



ÉCOLE DE LA FONCTION
PUBLIQUE DU CANADA
CANADA SCHOOL
OF PUBLIC SERVICE

*W*ELCOME TO
INTERACTION CANADA
PHASE 1
STUDENT'S BOOK



**SUPPORTING OPINIONS,
JUSTIFYING ACTIONS - PART 1**

SUPPORTING OPINIONS, JUSTIFYING ACTIONS – Part 1

Table of Contents

● **Credits**

● **EXPRESSING OPINIONS/ POINTS OF VIEW**

- Presentation 1 23
- Presentation 2 24
- Presentation 3 25
- Practice 1 26
- Study 1 27
- Practice 2 28

● **SUPPORTING OPINIONS**

- Study 2 29
- Practice 3 30
- Practice 4 31
- Presentation 4 32
- Special Practice – Scramble 33

● **JUSTIFYING ACTIONS**

- Study 3 34
- Practice 5 35
- Practice 6 35

● **DISAGREEING DIPLOMATICALLY**

- Presentation 5 35
- Study 4 36
- Practice 7 37
- Practice 8 38
- Special Practice – Consolidation Activity 39

CREDITS

Development and Learning Technologies Directorate
Language Training Centre
Canada School of Public Service

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, represented by the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, 2006

Supporting Opinions, Justifying Actions

SUPPORTING OPINIONS

PRE 1

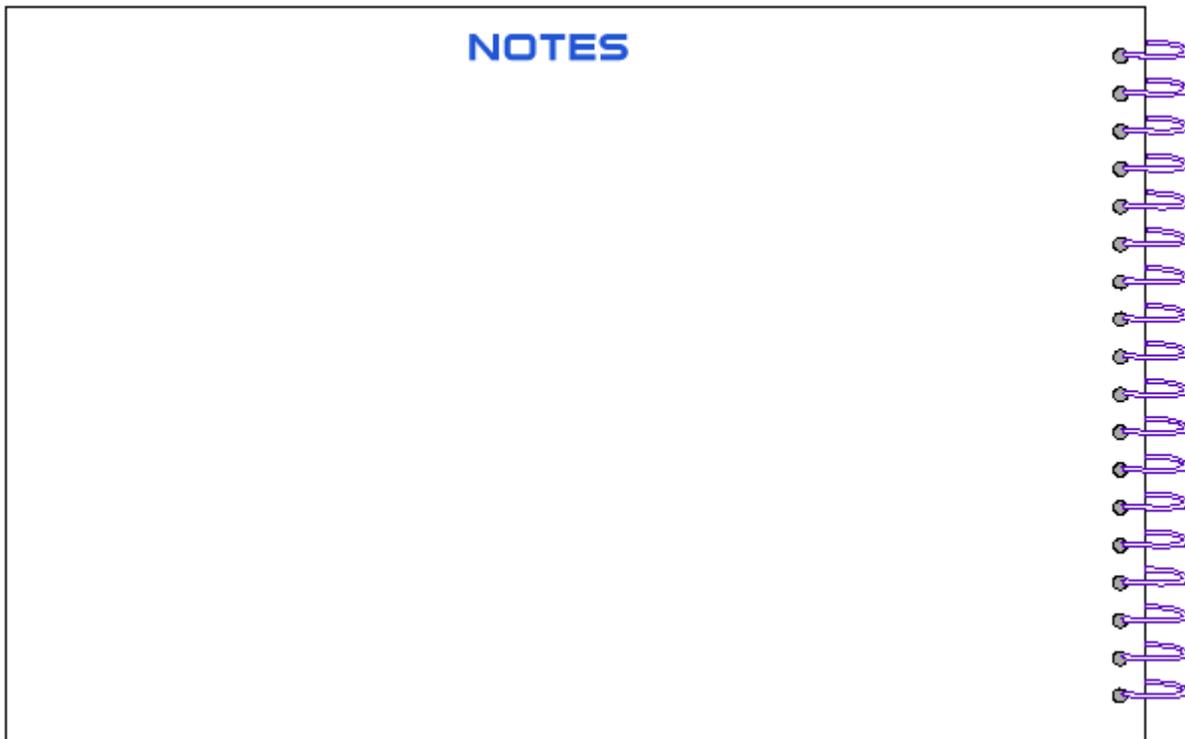
Situation 1a – in class

A major highway is being planned that will go through your neighbourhood. In your area alone a park and forested area with century-old trees will be destroyed; fifteen homes and businesses will need to be expropriated and torn down for ramp construction; and over 100 rented garden plots used by local citizens to grow vegetables for the past 25 years will be gone. This land was set aside by the city council of 30 years ago to act as a "green belt" of park and recreation land to stop "city creep." With time the city has grown considerably and burst outside the borders of this green area. The present council wishes to put a circumferential highway around the ever expanding city. The route through the green belt is the easiest to take as there is no construction and most other land is privately owned.

