



# Notes for Facilitators & Recorders

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**SARKISSIAN**

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# CONTENTS



***Notes for Facilitators & Recorders* offers simple tips for effective facilitation, including both listening and recording approaches, meeting management and group dynamics.**

## About *Notes for Facilitators & Recorders*...

The materials in this *document* have been prepared to aid group Facilitators (including both Listeners and Recorders) in public meetings and workshops about community issues. They are drawn from a wide range of source materials, which are listed at the end of the *Notes*.

The materials are designed to provide guidance for conducting public meetings where everyone has an equal opportunity to participate. To avoid having articulate or powerful people dominating meetings, a "workshop" format is used, with participants working in groups at tables with Facilitators and Recorders.

With careful facilitation, even the most shy and reticent can be encouraged to speak out. All opinions have equal value in a forum such as this; all views are recorded in a form, which everyone can see.

The contents of these *Notes* draw on published material on group dynamics, meeting format, communication, search conferences, interpersonal dynamics, creativity, conflict resolution and participation methods.

## Inside...

### What is a good meeting? 6

A number of common points contribute to good meetings, that is, meetings that people learn from...

### Facilitation 11

Facilitation is basically helping people's views to be openly shared in a balanced way...

### Group process 18

There are many ways to help people in a group come to agreement or simply be creative together...

### Recording 25

Recording or writing down the content of group discussions is a useful function in many situations...

### Final comments 27

Please try not to allow the material in these *Notes* to intimidate you..

### References 28

# What is a good meeting or workshop?

A number of common points contribute to good meetings, that is, meetings that people learn from:

- Commonly understood goals
- A clear process for reaching those goals
- An awareness that people come with their personal preoccupations and feelings as well as an interest in the subject at hand and
- A sense of involvement in making decisions and the actions following, which means that all members should participate.

Ensuring that all materials are ready so that you can concentrate on the meeting itself can help this process.

The quality of recording is critical to the success of a meeting or workshop--for all concerned. The record is essential to ensure that an appropriate and actions flow from the deliberations.

In your group will be a Facilitator, a Recorder (who writes down which is said) and the active participants. The Recorder can also act as a timekeeper, to ensure that the agenda flows smoothly by sticking to the time, though times may be extended if the group wishes.



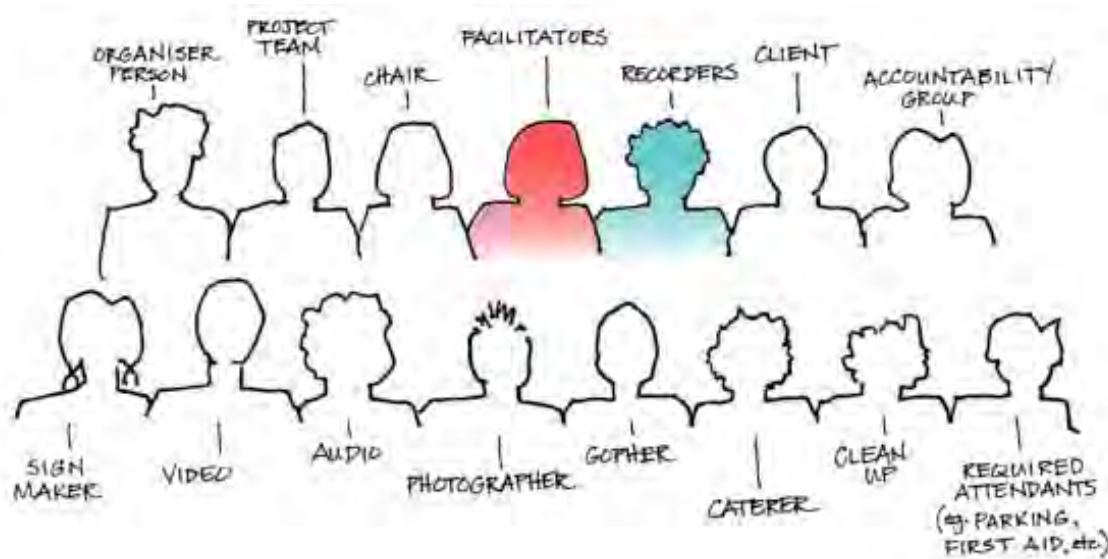
## TEN functions of a good meeting

1. Brings people together who would not normally come together otherwise.
2. Provides a comfortable setting in which to express ideas and attitudes.
3. Helps to clear up misunderstandings.
4. Establishes many new informal channels of communication among participants.
5. Provides more information and insights than are available through survey methods.
6. Stimulates follow-up action growing out of real needs.
7. Paves the way for co-operative action.
8. Enables participants to understand more fully the objectives, boundaries and problems of other organisations.
9. Is rewarding to the individual participant.
10. Produces an unusually good setting for creative thinking.

