

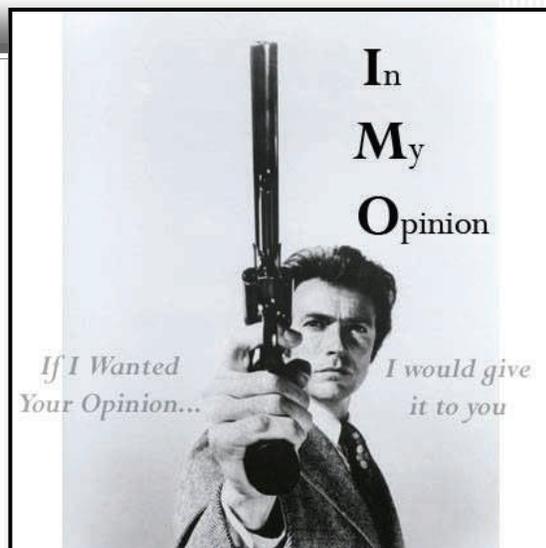
## 10A. Asking for and Giving Opinions and Preferences

### - Agreeing, Disagreeing and Interrupting -

In business we typically must be more diplomatic than Dirty Harry, but we have all had managers and bosses about that difficult!

Our goal here though, is to be more tactful, but yet still express our opinions and sometimes, even strong disagreement.

General opinions, agreements or disagreements typically follow these structures:



General Opinion	Agreeing	Disagreeing
I think . . .	I agree.	I wish I could agree, but I can't.
I would prefer . . .	I think so too.	I'm sorry, I don't agree . . .
In my opinion, . . .	I think you are right.	Yes, but . . .
Personally, . . .		I'm afraid I disagree . . .
		I disagree . . .
		It might be better if . . .
		I'm not so sure about that . . .
		That could be a problem, . . .

### Example Dialog 1 [in a meeting]:

- A:** So, relocating our office to the city center would help improve our business?
- B:** It might be better if we just stayed here. Our clients know where to find us and parking is much easier here.
- C:** I think you are right. Personally, I don't think our clients want the hassles of going downtown.
- A:** I would prefer staying here, but our survey of clients said that a downtown location would be much easier for them.

**Activity 1:** Using the structures and example dialog on the previous page and the information on the table below, work with a partner expressing opinions, agreement and disagreement about the issues.

Issue	Agree	Disagree
1. Raising prices to increase cash flow	Prices are elastic* right now, sales will continue regardless of a rise in prices	Prices are already too high. People will quite buying our products and go to our competitors.
2. Redesigning our electronic dictionary to increase sales	A new look and new functions for the dictionary would increase sales	Our customers are familiar with our product. If we change it too much, sales will go down. A change in design and functions will raise costs, too.
3. Opening a new sales office on the other side of town	It will make it easier for our customers to buy our products	It will only reduce sales for this office and increase our costs.
4. Having a big sale for Christmas to increase sales	A sale will lower the price and many more people will buy our product	The price is already very good. Sales won't increase and will only make less money.

\* *elastic* means flexible

## 10B. Interrupting to give your Opinion

Use the following phrases when needed to interject your opinion into a discussion.

### Polite Phrases for Interrupting, Correcting, and Disagreeing

I'm sorry to interrupt, but . . . (more polite)

Excuse me, but . . . (less polite)

I'm sorry, but to the best of my understanding . . . (more polite)

Actually, I don't think that is right . . . (less polite)

I am afraid I disagree. I think . . .

## 10C. Asking for Opinions

Use the following phrases to ask for opinions.

Asking for Opinions
<p>What do you think?            How about you, John?            Would you agree, Munir?            Does anyone else have an opinion on this?            Are there other ideas about this?            How about some fresh thinking on this issue?</p>

## 10D. Strengthening an Opinion or Statement

Precede your opinions or statements with these phrases to make them stronger.

