

# Ideas to help children to think more during discussions

Tell them the rules before you start the discussion:

1. Do your best thinking – there can be lots of different answers that are all interesting and helpful to think about.
2. Listen carefully to others' answers

Ask a question, tell them that you want them to think about it for a few seconds first before anyone calls out an answer, and then go around the circle giving each child an opportunity to contribute their ideas, if they want to.

Ask them to think about what other people contribute: *“Do you agree? Why or why not? What ideas could you add to that answer?”*

Sometimes children might not be able to answer a question. Resist the temptation to answer the question yourself! This could stop them pondering their own response, and could give them the idea that there's only one right answer, that is - the adult's answer. Give them a few seconds, and then say some thing like: *‘That’s a question that needs a lot of thinking... maybe you could continue thinking about it... You could talk about it with me later today if you have some ideas, or perhaps with someone at home.’* and then simply move on to the next part of the discussion. We want our kids to know that it's ok to ask questions, and that it's ok to have unanswerable questions and questions that you need to think about more and come back to another time.

If a child asks a question, first ask them *‘I wonder, what do you think about that?’* and/or *‘I wonder, what do the rest of you think about that?’*. Resist the desire to just give a formulaic answer, and instead try to encourage questioning thought.