



## How to Design and Lead an Effective Problem-Based Learning Discussion

Debnath Chatterjee MD, Nina Deutsch, MD, Kirk Lalwani, MD

1. Choose a scenario related to clinical anesthesia, medical education, ethics or professionalism that is interesting, relevant and presents a dilemma. A good topic has multiple decision points and several potential solutions. A once in a lifetime clinical case or rare syndrome with little controversy or decision making is not ideal for a problem-based learning discussion (PBLD). Choose a catchy title that will draw the attention of potential participants.
2. Identify three key messages you want the participants to remember at the end of the PBLD. Focus on these points when you write the learning objective, which are specific statements of observable learner behavior or action that can be measured upon completion of the PBLD.
3. Two moderators must be named for each submission, and if accepted, both must agree to participate as moderators. Ideally, one moderator will be an experienced educator, and the other a junior faculty member or a fellow in-training. Senior moderators may not be included on more than two PBLD submissions. For the submission process, include a short, informative description of the main elements of your case or problem in 1000 words or less. Highlight any enigmatic features that make your submission interesting. The goal here is to provide enough information for reviewers to be able to score your submission accurately for interest, scientific accuracy and clarity of thought and expression.
4. If your PBLD gets accepted for presentation, write up the case scenario and as the case gradually unfolds, include open-ended questions. Answers to these questions should not be included in the case stem.
5. The discussion section is basically a brief review of the topics to be discussed and should include relevant references. It should not be a list of answers to the questions in the case stem. Check your manuscript for typos and grammatical errors prior to submission. Make sure there is no patient identifiable information and request permission in advance for copyrighted material in the discussion section.
6. On the day of the PBLD, arrive early and find your assigned table. Bring several paper copies of the handout for participants who didn't prepare in advance. Ensure that all the participants are at the correct table.
7. Introduce yourself as the moderator and go quickly around the table and have everyone tell who they are and where they practice. Open the discussion with a non-threatening question that everyone should be familiar with.
8. Ask open-ended questions. Don't lecture on the topic. Your job as the moderator is to facilitate a discussion, rather than being a content expert.
9. Involve all the participants in the discussion. Engage the quiet participant by asking their opinion and control the dominant participant by giving others a chance to respond. To keep the discussion interactive, ask the group to vote or respond with a show of hands. Plan the timing of each section and be prepared to move the discussion along to stay on time. Keep the group focused on the case at hand.
10. Close the discussion on time with summary remarks and take-home messages. Thank all the participants and be prepared to stay late for some follow-up questions.

### Additional Reading

1. Chatterjee D, Corral D. How to write well-defined learning objectives. *J Educ Perioper Med.* 2017;19(4):1-4
2. Lalwani K. How to moderate and create a great PBLD. *MedEdPORTAL* publications. 2013.
3. Liu PL, Liu MP. A practical guide to implementing problem-based learning in anesthesia. *Current Anaesthesia and Critical Care.* 1997; 8:146-151.