BIG THINK +

How can I run an engaging group discussion session?

Last Modified on 08/11/2026 11:14 am EDT

This article outlines how you can run a group discussion or team session that is engaging, inclusive, and relevant.

Running a group discussion for training purposes is different than running other types of meetings. The goal of the facilitator is to foster shared understanding and knowledge by creating a safe space for people to share and learn from each other, and not to "teach" or "lecture" the group.

Here are 10 best practices to help leaders run a group discussion using Big Think+ Lessons and Discussion Guides:

1. Set the Tone Early

- Start with a brief check-in or light opener: *"What stood out from the video?"*
- Reinforce that this is a safe, learning-focused space - not a performance review.
- Avoid recording the session or allowing AI notetakers when virtual.
- Encourage curiosity: *"There's no one right answer. We're here to explore together."*

2. Be a Facilitator, Not a Lecturer

- Ask questions instead of giving answers.
- Use the Discussion Guide to frame prompts, then step back to let others speak.
- Redirect back to the group if someone asks you directly: *"Great question - what do others think?"*

3. Keep It Focused and Time-Aware

- Stick to the main question or theme of the week.
- Watch the clock: allow time for everyone to speak (especially in 30-minute sessions).
- If the discussion goes long, use a "parking lot" for topics to revisit later.

4. Encourage Diverse Participation

- Invite (but don't force) quieter team members: *"I'd love to hear your take on this."*
- Use pair shares or small breakout groups if the group is large.
- Set a norm: *"We want to hear from everyone - brief and honest is great."*

5. Ground Discussion in Real Work

- Ask: *"How does this apply to what we're doing this week?"*

- Prompt real-world examples: *"Have you faced a situation like this recently?"*
- Encourage action: *"What's one thing you'll try differently after this discussion?"*

6. Model Openness and Vulnerability

- Share your own learning or uncertainty: *"This made me think differently about how I give feedback."*
- Admit when something is challenging - you'll give others permission to do the same.

7. Wrap Up with a Clear Takeaway

- Ask: *"What's one insight or commitment you're walking away with?"*
- Summarize key themes or agreements.
- Reinforce how this connects to team or company goals.

8. Follow Up After the Discussion

- Send a quick recap or reflection question.
- Check in 1:1 with anyone who had an idea or challenge to act on.
- If appropriate, share a next step or related resource (another Big Think+ video, a practice challenge, or a coaching moment).

Tip: Use the Discussion Guide as a Flexible Tool

- You don't need to use every question; choose 2 or 3 that feel most relevant right now.



Need to get ready to facilitate a discussion?
Use our Group Discussions: Cheat Sheet to get yourself ready!