

Moderating Discussions Using Different Voices

When moderating discussions there are a variety of different voices you can take to guide student participation to reach deep levels of understanding and application.

Here is a description of different voices a moderator might assume in a discussion. For a deeper discussion of voices that includes examples and sample questions, go to [VOICES](#).

Generative Guide: This voice might be used after reading a dialogue thread and determining that plenty has been posted but it is of little of value to deepening the discussion. Here, your goal is to target likely conceptual blocks or assumptions. Using this voice you can list current directions or contributions and seek alternative ordering principles, extensions, or interpretations.

Conceptual Facilitator: You would assume this voice in order to address omissions, imbalances, or imbalances in a discussion thread. Here, you would bring forward certain ideas or probe certain entries for key concepts or connections that may be missing or weakly articulated. Using this voice you would indicate current progress and then identify conceptual areas, tensions or unbalanced expositions that need attention.

Reflective Guide: This voice is used for restating and re-crafting student posts. As a Reflective Guide you might refocus dialogue around certain points or issues by selectively highlighting or paraphrasing fruitful lines of discourse.

Personal Muse: Using this voice, you would start your intervention with a personal dialogue about central issues. Here, you model the kind of internal dialogue one might have with him/herself when critically examining his/her beliefs.

Mediator: Through this voice you will use personal communication or insights from your own experience to assess participants' unstated reasons for their reactions. The goal of this voice is to transition from a potentially argumentative forum to a pragmatic dialogue.

Role Play: Here, you actually step outside your role as instructor and take on a completely new persona. By using role play you can introduce necessary alternative perspectives into the dialogue without concern for personal ownership or direct confrontation of participants.

Adapted from *Facilitating Online Learning: Effective Strategies for Moderators*, G. Collison, B. Elbaum, S. Haavind, & R. Tinker (2000)