

What does R.E.A.L.® stand for?



R IS FOR RELATE

R1: Relate text to self, world, and other texts

R★: Relate your point to your classmates' ideas



E IS FOR EXCERPT

E1: Excerpt with efficiency

E★: Excerpt with editorial



A IS FOR ASK

A1: Ask questions about the text

A★: Ask questions of your classmates



L IS FOR LISTEN

L1: Listen with your body

L★: Listen to facilitate

R IS FOR RELATE

R1: Relate text to self, world, and other texts

"The lesson I take away from this scene reminds me of what my music teacher always says...even if you're playing Bach, start with basic scales."

"The whole tension between isolationism and globalism in the early twentieth century is eerily similar to headlines today about US-China relations. In debate club recently, we researched..."

Make connections to find meaning in a text.



Text to self (TTS)

Relating a text to a personal experience is often an effective way to establish an immediate connection to a character, setting, etc., and is always a great margin note or annotation. Please be sure to offer a specific story or connection rather than just referring to "video games" or "second grade" or "my brother."



Text to world (TTW)

Relating the text to the world can take different forms. With TTW, you connect something in your reading to something in the world: current events, history, etc. The goal here is to zoom out beyond the story or time period you are studying.



Text to other texts (TTT)

More often than not, discussion will focus on more than one text (or source) at a time, so TTT connections should feel like a "lay-up" of a comment, or something that almost always works. That said, you should feel free to connect to texts you read earlier in the year or sources outside of your curriculum, too!

R IS FOR RELATE

R2: Relate your point to your classmates' ideas

"I want to take Jason's idea further and argue that the primary source relates directly to the plan to partition India in 1947 and create Pakistan as a separate homeland for Muslims so they would not be a minority in an independent India. For example..."

"Jamila, I understand your reasoning that Lady Macbeth is responsible for her husband's bad behavior because it's her idea to kill Duncan! But for me, the Witches are more responsible because they are the ones who plant the seed of ambition. If they weren't there, none of this would have happened..."

Think about how your ideas fit in with others' ideas.



Agree

To agree well, summarize your classmate's idea and then add more evidence to further develop the point. Do NOT just say, "Yeah, I agree with Susan!"



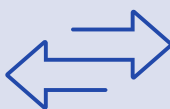
Disagree

To disagree well, focus on the idea (not person!) you don't agree with. Begin by re-stating the idea—you might even pause, and look in their direction to make sure they feel adequately heard. Then add your perspective. Disagreeing in discussion doesn't mean you don't like someone or are taking issue with their entire identity.



Compromise

Compromise to offer a middle way between opposing ideas. Just like agreeing or disagreeing, it's a good idea to begin by quickly summarizing each person's point.



Complicate

Complicating someone's idea means that you are adding nuance to a point that has been made—not just adding another piece of evidence to prove the point (that's just agreeing!). Think of it like adding a layer with a different flavor to a cake or opening a door to another room in a house.

E IS FOR EXCERPT

E1: Excerpt with efficiency

"In this primary source, the language of the author makes it clear she's writing in the 1930s. In the second paragraph, she mentions the 'dust storms' and then a few lines later, the WPA — which we know started under FDR."

"There's a great example of Ralph's authoritarian leadership style on page 37, top of the fourth paragraph [pause, flip to page, wait for everyone else to do so.] The narrator says ..."

Make excerpts (evidence from the text) easy to follow.



Orient Classmates

When referencing a specific quote, you should make sure you and your classmates are "on the same page" (literally and figuratively!) before jumping into analysis. When you reference a text, include the source/page number AND the location (e.g. "page 87, top of the third paragraph"). Your DQ Prep should make this easy.



Respect the Rule of 7

Before reading your evidence, count to SEVEN (or spell E-X-C-E-R-P-T) on your fingers so that your classmates get on the same page. This feels awkward at first, but it helps you avoid "hogging" air time and assuming that everyone remembers the quote you picked. It is also a good habit to mark the quotes that your peers excerpt in discussion in your own text. They will become useful later if you have to write a paper.



Help them care

If your quote is too long, people will zone out and not care! If you want to use a quote longer than three sentences, use your own words to connect different parts of the quote: phrases like "and then, a few lines later" or "dot-dot-dot" often work well.

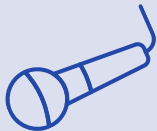
E IS FOR EXCERPT

E2: Excerpt with editorial

"In Long Walk to Freedom, Mandela says that 'to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way... that enhances the freedom of others.' I hadn't thought of freedom in that way before - not just as the removal of restrictions but as something given to others."

"Lines 1-2 in the poem — 'so much / depends upon' felt choppy at first but then I realized the poet uses line breaks to slow down the reader, to force-feed you word by slow, beautiful word."

Avoid "quote dropping." Everyone wants to hear your unique perspective, not just what the author said!



Don't quote drop

If you find a quote that you think deserves to be shared but can't come up with meaningful analysis, remember that, as crazy as it sounds, every word has been deliberately chosen by the author (for a book) and every word has the potential to give you a clue about the historical context (for a primary source).



Find something interesting about your quote

Remember that your classmates can't read your mind, so when you Excerpt, you need to help them see how the quote supports what you are saying. You might "zoom in" on a particular word or phrase in a quote and connect it back to the DQ or to someone else's point.

It can help to think about these prompts:

Why do you think the writer chose the words they did?

