



Sway

LEARNING THROUGH DISAGREEMENT

WHAT IS SWAY?

Sway is an educational chat platform that pairs students who disagree into one-on-one, [text-based conversations](#) about discussion topics chosen by their instructor or program. Students share their opinions on these topics, and Sway aims to match each student with a peer who holds a different perspective. Students then chat synchronously or asynchronously on their phones or laptops.

An AI facilitator called Guide joins every conversation: it can pose challenging questions, surface implicit assumptions, de-escalate tense moments, and provide relevant information—without ever taking sides. When a student writes something unconstructive, Sway suggests a better way to make the same point, providing real-time coaching in clear, respectful communication.

From the humanities to STEM, more than [11,000 students](#) at over 100 institutions have used Sway to practice constructive disagreement. No extra staff time, facilitator training, or coordination is required. After each discussion, Sway delivers [anonymized reports](#) to instructors/staff on how student positions evolved and how well students understood each other's reasoning. Sway is grant-funded and provided to students and educators for free.

Improving Campus Discourse

- Students are nearly 5x more likely to moderate an extreme view than to harden a moderate one: 56% who entered a conversation at a polar extreme left holding a more moderate view.
- The effect holds on the hardest topics: 51.5% moderated even on polarizing issues such as abortion, immigration, and gender.
- The share of students holding extreme positions dropped by 23% after a single 30-minute conversation with a classmate who held an opposing viewpoint.

Based on a study of 10,000+ matched pre/post opinion pairs across 1,630 topics at 80+ institutions

[Learn more about improving speech cultures →](#)

What Makes Sway Different

- Most programs teach students *about* constructive disagreement; Sway gives every student hands-on, structured *practice*.
- Sway has been used in courses spanning over 15 disciplines—and students across the board [tell us it's valuable and fun](#).
- No facilitators, TAs, or training needed; Sway handles moderation at any scale, on any device, asynchronously or synchronously.
- Generates behavioral evidence of learning, not just self-report.
- 92% of students felt comfortable sharing honest opinions; 93% felt respected by their partner.

[Chronicle of Higher Ed Coverage →](#)



"The engagement aspect is just a million times better than discussion boards. The ability for students to have a back and forth and actually have a real conversation was fantastic." — Patrick Ryan, Professor of Philosophy, Fullerton College ([more from instructors](#))

Privacy & Moderation

- Conversations are encrypted; instructors/staff cannot read identifiable transcripts or view individual students' opinions.
- Personal attacks and mere insults are blocked.
- Across 250,000+ messages, Sway flagged fewer than 0.4% as unconstructive.
- Students control what gets shared with instructors and can delete their accounts at any time.
- Student data is never used to train commercial AI models and research participation is opt-in.

[Read our privacy policy and consent document →](#)

Inclusion & Fairness

- Guide does not offer opinions—it pushes students to reason more carefully, interrogate their assumptions, and engage seriously with the strongest version of the opposing view.
- In a survey of over 3,500 students, 87% agreed Guide treated both sides with equal respect—and only 3% disagreed.
- In an empirical study, over 600 politically diverse Americans evaluated real Sway transcripts across multiple topics and perceived no directional bias—while correctly detecting bias when it was experimentally introduced.

[Learn more about bias evaluation →](#)



"Students know that Guide is AI and they find it not at all partisan, not at all biased. That was never an issue."

— Diana Mutz, Samuel A. Stouffer Professor of Political Science & Communication, UPenn ([more from instructors](#))

Sway is free for individual instructors and their students. [Get started now](#) or [book a 20-minute demo](#) to learn more.

www.swaybeta.ai · Developed with [Heterodox Academy](#) · Funded by [Arthur Vining Davis Foundations](#)