Strengthening Opinions and Statements
<p>I really think . . .            I'm quite sure . . .            I strongly believe . . .            We really must . . .</p>

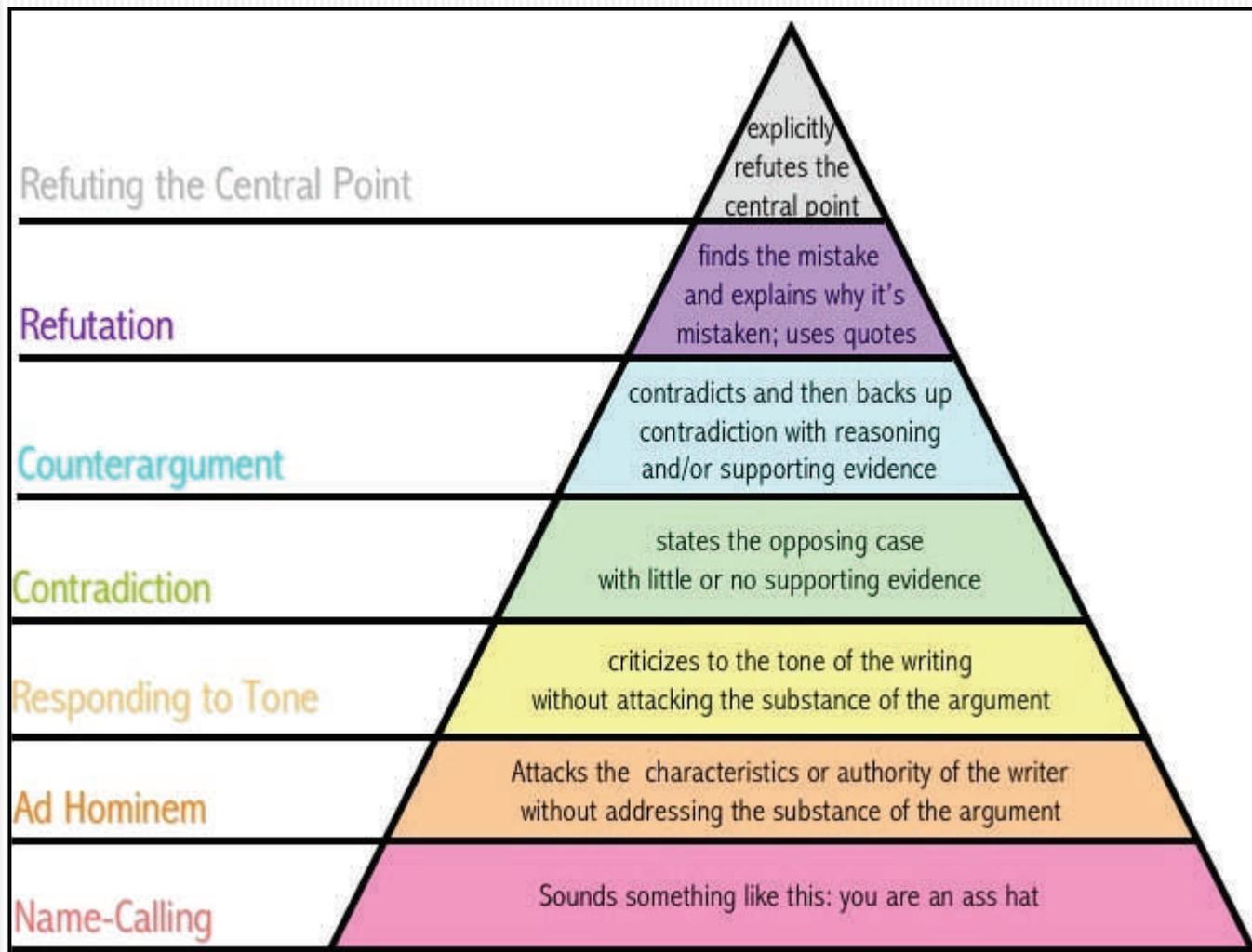
**Example Dialog 2 [Dialog 1 continuing . . . in red]:**

- A:** I would prefer staying here, but our survey of clients said that a downtown location would be much easier for them.
- B:** I'm sorry to interrupt, but I quite disagree, I really think they were saying it was easier for them to come here. Does anyone else have an opinion on this? John?
- D:** I thought the survey was inconclusive - there just wasn't enough information. But I am quite sure no one is looking for all the parking problems being downtown would present.
- E:** To the best of my understanding our three biggest clients have their offices downtown and I'm quite sure they would prefer just walking over to our office rather than having to drive across town as they do now . . .

