

GAMBITS: Moves for Getting in and Navigating Discussions

1. Opening a discussion

To begin with,

We need to discuss . . .

determine, find out

Let's start by (V ing)

We'll start by (V ing)

The problem here is . . .

issue question

The important thing (here) is . . .

The main thing we need to discuss is . . .

Let's look at . . .

It looks like . . .

It appears that . . .

2. Asking for input

What do you think?

How about you?

How do you feel about that?

Any ideas on that?

3. Responding

That sounds like a) good idea.

Sounds good.

The problem with that is . . .

That raises the issue of . . .
brings up

4. Clarifying your own ideas

In other words,

What I mean is . . .

What I'm trying to say is . . .

What I wanted to say was . . .

To clarify,

5. Asking for Clarification

What do you mean (by that)?

What are you trying to say?

What was that again?

Could you clarify that?

6. Clarifying/confirming another's ideas

You mean . . .

What you mean is . . .

What you're saying is . . .

(I think) what she means is . . .

What he's trying to say is . . .

If I understand you, (you're saying that . . .)

If I'm hearing you correctly,

So, you think (that) . . .

So, your idea is . . .

Generally, to clarify or confirm what someone has said, we use **paraphrasing**, which involves restating someone else's ideas in your own words. Some phrases used to introduce paraphrasing:

So . . . (rephrase the other person's ideas)

In other words . . . (paraphrase)

I understand. (You're saying that . . .)

Oh. I see. (You want to say that . . .)

I get it. (You mean . . .)

So, what you mean is . . .

Let me see if I understand you correctly. . .

What I think you're saying is . . .

If I'm hearing you correctly . .

7. Checking for Understanding

(Do you) know what I mean?

Do you know what I'm saying?

Do you understand?

Are you following me?

Are you with me (so far)?

Have you got it?

Any questions?

Got it?

8. Showing Understanding

I see.

I understand.

I get it./I got it.

Gotcha. (Informal)

9. Expressing Lack of Understanding

I don't get it.

(I'm sorry.) I don't understand.

What do you mean?

I'm not following you.

I don't quite follow you.

I'm not sure I get what you mean.

What was that again?

10. Interrupting politely

Excuse me,

Pardon me,

Sorry to interrupt,

May I interrupt (for a minute)?

Can I add something here?

I don't mean to intrude, but . . .

Could I inject something here?

Do you mind if I jump in here?

11. Getting back to the topic

Anyway,

Now, where was I?

Where were we?

What were you saying?

You were saying . . .

To get back to . . .

12. Asking for Elaboration

Could you elaborate (on that)?

Could you tell me a little more about it?

Could you give (me) some details?

Could you fill me in on that?

Could you expound on that?

What else can you tell us (about that)?

Is there anything else you can tell us?

Is there more to it?

13.Elaborating

To elaborate,

To give you more information,

Let me explain.

Let me elaborate.

Let me tell you a little more (about it).

Let me give you some details.

What's more,...

14. Commenting

If you would like to make a comment or insert a remark in an ongoing conversation, it is polite to acknowledge what someone has just said before stating your own ideas:

That's interesting. I think that...

Interesting point. I would add...

Hmmm. I hadn't thought of that before.

Questions can also be a useful way of bringing new ideas into a conversation:

What do you think about . . .

Have you considered . . .

What about . . .

Sometimes a more direct approach is appropriate:

Can I add something here?

(Do you) mind if I interject something here?