



Facilitation 201: Approaches and Techniques

NOTE: Some of this material comes from Interaction Institute for Social Change's "Facilitative Leadership" training

Overview: This lengthy, content rich, interactive session introduces a general approach to facilitation and gives a range of facilitation tools and techniques. It engages participants in a series of active role-plays in order to teach the facilitation processes. This session requires a facilitator who is comfortable with all of the techniques and tools contained in this trainer guide and handouts.

Category: Facilitation and communication; management

Level: Intermediate

Type: Structured activities suitable for workshop (e.g. retreat or training) or for use during regular meetings

Focus or Goals of this Guide:

- Introduce a facilitation framework through active role play
- Help participants understand facilitation process techniques (e.g. how to use a group debrief and dialogue)
- Introduce some techniques and tools for facilitation through a second active role play
- Provide participants with the opportunity to practice what they learned and to get feedback through scenarios and group observation

Materials:

- Flip chart and markers
- Handouts (found at the end of this guide)
 - Working Agreements
 - Facilitation Framework
 - Facilitation Guidelines
 - Bag of Tools
 - Preventions and Interventions
 - Prepared Role Play Cards (for Group Role Play)

How to Prepare:

Review the trainer guide and become comfortable with all information and activities. Study and practice all of the facilitation techniques and prepare the handouts. Review and modify scenarios to fit the purpose and activities of the participants. Prepare role play cards for the Group Role Play.

How to Do/Brief Outline:

This workshop consists of 3 hours of activities, with a short break in the middle. It is designed to cover a lot of material about facilitation, with plenty of time for group/individual engagement and practice. It can be modified or shortened in some areas or divided into a few sessions, depending on the needs of the group.

1. Introductions	suggested time 10 minutes
2. Warm-Up (Magic Object)	suggested time 10 minutes
3. Focusing In	suggested time 10 minutes
4. Facilitation Framework	suggested time 10 minutes
5. Active Role Play #1	suggested time 30 minutes
6. Introduction of Techniques (Debrief)	suggested time 30 minutes
7. Break	suggested time 10 minutes
8. Active Role Play #2	suggested time 20 minutes
9. Introduction of More Tools (Debrief)	suggested time 20 minutes
10. Group Inquiry	suggested time 15 minutes
11. Group Role Play	suggested time 20 minutes
12. Closing	suggested time 5 minutes

1 Introductions

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Introduce yourself as the facilitator:

- Welcome
- Introduce yourself, role and why you are doing this training.
- Review major goals.
- Review agenda (Use large poster for this)

Lead people in an introduction. For example, go around the room and have each person share:

- Name
- School/major/department
- Name and artist of a favorite song
- Name of an actor/actress they'd like to be like, metaphorically, as a facilitator
- Or other creative ideas

2 Warm-Up (Magic Object)

Suggested time: 10 minutes

- This workshop will present you with some useful tools and techniques for facilitation. You can use these during trainings, meetings, gatherings and other opportunities where you are organizing people and helping them move through a given process.
- This workshop will be a combination of presenting these tools and techniques and giving people the opportunity to practice them. Everyone should have a chance practicing at least one technique.

Lead the group in this creative, silent warm-up in which you pretend to have an invisible object (such as a ball, an anvil, a plant, etc.). Act out what it would be like to hold the object and to do things with it (such as tossing it in the air, bouncing it on the ground, stretching it out, etc.). When other people think they know what the object is, they should raise their hand, at which point you can “give” them the object, and they should further act out using it. When other people know it, they can continue to “pass” the object on. Make sure the object is complex enough that people won’t get it right away, but simple enough that they will eventually guess the object. Once everyone has figured out what the object is, and it has been passed a few times within the circle, choose someone else to act out a different object. When everyone has guessed that object, they should choose someone else to act out a third object. You should explain the activity before you begin, but once you begin, people should be silent. Have everyone stand in a circle so that they can all see each other.

Debrief by leading into the next part.

- Even though that brief warm up was silent, it demonstrates an important aspect of facilitation – the facilitator has a lot of power to set a session’s tone, and in many ways, facilitating is like watching an invisible object change hands in a room. The invisible object is what people are doing and saying; there is a whole complex set of interpersonal communication — both physical and verbal — going on and your role as the facilitator is to keep that object moving between parties and ensure it is still recognizable by most. Even more difficult, often as facilitator, your role is to get everyone to agree on the object, at least in some basic way.

