



HARVARD UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF EARTH AND PLANETARY SCIENCES
20 OXFORD ST., CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138
TEL. (617) 495-2351 FAX. (617) 495-8893

EPS/ESE Community Discussion Guidelines

Note that the first question will be from a student: We are trying to coordinate a discussion that includes more members of the community, and so we will be focusing on student questions first and prioritizing them throughout the discussion.

- 1) **Be mindful that tone and body language are powerful communicators:** Even if you are having a bad day, a sharp tone might come across as rude or critical. If always watching your non-verbal cues is difficult, consider prefacing your questions with thanking the speaker for their talk or some similar other comment.
- 2) **Make an effort to cast objections in a constructive way:** The speaker may not have thought about things from the same angle you see, but that does not invalidate their science. Instead of “Your record is not long enough to say anything about trends.” Try “How does the length of the record limit your conclusions?”
- 3) **Criticize ideas, not individuals:** Avoiding comments that center the person will keep the discussion more open and productive. Instead of “Why would you do that?” try “What are the advantages of that method?”
- 4) **Impact and intent are not the same thing:** Intent is the science component and refers to what you thought you were doing. Impact is the human component and refers to how your actions are perceived by others. The impact of your actions can be significantly different from your intent, and the impact is very important.