



HOW TO TALK PHILOSOPHY:

Philosophy Class Discussion Moves



01

Ask for clarification

"I'm having trouble understanding [concept/view/argument]. Could you explain it again?"

"I'm a bit unclear on the distinction between [two views/concepts]. Could you clarify it for me?"

"Could you remind me how this connects to [issue]?"

02

Check your understanding

"I want to make sure I understand your point correctly. Are you suggesting that [...]?"

"Is the debate mainly about [...]?"

"Is X saying this because [...]?"

"Is one of the premises of the argument that [...]?"

03

Offer examples

"One example of [phenomenon] might be [...]."

"I think we can illustrate [concept] with the case of [real-life scenario]."

"I think my own experience with [situation] helps me understand what X means by [...]. Here's how: [...]."

04

Reveal assumptions

"It sounds like the assumption here is that [...]."

"I think X and Y might be defining [term] differently. X takes it to mean [...] whereas Y takes it to mean [...]."

"There seems to be a hidden premise in this argument, namely that [...]."

05

Agree with reasons

"I agree with X because [...]."

"I think this claim is true because [...]."

"I think this argument is strong because [...]."

"I think this objection succeeds because [...]."

"I think this response is convincing because [...]."

06

Disagree with reasons

"I disagree because [...]."

"I think this claim is false because [...]."

"I think this argument fails because [...]."

"I don't think this objection succeeds because [...]."

"I don't find this response convincing because [...]."

07

Make connections

"I think what X just said connects to what Y was saying before. Here's how: [...]."

"This reminds me of our previous discussion of [another topic] because [...]."

"I think X might respond that [...] because [...]."

08

Identify (dis)agreements

"It seems that we agree on [claim]."

"It sounds like our disagreement boils down to [...]."

"We seem to be leaning towards the view that [...]."

"We seem to have different takes on what X means by [...]."

09

Summarize

"Here's a recap of our discussion: X argued that [...]. Y responded by saying that [...], and Z then pointed out that [...]."

"It sounds like our main worries about [concept/view/argument] are [...]."

"The key takeaway of this discussion seems to be [...]."

10

Pump intuitions

"Let's say we were in [hypothetical situation]. What would your gut reaction be, and how does it inform your take on [issue]?"

"Think about a time when you felt [specific emotion]. Does this experience support or challenge [argument/view]?"

11

Change it up

"I think it might be useful here to consider [related issue] because [...]."

"I wonder how these ideas might apply to [another relevant topic]."

"I think evidence from [another field of study] might be relevant here. Can we talk about that?"

12

Give credit

"The example X used changed my thinking on this because [...]."

"I think X's point was particularly important, because [...]."

"I appreciate X bringing up [...]. I hadn't thought of it and it seems relevant here because [...]."