3 Focusing In

Suggested time: 10 minutes

At this point, give more of your own background as a trainer/facilitator, or explain why this session is being done and what you hope participants will do with the information.

In addition, you should have them share more information about their expectations for the session, or their experience with facilitation. For example:

- In pairs, share an example of a time you have facilitated and a challenge you faced.
- With the whole group, ask for the same types of experiences and challenges.
- Or focus on setting ground rules. You can introduce the *Working Agreements* handout.

Setting some Ground Rules for the workshop is often a helpful way to ensure the success of the session. You can use some tried and true Ground Rules, such as:

- Participate fully
- Be willing to take risks
- Respect for self and others

- Tone of sharing and learning
- Ask any questions that you may have

Ask if anyone in the group wants to add additional Ground Rules.

4 Facilitation Framework

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Ask two opening questions:

- “What is a facilitator?”
- “What are the roles of facilitators?”

Have people brainstorm answers while you record them on the flip chart pad.

If they don’t come up with these responses on their own, let them know that...

A FACILITATOR:

- encourages participation
- maintains focus on the task
- helps build small agreements
- manages the group’s process of decision making
- enables a meeting or educational session to flow more smoothly; “to facilitate” means “to make easier”

Explain:

For this session, I want to introduce helpful facilitation techniques that can be used at any time - during a regular meeting or ongoing process.

Introduce the *Facilitation Framework* handout. Explain that this framework is a basis for many of the concepts and tools to be covered (credit *Facilitative Leadership* by Interaction Institute for Social Change for this content).

5 Active Role Play #1

Suggested time: 30 minutes

Several members of the group will be asked to participate in an active role-play to model the facilitation techniques. Other members of the group will be asked to be observers.

Explain:

We are going to be engaged in an active simulation, in which I play the role of a facilitator and the volunteers play the role of participants. While we are doing this, other members of the group will be observers, taking notes of what is said, done, etc.

Ask for three to seven volunteers. Bring them up front.

Introduce an easily understandable situation to the entire group. In most cases, it will work to have you *play yourself* and the participants *play themselves*. Select a target question for a mock focus group, such as what the theme of the conference will be, who the speakers will be, or where the group will go for a celebration.

- *I am the [EXPLAIN WHO YOU ARE].*
- *You all play yourselves, for example students engaged in service, students engaged in activism, program organizers, etc.*
- *The rest of you are observers. I'd like you to take notes, keeping track of what you see me as a facilitator is doing, saying, etc.*
- *Any questions?*

Use this made-up example as a model script for role play, but modify it and/or shorten it for your purposes:

- *“Good afternoon folks. Thanks for coming to this brief focus group. I am working with a great organization that promotes literacy in the city. Our scope spans all ages and income levels—we just want people to read. We’re encouraging this by asking for volunteer tutors of all ages, and for all age tutees. We also want to begin a program that rewards students for reading a certain number of books, and encourages their parents to read with them as well. We are going to set up book drives so that people in the city can easily sell and buy used books, and use the profits to buy books for people who can’t afford them. We also want to establish regular book discussion groups.”*
- *“We think we have a lot of great ideas that could really catch on. However, we aren’t sure how we should go about starting this up. What should we do? Who should we talk to? What is the best way to prioritize all our ideas and get started?”*
- *“Again, this is a focus group. Within this short span of 20 minutes or so, we will get your input, prioritize it, and gather some key ideas to consider as we move into the design process. I will play the role of facilitator, not contributing to the content of the conversation, but providing helpful issue and context information.”*
- *“To start, let me write the focus of our brainstorm at the top: LITERACY START-UP”*
- *“Okay, before I begin, let’s review the guidelines for brainstorming. Does anyone know them?”*
- *Let the group make suggestions. Make sure to conclude with at least the three listed below:
“There are three main guidelines for during the brainstorming activity: (1) Quantity not quality; (2) Repeats are okay; (3) No discussion, commenting, etc.”*
- *“Finally, I need a volunteer to help me capture everyone’s thoughts on paper. Any questions? Let’s go!”*

Brainstorm for a few minutes.

Transition to the process of narrowing the brainstorm, using the open/narrow/close process (found in the “Facilitation Guidelines” handout at the end of this guide – page 14).

CLARIFY

- *“Okay, now, we’re going to start the process of narrowing down these ideas to a few key recommendations to consider.”*
- *“To begin, does anyone need clarification on any of the individual items? If so, the person who said that item will provide it.”*

COMBINE SIMILAR IDEAS

- *“Do any of the ideas up there sound the same, but are just stated in different words?”*
- Ask for suggestions or suggest them yourself. Call upon the group for agreement.

