



Facilitation 101: Roles of Effective Facilitators

Bonner Curriculum

Overview:

This workshop provides a basic introduction to techniques and tips for facilitation, which are useful for trainings, discussion groups and other formats. It is an introductory workshop, exploring some of the knowledge and skills a facilitator needs to be effective in leading groups. It focuses in particular on presenting the roles of effective facilitation. It should likely be followed with additional training on facilitation, such as **Facilitation 201** and **Facilitation 202**.

Category:

Facilitation; communication; leadership skills; project planning; management

Level:

Introductory

Recommended Bonner Sequence:

This workshop is an introduction to facilitation, which may be helpful to follow with other trainings (201 and 202). It is probably most appropriate for sophomore year, in conjunction with a focus on communication and developing leadership skills, or junior year, as part of project coordination training. It could also be used senior year, especially as part of the whole series.

expectation	explore	experience	example	expertise
-------------	---------	------------	---------	-----------

VALUES: ALL - community engagement, community building, social justice

Type:

Structured activities suitable for workshop, retreat, training, and regular meetings.

Focus or Goals of this Guide:

- Provide participants with a general definition and approach to facilitation
- Introduce a range of concepts and set of roles and responsibilities behind facilitating

- Participants will have the opportunity to try out facilitation roles and get feedback from others

Materials:

- Flip Charts
- Markers and tape
- Copies of attached handouts

How to Prepare:

This guide will help you give information to others about facilitating. Participants will be role playing as facilitators in scenarios, so familiarize yourself with the list of what “to do” and “not to do” as a facilitator before you present it. As a trainer, make sure you have handouts to give to participants about facilitating. A list is available at the end of the training.

How to Do/Brief Outline:

The outline has the following parts:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1) Brief warm up | suggested time 15 minutes |
| 2) Introduction | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 3) Action! Facilitation Scenarios | suggested time 40 minutes |
| 4) Review of Effective Roles | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 5) Wrap Up | suggested time 10 minutes |

Part 1) Brief Warm Up

Suggestion time: 15 minutes

As a facilitator, introduce yourself, setting a tone for the session. You may want to include your role/position, goals and hopes for the session and anything else relevant to the session about you.

You may also want to do a round of introductions and/or a name game.

Check the Games, Games, Games handout for activities, keeping in mind you want an upbeat, warm tone.

Part 2) Introduction

Suggestion time: 10 minutes

After a warm up, you should have everyone sit in a circle or other way that allows them to see and hear one another.

Stand in the circle with a marker and a flip chart ready to write on. At this moment, you should re-welcome everyone. It is good to reintroduce yourself, so that people are sure to remember your name and are comfortable asking you questions. Here's an example conversation starter:

“Now that we know some people and something about each other, let's move on with the workshop. Again, I welcome you all to this “How to Be a Facilitator” workshop. My name is Kelly Carter, and I'll be your facilitator for the day. Please feel free to ask questions or stop me during the workshop if you have any concerns.”

Now, begin a conversation and dialogue with the participants. As you ask questions, write the participants' answers and pertinent comments on the flip chart.

Use the question below, having familiarized yourself with the roles of a facilitator.

Ask:

What is a facilitator?

- Take responses from participants, using a volunteer to help you note them on flip chart paper.
- Try to model effective note taking techniques, such as writing with large and alternative marker colors. As ideas are recorded, repeat them back to the audience to make sure everyone has heard.
- Use attentive body language (such as nodding, smiling) to be supportive of the participants. Nod your head and encourage their brainstorming with positive comments.
- After approximately half the group has offered an answer to the question, incorporate the definition of a facilitator. Present the definition slowly and clearly.

Now, introduce this definition of “facilitator”:

A “Facilitator” is:

- ***One who helps participants learn from an activity. The literal meaning of facilitator is “one who makes things easy.” Explain that a facilitator may also be called a trainer.***

Go deeper into the definition, using the following points:

- The facilitator serves as a coordinator and organizer of small groups, and ensures everyone is participating and staying on task.
- It is critical for the facilitator to have the capacity to develop mutual respect among the group in order to maximize learning. You must be willing to take risks and work hard.

- The facilitator guides the participants. People will tend to view facilitators as experts in the topic they are facilitating. Make sure you are knowledgeable about the topic and feel comfortable with people questioning your resources of information.

A Suggestion: Walk around the room, perhaps between the participants. Make eye contact with the audience. As the facilitator, lead by example: Be energetic and get involved in each point. An effective facilitator gets the audience involved in their subjects. Observe your participants for clues that they are listening and responding to what you are saying. Watch to see if they maintain eye contact with you and respond with their body language, nodding their heads, etc. Respond to those people who are listening well, while also engaging people who do not appear to be listening or interested.

Part 3) Behavior of a Facilitator

Suggested time: 40 minutes

After you present the definition of “facilitator,” transition to the next part of the workshop. At this point, start acting out some scenarios. Skits are a great way of getting people involved with the subject material. The more activity you incorporate into the workshop, the more engaged your participants will be, and they will learn more as a result.