Situation 1b – at a city council meeting

Except for the context, the situation is the same. Write the responses and the support used on the BB. Are the opinions expressed in the same way? Discuss differences.

NOTES



PRE 2

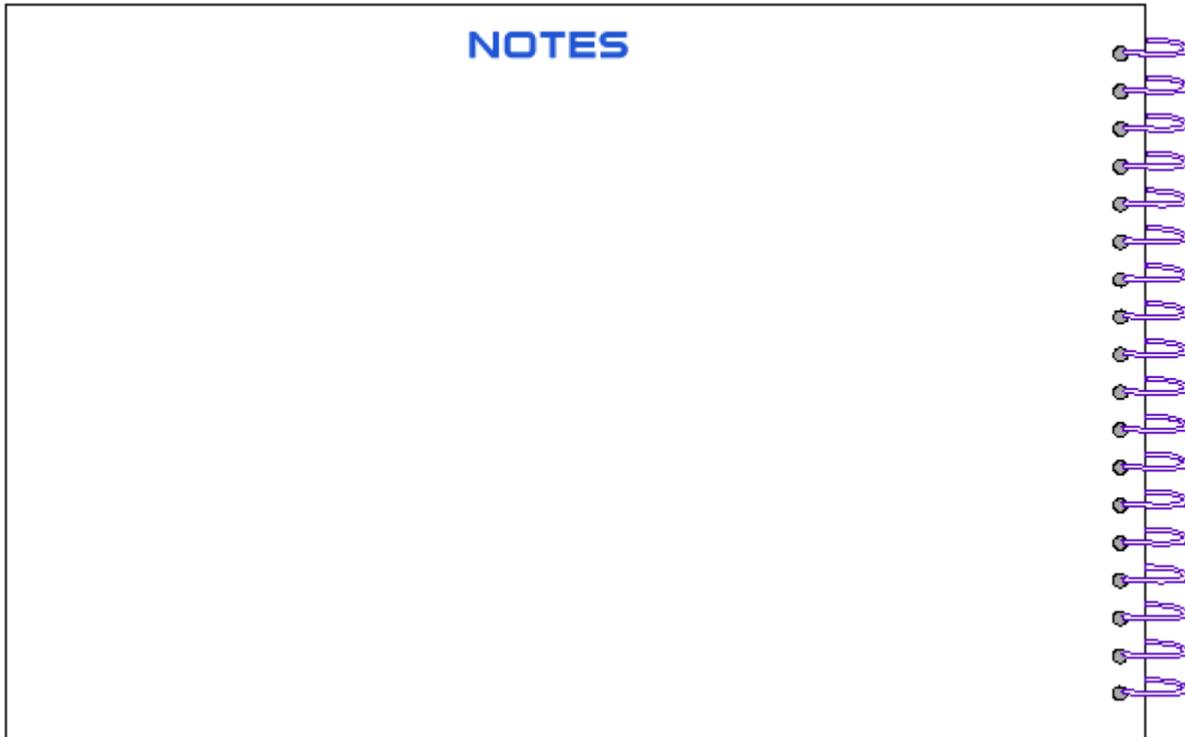
Situation 2a (context – a social gathering):

At a social gathering, a distinguished visitor from another country said in a speech that all employee training should be the responsibility of and be paid for by the employee. Employees who do not up skill as required should be fired.

Situation 2b (context – S alone with a friend talking after a social gathering):

After a social gathering, where a distinguished visitor from another country said in a speech that all employee training should be the responsibility of and be paid for by the employee, and added that employees who do not up skill as required should be fired, the S meets alone with a friend.