PRIORITIZE

- *“So, we’re left with xx number of ideas. I’m going to use a polling technique called N/3. I’m going to count up all of the ideas we have and divide that number by 3. Each person gets that many votes. This is a poll to determine what the group thinks the prominent ideas are for this issue.*

NEGATIVE POLL (eliminate ones with no votes, with group agreement)

- *“Okay, remember we are trying to exit with just two or three recommendations so that we have a manageable plan. So, looking at how the votes are spread out, we want to eliminate some items from our set of possible recommendations. Let’s start with the items with the fewest votes.”*

Start with 0 votes; move to 1, 2, etc.

- For each idea, ask: *“Does anyone not agree with eliminating this idea?”*
- *“Now remember the goal is to present two to three final recommendations that capture the thinking of the group.”*

Continue the negative poll through the higher numbers of votes.

To wrap: Either have the group agree to a list of two to three recommendations or let them vote from the remaining ideas.

CHECK FOR AGREEMENT THROUGHOUT THIS PROCESS!

6 Introduction of Techniques (Debrief)

Suggested time: 30 minutes

Distribute the **Facilitation Guidelines** handout.

Go through each part of this lengthy handout, using examples from the role play.

Make sure to explain that this is part of a larger process.

- *“I’m going to explain the techniques to use during facilitation by walking through the role play.”*
- *“As or after I do that, we will step back and consider how this example – of a meeting situation – is illustrative of the basic guidelines in the Facilitation Flow or Open/Narrow/Close” – refer participants to the Facilitation Guidelines handout*
- *“After that, I’m going to give a lucky individual the opportunity to practice.”*

Use handouts or overheads to present concepts.

7 Break

Suggested time: 10 minutes

During the break, work ahead a bit and write out the scenarios from section 10 on flipchart paper.

8 Active Role Play #2

Suggested time: 20 minutes

FACILITATOR: REVIEW AND LEARN ALL OF THE TOOLS IN THE HANDOUT “BAG OF TOOLS” AND KNOW THEM.

Explain the context for the next role play, which is also a simulation, but rather than (completing the entire process), it moves from a beginning process (brainstorm, narrowing) to a middle (discussion).

Ask for 5-7 volunteers. Bring them up front.

Introduce the situation:

- *I am the [AGAIN, INSERT YOUR ROLE]*
- *You all play yourselves; you are [DESCRIBE HERE].*
- *The rest of you are observers. I'd like you to take notes, keeping track of what you see me, as a facilitator, doing.*

You want to use a more complicated situation than the one used in active role play #1. A sample script to modify for your own use:

“Thanks for coming to this special meeting. As you know, our literacy organization has been conducting focus groups to figure out how to get off the ground. These groups were asked to generate some key recommendations for consideration. They helped to hone in on some priority areas.”

“Now, as you know, our literacy organization has limited resources (staff and financial) with which to make things happen. But we are resourceful. Thank you for volunteering to help us. In the next 15 minutes or so, I would like you to help me identify some creative ways to move forward with these priorities, using the help of people in our national network.”

In this role play, you will want to use and illustrate a number of techniques, such as:

ONCE AROUND (see #3 on the “Bag of Tools” handout at the end of this guide)

- *“Let’s start by going around and getting each person’s name, school, and one idea about any of the prioritized recommendations.”*
- Take notes on the flip chart so the group can come back to them later.

CATEGORIZING

“Now let’s open it up to comments about what you all think would be the easiest, or most productive, recommendation to try to accomplish and why. Let’s implement the NOSTUESO (No One Speaks Twice Until Everyone Speaks Once) for this discussion.”

FIST TO FIVE (see #2 on the “Bag of Tools” handout at the end of this guide)

“Fist to five is one way of commenting on your general agreement or disagreement with a given set of suggestions. Since the focus groups have already come up with some recommendations, I’ll ask all of you to show your degree of agreement or disagreement with each one. The way you will do this is to hold up your hand to display anything from a fist (zero – total disagreement) to a fully outstretched hand (five – total agreement). Using these numbers, we will get a sense of what recommendations have the most energy from the group.”

9 Introduction of More Tools (Debrief)

Suggested time: 20 minutes

Hand out *Bag of Tools* and *Preventions and Interventions* handouts.

Go through each part on the handout, using examples from the role play to emphasize each point.