**Activity 2:** Using the structures and example dialogs on the previous three pages, work with a partner expression opinions, agreement and disagreement about the issues.

Use the suggest phrases to interrupt your partner and to strengthen your opinion. Use your own information and opinion about your company as the basis for your dialogs.

Work around the room and talk with several other students.



Paul Graham's *Disagreement Hierarchy* - above

See: <http://www.paulgraham.com/disagree.html>

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# 11. Supporting your Opinions

Expressing Advantages and Disadvantages:  
“Pros and Cons”



To best support your opinions in discussion, you will need to add supporting information and advantages, and note disadvantages to opposing positions.

The structure of supporting your opinions follows this pattern:

State your Opinion	+	Support	+	Support
<i>for or against</i>	+	add information	+	add more information
I agree, in my opinion . . .	+	support	+	more support
I don't agree, I think . . .	+	first point	+	second point

In the *Example Dialog* notice the words that connect the supporting points: they are in red.

## Example Dialog:

- A: The board has suggested opening our first overseas office in Panama City. The purpose of this meeting is to ask your opinions on the issue.
- B: Opinion: I think It might be better if we looked at Pusan, Korea. Support: Office space and housing costs for our staff would be about half the price of Panama City, **and** (support) the population base of potential customers is much larger. Even more Support: **Another point is** that the Korean regulatory system is more supportive of new businesses.
- C: Opinion: I think Korea might be a problem. Support: None of our staff speak Korean **and** (support) we have a good number of staff who are fluent in Spanish and operate comfortably in that environment. Even More Support: **In addition**, Panama City is in the same time zone as here and only a few hours flying time.
- A: Well, I can see that we have some differing opinions here. I think that we probably need to study the points that both of you have made. The language issue is certainly important and so is the fact that it is much closer and much easier to get to Panama from here. The costs of language training, transportation and communication are also important considerations.

### Connecting words: Connecting your Supporting Points

And . . . as well  
 In addition . . .  
 Another point is . . .  
 Another consideration is . . .  
 Another thing . . .  
 I should also add that . . .

**Integrated Activity 1:** Using the structures and example dialogs in this and the previous sections use the information in the table below to agree and disagree as noted using the points given.

## Integrated Activity: Supporting your Opinions

Dialog:

The CEO has suggested that the sales team expand overseas. She feels that there is a huge market in other countries that could easily double or triple our sales. She has asked me to seek your opinions on this issue.

	Opinion	1st Support	2nd Support	Connecting Words
1.	Disagree politely	We have not yet maximized our sales here	Shifting our focus overseas will be distracting and hurt our performance here	and
2.	Agree strongly	Our sales peaked a year ago, it is time we started looking elsewhere to increase our sales	An overseas market would give us an opportunity to test new products, before trying them here	In addition . . .
3.	Disagree strongly	We are all already working 60 hours a week and more!	The extra work will burn us out and create turnover, our experienced staff will quit	And another thing is that . . .

**Activity 2:** Working with a partner, use the table below to discuss the suggested issues. Give your opinions, agree and disagree, and provide at least two points of support for each opinion.

<b>Issues for your Company</b>	
Our company should . . .	
1.	Raise prices by at least 20% for our products and/or services
2.	Open another office on the other side of the city
3.	Reduce the number of staff, but pay everyone more
4.	Expand into other countries in which we are not yet present

**Activity 3:** Working with a partner, create your own issues for your company. They can be real or imaginary. Give your opinions, agree and disagree, and provide at least two points of support for each opinion.

