

Facilitation 201: An Intensive Intro to Techniques

Bonner Curriculum

Overview:

This lengthy, content rich, interactive session introduces a general approach to facilitation and a range of tools and techniques for facilitation. It introduces a framework that provides a foundation for how to approach facilitation. Then, using a series of active role-plays, the workshop involves volunteer participants, engaging them in learning about and practicing a variety of facilitation tools. This is a fairly advanced training in parts, requiring a facilitator who is comfortable with all of the techniques and tools contained in this trainer guide and handouts.

A precursor to this training is the basic ***Roles of a Facilitator***. A good follow-up session is ***Facilitation 202***.

Category:

Facilitation; communication; management; leadership skills

Level:

Moderate

Type:

Structured activities suitable for workshop (e.g. retreat or training) or for use during regular meeting structure

Focus or Goals of this Guide:

- Introduce a framework, techniques, and guidelines for facilitation
- Engage participants in active role plays to engage in order to learn and apply techniques, through observation and modeling
- Provide participants with the opportunity to practice and get feedback, using scenarios and group observation

Materials:

- Flip chart and markers
- Attached Handouts including:
 - Working Agreements
 - Facilitation Framework
 - Facilitation Guidelines
 - Bag of Tricks

- Prepared role play cards for Group Role Play

How to Prepare:

Review the trainer guide. Become comfortable with all of the facilitation techniques and prepare handouts. Review and modify scenarios to fit purpose and activities of participants. Prepare role play cards for Group Role Play (see attachment).

How to Do/Brief Outline:

This workshop consists of 3.5 hours of activities, with a 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/shortened in some areas or split over a few sessions for most practice.

1.	Warm Up (Magic Object)	suggested time 10 minutes
2.	Introductions	suggested time 10 minutes
3.	Focusing In	suggested time 10 minutes
4.	A Facilitation Framework	suggested time 10 minutes
5.	Active Role Play	suggested time 30 minutes
6.	Introduction of Techniques (Debrief)	suggested time 30 minutes
7.	Volunteer Try-Out and Feedback	suggested time 20 minutes
8.	Break	suggested time 10 minutes
9.	Active Role Play #2	suggested time 20 minutes
10.	Introduction of More Tools/Debrief	suggested time 20 minutes
11.	Group Inquiry	suggested time 10 minutes
12.	Group Role Plays	suggested time 25 minutes
13.	Closing	suggested time 5 minutes

Part 1) Opening Warm Up: The Magic Object

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Lead the group in this creative, silent warm up in which you pretend to have an invisible object, then pass it to someone else. As it passes, the object is transformed into something else. Explain, "I've got something; can you tell what it is?" and act something out. "But as I pass it, the object magically transforms into something else."

Act it out to illustrate (it's like a mime). Get people into it, standing in a circle if possible. This should be quick but gets everyone focused. You can add a few more rounds such as (1) having people guess the object and the object passing to the person who guesses correctly and (2) having people act out a feeling or emotion and again having people guess the emotion and it passing to the person who guesses correctly.

Debrief by leading into the next part.

- Even though that brief warm up was silent, it has an important connection to the topic here – the facilitator has a lot of power to set the tone of a session, and in many ways facilitating is like watching an invisible object change hands in a room. Only 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 what the object finally becomes, at least in some basic way.
- 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 can have a chance practicing at least one technique.

Part 2) Opening Introductions: Represent Yourself

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Introduce yourself as the facilitator:

- Welcome everyone
- Introduce yourself, role and why you are doing this training
- Review major goals
- Review agenda
- Use a visual or large poster as well

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

Part 3) Focusing In

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Now you may want to 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 may want to 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. Transition into a focus on setting Ground Rules. You can introduce *the Working Agreements* handout.

You may want to set some Ground Rules for the workshop for participants, such as:

- ❖ Participate fully
- ❖ Be willing to take risks
- ❖ Respect for self and others
- ❖ Tone of sharing and learning
- ❖ Ask

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

Part 4) A Facilitation Framework

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Ask the following opening question:

“What is a facilitator?”

Using the flip chart pad, note a few of the responses.

Then, present:

Technically, facilitate means, “to make easier.”

Then, lead people in a brainstorm to throw out the roles of facilitators. After getting a few of those responses up, build on what has been said.