NOTES

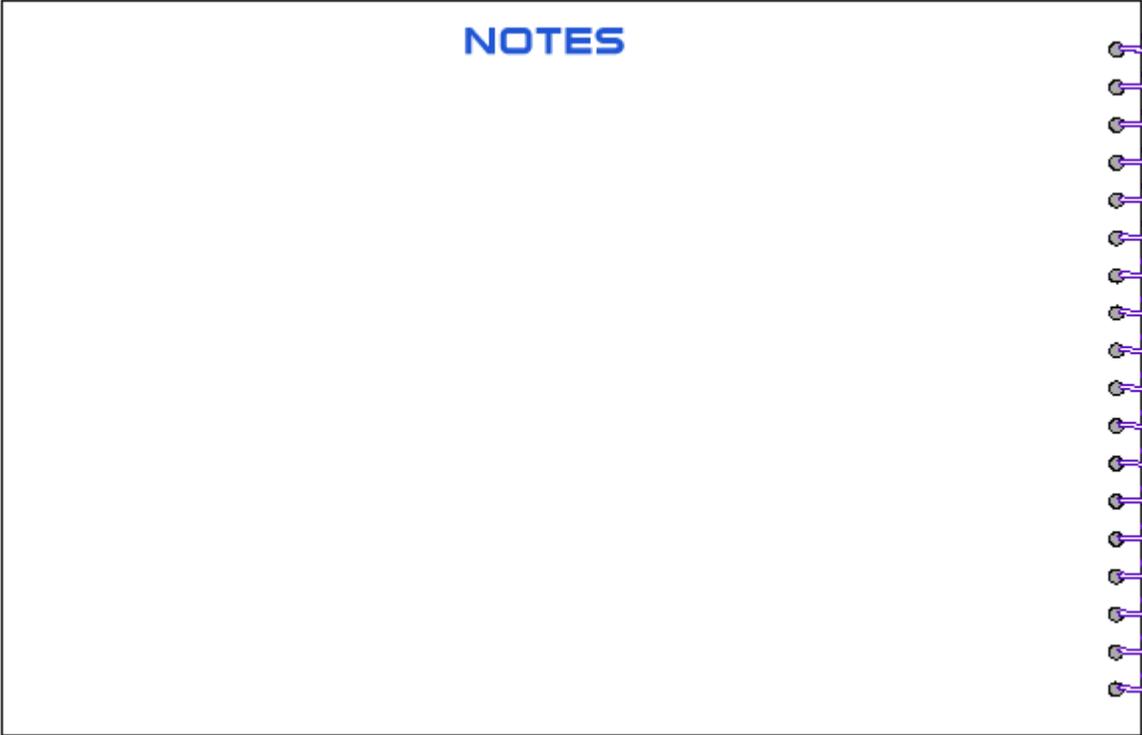


PRE 3

Situation 3a: You missed an important meeting without letting anyone know. Now everyone is angry. Justify your absence to your boss.

Situation 3b: The situation is the same. Justify your absence to a colleague.

NOTES



PRACTICE 1

- a. Read the expressions below and group them into three categories; write **1** beside expressions which you think indicate that an opinion is strongly held, write **2** beside those indicating opinions that are moderate or neutral, and write **3** beside those indicating opinions that are weak.
- b. Indicate which expressions are idiomatic, ...negative, ... emphatic, ...hypothetical. Which depend on specific vocabulary? Underline any intensifiers or adverbs.

Off the top of my head, I'd say...

I feel quite strongly that...

My gut reaction is (that)...

If you (should*) ask me...

I've no doubt whatsoever/ at all that...

I believe/feel/think (that)...

There's no question that...

(It) seems (to me) (that)...

I don't "think"; I know (that)...

I truly think (that)...

I feel strongly that...

Without a doubt...

I'm convinced that...

My first reaction would be to...

I really believe...

At first blush...

- c. Briefly discuss what seems to define the strength of each expression.

* Note that 'should' is usually not said or written.

