Start of Session

• Say why you picked this paper. Enthusiasm goes a long way towards getting everyone interested.

• Explain any definitions or acronyms that are used in the paper that won't be obvious to a non-expert. If there are essential pieces of background that are missing from the Introduction, explain these as well. You should also give a broad idea of what is important in this field. However, do NOT start a lecture.

• No powerpoint or slides are allowed. However, you may draw on the board.

Getting Going

• Start out with questions about the premise and the hypotheses to be tested. Try not to get bogged down in the technical details at this point. If no one gets the hypothesis, then backtrack and ask about what was known before the study was done, and then move forward again to the hypothesis.

• Discussions often start out slowly because it takes awhile for people to start to talk. One trick is to ask a rapid series of easy questions at the start. Once this is out of the way, start with the harder questions again.

Middle Section

• Prepare a list of 12-15 questions to ask the class. You probably will not get through them all depending on how much discussion there is.

• Do NOT go through the paper figure by figure. Instead, structure your questions around the major concepts of the paper; e.g. ask a question where the answer is found in Figure 2, rather than asking "what did they do in Figure 2?". Also, spend more time on the important figures—if a figure or panel is not really that important for the main points, skip it by all means!

• Ask questions in logical sequences. Each group of questions should be asked with the idea of getting to some point you want to make. It can help to make a list of important points first, and then design the questions around bringing each one out. Ask “fact” questions only as a lead-up to a “concept” question. The concept questions are the important ones.

• Keep in mind that your goal is to give the class the opportunity to discover the point through discussion, rather than telling it to them directly.
Ending

• Be sure that you try to bring out the "big picture" and why this paper is important.

• At the end, come back to the original hypothesis and try to get more discussion by asking questions about whether or not the authors proved their hypothesis (come back to your starting ideas about the broad themes).

General

• Always look at people in the eye when you are asking questions (i.e. never look down or away after you have asked a question). The best way to get someone to talk is to catch their eye.

• The other way to get people to talk is to call on them directly. Once you do this a few times, you will get more volunteers.

• When someone in the class asks a question, be sure to repeat it back to the entire class. Try to involve everyone.

• Use the expertise in the class. If you get the impression that someone really knows about the subject of the paper, ask them to expand on answers given by others.

• Before you answer any questions yourself, make sure that you have given the class a chance to try to answer it.

• Always wait 20 seconds after you ask a question before you open your mouth again. You need to give people time to think about it and respond. DO NOT ANSWER YOUR OWN QUESTIONS. If you wait long enough, someone will answer.

• Don’t show frustration at getting wrong answers (or no answers). Rather, if you don’t get a response that you are looking for, then ask a related question that is easier. Keep on going until you start getting answers and discussion.

• Once an interesting discussion starts, don’t stop it. Your job is to moderate a discussion to keep in on track. It does not matter if you don’t get through the entire paper.