End this by presenting, using ideas from the brainstorm, some basic ideas of the roles of a facilitator (flip chart):

A FACILITATOR:

- *encourages participation*
- *maintains focus on the task*
- *helps build small agreements*
- *manages this process of decision making (involving a group)*
- *sometimes this is in the context of an educational session; at other times it is in the context of a working meeting*

Explain:

”For this session, I want to introduce many helpful techniques for facilitation that are also geared to be used at any time, during a regular meeting or ongoing process.”

Now, introduce the **Facilitation Framework** handout. Explain that this framework is a basis for many of the concepts and tools to be covered.

Part 5) An Active Role Play

Suggested time: 30 minutes

In this part, you will call on members of the group to be participants in an active role-play, where you model the facilitation techniques. Other members of the group will be asked to be observers.

Select several volunteers from the audience for this next part.

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 they observe is said, done, etc.”

Take 3-7 people. Bring them up front.

Introduce a situation that is readily understandable by the participants. In most cases, it will work to have you *play yourself* and the participants *play themselves*. Then select a target question, such as a mock focus group for determining something, like what the theme of the conference will be, who will be a speaker, 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, staff who run programs, etc.]*
- *The rest of you are observers. I'd like you to take notes, keeping track of what you see me as facilitator doing, saying, etc.*
- *Any questions. Let's start.*

Use this sample as a model script for role play, but modify it for your purposes:

- *“Good afternoon folks. Thanks for coming to this brief focus group. As you know, I am a staff member at Idealist. I am here to get your input on an important issue relevant to Idealist's work moving forward. As you may know, we have a website, www.idealistoncampus.org, which currently provides information about our programs, events, resources, national conference, etc. This year, we would like to build out the area of our website that is geared specifically at your campus. For example, it would be the Illinois State, Stanford, or Mariposa Community College idealistoncampus site. It would offer our general resources but also have localized resources, allowing people on campus (and in the community perhaps) to post information about groups, departments, opportunities, etc. It would also be a vehicle for organizing, allowing Idealist Alliances or groups on campus to share information, contacts, etc.”*
- *“This year, we'd like to build out this facet, with your input on how it should be organized, what it should contain, etc. So, briefly, I'd like to lead us in a brainstorm of what information, services, and ideas you have for this customized site.”*

- *“Again, this is a focus group. Within this short span of 20 minutes or so, we will get your input, prioritize it, and leave me with some key ideas to consider as we move into the design process. I will play the role of facilitator, not contributing to the content in this case, but providing helpful information about the issue and context.”*
 - *“To start, let me write the focus of our brainstorm at the top: IDEALIST ON CAMPUS CUSTOMIZED CAMPUS WEBSITES*
 - *“Okay, before I begin let’s review the guidelines for brainstorming. Does anyone know them?”*
 - *Let group throw them out. Make sure to conclude with the three.*
 - *“There are three main guidelines for brainstorming: Quantity not quality; (2) Repeats are okay; (3) No discussion, commenting, etc. during;*
 - *“Finally, I need a volunteer to help me write. We’ll alternate colors. Any questions? Let’s go”*

Do brainstorm for a few minutes.

Wrap up:

- *“Okay, I’ll take three more.”*

Transition to the process of narrowing the brainstorm, using the open/narrow/close process.

Do CLARIFICATION

- *“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.”*

Do COMBINE SIMILAR IDEAS

- *“Well, does it seem like any of the ideas up there are actually the same idea stated in different words?”*
- *Ask for or suggest. Call upon group for agreement.*

Do PRIORITIZE

- *“So, we’re left with x number of ideas. I’m going to use a Prioritizing Technique. I’m going to count up all of the items. There are 18. Okay, I’m going to divide 18 by 4, which is 4 and some fraction. Now each person gets that many – 4- dots or checks. You can use the dots on that number of items or you can weight them. This is not a vote. It is a poll to see what the prominent ideas are for this issue for the group.*

After the Prioritizing Technique, do the NEGATIVE POLL (eliminating ones with no dots, with group agreement)

- *“Okay, remember we are trying to exit with just 2-3 recommendations. So, now, looking at how the dots are spread, we want to eliminate some items from our set of possible recommendations. Let’s start with the items with the fewest dots.*

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

- *“Does anyone not agree with taking this item off*
- *Now remember the goal is just to present 2-3 final recommendations that capture the thinking of the group.”*

Continue negative poll through higher numbers.

