

YSP Summer Focus Writing Course
Guidelines for Facilitating Small Group Discussions
Last revised: 05/07/07

The second half hour of each writing course class period is devoted to small group discussions. The class will break into four groups of three students. Each group will have a YSP facilitator to lead the discussion.

- Start by introducing yourself and giving a brief but understandable description of what you research. When you encounter a blank look, ask the student if s/he understands what you just said. If s/he says yes, have him/her explain back to you what you just said.
- Next, ask a student at random to tell you what s/he has been doing since the last class period. If s/he gives you a vague answer, ask questions. Specifically, ask why s/he is doing whatever it is s/he is doing.
 - We want the kids to understand what and why they are doing experiments as well as be able to explain to potential college employers what they did over the summer in a coherent manner.
- Sometimes, the discussions will be structured to reinforce a concept that was learned in class. Be sure they actually follow the structure—they won't necessarily want to at first.
 - After the oral presentations strategies class, each student should discuss his/her work while standing up with the others sitting down. This is to help them get more comfortable with public speaking.
 - After the science for non-scientists class, students should discuss their work like they were talking to their grandparents. Help them out with this one by acting like a grandparent, asking all sorts of weird questions or making them describe things in detail. This will help them describe their experiences to their high school teachers, friends, and families.
- Have fun with the kids—you don't have to talk about research all the time. Feel free to talk about careers in science, possible colleges or majors, hot topics in science, how things are going in lab, or anything that is somewhat sciencey. You can also joke around with them—it's more fun for all involved and you'll get to know them better.
 - We want the students to talk about their projects, but we also want them to be able to discuss other science-related topics. Besides, if you try to make them all talk about their projects for ten minutes each, they will run out of things to say, and then get bored or surly.
 - Developing good relationships with the kids makes it easier to figure out if anything is going wrong in their labs. If you think anyone is not having enough fun in lab or that anything else is going badly, let one of the writing course instructors, YSP liaisons, or YSP coordinator know.