How might someone interpret this evidence differently from how you first did?

Is anything giving you the impression that this might not be a trustworthy source?

Does the depiction of a character seem harsh?

How do you hear the passage as a reader?

How would you hear it from the perspective of the audience to whom the writing was addressed?

What might it say about the author?

A IS FOR ASK

A1: Ask questions about the text

"Is this Federalist, or anti-Federalist? I can't tell if the author 'Publius' actually believes in the importance of centralized authority, or is making fun of people who do. What do you think?"

"In the Bennet sisters, I see so many gender stereotypes. It makes me want to dismiss the story but actually I think these characters are deeper than the ditziness they first show. Does anyone have evidence showing that?"

Ask questions that help everyone learn together.



Text Questions: Zoom In

Remember that you can ask both closed questions (Yes/No or One-Word Answers) and open questions (often beginning with "How or Why").



Context Questions: Zoom Out

Regardless of the discipline, context questions can be useful to a collaborative effort at interpreting a text. You might ask an open question about how historical, literary, social, economic, political or cultural context relates to an author's intent or reader interpretations! Remember that texts can be both products of their times and written to be read for many, many years to come.

Different types of questions help us make sense of a text:

Closed questions

Clarify a point of confusion, such as relationships between characters, a confusing word, the time period when something happened, or a sequence of events.

Open questions

Broaden conversation and explore issues like themes or authorial techniques. If the conversation stalls because everyone agrees, use an Open question to spice things up: "What might someone who disagrees with us argue here?" "How else could we think about this?"

A IS FOR ASK

A2: Ask questions of your classmates

"So, Mike, I hear you about the relative period of peace and prosperity during the Qing Dynasty. But I'm wondering if we can also see examples of trouble brewing in the economic changes of the time?"

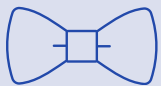
"Madison, I feel like I almost get what you said — but not quite. I see the quote you just referenced — how is Lahiri using these descriptive details to create place for the reader?"

If you don't understand someone's point, just ask.



Clarifying Questions

Clarifying Questions are for moments when a classmate says something you don't understand. Clarifying Questions should be specific and respectful; if they aren't, your classmate will likely be defensive or embarrassed. Do not just ask CQ's to try to make yourself look smarter than your peers!



Synthesizing Questions

Synthesizing Questions "put a bow" on the conversation about a topic - even if you haven't arrived at a single "right" answer. They are for instances when you want to wrap up a topic of conversation, perhaps by summarizing what has been said and asking the rest of the group to take a stance. These questions tend to do two things: they surface a tension that has emerged in discussion and they help everyone reflect about that tension.

Keep these phrases in your back pocket when asking questions of your classmates:

I think you might be onto something, is your idea that...?

I hear what you're saying, and I'm wondering what part of the text makes you think that?

It sounds like we are all starting to think that....does that sound right to everyone?

Going back to the DQ, has anyone changed their mind yet?

L IS FOR LISTEN

L1: Listen to engage actively (i.e. non-verbal communication)

"Tai, thanks for reminding us all about the role of algorithms in today's world and our consumption of the news. It's really easy to feel like we live in different worlds — but we don't."

"Sam, I appreciated how you shared that Langston Hughes' poetry made you see how life is a mix of both joy and grief. That really opened up the conversation for other people's stories too."

Use non-verbal communication strategies to show engagement and shout-outs to make everyone feel heard.



Engage Thoroughly Using Non-Verbal Communication (NVC)

Remember that when you aren't speaking, you should be fully engaged in listening and use NVC, such as the "I-Agree!" hand signal, turning your body toward the speaker, and not raising your hand while a peer is still speaking. You can think of the "I-Agree!" hand signal as a visual "like button:" immediate positive feedback for the speaker.



Give Shoutouts to Help your Class Grow

You'll take In-R.E.A.L.[®]-Time notes several times through each discussion, noting a peer's idea and your response to it (more on that on page 29). After discussions, you may engage in a "shout-out" circle where you share your In-R.E.A.L.[®]-Time notes in order to thank a classmate for sharing a perspective that changed or challenged your own understanding. Shout-outs are both evidence of your own engagement and a way to let classmates know they were heard.

L IS FOR LISTEN

L2: Listen to facilitate (i.e. the Three T's)

"Ah Sarah I see you want to talk but Mateo has his fist up and hasn't talked yet. So, Mateo, go ahead!"

"We only have one more minute! Should we stop and do our final IRT notes?"

Use the three T's to facilitate authentically.



Don't force it!

Approach facilitation as an honest temperature check on the group's progress – not a passive-aggressive "I'm over this." Remember the Three T's and that you didn't "fail" if you try to transition and your group isn't ready yet!



Use the Pass-Off System

In R.E.A.L.[®], students are responsible for calling on each other and deciding who will speak next. It is good practice to call on the person who has spoken the least so far to ensure that everyone has a chance to participate in the conversation.

If you want to talk, put up your hand and hold up a finger for every comment you have already made. Haven't talked yet? Use a fist (which stands for zero!).

The Three T's

Time Out

"It's already 15 minutes in and we've only gotten through #1; let's keep that in mind!"

Time Check

"Should we stop and do our In-REAL-Time notes? I don't want to forget all of these good points!!"

Transition

"Sam, that idea actually connects with DQ3, too! Anything else to add before we move to DQ3?"