Add to Class Discussions

Do you have trouble speaking up in class with a full voice?
Does your voice chatter? Do you forget to breathe?

"Success in college and life depends on your ability to participate in discussions."

Speak before you have a fully developed idea in your head.
Speaking up in class can be the last thing on your agenda. But a semi-formed thought can be a promising start to fruitful lines of discussion.

Speak up early and often
Speak up early in the semester. Don’t plan on speaking up in class in later weeks of the semester when you think you’ll be more comfortable with the group. As your silence grows, you'll be increasingly daunted by the prospect of making your first squeak.

Speak up by asking questions
When you read up in preparation for a class, make a note of ideas that you don’t fully understand. Compile questions and bring them with you to class. Other students will likely have similar questions floating about in their heads. Your questions will give the instructor an opportunity to understand specific problems students face.

Ask for clarification
If you can’t follow arguments being made during class discussions, ask for clarification. This is not for just your own benefit, but also for the benefit of the students who may not have communicated the idea effectively in the first place. In fact, asking others to re-articulate their points may present an important opportunity to them to re-examine what they said previously. It can be a friendly in nature, but still challenging.

Contribute your Ideas
You may see things from a different or minority perspective. Your contribution will help to bring diversity and interest to the discussion. Express your own personal experiences as a way of engaging with the topics.

Learn through active participation
The point of expressing opinions and joining discussions is for others to benefit from your input whether it takes the form of opinions, arguments, counter-arguments, or questions. The goal is collective learning – the means are discussion and debate. What’s important in a discussion is the access to many different pints of view.

Make friends
Make friends with other students as early in the semester as possible. It is so much easier to discuss issues, particularly sensitive ones, with friends than with strangers. Among friends, humor is powerful, and a means of elevating the discussion to a higher level of subtlety and sophistication.

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