# MAKING MEETINGS WORK: FIRST THINGS FIRST

A successful meeting needs three things:

- The **group memory**, a written record maintained where everyone can always see it;
- The **facilitator**, a neutral 'servant', who makes sure participants are using the most effective methods for accomplishing their task in the shortest time; and
- The **recorder**, who adds the main points of what was said to the group memory, using the words of group members.



## PREPARATION

- Begin with meeting goals and challenge each goal for a meeting. Ask, "Is there another way to achieve this?"
- Set a firm agenda that outlines what participants want to discuss and the best way of using the allotted time
- All supporting materials should have a one-page executive summary (not longer)
- Determine in advance who will be responsible for each part of the agenda and make sure that they are present
- Make sure the agenda sets out exactly what's going to happen at the meeting
- Inform others: send the agenda out well before the meeting

## TIMING

- Send out all material the day or night before by email (preferably earlier if you possibly can)
- Budget meeting time carefully and adequately
- One hour to 90 minutes should be enough for any meeting
- Start on time even if everyone isn't there (they will be next time)
- Decide together how long will be spent on each item
- Review the objectives, agenda and timeframe before the meeting begins
- Have a time limit and commit to sticking to the clock
- End on time so that everyone focuses on the pertinent issues



# PARTICIPANTS & PROCESS

- Invite the fewest people possible to the meeting
- Make a note of people who may hinder meetings and talk to them beforehand
- Turn people who may think they have nothing valuable to offer to the group's advantage by directing skills, asking them to follow up on details, prepare a report and so on
- Write key decisions already made/key areas already covered during a meeting on butcher's paper to keep people from returning to old territory, as others will say the matter is already dealt with



# NOTE TAKING & REPORTING

- Assign a note-taker or recorder for every meeting (not the chair or facilitator)
- Keep detailed records of the meeting (the minutes)
- Use technology creatively: for example: on one wall, a projector (or a sheet of butchers paper) displays the presentation and/or the agenda, while next to it, another projector shows the transcription of the meeting
- At the end of a meeting, ask:
  - Where are we going to go from here?
  - What are the to-do's?
  - Who is going to do them? and
  - When will they be delivered?
- Build in time for reflection: how do we feel and how are things going?
- Ensure that meeting participants agree on a set of deliverables and set their own timetable
- The organiser of the meeting should send a short email summary, confirming decisions and reviewing action items, to every attendee within ten minutes of the end of the meeting
- Send out meeting minutes as quickly as possible, clearly identifying what each action is and who is responsible for each action. A template can be used to aid this work.

## LEADING PRACTICE

- Seek advice on best practice for meetings
- Use structured activities in your meetings
- Explain logistics, housekeeping to newcomers
- Maintain focus on the issues
- Try to ensure that everyone stays for the whole meeting
- Be selective about what can be accomplished in a meeting
- Check in to see how the group is tracking, asking: "Where is the group now? Where does it need to go? What tools will help keep us on topic and reach our goals?"
- At the end of each item ask "Does everyone understand and agree to what has been proposed/decided? Are there any questions or comments before we move on?"
- Carve out micro-meetings: set aside large blocks of time sliced into smaller, self-contained gatherings on a particular subject or project
- Consider the use of an *Energy Moderator*: Meetings are sometimes long, difficult, and emotional. Or just boring. The Energy Monitor pays special attention to how the group is functioning on a personal level as a group and as individuals. They watch for loss of concentration among members, intense emotional discussions which need a break and needed pauses after momentous decisions.

# ADVICE FOR MEETING CHAIRS AND FACILITATORS

## 1. Be familiar with the agenda.

- Know beforehand who has background information about each item, what actions need to be taken and what time constraints you will be operating under
- Expect changes and allow for breathing space
- Make sure people know when they should speak out and when they should raise their hands
- If you have them raise their hands, keep a list of speaking order

## 2. Dealing with a particular item:

A. If the item is a report, simply ask for the report.

Check if anyone has any questions or feedback or if the report raises any issues that need to be put on the emergent agenda.