- Okay, I’m going to walk through the role-play and explain the techniques. This one is a bit more open-ended – that is, it could have gone in a lot of different directions. The main thing is that I want to introduce to you many different techniques or tools for facilitation.
- Also, other people may have tools they would like to share and should feel free to do so.

Use both handouts to present concepts.

10 Group Inquiry

Suggested time: 15 minutes

(During the break, you should have written out each of the scenarios below on the flip chart.)

During this session, the group is going to think about the tools and techniques just covered and start thinking about ways to deal with a variety of situations.

Have everyone arrange themselves so that they are in pairs. In pairs, have them discuss the questions and come up with some answers to each of the following scenarios:

Scenario 1: A facilitator is convening a meeting to get a group’s input on which restaurant would be best for the group celebration party. What techniques/tools could the facilitator use?

Scenario 2: During a regular weekly meeting, the same few people talk while others do not speak. What might the facilitator try to balance the situation?

Scenario 3: During a brainstorming session, an angry participant says, “I don’t think this is the right issue. This is a waste of time.” How might the facilitator respond?

Scenario 4: The facilitator has taken the group through a large part of a collaborative planning process. It’s the fifth weekly meeting and the group needs to move forward with team assignments on the strategic planning objectives, but everyone keeps goofing off. What can the facilitator do?

After about five minutes of discussion in pairs, have the pairs share their answers aloud with the entire group.

11 Group Role Play

Suggested time: 20 minutes

In this last portion of the workshop, ask for new volunteers to try facilitation roles in a group setting. The scenario is a group deciding on a theme for a staff party.

Assign some mock roles to volunteers. Distribute the role-play situations on page 20 of this guide to all the participants.

Ask everyone to exchange thoughts and comments on the exercise and ask for feedback on additional ways to effectively use/implement the facilitation techniques.

12 Closing

Suggested time: 5 minutes

End this session with some general restatement and discussion. Open it up for comments and discussion from the floor.

End with a Plus/Delta session.

Working Agreements Handout

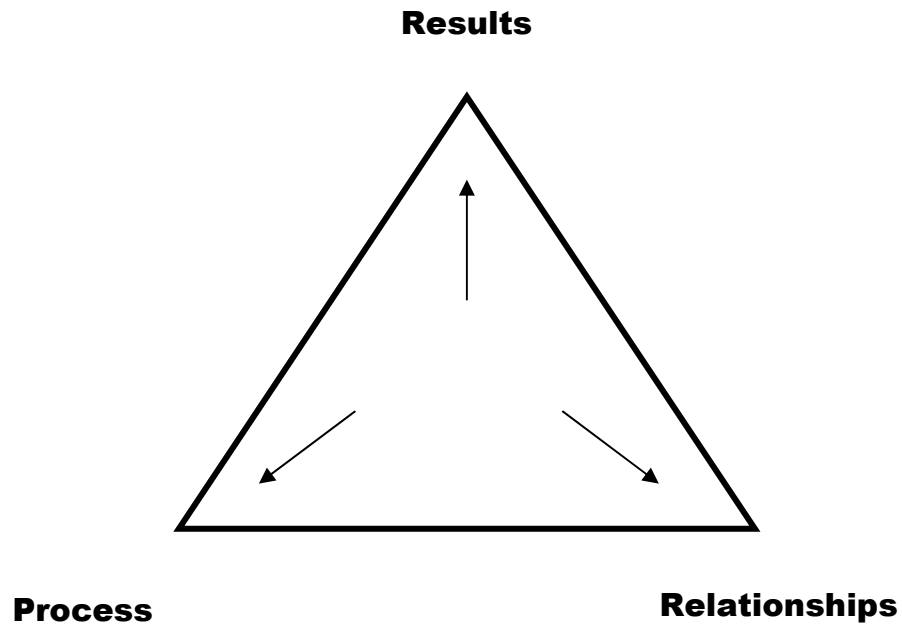
Group Facilitator

- **Be sensitive to the group's needs**
- **Listen to constructive criticism and make appropriate changes**
- **Confront problems and difficulties**
- **Be supportive**
- **Encourage and empower all group members**
- **Continually evaluate the progress of the training (plus/delta)**

Group Member

- ⌚ **Be open and honest with the group**
- ⌚ **Listen to others and honor their experiences**
- ⌚ **Communicate your needs**
- ⌚ **Judge the message, not the messenger**
- ⌚ **Ask questions when you have them**
- ⌚ **Challenge yourself and group members**
- ⌚ **Arrive on time and participate 100%**

Facilitation Framework Handout



Results

- Are the results of high quality?
- Are the results timely?
- Do the results meet expectations (stakeholders)?

