

1 Chairing a discussion – TASK

A chairperson has the following responsibilities in a discussion:

1. Getting the discussion started
2. Giving a brief overview of the topic (introducing it)
3. Possibly giving definitions
4. Keeping the discussion going by encouraging everyone to participate
5. Clarifying what people say, if necessary
6. Ensuring that one person does not dominate
7. Checking that all contributions were understood
8. Managing the time
9. Summing up the discussion at the end

Read the nine extracts (a–i) from a discussion below, made by the chairperson. Match each extract with one of the responsibilities from the list above.

- a. Sorry, can I just quickly recap on your main point, so everyone is clear about your position. If I've understood you correctly, you're arguing that the government's goal that 50% of school leavers should go into higher education will inevitably lead to a decline in standards. Is that right?
- b. Before we start, perhaps we should be clear about what we mean by 'academic'. For the purposes of this discussion, we're referring to higher education only, not school-level study.
- c. I think we need to round off this discussion soon, as we're running out of time. Would anyone like to make any final points?
- d. Ok, shall we begin? Hopefully, we've all had a chance to look at the reading text and thought about the topic.
- e. Sorry, David, could I just ask if anyone else wants to come in here, before you respond. You've made a lot of interesting points so far, but I want to give some of the others a chance to join in.
- f. Thanks, Jo. Did everyone follow that?
- g. So, we're looking today at the controversial issue of whether success in academic study is any way influenced by a student's socio-economic background. Does the income of a student's family, the educational background of their parents, the part of the country they come from etc have any effect on their chances of success?
- h. Ok, it looks like we've covered quite a range of views on this issue, but most of us seem to believe that students' initial performance in higher education might be negatively affected by their background. That influence disappears into the second or third year of study. That was the general consensus, I think. Is that a fair summary?
- i. Does anyone want to respond to that point? Anyone who hasn't spoken yet? John or Anna, would you like to come in at this stage?