B. If the item is one for which there is an established process, use that process.

C. If the item is one that the group needs to discuss and come to some kind of decision on, consider the following process and modify it according to the issue and/or the needs of the group.

1. Make sure everyone understands the issue at hand. What are we talking about?
2. Ask whoever has pertinent background information to offer it.
3. Ask if anyone has questions.
4. Let the group discuss the issue, but keep people on track. This discussion is necessary because it allows each participant to hear the others' views and feelings to clarify her/his own, to evaluate previous solutions to the problem.

## Conflicts in meetings

If the discussion draws on and on; if there is a lack of participation – and there are many late arrivals...

If there is excessive conflict inter-spread with bad interpersonal relations and you feel things are not okay...

Ask yourself:

- *What is the speaker feeling?*
- *What are the other people in the meeting feeling?*
- *What does the speaker mean as opposed to what they are saying?*
- *What is the objective and what hinders in its attainment?*

And, if two parties are at conflict, ask each party to summarise the other's case to the latter's satisfaction.

## Conflicts in meetings

1. Don't ask for permission to talk or offer opinions.
2. Send "I" messages instead of "You" messages when you are signalling a problem.
3. Give your comments a positive label.
4. Add "In my opinion" to soften a contrary statement and to relax people who might disagree.
5. Select an appropriate tone.

## After discussing an issue, several situations are possible:

1. The group may have reached what you feel to be a resolution on the issue, in which case you may offer a statement of what you think is the consensus of the group ("It sounds to me like we want to use the same schedule and structure we used last year").
2. Are there any questions?
3. Any discussion?
4. Do we have consensus? (Remind the group that silence does not mean yes.)

# THE AGENDA

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The agenda is an important element in the meeting. It should be prominently displayed and show:

- Topics to be discussed
- The order in which they will be discussed
- The priority and
- A suggestion of the time to be devoted to each topic of discussion.

In the Meeting or Workshop you will attend, an agenda will have been

prepared and will be thoroughly discussed with the Recorders, the Facilitators and all resource people before the Meeting begins. It will also be discussed with meeting participants at the beginning of the first session.

## Agenda ideas...

Welcome  
Indigenous acknowledgement  
What's happening today?  
Overview  
Small group brainstorming  
Evaluation  
Where to from here?



# FACILITATION

**F**acilitation is basically helping people's views to be openly shared in a balanced way. In doing this, the Facilitator should maintain equity, recognise each individual and try to balance personal and group needs, while not letting anyone dominate the discussion.

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## General points...

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A Facilitator's job is to focus on how well people work together. The purpose of this focus is to ensure that members of a group can accomplish their goals for the Meeting or Workshop. The Facilitator trusts that each member of the group can share responsibility for what happens, whether it involves calling the members to remind them of the next workshop, making sure that each person has an opportunity to contribute to a discussion, or seeing that the agenda serves the group's purpose.

The effects of this sharing can be to equalise the responsibility for the success or failure of the group and to allow more people to have control in determining what happens within the group and what decisions are made.

A Facilitator can fulfil different kinds of needs in working with a group. This is determined by the group's purpose for coming together and by what is expected of the individual who will act as Facilitator.

### A few pointers

- Have all the necessary equipment ready (for example, pens, paper and any background material).
- If anyone comes is looking lost, make them feel welcome; remember, they have something to offer the workshop.
- The aim of the workshop is to seek opinions. The Facilitator can suggest different ways to proceed.
- Have some questions ready for beginning discussion and restarting discussion if people are hesitant and discussion bogs down.



As a Facilitator and resource person, you can affect the way in which the group interacts. Simple, non-verbal cues such as the way you sit and the attitude you show toward the people you are working with can affect the way a discussion will progress. Be aware of spatial and physical barriers that may exist between you and the group. If you can sit among the other participants, with them around you, this will physically equalise the relationships and ease interaction.

The purpose of your role as Facilitator is to share information, not to set yourself above the group as an expert. By being open to questions and soliciting feedback, you can accomplish this, as well as learn something from the others yourself.



One need not be labelled "Facilitator" in order to employ facilitation techniques in a group. Any group member can call the group back to the subject of the discussion, interrupt patterns of conflict or misunderstanding between other parties, offer clarifying comments, summarise activities or give evaluative feedback. In some groups, many or all of the members share these responsibilities. Other groups, whose members are less skilful at group process, will expect the Facilitator to perform this function alone.