STUDY 1

EXPRESSING OPINIONS OR POINTS OF VIEW

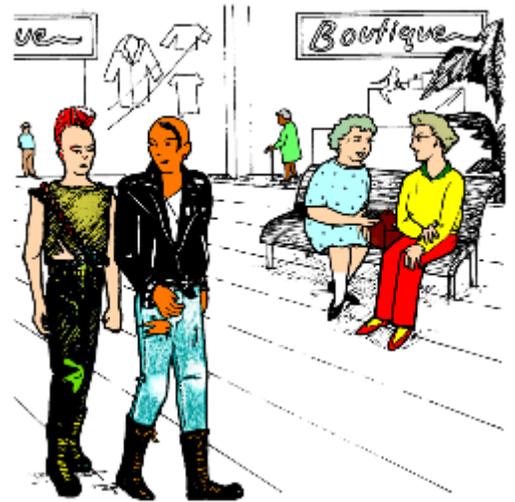
EXPRESSIONS*	NOTES/STRATEGIES
<p>I don't "think", I know (that)...</p> <p>Without a doubt...</p> <p>I've no doubt whatsoever that...</p> <p>There's no question that...</p>	<p>STRONG: The attitude expressed by these negative statements says that your feelings are very strong.</p>
<p>I'm convinced that...</p>	<p>Verbs with strong meaning send a message.</p>
<p>I feel quite strongly that...</p> <p>I feel strongly that...</p> <p>I really believe...</p>	<p>Using adverbs and intensifiers adds strength to verbs with weaker meaning or otherwise neutral verbs.</p>
<p>My gut reaction is (that)...</p>	<p>MODERATE OR NEUTRAL: A "gut" reaction may be strong at times but it is also not thought out, so it has moderate strength.</p>
<p>I think (that)...</p> <p>I feel/believe (that)...</p>	<p>Use of ordinary, everyday verbs generally gives a neutral impression.</p>
<p>(It) seems (to me) (that)...</p>	<p>WEAK: Verbs with weak meaning give an impression of not having strong feelings.</p>
<p>Off the top of my head, I'd say...</p> <p>At first blush, I'd say...</p>	<p>These idioms imply you are not sure as you have not thought it out.</p>
<p>My first reaction would be to...</p>	<p>A 'first reaction' is also not thought out; therefore, weaker.</p>
<p>If you ask me...</p>	<p>This hypothetical lead-in can imply a weak opinion is held; the opposite may be true.</p>
<p><i>NOTE: Weaker expressions can have more force when combined with stronger expressions.</i></p>	<p><i>NOTE: Using "weak" expressions to express opinions can be diplomatic; they appear weak even if in reality, or in secret, your opinion is strong.</i></p>

* Add expressions that you know and use to the appropriate sections of the list.

PRACTICE 2

Read the situations listed below.

1. Shopping malls as hang-outs and meeting places for youth and seniors
2. Spending all your workday in an open-concept or very small office
3. Working on an assembly line
4. Replacing people with artificial intelligence
5. Eating out every night
6. Buying a used car from a dealer you don't know
7. Golfing or curling as a form of exercise and recreation
8. Groups of middle-aged people riding motorcycles
9. Compulsory attendance at weekly meetings
10. Saving money on a regular basis
11. Downloading or recording copyright materials



Write:

STUDY 2

SUPPORTING YOUR OPINION/ POINT OF VIEW

OPINION I'm convinced that we're going to have to limit the availability of junk foods.

SUPPORT



Give reasons:

"...because we're raising a nation of children with unhealthy eating habits."



Give examples:

"For example, many small children have so much sugar and fat in their diet that they're already overweight."



Describe experiences (anecdotes):

"I've watched all ages of people in the supermarket and the amount of non-nutritious foods they buy is astounding!"



State facts:

"I've read that the average intake of junk food items has gone up 25 percent."



Give details:

"Soft drinks, chocolate bars and salty, fried snacks are the major culprits."



State consequences (results):

"If we don't take some kind of action soon, we'll all end up as junk food addicts with high blood pressure."

Use these strategies whenever you want to give more weight to your opinions.

PRACTICE 3

- a. 1. Work with a partner or small group. From the list below, select four questions.

How do you define success?
What is the most important quality in a manager?
What is the most important quality in an employee?
What is the best way to relax?
What makes a neighbourhood a good place to live?
Should access to violent movies be restricted? How do you define violence?
What is the best strategy for getting promoted?
What is the worst problem facing a family in which both parents work?
What is the best way to diet?
Is jogging or cycling a better form of recreation?
Topics of your own.

2. For each question chosen, decide on a team opinion.
3. Think about the kinds of support (reasons, consequences, facts, examples, ...) that would give your opinion the most credibility.
4. Write your ideas below.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

- b. Meet with another pair or group. Present your opinion and support for each of the questions chosen. The other pair/group will react by evaluating the support and discussing the issue.