To wrap: Either have the group agree to a 2-3 list or let them vote from remaining.

Check for agreement.

Part 6) Introduce Content through Debrief of Role Play

Suggested time: 30 minutes

Hand out **Facilitation Guidelines**.

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.

- *“Okay, I’m going to explain the techniques used now, walking through the role play.”*
- *“As or after I do that, we are also going to step back and consider how this example – of a meeting situation – is an illustration of these basic guidelines of the Facilitation Flow or Open/Narrow/Close.”*
- *“After that, I’m going to give a lucky individual the opportunity to practice.”*

Use handouts on overheads to present concepts.

Part7) Volunteer Try-Out

Suggested time: 20 minutes

Call up a volunteer.

Either give a sample situation or allow the role play volunteer to pick a situation to do the whole process (brainstorm, narrowing).

Give the person a few minutes to get their thoughts together to prepare.

“Are you ready? Try to utilize the techniques we have just covered.

Take a moment to prepare while I call up a different group of volunteer participants.”

Write your scenario here:

Part 8) Break

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Part 9) Active Role Play #2

Suggested time: 20 minutes

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

“I need to have several volunteers from the audience for this next part. 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.”

Take 5-7 people. Bring them up front.

Introduce 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 facilitator doing.*

You want to use a situation that is more further along. Sample script to modify:

- *“Thanks for coming to this special meeting. As you know, Idealist has been conducting focus groups with students, staff and others in our national network about the development of customized campus websites. These groups have been asked to generate some key recommendations for consideration. They helped to hone in on some priority areas.”*
- *“Now, as you know, Idealist has limited resources (staff and financial) with which to make this 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 or national network.”*

REVIEW ALL OF THE TOOLS IN THE HANDOUT “BAG OF TRICKS” AND KNOW THEM. In this role play, you want to use and illustrate a number of techniques, such as:

ONCE AROUND:

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

Note those on paper.

- “Okay, now before we get into discussing any of these ideas, let’s try to build on or group each one.”

INTRODUCE A VERSION OF BRAINMELDING (using group) AND CATEGORIZING.

“Now let’s open it up to comments about what you all think would be the easiest or most productive and why. I’d like to introduce NOSTUESO for this discussion.

“Okay, it seems like this area is getting the most interest. Let’s do a FIST OF FIVE.”

DO FIST OF FIVE OR INDEX CARDS

Part 10) Introduce Content through Debrief of Role Play

Suggested time: 20 minutes

Hand out **Bag of Tricks** and **Getting and Keeping Discussion on Track**.

Go through each part, using examples from the role play.

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

- Okay, I’m going to explain the techniques used now, walking through the role play.
- 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.
- Also, other people may have tools they would like to share.

Use both overheads to present concepts.

Part 11) Group Inquiry Using Concepts

Suggested time: 15 minutes

Now we’re going to think about the tools and techniques we have just covered and get folks thinking about some different situations and how you might deal with them.

I’ll throw out a scenario and take a few comments.

- **Scenario 1: Facilitator is convening a meeting to get group’s input on what restaurant the group should have their celebration party at. What techniques/tools could the facilitator use?**

- **Scenario 2: During a regular weekly meeting, the same few people talk over and over and others say nothing. The facilitator is getting frustrated with this. What might he or she try?**
- **Scenario 3: During a brainstorm an angry participant says, “I don’t think this is the right issue. This is a waste of time.” What can the facilitator do?**
- **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?**

Part 12) Group Role Play

Suggested time: 25 minutes

Now, in this last portion of the workshop, we are going to allow for some other volunteers to try facilitation roles using group role plays. The scenario can be having the group decide a theme for an upcoming event.

In this role play, you also want to assign some mock roles to volunteers. Use the role play situations on the attached hand out to affix to index cards.

Hand out situation to facilitator and hand out participant role cards to others.

If time permits, have two volunteers do the role play substituting a new issue or use freeze and call for audience feedback and switching facilitators.

Again, facilitate the exchange of information and feedback around how to effectively use the facilitation techniques.