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## Communication

**Y**our effectiveness as a Facilitator depends on your ability to communicate well with the group and to help the group members communicate well with each other. The ability to communicate effectively is a skill, and like any skill, it is best acquired through practice and self-observation. Following a list of rules and strategies that are conducive to effective communication.

**Adapt to your listeners:** Something that seems perfectly clear to you may have an entirely different meaning, or may be completely incomprehensible to the person you are talking to. Other people have had different experiences from yours. As a result, they may attach different meanings to words, gestures and appearances than you intend.

To minimise this possibility, adapt:

- **Your language:** Make sure that the terms you use are common usage for the group. Do not use any technical terms or professional jargon without making sure that the entire group agrees on the meaning. Slang that is common to your peer group may make others of different ages, professions, or even geographical origins, feel uncomfortable, either because it is offensive to them, or because it is unfamiliar.
- **Your style:** The way you dress, carry yourself, and interact with others will affect how well you fit in with a group. In general, if you are informal and comfortable with the group, it helps to make them relax as well. But interpret the word "informal" to be consistent with the norms of the group. Do not dress or act in ways that give a false impression, but do try to avoid turning people off by appearing strange or threatened in any way.

## Be aware of what is happening in the group...

Various verbal and non-verbal cues tip you off as to how the people you are talking to are reacting.

You can adjust your style (by speaking faster, slower, on a more or less complicated level; by encouraging more or less group participation).

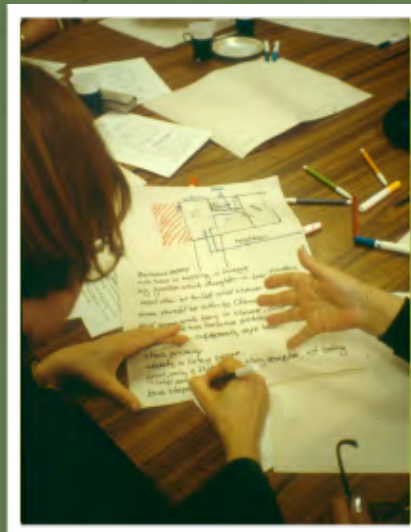
Or you can check out your interpretation of these cues with the group and get them to suggest revisions in your method. Some cues to watch for are:

- **Restlessness:** Are people shifting around a lot? Are they clearing their throats or having side conversations? If so, you are probably losing them. You may be boring them or talking over their heads or it may be simple fatigue.
- **When silences occur:** Do they seem comfortable or uncomfortable? In some groups, silences can be agonising. If this is the case, several things could be happening; people may be bored because you are going too slow or because your material is too simple; people may be

uncomfortable with the topic, or people may be shy with each other and too self-conscious to talk in front of the group.

- *Do people look at you when you talk?* If so, they probably feel comfortable with you and are intrigued by what you are saying. If they avoid eye contact, something may be wrong.
- *Do people look at each other when they talk?* Again, if they do not avoid one another's gaze, it is a sign that the group is relaxed and at ease. If two or more people will not look at each other, or if two or more people will not talk to each other, there may be something wrong.
- *Posture of group members:* People often lean forward and shift positions when they want to say something. Posture can also reflect tension or how relaxed a person is. Naturally, posture also reflects how tired or alert people are.

These cues are indicators to help you watch for certain behaviour. Remember that none of these cues can tell you absolutely what is going on....



## Listening is important!



Listening is much more difficult than most people realise.

Much of the time when someone is talking to us, we are not really listening; we are thinking about what we are going to say in answer.

When you are listening to someone, try not to immediately evaluate what is being said in terms of what it means to you; instead, try to understand what it means from the other person's perspective.

Ask questions that will help you understand better what the other person is thinking and feeling.

Not only will you understand better, but you will also be able to give an answer that has meaning to the other, from her or his point of view.



