Line-up

How?

Devise two opposing or extreme statements on a (potentially controversial) topic. For example:

Climate change is the greatest threat to humanity	⟷	Climate change is insignificant compared to war
Method X is most appropriate to solve a problem	⟷	Method Y is most appropriate to solve a problem
Monetarism has greatly damaged the US economy	⟷	Monetarism has saved the US economy

Tell students which end of the room represents which statement (you might want to print/write the statements on paper to stick on the walls) and get them to create a physical line between the two in such a way that they are standing at the point that reflects their own view between the two statements.

Students need to talk to one another on the line to find out if they are in the right place, so this should generate lively discussion. If you find students clustering in agreement, then change aspects of the dimension or introduce a new variable, and have students consider subtler issues. For example, students are likely to change their position in the line in response to these economics line-ups:

Monetarism has damaged the US manufacturing base	⟷	Monetarism has saved the US manufacturing base
Monetarism has damaged the US public sector	⟷	Monetarism has saved the US public sector

When?

At the start of a class as a precursor to a discussion or to another activity (especially a fishbowl).
Midway or at the end of class to gauge views after a discussion.

Why?

- Line-ups ask students to share where they stand on a controversial issue. This tells you the range of views in the room.
- The discussion helps students generate their own questions to address in the whole group.
- Line-ups need only take two minutes and require minimal preparation.
- They work even with larger groups.

Suggestion: Use blank colored paper to indicate the ends of the line, then show the statements on screen in text of the matching color and towards same side of the room as the paper.

Source: Gibbs, G. (1995). *Discussion with more students*. Oxford Centre for Staff Development.