Process

- Is the process clear and logical?
- Is the process efficient?
- Is the process appropriate to the task?

Relationship

- Do I feel supported?
- Do I trust the other group members?
- Do I feel valued?
- Am I supportive and trustworthy?

Facilitation Guidelines Handout

Beginnings

When starting a session:

1. Present basic information:

- a. Who you are as the facilitator
- b. Context for the session, relevant history (what led to this or has transpired that is important for the group), who worked on the session, and its importance
- c. Desired outcomes or goals for the session
- d. How those desired outcomes or goals fit into a larger process
- e. Overview of the agenda/outline

2. Clarify if necessary:

- a. A simple way for doing this is to ask:
 - i. Does anyone have questions?
 - ii. Does this make sense to everyone?

3. Check for agreement:

- a. Look for cues
- b. Make eye contact

4. Begin

The Facilitation Flow

It's helpful to consider a basic principle of flow when deciding how to structure or handle topics or items during a session. Think, for example, of a typical conversation or problem-solving attempt:

- **Set out the question or issue** (like defining an outcome) in the context of a conversation, such as "What kind of ice cream do we want for dessert? We can only have two kinds." or "What should we do to recruit volunteers? We only have three weeks and \$500." And you might open it up with relatively few constraints, "Look they have 50 kinds of ice cream; I want chocolate; he wants rum raisin; what's your favorite?" or "Fliers work for me; I like tabling at the fair; ask the people who were in it last year to do it;" etc.
- **Focus in a bit**, "Rum raisin isn't good after eating oranges; let's get the ones that are most favored by the group" or "We only have time to do two strategies fully; let's do what's most important."
- **Close or transition the process**, "80 percent of the people like vanilla, and the birthday girl really wants mint chip. Let's go with that" or "The surveys show that the fair brought in more than half the recruits and the others were tapped by alumni; we agree on those strategies."

You might consider the following general flow:

1. **OPEN:** Consider a topic through open-ended activities. First clarify the content and scope of the topic (using outcomes and specificity). Examples:
 - a. Brainstorm
 - b. List
 - c. Survey
 - d. Hear from every participant
 - e. Free-roaming discussion
2. **NARROW:** Use a process to narrow the information and considerations. Examples of different processes:
 - a. Material, time, resource constraints
 - b. Polling
 - c. Eliminate duplicates
 - d. Voting
 - e. Consensus process (if agreed on as decision-making approach)
3. **CLOSE.** Reach closure or transition (e.g. next steps for process). Examples:
 - a. Negative poll
 - b. Decision from voting
 - c. Combine and build agreement until goal is reached
 - d. Define next steps for decision (e.g. "Okay we have three possibilities to research. Let's come back next week with the information and we'll decide based on that.")

It's important that, as facilitator, you continue to clarify the process throughout.

Opening Techniques

1. **BRAINSTORM:** While many people are familiar with brainstorming, there are some important tips that make it work effectively. These include:
 - a. Important guidelines: Always review the guidelines, inviting participants to generate them if they know them: 1) quantity not quality; 2) no put downs, comments, or discussion; 3) repeats are okay.
 - b. Use a person (or two) as a notetaker. It makes your job as the facilitator, who must pay attention to the group's behavior, much easier.
 - c. Write topic at the top. Write your topic/question on the paper, board, or whatever so that everyone can see it. Check for clarification.
 - d. Use two colors on flip charts, alternating between ideas for better readability.
 - e. Don't crowd items.
 - f. Enforce the guidelines.
 - g. Affirm and encourage participants: with statements that show you're listening (but not evaluating!) like "Got that," "Keep them coming!" or "We're jamming!"
 - h. Wrap it up: by signaling you're going to end, "Okay, I'll take three more."
 - i. Add ideas: Yes, the facilitator and recorders may add ideas at the end; note for the group that you are stepping out of your role as facilitator when you add your own thoughts.
2. **ONCE AROUND:** Often, the best way to include everyone, especially if you have quiet participants, is to ask a focused question and have each person contribute their response to that question. Have a recorder note those responses up front.

- 3. FREE ASSOCIATION:** If your group is stuck with old ideas, you may want to interject a structure that promotes creativity. One way is to use some kind of toy or silly object and have people generate a response to the topic that is somehow a free association with it. Another is to use articles, quotes, or other materials.

