**Polite Ways to Agree and Disagree**

Step 1: Make sure you begin with soft language - not aggressive or angry. Show you are thinking professionally about the situation. Possibly apologize to soften the following disagreement. “I’m sorry but…”. Possibly express the idea you yourself may be wrong. “I’m not sure I agree with you.” “Let’s consider the possibility that…”

Step 2: Use words to show you have listened to the other person’s ideas - that you understand their ideas and acknowledge that they have merit. “You’re saying that <paraphrase their idea>.” “I see your point and it is valid, but what about …?” Often people disagree in the form of a question. “Don’t you think…?” “What about the idea of…?”. Often an objection is framed as a gentle suggestion: “Perhaps it would be better to…”.

Step 3: Show a willingness to compromise if this is a reasonable option. Seek middle ground if possible. Note though, that sometimes people exaggerate their own position so “middle ground” (giving up something) is actually what they really wanted. (If you want $1M, ask for $2M and “settle” for $1M.)

* “We need to hire more employees.”
  + “I’m afraid I disagree. More employees might help, but I believe the root of our problem is our outdated equipment. Perhaps we should look at both options.”
* “Printed textbooks should be replaced by handouts.”
  + “I beg to differ – handouts can be effective, but a good textbook is more economical.”
  + “You make a good point, but wouldn’t putting the material in electronic form on a website be even more economical?”
* “In 50 years, the international language of business will be Chinese.”
  + “I’m not so sure about that. Chinese does have potential for greater use but English is so popular that I don’t see it being replaced easily.”

**Stating your own opinion**:

* In my opinion... The way I see it... If you want my honest opinion.... According to <somebody or some authoritative source of information>... As far as I'm concerned... If you ask me...

**Encouraging another person to express an opinion**:

* What's your idea? What are your thoughts on all of this? How do you feel about that? Do you have anything to say about this? What do you think? Do you agree? Could you suggest an alternative?

**Agreement language:**

* I agree with you 100 percent.
* I couldn't agree with you more.
* You're absolutely right.
* Absolutely.
* Exactly.
* That's so true.
* That's exactly how I feel.
* There’s no doubt about it. (probably an exaggeration)
* Me neither. (agree with negative statement like “I don’t like that idea.”)
* That’s an excellent point.
* You have a [good] point there.
* I suppose so. / I guess so. (weak agreement)
* I was just going to say that. (informal)
* That's for sure. (informal)
* Tell me about it! (slang. Do not use in a formal situation.)

**Disagreement language:**

* I can see how that makes sense, but consider this alternative…
* I understand where you’re coming from but another solution may be better.
* I can’t help but think we’re missing a better option here.
* I’m sorry, but I don’t agree.
* I'm afraid I agree with James (unsaid: and not with you!)
* I have to side with <somebody who disagrees with you> on this one.
* I’m sorry but I just can’t see that as a workable option.
* Yes, but <state an alternative>…
* Well, in my opinion…
* You may have a point, but we should consider <this alternative view>.
* Not necessarily…
* I don’t see it that way
* Actually, I think <a different idea>”
* I don’t think I have the same opinion as you. (kind of wimpy but polite)
  + Note: Americans have a reputation for directness to the extent of being rude. British people have a reputation for indirectness and a hesitancy to criticize. “You should think that through again.” means “be careful about that” in American English but means “You’re crazy! Give it up!” in British English.
* We’ll have to agree to disagree about this. Let’s move on to the next item.
* No way! (very informal and maybe rude)
* You can’t be serious. (informal and usually rude - disrespectful)
* Are you crazy? (extremely rude in a formal situation, but common in informal situations with friends as a kind of joke)