Different Types of Discussion Activities

1. **Quizzing Discussion**: In this type of discussion you are responsible for leading and guiding the students through the material. This type of discussion is most useful as a check to see if the class knows the material, or as a way to set expectations for an exam (where they would know what to study based on the types of questions you were asking).

2. **Roundtable Discussion**: In this type of discussion the GSI serves as a facilitator for the discussion. Instead of asking students to recall specific material, in a roundtable discussion the GSI encourages students to share what they think about a certain topic and explore why they believe what they do. In a roundtable discussion the main goal of the facilitator is to get many different people to share their perspectives.

3. **Brainstorming Discussion**: In this activity the GSI will usually serve as the recorder of information. In this model the GSI poses a question(s) to the group and the various answers get listed on the board or overhead. This model works well when there are many different types of responses.

4. **Debate Discussion**: In this type of discussion the GSI frames an issue for the class then encourages students to defend one or the other position. The goal of a debate discussion is to get students to work through a complex issue in some detail. It also helps them to consider diverse viewpoints. The GSI’s role in the debate is limited.

5. **Fishbowl Discussion**: In this activity one group sits in the middle of a circle and discusses a topic (the fish). While they do this the students sitting in the outer circle watch silently (the bowl). The fishbowl is useful when you want to give voice to a particular group in the class, or when you want others to work on their listening skills. Make sure you take time at the end for members in the “bowl” to comment on what they observed.

6. **Think, Pair, Share Discussion**: Give students a topic to think or write about for a couple of minutes. Next, ask them to pair up and give them another few minutes to discuss their views with one-another. You can then ask the pairs of students to share some of their views with the entire group. This activity forces all students to speak and allows them a chance to articulate their ideas several times before sharing them with a larger group.

7. **Free-Write or Minute Paper Discussion**: In this type of discussion the GSI asks students to take a couple of minutes to reflect on a certain topic. Afterwards, ask people to explain or elaborate on what they wrote. This type of activity can be useful to invigorate a discussion that is lagging or to encourage students who might not speak up in larger groups.