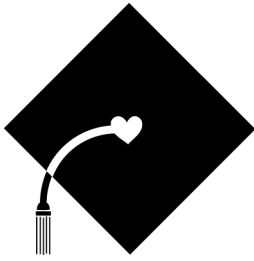
Part 13) Closing

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 or evaluation cards.



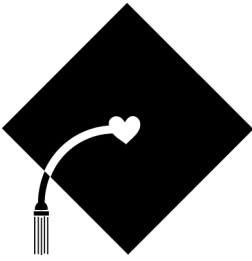
Working Agreements & Ground Rules

Group Facilitator

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

Group Member

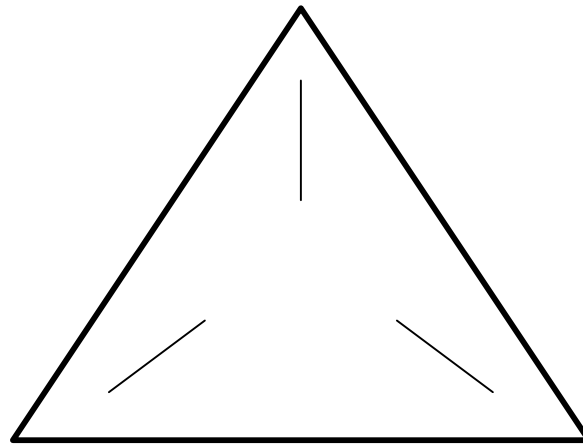
- 🕒 Be open and honest with the group
- 🕒 Listen to others and honor their experiences
- 🕒 Communicate needs
- 🕒 Judge the message, not the messenger
- 🕒 Ask questions when you have them
- 🕒 Challenge yourself and group members
- 🕒 Arrive on time and participate 100%



Facilitation Framework

Effective facilitators balance their focus along three dimensions.

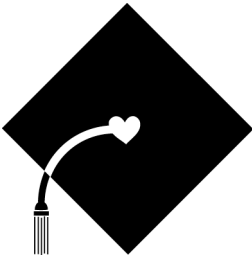
Outcomes/Goals



Process/How

Dynamics/People

Outcomes/Goals	The facilitator is attempting to get to a particular outcome or end. This is usually a goal or aim.
Process/How	The facilitator is concerned about <i>how</i> to get to the aim, paying attention to the quality of the process. For instance, the facilitator doesn't want to make all decisions or do all the talking; but at the same time, the facilitator is concerned about the flow, efficiency, and ease of the process.
Inclusion/People	The facilitator has to be aware of and observant about the individuals' and group's behavior and participation, attempting to reaffirm and trust participants' contributions



Facilitation Guidelines

Setting the Stage for Success

Beginnings

When starting a session:

❖ Present basic information

- Who you are as the facilitator
- 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
- Desired outcomes or goals for the session
- How those desired outcomes or goals fit into a larger process
- Overview of the agenda/outline

❖ Clarify if necessary:

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

❖ Check for agreement:

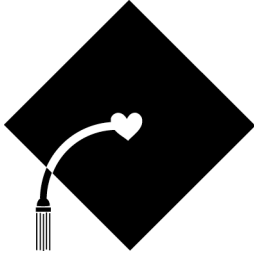
- Look for cues
- Make eye contact

4. Begin

Clarify the process

When starting a new item or segment:

- ❖ Clearly state the content of the segment and desired outcomes.
- ❖ Clearly present the process. Use concise, straightforward language.
- ❖ Clarify if necessary. Ask if anyone has questions.
- ❖ Check for agreement



Facilitation Guidelines

The Facilitation Flow

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

- ❖ **First you might 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 faire; ask the people who were in it last year to do it;” etc.
- ❖ **Then, you might 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”
- ❖ **Then, the process comes to a close or transition** of some kind, “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 faire brought in more than half the recruits and the others were tapped by alumni; we agree on those strategies.”

