MAKE THE MOST OF TUTES

If you want to take an active role in tutorials but you’re not sure how to do it, keep reading.

Like all communication skills, taking part in group discussions requires practice and self-evaluation. The best way to get started is to understand what tutorials (usually called tutes) are for and what is required of you.

Understanding tutorials
Tutes can be powerful learning opportunities. Among other things, they
- give you a chance to ask questions
- allow you to develop your oral communication skills (which are highly-valued in the workplace)
- provide you with an opportunity to hear a range of opinions and ideas
- promote deep learning by giving you the chance to apply, critically evaluate and test the material covered in lectures.

Speaking up in tutes is a form of active learning and will help you
- develop your ability to articulate your understanding of your unit content
- transfer the content from your short term memory to your long term memory, which, among other things, will be useful if you have exams.

Start contributing in tutes from week one even if it feels scary. The more you are an active participant, the more likely you will find your academic study enjoyable and fulfilling.

Getting started
If you are shy or find it difficult to speak up in groups, here are some ways to ‘break the ice’ or, in other words, to get started.

1. Talk to at least a few members of the tute in the first session. Asking questions in a group where you have a number of acquaintances or friends is less daunting than in a group where you know no one. Start by talking to the person next to you.

2. Plan before the tute what you want to say. You could ask a question or make a comment.

3. Plan to make at least one or two comments in each tute. Once you have made a start, joining in will probably get easier.

4. Always ask for clarification if anything is unclear. This is a useful form of participation as the answer is sure to help others in the tute too.

5. Practise different ways of joining the discussion. Observe and learn from others.

Did you know?
A key to having something meaningful to say in tutorials is to do the pre-readings, attend all the lectures and then develop some questions before the tutorial.
Play your part

**Take responsibility** for the success of each tutorial.

Many students blame the tutor or other students when a tutorial is unsuccessful. Don’t contribute to the problem of an unsatisfactory tute. Be part of the solution.

In any tute you could try the following:
- **Start** the discussion by, for example, asking a question or offering an opinion.
- **Support** others. In most tutes, there will be students whose English language competence is not as strong as others. If someone is taking time to answer a question, don’t rush in and ‘help’ them. Just give them time.
- **Monitor** your contribution. Don’t talk too much or too little.
- **Help** by listening carefully and responding to others’ comments, asking relevant questions, restating points made, respectfully telling others when you disagree with a point and why.
- **Keep** your comments focused on the point of the discussion.

Discussion skills

- **Take risks** – whether what you say is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ is less important than you being engaged the discussion. It is better to say something everyone disagrees with than to say nothing at all. How will you know it is if it is a minority view if you don’t try it out on your peers? If it is ‘wrong’ you will learn from it. If it is ‘right’, others will learn. **However, remember having a minority view might be ‘right’ for you.**

- **Take more risks** – speak up if you disagree with what is being said. Restate what the other speaker has said and state your reasons for disagreeing. Remember your opinion is as valid as anyone else’s.

| Many people say we learn most from our mistakes |

After the tute

- Make a note of the important points made. Ask yourself whether you fully understand the topic. If not, work out what follow-up you need to do.

- Evaluate our own contribution and consider how you might improve it.

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