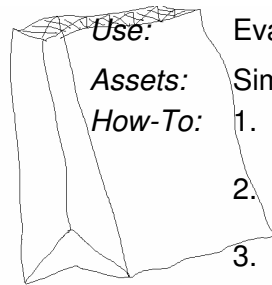
Narrowing Techniques

- 1. WORKING WITH A BRAINSTORM:** After completing the brainstorm, try the following steps:
 - a. Check for clarification.** Often people throw up an idea or word that other people don't understand or don't interpret in the same way. Ask the group, "Is there anything up there that anyone wants clarified?" Allow for the person who said the item to briefly explain what s/he meant.
 - b. Eliminate duplicates.** Literally cross them off the list, asking the group for help and permission in eliminating the items. You have to get the group's agreement for eliminating synonyms (e.g. make sure that the group agrees on the meanings of the items).
 - c. Get a spread.** Use the N/3 tool (below) or polling.
 - d. Delete low interest items.** You can use Negative Polling.
 - e. Combine.** This is often the hard part, but it requires synthesizing the items into categories or areas that the group agrees to.
- 2. N/3:** Count the items left and allow each person to vote for N/3 items (e.g. if there are 15 items, everyone can vote for 5). This is not a vote – it is to see the spread of responses. Therefore, people can place all of their votes on one item or spread them however. Use sticky dots, colored markers, or other tools to do this visually, with everyone participating.
- 3. NEGATIVE POLLING:** This involves removing items from consideration, usually after an N/3 or other polling. You ask the group, "This didn't get much attention/any dots. Is it okay with everyone if we take it off our list?"

Bag of Tools

This resource includes a number of simple, everyday facilitation techniques that can support your work and engage team members in a collaborative yet structured way. Many of these techniques are also noted in the Facilitation Guidelines handout.

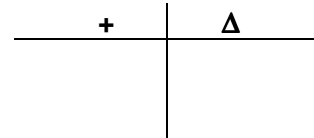
1 Plus/Delta



Use: Evaluation & improvement

Assets: Simple structure, easily applicable

- How-To:*
1. Identify what it is you're evaluating (a service project, a team meeting)
 2. Ask people to state "pluses" (strengths) and "deltas" (areas for improvement).
 3. Keep deltas focused on upgrades or recommendations, not negatives
 4. Don't argue, defend or discuss.
 5. Summarize with a few key take-aways.



2 Fist-to-Five



Use: Evaluation, polling agreement

Assets: Quick pulse check, shows divergent thinking

- How-To:*
1. Identify a clear focus/question ("Should we adopt these bylaws?")
 2. Illustrate how to do it (see below)
 3. Count 1, 2, 3: People show their fists!
 4. Take selected comments to highlight different opinions.
 5. Wrap & move on.

Fist-to-Five Consensus Building: When a group comes to consensus on a matter, it means that all members of the group can support the decision. They don't all have to think it's the best decision, but they should all agree with it to some extent. To use this technique, the facilitator restates the proposal/idea and asks everyone to show their level of support. Each person responds by showing a fist or a number of fingers that corresponds to their opinion. It is a good idea to post what each finger means so everyone knows exactly what they are representing.

Fist: "I need to talk more about the proposal and require changes for it to pass."

1 Finger: "I still need to discuss certain issues and suggest changes that should be made."

2 Fingers: "I am more comfortable with the proposal but would like to discuss some minor issues."

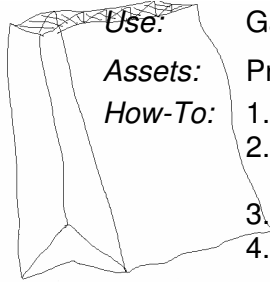
3 Fingers: "I'm not in total agreement but feel comfortable to let this decision or proposal pass without further discussion."

4 Fingers: "I think it's a good idea/decision and will work for it."

5 Fingers: "It's a great idea and I will be one of the leaders in implementing it."

If anyone shows fewer than three fingers, s/he should be given the opportunity to state her/his objections, and the team should address these concerns. Teams continue the Fist-to-Five process until they have achieved consensus (a minimum of three fingers or higher) or until they determine they must move to the next issue.

