

## **GUIDELINES FOR SOCRATIC SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS**

1. Refer to the text when needed during the discussion. A seminar is not a test of memory. You are not “learning a subject”; your goal is to understand the ideas, issues, and values reflected in the text.
  2. It’s OK to “pass” when asked to contribute.
  3. Do not participate if you are not prepared.
  4. Do not stay confused; ask for clarification.
  5. Stick to the point currently under discussion; make notes about ideas you want to come back to.
  6. Don’t raise hands; take turns speaking.
  7. Listen carefully.
  8. Speak up so that all can hear you.
  9. Talk to each other, not just the leader or teacher.
  10. Discuss ideas rather than each other’s opinions.
  11. You are responsible for the seminar, even if you don’t know it or admit it.
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## **DIALOGUE AND DEBATE**

- Dialogue is collaborative: multiple sides work hard toward shared understanding.  
Debate is oppositional: two opposing sides try to prove each other wrong.
- In dialogue, one listens to understand, to make meaning, and to find common ground.  
In debate, one listens to find flaws, to spot differences, and to counter arguments.
- Dialogue enlarges and possibly changes a participant’s point of view.  
Debate defends assumptions as truth.
- In dialogue, one submits one’s best thinking, expecting that the other person’s reflections will help improve it rather than threaten it.  
In debate, one submits one’s best thinking and defends it against challenge to show that it is right.
- Dialogue calls for temporarily suspending one’s beliefs.  
Debate calls for investing wholeheartedly in one’s beliefs.
- In dialogue, one searches for strengths in all positions.  
In debate, one searches for weaknesses in other positions.
- Dialogue respects all the other participants and seeks not to alienate or offend.  
Debate rebuts contrary positions and may belittle or deprecate other participants.
- Dialogue assumes that many people have pieces of answers and that cooperation can lead to a greater understanding.  
Debate assumes a single right answer that somebody already has.
- Dialogue remains open-ended.  
Debate demands a conclusion.