PRACTICE 4

- a. Work with a partner. Select one of the situations below. Discuss the best strategies (reasons, examples, consequences, ...) to use and the specific information you feel is best to support your opinion re the situation chosen.
1. You want your boss to reduce the number of reports everyone is obliged to do.
 2. You want your boss to consider implementing a flex time and place of work policy.
 3. Your municipal council intends to close skating rinks and swimming pools; you do not want them to do this.
 4. You want your municipal council to put in additional lights on neighbourhood streets.
 5. You want your municipal council to improve snow removal services.
 6. You want your boss to purchase software that will keep most documents stable even if you change hardware.
 7. You want your boss to get computer services to stop, or at least reduce, spam.
 8. There have been several accidents at the intersection of the entrance to your work parking lot and the street. You want your department and the city to get together somehow and install traffic lights.
- b. Find another partner. Take turns presenting the situations you chose with your former partner. Try to convince your new partner to consider your opinion. New partners, when not presenting, role play the boss or municipal councilor according to the situation.
- c. Regroup with your original partner to compare your success first in presenting the situation and second in convincing the new partner to consider doing something re the situation.

PRE 4

What would you say to **justify** an **action**? Write the expressions from the board in the chart in front of the suggested strategies if you can.

EXPRESSIONS	NOTES/STRATEGIES
	<p>You can justify actions by giving the consequences or results of acting differently. A past unreal condition is used (past perfect in the If-clause, perfect modal in the result clause).</p>
	<p>You can give reasons to justify yourself.</p> <p>Often, the reason is stated without any introductory words such as because (of), due to, on account of, or the reason is.</p>
	<p>You can justify yourself by giving the purpose of your action.</p>
	<p>To take the focus away from yourself, use an impersonal subject or the passive voice.</p> <p>You can give consequences, reasons or purposes as relevant.</p>

SCRAMBLE

Try to place the 12 expressions given below into the chart from the previous page.

1. I brought it home so that it would have a chance.
2. I did it because I felt sorry for it.
3. Had I left it there, it would have died.
4. It was just a kind gesture.
5. If I'd left it, it could have died.
6. Given the state it was in, I couldn't just leave it there.
7. If I'd left it, it might have died.
8. The reason was that I felt sorry for it.
9. Leaving it there would have been cruel.
10. People bring home strays in order to save their lives.
11. I did it in order to give it a chance.
12. Such things have been done by lots of others too.

EXPRESSIONS	NOTES/STRATEGIES
	You can justify actions by giving the consequences or results of acting differently. A past unreal condition is used (past perfect in the If-clause, perfect modal in the result clause).
	You can give reasons to justify yourself. Often, the reason is stated without any introductory words such as because (of), due to, on account of, or the reason is.
	You can justify yourself by giving the purpose of your action.
	To take the focus away from yourself, use an impersonal subject or the passive voice . You can give consequences, reasons or purposes as relevant.

STUDY 3

JUSTIFYING ACTIONS

EXPRESSIONS	NOTES/STRATEGIES*
<p>(If I had (just) walked away,) it (surely) would/could/might have died. (Had I walked away) would/could/might have died.</p>	<p>You can justify actions by giving the consequences or results of acting differently. A past unreal condition is used (past perfect in the <i>if</i> clause, perfect modal in the result clause).</p>
<p>(The reason I did it was) I was there and could help. (I did it because) I was there and could help.</p> <p>Given the way she felt, I couldn't just leave her alone. Running away would have been the easy way out.</p>	<p>You can give reasons to justify yourself.</p> <p>Often, the reason is stated without any words such as because (of), due to, on account of, or the reason is.</p>
<p>I sent a big donation so that they could start rebuilding. I sent a big donation (in order) to let them start rebuilding.</p>	<p>You can justify yourself by giving the purpose of your action.</p>
<p>It was just the right thing to do.</p> <p>Such things have been done by thousands.</p> <p>Everyone drops in loose change in order to help out.</p>	<p>To take the focus away from yourself, use an impersonal subject or the passive voice.</p> <p>You can give consequences, reasons or purposes as relevant.</p>

* In certain circumstances adding a question such as "Wouldn't you have done the same thing" takes the focus off ourselves switching it to the listener. However, one must be careful when using such a strategy so as not to offend.