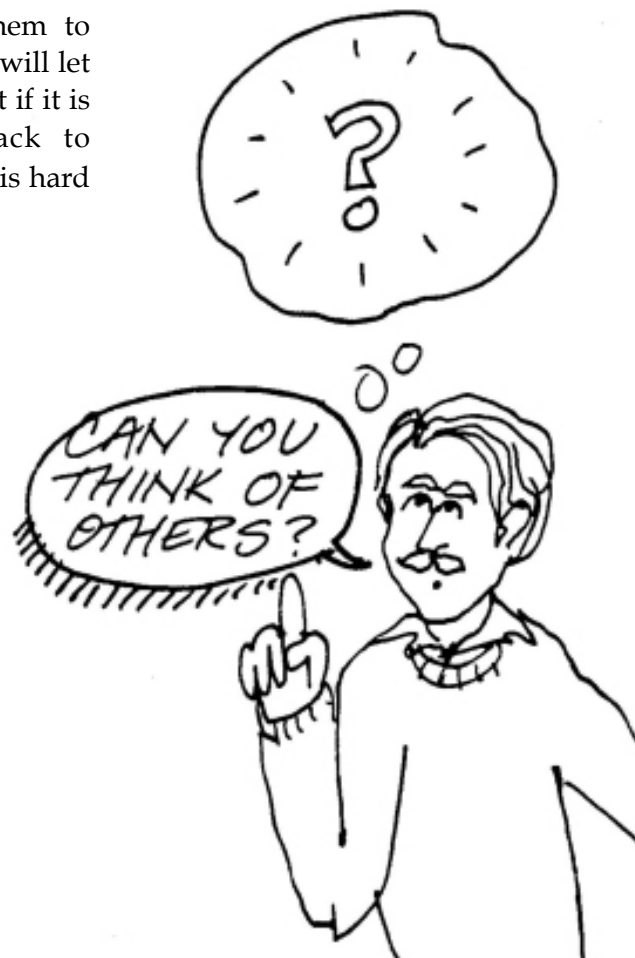
# Facilitation continued...

**Test assumptions:** Communication and interpersonal relationships are based on assumptions that people make about each other and about the relationship. Sometimes these assumptions are correct, but often they are only partly correct, or altogether incorrect. People generally believe that their assumptions are correct until something happens to make them change the assumption. Sooner or later, most mistaken assumptions lead to a misunderstanding of one kind or another. The longer a mistaken assumption has been held the greater the problems that such a misunderstanding can bring.

**Give feedback:** A good way to test assumptions is to provide, and ask for, feedback. Ask people what they mean by a certain word, or tell them how you feel about what they just said. This will allow them to explain where they are coming from, and will let them know how you feel. Feedback is best if it is given immediately, since looking back to something that happened two weeks ago is hard for people.

Feedback statements are more helpful if they are:

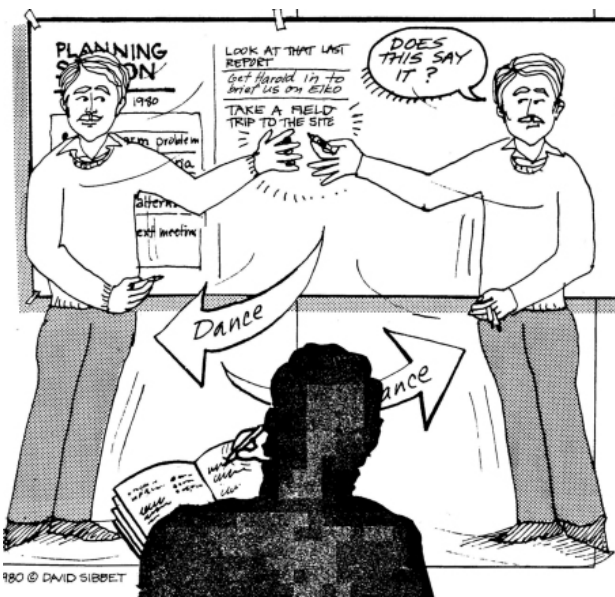
- *Specific rather than general:* "You bumped my arm" rather than "You never watch where you are going".
- *Tentative rather than absolute:* "You seem unconcerned about this problem" rather than "You do not care what happens".
- *Informing rather than commanding:* "I have not finished yet" rather than "Stop interrupting me".
- *Suggesting rather than directing:* "Have you ever considered talking to Tim about the situation?" rather than "Go talk to Tim".
- *Tied to behaviour rather than abstract:* "You complain frequently," rather than "You are immature".





# Clarifying the roles

**D**emystifying the Facilitator: Many participants will be unfamiliar with facilitation as a leadership style. You should make sure everyone in the group understands what your role will be. Even with this understanding, though, there is likely to be a tendency to treat the Facilitator as an authority. It is up to you to help the group perceive you as "human". Following are some ways of achieving this.



