The Challenge

One of the critical tasks in preparing for a discussion is to frame the questions you will use. In essence, these discussion questions are prompts for the discussion. Not all of the discussion questions need to be brought up during the discussion. And there is no special order for the discussion. The questions are used as necessary and when appropriate.

Facilitator Tools

Use open-ended questions

- (Ask for multiple, descriptive responses) rather than closed-ended questions (yes/no, true/false)
- Closed–ended: *Is privacy discussed as a public policy issue for citizens of our country?*
- Open–ended: *What are the privacy issues for citizens of our country?*

Qualifiers

- Put qualifiers on your question to ensure the responses provide the focus you want.

"What are the likely privacy issues that will impact citizens in the next 10 years?"

Thought Provoking Questions

- Ask questions that are likely to open up the discussion for diverse perspectives.
- Think about how you would respond to this question:

"How do citizens of different ages view privacy issues?"

Avoid Polarizing Questions

- Refrain from questions that are likely to generate polarizing responses that are not useful in opening up the topic being discussed.

"Under what circumstances do privacy rights have precedence over issues of morality?"

Tip: While a question such as this is likely to generate a lively discussion, it could just as quickly become a polarizing debate over abortion.

Use the time you have

- Have at least five discussion questions prepared for each one hour of discussion.
- You don't need to use all of these questions, but having questions in reserve can be very helpful.

Let the sequencing of the questions you use be natural

- Often the discussion of one question will naturally lead to the discussion of another question.
- You don't need to worry about putting the questions in some order.
- Don't force a question that is not relevant to the topic being discussed.

Try to avoid belittling wording

- They can discourage further contributions from the member it is directed to.
- Look at the difference of the following two questions:

"Do you really think that would work given the current circumstances?" versus *"Do you think that would work given the current circumstances?"*

End with more Questions

- Leave the group with post-discussion questions to consider for the next meeting.
- This will help get the discussion started for the next session, especially if a different team member is facilitating.

During Preparation, approach problem from the perspective of your team

- Think of your ideas
- Create questions that may trigger discussion on your viewpoint without necessarily stating it.

Note

Generally the discussion questions are not given in advance to your classmates. They are merely prompts for you to use in facilitating the discussion.