

Socratic Seminar Rules of Engagement

Traditional Socratic Seminars have a discussion group and an observation group, usually arranged in an inner circle and an outer circle. Depending on which group you are assigned to, you will either be participating in the discussion or observing it. It is important for both groups of students to understand the “Rules of Engagement” for the seminar.

Before the seminar (for inner circle, unless told otherwise by teacher):

1. Read the text in advance.
2. Number the paragraphs.
3. Complete the Socratic Seminar Planning Guide.

During the seminar

1. The teacher or instructor will serve as a discussion moderator but will not answer questions during the seminar. The goal is for you and your classmates to keep the discussion going. **Address each other but do not turn to your teacher.**
2. Everyone in the inner circle should participate in the discussion and practice taking turns **without** raising hands. Instead, wait for a break in the discussion. It is important for you to speak but also for you to give others the chance to speak as well. See the Tips for Joining the Discussion for examples.
3. Listen carefully and do not interrupt when others are talking.
4. Everyone should have a chance to participate by either asking a question, answering a question, providing a comment, or giving an example from the text.
5. Comments, questions, and answers should be supported by facts from the text. This means that you should be prepared to share the paragraph number where the information is located or even give a quote from the text. You can use the Socratic Seminar Planning Guide to help you.
6. Agree or disagree with comments, not individuals!
7. Keep the discussion moving. If you were the last person to speak and there is a pause or silence, call on someone that has not spoken yet to join the discussion.

After the seminar

1. Complete the Socratic Seminar Self-Reflection and/ or Peer-Evaluation