*Above: The dance of recording*

- **Your own attitude towards your skills and resources should be a humble one.** What you say about facilitation can help people see that you have a combination of skills, which everyone possesses in some degree - that you are in the role of Facilitator only because you have had an opportunity to develop these skills.
- **Explain the reasoning behind the things you do.** If you tell why you introduced a particular exercise or intervened at a particular point, you are bringing your tools and skills down to earth, enabling the participants to evaluate them for themselves. This leaves you open to criticism or alternative suggestions. By exposing the logic behind your moves, you become more accessible to the group. They understand what you hope to accomplish, how your decision making works, and that you are not holding anything out on them. Thus, they can perceive you as just a person who is present to fulfil a need in the group.



- **Solicit feedback and pay attention to it.** Demonstrate to the participants that their opinions count. Treat their ideas with the same value that you do your own.

**T**he Recorder: Recording or writing down the content of group discussions is a useful function in many situations. Participants should understand the purpose of this role and how it will be useful to the group. This role is discussed in further detail later in these *Notes*.



## Altering the roles

Facilitation varies from situation to situation and your role with one group will not be the same role you will perform with another group.

If you or the participants are uncomfortable with some aspect of the Facilitator's role (the responsibilities assigned to it, or your style of performing those responsibilities), then the group should discuss modifying the role (and the role of participants in relation to it).

This may happen at the beginning of a workshop or at some point during its progress.

## The participants

Egalitarian group participation -- the sharing of leadership responsibilities -- may be a new concept to some or all of the participants.

You may need to take time to tell the group what you expect of them, what their rights and responsibilities are. You cannot facilitate in a vacuum - it requires the cooperation of all participants.

And as responsibility for what happens in the group is shared, the Facilitator cannot simply prescribe certain behaviour for group members and expect it to be performed.

A group can function cooperatively only when the members themselves want it to do that.



Small Group Work

# Ground Rules: being explicit

The ground rules for the discussion sessions are:

1. Everyone's contribution is valuable, must be listened to and recorded.
2. Everyone must talk - they have come to make a contribution, and must be given the chance to do so - even if it is a small contribution or they are shy.
3. However crazy a suggestion may seem, give it the chance to influence the picture. This is particularly important in the brainstorming sessions.
4. Work towards the goal of the workshop. Make sure that people do not start making judgements (especially negative ones) about what specific outcomes may occur from the workshop.
5. No one should be allowed to consume group time with his or her own hobbyhorses.
6. Conflict is healthy and differences are important. Do not let differences or conflict drift into confrontation. No one is to be bullied into changing his or her opinion.





# Techniques & group processes

There are many ways to help people in a group come to agreement or simply be creative together. Some of these approaches are discussed below.

## Brainstorming

The point of brainstorming sessions is to generate ideas. It is literally a process which encourages "a storm in the brain" -- ideas bursting out without any particular order. The aim of brainstorming is not to come to a decision.

One way is to follow these five steps:

1. **Conduct a warm-up session:** It is especially important to remind the group not to evaluate any idea prematurely.
2. **Brainstorming:** This step is the actual brainstorming session, which should not last more than thirty minutes.
3. **Elimination of duplicated ideas:** Once the brainstorming session is completed, the leader takes the group through the notes made and eliminates all duplications. This can be one using a "lump and split" approach.
4. **How to do it:** In this model, the first item on a list is given the number 1. Then all other similar or related topics are also given 1. The Facilitator then moves back to the top of the list, with the direction of the group and gives the second item a number 2. Then all related items throughout the list are similarly identified by 2's. And so forth. This approach generally yields about seven or eight key categories, in our experience, which can be further collapsed into three or four categories if necessary. The Facilitator or rapporteur can then report back to a plenary session on the main categories.
5. **Clarifying, ordering and evaluating:** In this final step the group categorises the large volume of ideas into some sensible outline.

## Common problems with brainstorming

Three common problems often arise during this session, so be prepared for them.

1. **Problems:** People find it difficult to be creative because they can see the problems in their ideas, and will say, "if ... then we could". Your job is to get them to stop worrying about the "if" at this stage.
2. **"Yes, but" and disagreement:** Other people will listen to an idea and say "yes but". Your job is to control this and encourage people to listen to what each other has to say without judgement.
3. **Conflict:** There will be contradictory and conflicting views about what is desirable. Your job is to get them all recorded, and see that no one person's view is considered right.

- It is important to highlight areas of disagreement, and make each person feel that they have been heard.
- It is also useful to highlight areas where there has been strong agreement, so that they form a picture of shared goals, and areas that need much more discussion.
- Do not try to avoid the conflicts. Make them important and record them, but do not let people get into discussion or argument about them. Keep reminding them that this workshop is to generate information, not solutions.



