Try to frame your reading questions in ways that might result in a more engaging discussion. Together, these approaches help students learn to identify the differences between unsubstantiated opinions and reasoned, supported arguments. Some ways to do that:

1. Create names for the teams. In a science course, for example, teams might be named after the major systems in the human body, such as the heart, lungs, or brain. On the first day, the professor assigns students to teams by rolling a die or drawing names from a hat. This approach is particularly helpful with those very bright, yet very shy students.

2. Set the stage on the first day. If students are not prepared for a discussion, it can be an incomplete first day. Some students, because they see taking part in a class discussion as optional, may not prepare. Thus, you might begin the first day that you want them participating regularly in class discussions with this Chronicle guide. For more advice on how to teach a first day that you want them participating regularly in class checking names against the class roster and going over the syllabus in hopes of clarifying expectations and procedures. The professor's voice is the only one students hear on that first day.

3. Provide the correct answer to each question in turn, and check to see if further attempts at humor, or making brief eye contact. And by the things they don't do: appear to be listening, they can expect that the professor won't call on them unless they are participating. In a discussion, it is typically an ineffective way to start a productive discussion. Yes-or-no questions are often an ineffective way to start a productive discussion. How to Disrupt Those Norms

4. Try a discussion about discussion. How to Disrupt Those Norms

When students are studying alone or are preparing for an exam, they may not ask an instructor questions. For more advice on how to disrupt discussion, see this Chronicle guide. This guide suggests strategies for increasing participation in class discussions. The professor's voice is the only one students hear on that first day. Afternoon Update

Discussion is one strategy for shifting the work from instructor to students. Rather than the people doing the most work are also the ones doing the most learning. If you, as the instructor, engage in a discussion, your students can learn a lot from you. The more questions you ask, the more students you will engage.

Don't let the uncertainties dissuade you. There are good reasons to engage students in a discussion. To come up with reasons, consider the different types of questions and how they affect students' learning experiences. For example, open-ended questions can lead to a deeper understanding of the material. In contrast, closed-ended questions can limit the range of answers students give. A good question is one that allows for multiple perspectives. It shows that the topic is relevant or helpful. Here are four ways to do that:

- Frame the question to inspire a range of answers. Don't ask, "When did the invention of the telephone change the world?" Instead, ask, "What are some ways the invention of the telephone has changed the world?" This type of question encourages students to think critically and creatively.

- Make the questions analytical in scope. Ask questions that require students to analyze evidence, draw conclusions, and make inferences. For example, "What evidence do you have that the invention of the telephone had a positive impact on society?"

- Ask students to apply concepts from other courses or from their own experiences. For example, "How is the invention of the telephone related to the development of the internet?"

- Ask students to evaluate information from different sources. For example, "How do you think the invention of the telephone would be perceived if it were invented today?"
When to raise controversial issues.

Should you stake out a position?

If, for instance, your college faces a debate about changing the name of a building

A second approach is to ask classmates to assist the student who is on the wrong

One possible strategy is to ask the student to redefine the topic. Perhaps the student

Another approach is to ask your class to “take sides” with their teacher. That is, ask

Yet another approach is to ask your class to “take sides” with the professor. That is,

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