Summarizing that you might consider the following general flow:

- ❖ **OPEN:** Open consideration of a topic through open-ended activities. Make sure to first clarify the content and scope of the topic (using outcomes and specificity).
Examples:
 - Brainstorm
 - List
 - Survey
 - Hear from every participant
 - Free-roaming discussion
- ❖ **NARROW.** Use some kind of given process to narrow the information and considerations. Examples:
 - Material, time, resource constraints
 - Polling or Prioritizing Technique
 - Eliminate duplicates

- Voting
 - Consensus process (if agreed on as decision-making approach)
- ❖ **CLOSE.** Reach closure or transition (e.g. next steps for process). Examples:
- Negative poll
 - Decision from Prioritizing Technique or voting
 - Combine and build agreement until goal is reached
 - 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”)

Through each part of the process, it’s important that as facilitator you continue to clarify the process.

Opening Techniques

- ❖ **BRAINSTORM:** While many people are familiar with brainstorming, there are some important tips that make it work effectively. These include:
- **Three 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
 - **Use a recorder (or two):** it makes your job as the facilitator who must pay attention to the group’s behavior much easier.
 - **Write topic at the top.** Write your topic/question on the paper, board, or whatever so that everyone can see it. Check for clarification.
 - **Use two colors on flip charts, alternating them for better readability.**
 - **Don’t crowd items.**
 - **Enforce the guidelines**
 - **Affirm and encourage participants:** with statements that show you’re listening (but not evaluating!) like “Got that.” “Keep them coming” “We’re jamming!”
 - **Wrap it up:** by signaling you’re going to end, “Okay, I’ll take three more.”
 - **Add ideas:** Yes, the facilitator and recorders may add ideas at the end; note that you are stepping out of your role.
- ❖ **ONCE AROUND:** Often, the best way to include everyone, especially if you have quiet participants, is just to use a focused question and have each person contribute their response to that question. Have a recorder note those responses up front.
- ❖ **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

- ❖ **WORKING WITH A BRAINSTORM:** After completing the brainstorm, try the following steps:
 - **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 clarification of?" and allow for the person who said the item to explain briefly.
 - **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. know that in fact something means the same thing to members of the group).
 - **Get a spread.** Use the Prioritizing Technique (described below).
 - **Delete low interest items.** You can use Negative Polling.
 - **Combine.** This is often the hard part, but it requires synthesizing the items into categories or areas that the group agrees to.

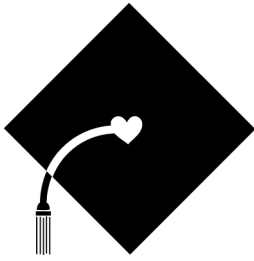
- ❖ **Prioritizing Technique:** Often, groups get stuck in discussing items that aren't even of top interest to most of the members. The Prioritizing Technique is a strategy for eliminating this. Here's how it works.

After a brainstorm or list has been generated, as facilitator number and count the items. Then, explain that the group will go about prioritizing the items that they want to explore more. This isn't a vote, although it has similar elements. Rather, it is a way for participants to indicate their interest in "keeping the item alive" for discussion, research, consideration, etc.

Count the number of items and divide by 3 (if there are less than 10) or 4 (if there are more than 10). For example, with 9 items, everyone gets to prioritize 3. With 20 items, everyone gets to prioritize 5.

Since this is not a vote, people can place all of their "priority dots" or checkmarks on one item or spread them however they wish. Use sticky dots, colored markers, or other tools to do this visually, with everyone participating.

- ❖ **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 Facilitation Tricks

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.

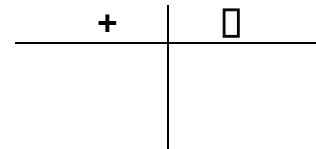
1 **Plus/Delta**

Use: Evaluation & improvement

Assets: Simple structure, easily applicable

How-To:

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



2 **Fist of Five**

Use: Evaluation, polling agreement

Assets: Quick pulse check, shows divergent thinking

How-To:

- ❖ Identify a clear focus/question ("how did we think the session went?")
- ❖ Illustrate how to do it ("1 means really bad, 5 means really good")
- ❖ Count 1, 2, 3: People show their fists!
- ❖ Take selected comments to highlight different opinions.
- ❖ Wrap & move on.