3 Once-Around

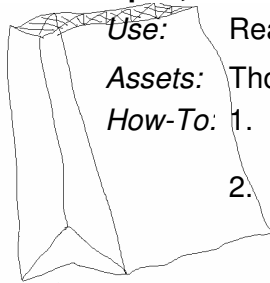


Use: Gathering input on a specific question

Assets: Provides focus, encourages participation

- How-To:**
1. Choose a focused question that requires some critical thinking.
 2. Go around the circle (or choose other method), giving each person has chance to respond.
 3. Keep it moving, note possible areas for follow-up.
 4. **NOSTUESO** (No One Speaks Twice Until Everyone Speaks Once) – give everyone the option to speak, don't let the big talkers dominate.
 5. Close by noting what areas might need further discussion.

4 Open, Narrow, Close

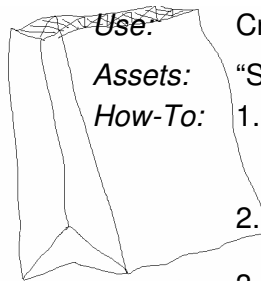


Use: Reaching agreement, esp. on bigger issues/ideas

Assets: Thorough, encourages input, shows trends in group opinion

- How-To:**
1. Your group needs to make a decision such as “where should we take our field trip?”
 2. **Open:** Spend 5 minutes brainstorming ideas on a flip chart. *The rules of brainstorming:*
 - Don't comment on/question any suggestions (unless clarity is needed to write it down)
 - Anything idea is useful, no matter how big/small/silly/strange
 - Don't get sidetracked into discussion – continue brainstorming new ideas
 3. **Narrow:** Use an N/3 poll to see how the group feels about the choices:
 - Count the item on the list and divide by three. Each person is allowed to vote for that many choices.
 - People can vote by raising hands, making check marks, using stickers.
 4. **Close:** Decide how to move on, based on the outcome of the N/3 poll.
 - It's not really a “vote” – i.e. the one getting the most votes isn't necessarily chosen.
 - If there seems to be a clear trend towards one or a few choices, make a proposal – “is anyone *not* okay with going to the park?”
 - If the poll shows no trend at all, choose another strategy to make the decision.
 5. Wrap with next steps.

5 Most Interesting Thing



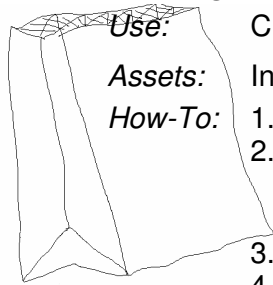
Use: Creates structure for ongoing coaching & teaching

Assets: “Structure liberates” – makes role easier; can engage others

- How-To:**
1. Establish an ongoing structure in team meetings where you choose one “most interesting thing” that has come up during discussion that session/day/week.
 2. Keep objective notes during meetings or structured working times. Choose one thing to bring up.
 3. Don't editorialize – just put the observation out there and see what happens.
 4. Engage others in discussion & analysis.

5. Discuss both strengths and improvements.

6 Running Index Cards



Use:

Creates structure for ongoing team problem solving

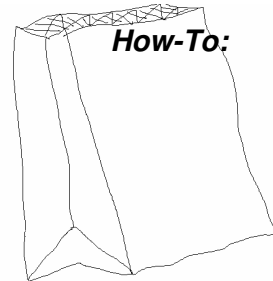
Assets:

Inclusive, gets everyone involved, allows leader to prioritize/focus

How-To:

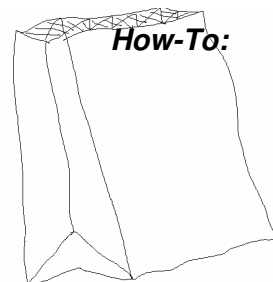
1. Establish this as an ongoing structure in team meetings
2. Have team members reflect silently and write down one problem/issue on an index card (e.g. "a problem I'm having with my child").
3. Collect cards and choose 1-2 to begin conversation with.
4. Have the person who wrote the card role-play the other person in the conflict (eg. the mother role plays as the child). Have someone else in the group role play as the person who wrote the card (eg. as the mother).
5. Have other people in the group comment on each of the role play, explaining what each could do differently.
6. Regularly spend 5-10 minutes problem-solving selected index cards.
7. Keep cards on file to revisit issues that didn't get discussed yet. Some may have resolved themselves by the time you get around to them!

7 **Name:** _____



How-To:

8 **Name:** _____



How-To:

Preventions and Interventions

Remember: building a group decision is based on a series of small content and process agreements made along the way.

