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| Communication Skills: Agreeing and Disagreeing |
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| When someone expresses their opinion, we respond by either agreeing or disagreeing with what they have said. Expressing agreement is easy. After all, people always like it when we agree with them. Expressing disagreement, however, is much more difficult. If we do not want to offend the speaker, we must find diplomatic ways to express our disagreement. The following sentences can be used to express agreement. After saying one of these sentences you should give the reason that you agree with the speaker.

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| * I support that idea.
* That’s a great idea.
* (I think) you’re right.
 | * That’s a good point.
* I tend to agree with you.
 | * That would be my guess.
* I have to agree with you on that one.
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The following sentences and phrases are diplomatic ways to express disagreement. After each of these sentences or phrases you should give the reason that you disagree with the speaker.

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| * I’m not sure I agree with you on that.
* I tend to disagree with that.
* Really? I thought…
 | * With respect, I disagree.
* I’m not (so) sure about that.
* On the contrary…
* Really? From my perspective…
 | * I think we have a difference of opinion.
* Umm…
 |

We can also use questions to present an opposing point of view.* Have you thought of …..?
* Have you looked at …..?
* Have you considered….?

If you don’t care if you offend the speaker or not, the following are other ways to express disagreement. Each of these should also be followed by the reason you disagree with the speaker.

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| * You’re wrong.
* I don’t agree.
* I disagree with that.
* I beg to differ.
 | * That’s impossible!
* You must be kidding/joking!
* No way!
 | * I beg your pardon?
* Are you crazy?
* What are you thinking?
* Contrary to popular belief….
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Your tone of voice can also make your disagreement diplomatic or not. Many of the diplomatic ways to disagree can become impolite if you change your tone of voice. |

*A. In the dialogue below underline all of the expressions the speakers use to put forward their opinions.*

Jay: What did you think of Professor Black’s history lecture this afternoon?

Alex: It was so boring! I could barely keep my eyes open.

Jay: Really? I thought it was quite interesting.

Charlie: I tend to agree with Steve. Professor Black did present some interesting perspectives today.

Alex: I beg to differ. He just goes on and on with the same old stuff.

Jay: On the contrary, he has never spoken about the British Empire during 1558-1983 before.

Alex: I’m not so sure about that. Who wants to get a coffee?

Charlie: That’s a great idea.

Jay: Umm….I don’t really like coffee.

*B. Some of the sentences and expressions for agreeing and disagreeing are best suited to specific situations. Put the following expressions into the most appropriate category. Some expressions may be appropriate in more than one category. Discuss the reasons for your decisions. If you disagree with your classmates, do so politely!*

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| 1. That’s a good point.
2. Have you thought of it this way?
3. Are you crazy?
4. I tend to disagree with that because
5. Have you considered?
6. You’re wrong!
 | 1. I think we have a difference of opinion.
2. Correct me if I’m wrong, but….
3. I beg to differ.
4. Contrary to popular belief….
5. I disagree with that because….
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| **A Formal Social Situation** | **An Informal Social Situation** | **A Confrontational Situation** |
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| **A Controversial or Political Situation** | **A Professional or Academic Situation**  | **Any Situation** |
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*C. With a partner discuss the following statements. One partner MUST agree with the statement and one partner MUST disagree with the statement.*

1. If you don’t start learning a language when you are a child you will never learn it well.

2. Dogs make better pets than cats.

3. Democracy is the only political system that is effective.

*D. Write one sentence agreeing with each statement above and one sentence disagreeing with each statement.*

1. Agree: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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 Disagree: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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2. Agree: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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 Disagree: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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3. Agree: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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 Disagree: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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