PRACTICE 5

- a. Justify the actions listed below.
- You talked to your supervisor's superior directly about a problem with one of your projects. Your supervisor wants to know the reason why.
 - You made a very expensive purchase (e.g. plasma television); justify this to your spouse/partner.
 - You stood up a friend on Saturday afternoon. Your friend wants to know why.
 - You gave away your spouse's/partner's favourite old coat. Your spouse/partner wants to know why.
 - You called a meeting but didn't inform one team member. The team member wants to know why.
 - You were house sitting for your friends while they were away for a month. Now they want to know why their hydro bill was so high for that month.
 - ...
- b. Make up two similar situations. Think of actions which will be challenging for other students to justify. **Note you will use your second situation in PRACTICE 6 on another day.**
- c.
1. Read out one of your situations to another student.
 2. That student responds to the situation and justifies the action taken, using an appropriate expression for justifying.
 3. Each following student responds to the same situation, giving a different justification and a different expression for justifying.
- d. In turn each student will present a situation.

PRACTICE 6

1. In turn pick another student at random. The student chosen responds to your second situation created during Practice 5 above. The student who responded then chooses another student to respond to his or her situation; etc.
2. **OPTIONAL:** Do a second round off the top of your heads, if you are up to it, for further practice.

PRE 5

Your teacher will ask you questions and present a situation.

STUDY 4

DISAGREEING DIPLOMATICALLY

EXPRESSIONS	NOTES/STRATEGIES
<p>Certainly/Yes/, but we don't have the right equipment. Sure; however, there's no money for it. Possibly; on the other hand, the final decision is not mine.</p> <p>That's true, but copyright law won't permit it. That's a good point; however, movies are longer than an hour.</p> <p>You're probably right; on the other hand... You (just) may be right, but...</p> <p>I can appreciate your idea; still... I (can) see your point; nevertheless... I understand where you're coming from; then again...</p> <p>That's/It's fine as far as it goes, but... I agree with most of that; on the other hand, ... I like what you said; but then...</p> <p>I have no problem with any of that; however, ...</p>	<p>When you want to be diplomatic, a useful strategy is to indicate partial agreement before stating your disagreement. You can use a relevant expression from the list in this section before disagreeing</p>
<p>I have a problem with the timing. I've trouble with I'm not happy with how it will look. The only thing is do we have the space? I don't think upper management will allow it. I don't see how it will work. I don't think so.</p>	<p>You can begin your statement of disagreement with these expressions.</p>
<p>I think jogging, yoga or tai chi would be better.</p> <p>(A statement whose content indicates disagreement with what was said.) Sometimes exercise is more effective.</p>	<p>Disagreement is frequently expressed simply by stating a new idea, often an alternative. However, such statements of disagreement are quite direct.</p>
<p>No, ... except if you can find the space and money for it. I can't agree with this idea, unless you take on all responsibility. Not really, not unless all deadlines are met first and it's not often.</p>	<p>These expressions indicate agreement depends on certain conditions. These are quite direct statements of disagreement.</p>
<p>I differ with you about what raises morale and motivates people. I tend to disagree. I (have to) disagree.</p>	<p>These are direct expressions. They are the least diplomatic.</p>

PRACTICE 7

a. Work with a partner to complete the following conversations, using appropriate expressions for disagreeing.

1. (Two friends talking at lunch) Marie: The hardest thing about being a mother and working is finding good child care.

Michelle: (Disagrees) _____

2. (At a meeting) Director: Because of this crisis, we have to redirect funds from two of your projects.

Manager: (Disagrees) _____

There's nothing to cut in those two projects.

3. (At a committee meeting break) Sensitive committee member: Nobody seems to appreciate how hard I work.

Committee member: (Disagrees) _____

We're all working hard.

b. Discuss your choices with the class. Be ready to explain why you made them.

PRACTICE 8*

a. **Situation:**

A joint project with another department is being organized. It has been suggested that there should be a co-ordinator from each department. You are strongly opposed because your department has staff qualified to co-ordinate, but you know that there is no one in the other department right now who has the proper expertise.

Express disagreement in each of the contexts given below.

1. The suggestion was made by the representative from the other department.

2. A colleague you know well has made the suggestion while you were having coffee.

3. The same colleague has made the suggestion at a meeting. Not everyone present has worked together before.

4. A colleague you have never worked with has made the suggestion at a meeting.

5. Your Director has made the suggestion.

6. Your Director General has made the suggestion.

b. Briefly compare and discuss your choices.

c. To practise the language roleplay the scenarios in pairs. Reverse roles and roleplay again.

* Adapted with permission from *Developmentally Speaking, Book II*, Bridgid Fitzgerald, Margahay-Johnson, W. and Pagurek, J. Canadian International Development Agency / Public Service Commission of Canada, pages 31–32.

CONSOLIDATION

EXECUTIVE SUITE

Your teacher will explain this communicative-board-game exercise.