You should get ready for the skits by following the steps below:

1. Have a partner facilitator (one or more) ready to help act out the skits.
2. Facilitators should take turns taking major roles in the skits. For example, one facilitator may act, and the other discusses the skit with the audience.
3. The first skit should exemplify things that **a facilitator should not do**.
4. From the list “the facilitator should not do” choose five scenarios that both of the facilitators feel comfortable with and it is easy to act out.

Begin the skits:

- Explain to participants that they are about to watch some skits. (This is the transition that you are making from the definition [Part 2] to behaviors [Part 3].)
- Keep your audience engaged in the skit by telling them that you are going to act out something, and afterward you will ask them to guess what you were doing.
- Tell your audience that the skit’s title is “Things A Facilitator Should Never Do.”
- One facilitator will act, and after he or she demonstrates that behavior, the other facilitator should call out “Freeze!”
- Ask them what the facilitator was doing wrong. This part should be a little humorous and can involve the audience. Ask your participants, “how should the facilitator have behaved?” Ask them to be creative with their suggestions.

Suggested Skit Topics:

- *Reading from a manuscript*

- *Telling inappropriate or offensive stories* by actually going off with a story that is not related to the workshop
- *Saying umm, aahh* repeatedly (saying umm and aahh and act really nervous.)
- *Talking too much* (effective facilitators try to follow the 80/20 rule of talking only 20 percent)
- *Dominating the process with your opinions*
- *Telling too much about your personal experience and life* (Tell an irrelevant story.)
- *Downplaying people's ideas* (Don't be too harsh!)

Write each scenario on the flip chart after participants respond as to what they observed. In the end you should have 5-8 different issues listed on the flip chart.

After you are done with the skits, ask what other things a facilitator should not do. Write these on the flip chart as well.

At this point, you want to have participants thinking deeper about and visually picturing what a facilitator should not be doing.

If you don't see the things listed below you can add them to the list.

Key things Facilitators should not do:

- Downplay people's ideas.
- Push personal agendas and opinions as the "right" answer.
- Dominate the group.
- Say "umm," or "aahh"
- Read from a manuscript
- Tell inappropriate or offensive stories
- Make up an answer to questions they don't know (lie).
- Allow people to bully others in the group
- Take a stance with one section of the group
- Tell too much about your personal experience and life
- Assume the demographics of your group (based on appearance)

Engage and reaffirm participants' contributions, telling them things such as:

"You all have done a good job in guessing what the facilitator should not do. Now let's talk about some tips that a facilitator should follow to be effective."

Again, use role plays to act out behaviors (this time, effective ones). Use scenarios that incorporate what a facilitator should do. Try not to talk a lot during this section. Try to be creative.

- *Exude confidence-be clear, enthusiastic, breathe!* Show confidence and show that you are breathing.

- *Have lots of visually appealing handouts and flip charts - they help add the practical material the participants leave your workshop with. Show that you have a flip chart and handouts.*
- *Be aware of individuals that may be experiencing discomfort or are not participating. Try to engage the participants who are not participating or ask them what they are thinking.*
- *Determine needed supplies, room requirements, chair set-up. Act out what you need and show that you are making sure chairs are set-up and you have all the supplies.*
- *Know the material before doing the workshop. Show that you are preparing for the training before the training.*

After you are done with the skits, ask what other things a facilitator should do. Write these on the flip chart as well.

If you don't see the things listed below you can add them to the list.

Effective Facilitation Behaviors include:

- Knowing the material before doing the workshop.
- Exuding confidence: Be clear, enthusiastic, breath!
- Using humor, stories, and examples that directly relate to their work.
- Selecting an appropriate activity that will meet the needs of your group and having lots of fun energizers/icebreakers on hand.
- Having lots of visually appealing handouts and flip charts: they help add the practical material the participants leave your workshop with.
- Determining needed supplies, room requirements, seating arrangement.
- Thinking through the exercise and visualize potential problems and pitfalls: one of the biggest is not allotting enough time for activities.
- Clearly explaining activity directions and being prepared for questions.
- Observing individual participation and involvement during exercises.
- Being aware of individuals that may be experiencing discomfort or are not participating.
- Following up the exercise with discussion.
- Processing with participants, allowing them to reveal thoughts and feelings as appropriate.
- Being available to talk/debrief with participants during break times and before/after the training.
- Evaluating needs of the group, especially at the end of the day to see what you can change for the next day.
- Evaluating the experience and write down notes for future trainings.

Thank everyone for participating in the exercise.

Part 4) Review Responsibilities of a Facilitator

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Transition from the role play and discussion of effective behaviors to discussion of responsibilities. Know the list contained in the attachment.

You can use a question like:

Now that we have reviewed effective behaviors of facilitators, let's consider responsibilities. What do you all think are the responsibilities — big ideas — of facilitators?

As people suggest responsibilities on the list, write them on the flip chart.

Then, draw connections between these ideas and the list below. You can make direct connections or ask additional questions to pull out ideas.

Then, present this list as a summary.

