How to hold TA Discussion Sessions?

As a teaching assistant (TA), you will probably need to teach weekly discussion or lab sections during the semester. Discussion sections are an important opportunity for students to ask questions, dive deeper into material, get more practice questions, and make connections that there might not be time to address directly in class. Here are some tips for a teaching assistant to hold a great discussion section.

1. As a TA you shall assist the course instructor. Follow the instructor’s directions. Consult with the instructor when needed.
2. Stick close to the material

* TA needs to make sure students in their section are all on the same page. Thus, some review at the beginning of the discussion session would be great. And give more detailed review for areas of confusion.

1. Prepare and deign questions

* Prepare and design some important questions you plan to ask in classes, and provide additional practice questions for students to enhance their understanding of the contents.

1. Clear up common confusion you've encountered while grading

* If you are also grading homework for the class, you can identify common mistakes or points that students seem confused about. Discussion sessions are a great time to discuss why these common mistakes represent a wrong understanding, and warn students away from them.

1. Be open to answer questions

* Listen carefully and actively for students’ ideas, and answer their questions.

1. Be flexible

* You may come into the discussion section with a plan and however find that it does not meet the particular needs of that session. You may find students have other questions, or get stuck on a text that you didn’t expect. This is a chance for them to get what they need, so please be flexible in the TA Discussion session.