3 **Once-Around**

Use: Gathering input on a specific question

Assets: Provides focus, encourages participation

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

4 **Open, Narrow, Close**

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

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

- How-To:*
- ❖ Your group needs to make a decision such as “where should we take our field trip?”
 - ❖ *Open:* Spend 5 minutes brainstorming ideas on a flip chart. *The rules of brainstorming:*
 - ❖ Don't comment on/question any suggestions (unless clarity needed to write it down)
 - ❖ Anything idea is okay, no matter how big/small/silly/strange
 - ❖ Don't get sidetracked into discussion – keep going
 - ❖ *Narrow:* Use a the Prioritizing Technique 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.
 - ❖ *Close:* Decide how to move on, based on the outcome of the Prioritizing Technique poll.
 - ❖ It's not really a “vote” – i.e. the one getting the most votes isn't automatically 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.
 - ❖ 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:*
- ❖ Establish an ongoing structure in team meetings where you choose one “most interesting thing” to comment on/discuss.
 - ❖ Keep objective notes during meetings or structured working times. Choose one thing to bring up.
 - ❖ Don’t editorialize – just put the observation out there and see what happens.
 - ❖ Engage others in discussion & analysis.
 - ❖ Alternate strengths and improvements.

6 **Running Index Cards**

Use: Creates structure for ongoing team problem solving

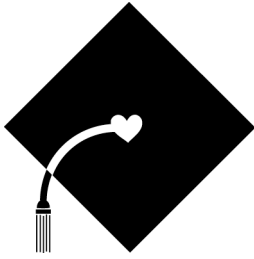
Assets: Inclusive, gets everyone’s issue, allows leader to prioritize/focus

- How-To:*
- ❖ Establish this as an ongoing structure in team meetings
 - ❖ 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”)
 - ❖ Collect cards and choose 1-2 to begin conversation with.
 - ❖ Regularly spend 5-10 minutes problem-solving selected index cards.
 - ❖ 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:



Getting and Keeping Discussion on Track

Remember: facilitation is a process of moving a group forward using 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?”

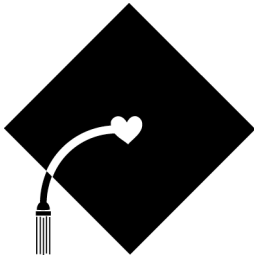
Getting Discussion on Track

- ❖ **STATE CONTENT.** Clearly state the content of what will be discussed (and what won’t) at the beginning.
- ❖ **CLARIFY THE PROCESS.** Explain HOW the content will be covered or discussed before beginning.
- ❖ **CHECK FOR AGREEMENT.** Make eye contact. Ask specific questions.
- ❖ **FOCUS ON AGREEMENT.** Summarize what’s been accomplished, decided or agreed to, 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.”
- **NOSTUESO.** 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.

Keeping Discussion on Track

Back on Track techniques do exactly that, especially if discussion has begun to go in a direction counter to the aims. Pay close attention to the group and use these strategies:

- ❖ **RIGHT BACK AT YOU.** When a participant interjects a question that questions 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?”
- ❖ **GROUNDING IN THE GROUND RULES.** 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 hand up, like we agreed. It doesn’t work to have people cutting each other off.”
- ❖ **“WHAT ARE WE DOING?”** Use the goals, agenda, outcomes, activity at hand or other ways to refocus the group on the purpose of the time. 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; do people want a five minute break, then come back and get through this.”
- ❖ **REAFFIRM THEN REFER OR DEFER.** An important tool can be to accept the statements, even when emotional, of participants without letting them take the flow totally off track. For example, “That’s a good point,” or “It’s clear that you have some very strong opinions about this. Let’s keep thinking about how to turn these problems into solutions.” Another example: “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.”
- ❖ **HUMOR COUNTS.** Humor, used right, can diffuse a tense situation. Use your own or someone else’s humor. Allow for some laughter and good-natured joking.
- ❖ **“WHAT’S GOING ON?”** Don’t be afraid to call out the question, “What’s going on here?” 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. Have a stretch. Play a short game or do an icebreaker.



Role Play Cards (for the Group Role Play)

<p>You are the facilitator. You are leading the group through a planning session for the determining a theme for the upcoming event.</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 utilize 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 a bad idea).</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. 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. You may even come to the aid or rescue of the facilitator if need be.</p> <p>You can contribute whatever issues are salient in your mind.</p>
<p>You are a participant.</p> <p>You keep definitely are sick of the talk about 9/11, the war, the terrorists. You think the retreat has to tackle issues of the living wage campaign on campus.</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>