Examples:

	<i>Open</i>	<i>Narrow</i>	<i>Close</i>
Process agreement	“Are we ready to brainstorm?”	“Are we ready to organize the information?”	“Are we ready to make a decision?”
Content agreement	“Is this the complete record of all of the focus groups’ responses?”	“Are these the right categories?”	“Is this our final list of recommendations to take to the board?”

Preventions

1. **STATE CONTENT.** Clearly state the content of what will be discussed (and what won't) at the beginning of the session.
2. **CLARIFY THE PROCESS.** Explain HOW the content will be covered or discussed before beginning.
3. **CHECK FOR AGREEMENT.** Make eye contact. Ask specific questions.
4. **FOCUS ON AGREEMENT.** Summarize what's been accomplished, decided or agreed upon, even if there are points of contention. “We've made a lot of progress in this meeting, especially in the last 30 minutes. We can finish this last item in the next ten minutes.
5. **NOTUESTO.** No One Speaks Twice Until Everyone Speaks Once. A great ground rule to lay out, especially if you anticipate that one or a few people will dominate the discussion.

Interventions

Interventions are techniques you can use to put things back on track when they have begun to go astray. Pay close attention to the group. Look for the issues below to get involved.

- ❖ **BOOMERANG.** When a participant attempts to question the process or otherwise wants to take the group in a different direction, it can be helpful to turn that question to the group. You can ask, “Well, what do you think?” or “Let's consider that question for a minute. What are people's thoughts?”
- ❖ **REINFORCE PROCESS AGREEMENTS.** Keep people working with the process and ground rules that the group agreed to. “Remember, this is just the brainstorming stage; clarifications and discussion will follow later.” Or “If you would like to speak, I need to see a raised hand, as we agreed. It doesn't work to have people cutting each other off.”
- ❖ **REGAIN FOCUS.** Use the goals, agenda, outcomes, activity at hand or other ways to refocus the group. For example, “We're getting off track with this item. Remember our purpose is to decide a theme for the training; we can deal with the issue of space, but

we need to make a separate time for that.” Or “Let’s refocus; take a five minute break, then come back and let’s get through this.”

- ❖ **ACCEPT/LEGITIMIZE. THEN DEAL WITH OR DEFER.** Accept participants’ statements, even when emotional, without letting them take the group totally off track. For example, “It’s clear that you have some very strong opinions about this. Let’s keep thinking about how to turn these problems into solutions.” “Wow, that’s an important point. Perhaps we should take five minutes to address that point before moving on. Does everyone agree?” “That’s a critical issue. Keep it in mind because we’re going to talk about this a few items down our agenda.”
- ❖ **USE HUMOR.** Or someone else’s humor. Allow for some laughter and good natured joking. It can help to diffuse tension and lighten difficult situations.
- ❖ **ASK/SAY “WHAT’S GOING ON?”** Being direct can be a useful technique when there is clear tension or resistance. Be prepared to deal with the answer.
- ❖ **BREAK.** Call a break if participants look like their attention is waning. Have a stretch . Play a short game or do an icebreaker.

Prepared Role Play Cards

<p>You are the facilitator. You are leading the group through a planning session to determine a theme for an upcoming staff party.</p> <p>The group needs to decide a theme for the event and 3-4 outcomes.</p> <p>Do this process. Try to think about your agenda and process and use a variety of strategies and tools.</p>	<p>You are a participant.</p> <p>You only have one idea for the theme (and it's clearly not the best idea – be creative and outlandish!!).</p> <p>You think your idea for the theme should win out and you don't want to give up.</p>
<p>You are a participant.</p> <p>You are withdrawn and sulky.</p> <p>You don't contribute ideas.</p>	<p>You are a participant.</p> <p>Your mind is more focused on the upcoming party (and on parties in general) than on the content at hand.</p> <p>Other than that, you are a somewhat focused, helpful participant.</p>
<p>You are a participant.</p> <p>You are a helpful, focused participant. You stay on task.</p> <p>You can contribute whatever issues are salient in your mind.</p>	<p>You are a participant.</p> <p>You tend to be a peacemaker.</p> <p>You may even come to the aid or rescue of the facilitator, if you think it's necessary.</p> <p>You can contribute whatever issues are salient in your mind.</p>
<p>You are a participant.</p> <p>You are definitely sick of all the talk about this party and wish that someone would just make a decision.</p>	<p>You are a participant.</p> <p>You're also the group's comedian, which can be helpful or a hindrance.</p> <p>You have lots of ideas to contribute.</p>