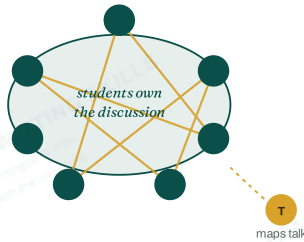


03 Harkness Discussion

A student-led, text-based discussion with minimal teacher intervention. One large oval table, no “front” of the room — students own the conversation while the teacher maps it.

SEATING & DISCUSSION MAP



● Student ● Teacher (observing)

— who speaks to whom

TEACHER INVOLVEMENT

Very low — waits silently, maps participation, feedback afterwards.

BEST EAP USES

- Close reading
- Literature / article analysis
- Synthesis of multiple sources
- Critical evaluation
- Advanced seminar preparation

PREPARATION — STUDENTS MUST BRING

- Annotated texts (one substantial reading or two related texts)
- Two discussion questions
- One important quotation
- One point of agreement
- One criticism or limitation

1

Students own it

They begin, invite, return to the text, question, manage disagreement, summarize.

2

Set the norms

Speak to classmates, use names, cite page numbers, avoid repetition, invite quiet voices, challenge respectfully.

3

Opening question

“What assumptions do the authors make about writing instruction and student success?”

4

A student begins

The teacher waits silently.

5

Students develop it

Compare texts, question evidence, find missing perspectives, examine terminology.

6

Track the discussion

Teacher draws a map of who speaks to whom; no grammar interruptions.

7

Pause to reflect

After 15–20 min, one minute to write: what changed your thinking? what’s missing?

8

Resume deeper

Written reflections feed back into the conversation.

9

Student summary

1–2 students summarize agreements, disagreements, open questions.

WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE

“In paragraph four, the author assumes writing ability affects performance in every discipline. Do you think the evidence supports that assumption?”

“I am not sure the second article proves transfer — it discusses correlation rather than causation.”

TEACHER’S ROLE & ASSESSMENT

- Selects appropriate texts and sets expectations
- Observes rather than leads; maps participation
- Provides feedback after the discussion
- Assess:** preparation · reference to evidence · quality of questions · responsiveness to peers · critical thinking · contribution to group progress

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

- Who helped move the discussion forward?
- Which comments were grounded in the text?
- Were any voices missing?
- Did the group explore ideas deeply or move too quickly?

Named for philanthropist Edward Harkness, whose 1930 gift to Phillips Exeter Academy introduced the oval-table, student-led method.

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