

Quick Tip: 7 Discussion Roles for Listening Classes

By [Rebecca Palmer](#)

Audience: Academic listening classes, intermediate and advanced levels

In reading classes, students often perform roles in after-reading discussions of an assignment (Daniels, 2002). These roles, such as group leader or summarizer, allow students to focus on one part of what they are reading. These reading roles, however, also enable students to apply academic listening skills in student-led after-listening discussions. Below are suggestions for seven discussion roles; depending on class size, you may elect to use some or all of them. Each role, with the exception of the Note Taker and Discussion Leader, presents for 1–3 minutes. Students should be given a day or two to prepare for the discussion.

Student Instructions for Seven After-Listening Discussion Roles

Note Taker. (This role is for all students.) Take notes as you listen to or view an audio or visual recording. View or listen to the recording at least twice.

Discussion Leader. Your role is to get the discussion started and to keep it going. Prepare five questions about things that surprised you or that you didn't know before. Use these questions to begin the discussion. Then, call on each person in your group to present his or her role. Make sure everyone has a chance to present.

Summarizer. Your role is to make sure everyone understands key points. Be prepared to retell what the recording is about. Include key points that everyone needs to understand. Ask the group questions about their understanding of these key points.

Connector. Your role is to help others see connections to what they already know. Make at least two connections to your own experiences and knowledge or to the experiences and knowledge of friends and family. Ask the group if they know things from other sources that are similar to what they heard.

Word Expert. Your role is to look for words that are good to know. Choose five words that you want others to understand. In your own words, explain the meanings of the words to the group. The words do not have to be new words. Discuss with the group ways to use these words.

Section Expert. Your role is to look carefully at one section of the recording. Look for a section that is important, interesting, confusing, surprising, well said, or difficult. Explain why this section caught your attention. Ask one or two questions about the section.

Culture Expert. Your role is to notice ideas that are the same and different from ideas in your own culture. Make a list of what is different or the same in your culture. Explain the similarities and differences you find. Ask the group to make comparisons to their own cultures.

Illustrator. Your role is to create pictures or diagrams that illustrate what the recording is about. Present visuals that simplify and clarify ideas. You may draw your own pictures or you may look for pictures online and in magazines or newspapers. Ask the group for additional drawings and symbols that connect to the recording.

These group discussion roles enable students to lead their own discussions. Focusing on one small task leads to a greater feeling of ownership and to livelier participation.

Reference

Daniels, H. (2002). *Literature circles: Voice and choice in book clubs and reading groups*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Rebecca Palmer has 15 years of experience as a reading specialist and reading teacher. She currently teaches in the Intensive English Program at Northern State University in Aberdeen, South Dakota, USA.