## Ten rules for brainstorming...

1. The aim is to generate ideas, not to make decisions.
2. Everyone should speak and their opinions should be listened to and respected.
3. Do not debate. Conflicting views are a healthy sign and should be recorded. Do not strive for agreement in the first session.
4. Keep the discussion moving - just toss in ideas.
5. Creative and "oddball" ideas are also valuable and should be recorded.
6. Stay away from "it is too hard" and "it will never work - we have tried that before" - keep the creativity flowing.
7. Do not let anyone dominate the discussion. Give everyone their turn and encourage the more hesitant members to speak out too.
8. Record all ideas, including disagreements.
9. Suspend judgement and criticism just for this session.
10. Every comment has equal value. Not all the people attending the session will have the same degree of experience, but they will still have valuable contributions which should be listened to.

## Rounds

**T**his is a technique for getting people to speak in a group. In "rounds", each person has an equal opportunity to speak and be heard. Each person speaks in turn, encouraged by the Facilitator. This encourages full participation. The Facilitator should explain at the beginning of the rounds that statements should be brief and specific. A time limit may be set.

Rounds can be either structured -- each person speaks in turn - or unstructured -- anyone can speak. Just keep moving from one person to the next around the table, asking each to make a contribution.

## Feedback

**T**he group Facilitator can help the group by providing feedback. Feedback should focus on:

- the behaviour of the group, not the individual;
- actual observations, not inferences;
- the description of what has been said, not judgement;
- the sharing of ideas, not the giving of advice;
- the exploration of alternatives, not the production of solutions;
- listen to what has been said, not why it has been said.

# Consensus Decision Making

The first step is to agree to reach an agreement. Then encourage individual participation and ensure that those who are going to be affected make the decisions.

Some of the qualities of consensus decision making are set out below:

1. Agreement to reach agreement.
2. People have the right to their own beliefs.
3. Know your own limits.
4. Only if you speak can you be heard.
5. Non-hierarchical process.
6. Valuing differences.
7. Encourage creative synergy.
8. Valuing clarity, conciseness and focused discussion.
9. Autonomy with cooperation.
10. Contracting.
11. Active participation is the responsibility of each person.
12. If the issue does not directly affect you, leave it to those who are.
13. Knowing when to listen and when to speak.

There are also different types of consensus, depending on your group's preferences and the reality of needing to make decisions.

The type of decision making you choose should reflect the type of organisation you want to create, from hierarchical (with fixed structures where positions tend to dictate levels of power), to flat non-hierarchical structures (where power is shared). Different types of consensus decision making include:

- **Unanimous agreement:** full consensus
- **Unanimity minus one vote:** allows for one dissenting voter
- **Unanimity minus two votes:** allows for two dissenting voters
- **Super majority thresholds:** 90%, 80%, 75%, two-thirds, and 60% are common
- **Simple majority:** more than 50% of the vote
- **Executive committee decides:** where a core organising committee exists
- **Person-in-charge decides**

# Evaluation

In any group process, it is always important to evaluate the effectiveness of the group process.