Responsibilities of facilitator:

- **Facilitators are the standard-setters for the discussion.**
Facilitators must stay focused and alert, interested in the discussion and the learning that is taking place. They set and maintain the tone of discussion, by example and by setting ground rules. Facilitators should make eye contact with all participants, listen closely, and encourage everyone to contribute to the group.
- **Facilitators make the workshop environment a priority.**
Everything from how the chairs are set up, candy, quotes on the wall, location of restrooms, and many other logistical items. The facilitator is responsible for gauging the physical environment of the training and how the environment relates to the feeling of the workshop.
- **Facilitators are mindful of timing issues.**
It is easy to over-schedule activities and not incorporate enough downtime for the participants. Avoid planning intensive activities directly before or after a meal. Always plan on activities taking longer than you think. Facilitators need to constantly check-in with the group to gauge their energy level.
- **Facilitators are responsible for articulating the purpose of the discussion and its significance to the group.**
It is important to clearly state the goal and purpose of each activity and section of the training. Also, let the group know the expected time that will be spent on each activity.
- **Facilitators make use of various techniques/tools to keep the discussion moving.**
- When tension arises or discussion comes to a halt. The facilitator must be prepared with tools to keep the learning happening.
- **Facilitators are responsible for paying attention to group behaviors.**

Be observant of verbal and non-verbal queues from the group. You can encourage people to explain their behaviors during check-in periods.

- **Facilitators should be relaxed and have a sense of humor that makes sure discussions are enjoyable as well as educational.**

Group discussions can often take a very serious turn and become intense. It is important to remember we do not have to be fired-up or uptight in order to have effective discussions. Laughter and a relaxed environment can be the greatest methods for a good discussion.

Part 4) Wrap Up

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Wrap up with a summary and reflection, involving participants in sharing what they have learned.

Conduct a workshop evaluation such as a plus/delta.

Also note any next steps or follow up (such as additional training).

“NOT To Do” List For Facilitators

A facilitator should not:

- ❑ Impose a solution on the group. They clarify issues, focus discussions, bring out viewpoints, synthesize differences, and look for underlying agreements. However, this does not mean they impose a solution on the group.
- ❑ Downplay people’s ideas.
- ❑ Push personal agendas and opinions as the “right” answer.
- ❑ Dominate the group.
- ❑ Say umm, aahh repeatedly.
- ❑ Read from a manuscript.
- ❑ Tell inappropriate or offensive stories.
- ❑ Make up an answer-you never know who is in the room.
- ❑ Allow people to bully others in the group.
- ❑ Talk a stance with one section of the group.
- ❑ Tell too much about your personal experience and life.
- ❑ Assume the demographics of your group (based on appearance).

“To Do” List For Facilitators

- **Know the material before doing the workshop.**
- **Exude confidence-be clear, enthusiastic, breath!**
- **Use humor, stories, and examples that directly relate to their work.**
- **Select an appropriate activity that will meet the needs of your group and have lots of fun energizers/icebreakers on hand.**
- **Have lots of visually appealing handouts and flip charts**
- **Determine needed supplies, room requirements, and chair set-up.**
- **Think through the exercise and visualize potential problems and pitfalls- one of the biggest is not allotting enough time for activities.**
- **Clearly explain activity directions and be prepared for questions.**
- **Observe individual participation and involvement during exercises.**
- **Be aware of individuals that may be experiencing discomfort or who are not participating.**
- **Follow up the exercise with discussion.**
- **Processing will reveal the thoughts and feelings never expressed previously.**
- **Be available to talk/debrief with participants during break times and before/after the training.**
- **Evaluate needs of the group, especially at the end of the day to see what you can change for the next day.**
- **Evaluate the experience and write down notes for future trainings.**

Responsibilities of the Facilitator

- **Facilitators are the standard-setters for the discussion.**
Facilitators must stay focused and alert, interested in the discussion and the learning that is taking place. They create the standards of communications by listening closely, and encouraging all participants to contribute to the group.
- **Facilitators make the workshop environment a priority.**
Everything from how the chairs are set up, candy, quotes on the wall, location of restrooms, and many other logistical items. The facilitator is responsible for gauging the physical environment of the training and how the environment relates to the feeling of the workshop.
- **Facilitators are mindful of timing issues.**
It is easy to over schedule activities and not incorporate enough down time for the participants. Avoid planning intensive activities directly before or after a meal. Always plan for activities taking longer than you think you will last. Facilitators need to constantly check-in with the group to gauge their energy level.
- **Facilitators are responsible** for articulating the purpose of the discussion and its significance to the group. It is important to clearly state the goal and purpose of each activity and section of the training. Also, let the group know the expected time that will be spent on each activity.
- **Facilitators make use of various techniques/tools to keep the discussion moving when tension arises or discussion comes to a halt.**
The facilitator must be prepared with tools to keep the learning happening.
- **Facilitators are responsible for paying attention to group behaviors.**
Be observant of verbal and non-verbal queues from the group. You can encourage people to explain their behaviors during check-in periods.
- **Facilitators should be relaxed and have a sense of humor that makes sure discussions are enjoyable as well as educational.**
Group discussions can often take a very serious turn and become intense. It is important to remember we do not have to be fired-up or uptight in order to have effective discussions. Laughter and a relaxed environment can be the greatest methods for a good discussion.