Chapter Ten
In What Ways Can We Plan Lessons for Home Economics Curriculum:
The Discussion Lesson

It is seldom that a discussion lesson takes up the entire class time. More likely it
is a mini-lesson within a larger lesson that includes other learning activities as well as the
discussion.

Discussion lessons can meet several objectives, such as: gaining an understanding
of the complexity of a certain topic; determining students’ prior knowledge; determining
various points of view; hearing of student experience with the topic; considering
appropriate action to address an issue or problem; challenging the status quo and things
taken for granted; and so on.

Discussions may be small group or involve the whole class. Small group
discussion is effective for students who are reluctant to speak out in larger groups. In this
chapter we will focus on preparing a lesson plant for a large group discussion.

As a discussion leader, you the teacher, have some basic responsibilities:
• making the classroom climate safe for discussions
• setting the ground rules (e.g., everyone has the right to be heard, everyone has the right
to pass, one person talks at a time, limit the number of times that you speak, not
interrupting, respect others’ values, be non-judgmental, comment on ideas not people,
etc.)
• determining the seating arrangement (have students face each other if possible, sit with
students)
• initiating the discussion, determining how to raise the basic issue
• keeping the discussion flowing and on topic
  - phrasing questions clearly and succinctly
  - allowing ten to fifteen seconds of wait time after asking a question before
requesting a student’s response
  - encouraging students to respond even if they are wrong
  - probing for evidence and reasons beyond opinions
  - distinguishing between knowledge and beliefs, facts and assumptions
  - pursuing problematic areas of thought
  - paraphrasing
  - helping students to discover the structure of their own thoughts
  - asking about implications and consequences
• involving all students
• listening carefully
• acknowledging and responding to students responses, encouraging students to respond
to other students’ responses (e.g., do you agree?, can you paraphrase what was just said?,
can you give examples?)
• periodically summarizing the discussion and refocusing
• determining when to sum up and how to transition to other parts of the main lesson

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Components of a Socratic Discussion Lesson Plan

1. Point of entry questions

Characteristics of point of entry questions
- Open ended yet focus inquiry on a specific topic
- Are non-judgmental
- Contain emotive force and intellectual bite
- Are succinct

Examples of point of entry questions
- Who is hungry?
- Why be concerned about food miles?
- What beliefs are worth fighting for?
- What does it mean to be healthy?
- Why do some children have to work?
- Are minimum wage laws fair?
- What are the characteristics of a good home?
- What is homophobia?

2. Instrumental/technical/data/informational questions

These are questions that clarify the topic or issue. They seek factual information.

Examples of Instrumental/technical/data/informational questions
- What do you think is the main issue here?
- Can you give an example?
- Could this be put another way?
- What factual information relates to this?
- How could that be defined?

3. Interpretive/meaning/value questions

These are questions that probe for student experience with the topic, different points of view and why people hold these points of view. What do the students know about the topic? What do they think they know?

Examples of Interpretive/meaning/value questions
- Have you any experience with this topic you can share?
- Can you give other examples?
- Why would people hold that point of view? What are their values?
- Why do you think that is true?
- What evidence might support that?

4. Critical/emancipatory questions
These are questions that explore the connection to society and social justice issues. They probe for what is taken for granted. They encourage critique, questioning the status quo, power relations, inequality or injustice of their own experience or those of others. They provide for a more in-depth exploration of consequences for self and others of various actions.

Examples of Critical/emancipatory questions
- What is unjust or unfair? Why?
- What kinds of action could be taken to address this issue?
- What are the alternatives?
- What are the consequences?
- What would happen if everyone did this?
- If that happened, what else would also happen as a result?
- How could we go about finding out if that is true?

5. Summary/Conclusion questions

Examples of Summary/Conclusion questions
- Can someone summarize our discussion?
- What were the main points made related to our discussion topic?

6. Possible follow-up activities

This should relate to the topic of the lesson and what was used as a motivator. It could be further research. If the motivator was a cartoon it could be creating a new cartoon, if the motivator was a newspaper heading it could be writing a letter to the editor of the paper, etc.
A TEMPLATE FOR DISCUSSION LESSONS

COURSE & GRADE ___________SPECIFIC TOPIC: _______________________

RELATED PLO'S:

OBJECTIVES (SWBAT):

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INTRODUCTION/MOTIVATOR

BODY OF THE LESSON

1. Point of entry questions

2. Instrumental/technical/ data/informational questions

3. Interpretive/meaning/ value questions

4. Critical/emancipatory questions

5. Summary/Conclusion questions

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

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REFLECTION
An Example of a Discussion Lesson Plan

Course: Family Studies
Grade Level: 11/12
Topic: Toys
IRP Connection:
   a) curriculum module
      Child Development and Parent
   b) learning outcomes
      A6 analyse the rights and responsibilities of being a parent,

Objective:
TWBAT: identify societal pressures related to the purchase of toys for children and the consequences of these pressures for parents and children.

Hook/Motivator/Introduction/Point of Entry:
The latest "have to have" toy or an advertisement for it.

Sample Questions:
   a) Instrumental/Technical/Data/Informational Questions
      What are the basic purposes of toys? What purpose might this toy fulfill?
      Who created this toy? What is its history?
      How do the principles of supply and demand affect a consumer's purchasing power? Who benefits from supply and demand economics?
      What types of advertising techniques are used to sell this toy?
   b) Interpretive/meaning/Value Questions
      What are the social implications of having this toy?
      How does the toy affect child development? (physically, intellectually, emotionally)
      How does advertising and the media create wants and desires for people? What marketing techniques have been used to sell this toy? Are they ethical?
      Do you know of anyone who has this toy or who has purchased this toy for a child? What is their experience?
   c) Critical/Emancipatory Questions
      Where is the toy produced? Under what conditions is it produced?
      What values are you consciously or unconsciously accepting when you purchase this toy?
      What are the consequences for parents when demands for toys like this are created in the marketplace? What are the consequences for children?
      Who benefits from the sale of this toy? Who loses?
      Would you purchase this toy? Explain why or why not.
      What values do you think ought to guide parental/adult selection of toys for children?

Summary/Conclusion
In small groups brainstorm answers to the following question: What should be done about societal pressure in the purchase of toys for children?

Possible Follow Up (ways to address this issue)
Students could examine ads for children’s toy and determine the advertising strategies used. Students could deconstruct an ad for toys using ADbusters, spoof ads strategy.
Questions to Guide Discussion Lesson Planning

1. Do you have an engaging point of entry (could be a cartoon, newspaper headline, video clip, poem, riddle, statistics, etc.) and questions to clarify the topic?

2. Do you have a breadth of questions in each category? (instrumental, interpretive, critical)

3. Have you considered a sequence? Note: seldom do you follow the questions in the order you have created them, however by having the questions prepared in advance you can select which questions will be appropriate as you proceed.

4. Have you considered your objectives when creating your questions?

5. Have you planned backwards from your follow-up activity?

Structured Discussions

Another form of discussion are structured small group discussions. Here are two examples.

Fishbowl or Inner and Outer circles

Procedure:
1. Prior to the day of discussion, students are assigned to create a certain number of questions (usually 5) related to the focus of the discussion. These must be brought to class the day of discussion. The teacher may choose to check the questions for a completion grade or to include them as part of the overall grade for the activity. [Hint: you can ask them used stems based on a set standard, such as Bloom’s Taxonomy.]
2. The teacher’s initial instructions should include the requirements of each circle:
   Inner Circle
   • Serves as the discussion panel for student-generated questions
   • May or may not take notes
   • Each member should provide at least two (2) quality responses (extension, cause/effect, elaboration-fully supported by textual evidence)
   • No moderator; no hands raised – listen and “jump in”
   • Follows rules of courteous discussion
   • May ask questions of each other only
   • No interaction with outer circle or teacher
   
   Outer Circle
   • Responsible for guiding/motivating/extending inner circle discussion (through questions)
   • Listen/take notes/ask questions
   • Each member should ask at least one (1) question
   • No moderator; no hands raised – listen and “jump in”
Follows rules of courteous discussion
No "yes" or "no" questions allowed
No interactions with inner circle or teacher
May not respond to the inner circle discussions
The discussion itself can be graded based on the expectations for participation that you determined and relayed to the class. See the example discussion assessment in chapter 6.

3. On the day of the discussion, the teacher pre-arranges desks in an inner and outer circle. Groups can be formed on a volunteer or teacher-selected basis (i.e. Have students number off 1 and 2; all 1's are inner circle, and all 2's are outer circle).

4. The inner circle discusses for the pre-determined time or until the teacher feels all these students’ thoughts have been fully expressed.
The teacher may or may not intervene during the discussion; but if he/she does, it should be only to reinforce the discussion or ask for clarification or extension if a student does not. THE TEACHER’S ROLE IS ONE OF OBSERVER. His/Her primary role is to monitor and/or evaluate the activity.

5. The inner circle then changes places with the outer circle the discussion is repeated.

6. The teacher may ask for summaries at the end of the discussion period. Students or teacher may write down main points on the overhead/board to ensure all have necessary information. A post-discussion (debrief) assignment may also be assessed: you might ask students to respond more fully to the best question that was asked, or to provide concluding thoughts about the text or discussion. If this discussion is serving as a concluding activity for a unit of study, your post-discussion assignment might be used to provide a transition to the new unit.

**Placemat Activity**

These are typical directions for a placemat:

Names of Group Members

1. On your large piece of poster paper, make a diagram similar to the one below.

![Diagram of placemat activity](attachment://placemat_diagram.png)
2. Give each member of your group a section of the placemat. Write your name in your section (leave room for points). Respond to the topic or question as assigned by your teacher:

[Note to teacher: you will observe that the teacher needs to give some background information in order for this activity to proceed].

3. Read each other's sections, rotating the placemat around your table. Observe similar points that everyone has made.

4. In the middle circle, write the points that are common to everyone in the group.