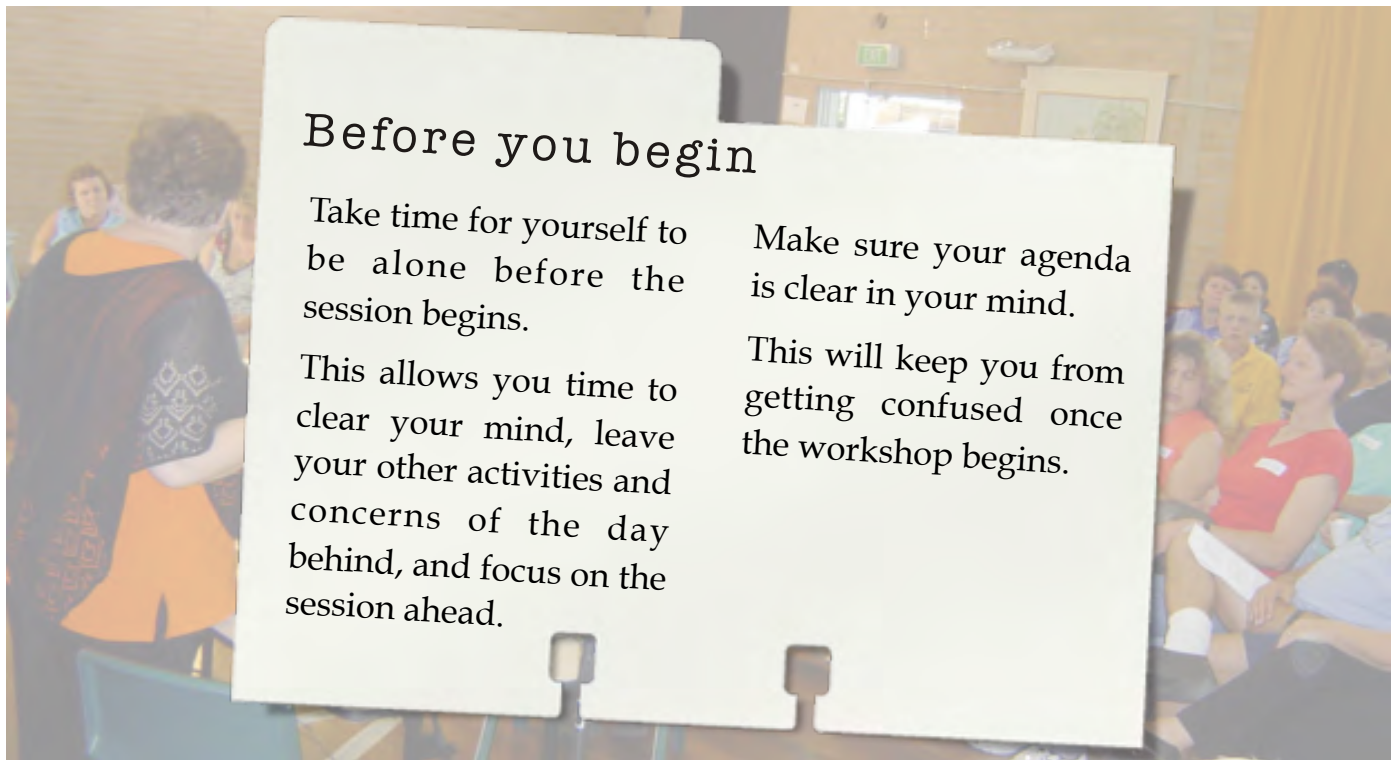
It is important to distinguish one thing: we are evaluating ideas, not individuals. You may want to stop and evaluate your group's progress part way through the session or do so at the end of the workshop.

Evaluation can also focus on the effectiveness of the Facilitator.

You can ask for feedback on how well the group was facilitated.



## ADVICE TO FACILITATORS ON GETTING STARTED: THE VERY FIRST STEPS IN A GOOD WORKSHOP



### As you enter the room...

- The first few moments after participants walk in the door will be important ones in influencing your perceptions of them and their impressions of you. Observe the individuals. You can learn to pick up quite a bit of verbal and non-verbal information which may indicate how well people will work with each other.
- Are people talking with each other as they walk in? If so, what are they talking about? If not, what kinds of expressions are on their faces?
- If the participants vary in terms of age, sex or ethnic group, do they mix freely? If not, there could be tensions and miscommunication among them.
- It is important for you to be present on time, if not a little early. Even if you have had a chance to work with or observe the group in the past, this will give you an opportunity to pick up on people's moods and feel out the situation on the particular day of the session. It is also a matter of simple courtesy and respect to the group to be on time.



# Seating arrangements

**I**n workshops where participants must communicate and cooperate with each other, the seating arrangement can exert a strong influence on group dynamics. It can affect who talks to whom and who is likely to dominate group activities.

It is important for each participant to be able to make eye contact with each of the other participants as much as possible. (It is especially important for the Facilitator to be able to make eye contact with everyone.) A circle is ideal for this. It lets people look at each other to the greatest possible extent, thus encouraging openness and concern in the group.

Tables give people a point of common contact, allow them to sit comfortably, and provide a place to write and to put work materials.

A disadvantage of table is that they restrict movement and sometimes may act as a barrier between people.

Tables influence the way group members interact; people are most likely to talk to those sitting at right angles to them, next most likely to talk to those sitting next to them, and much less likely to talk to those sitting across from them. In addition, whoever is seated at the end of the rectangular table tends to do more talking and have a greater influence on the outcome of the discussion than other members. So, if possible, use a round or square table. (You can often put two rectangular tables together to make a square.)

These shapes allow group members more eye contact with each other.

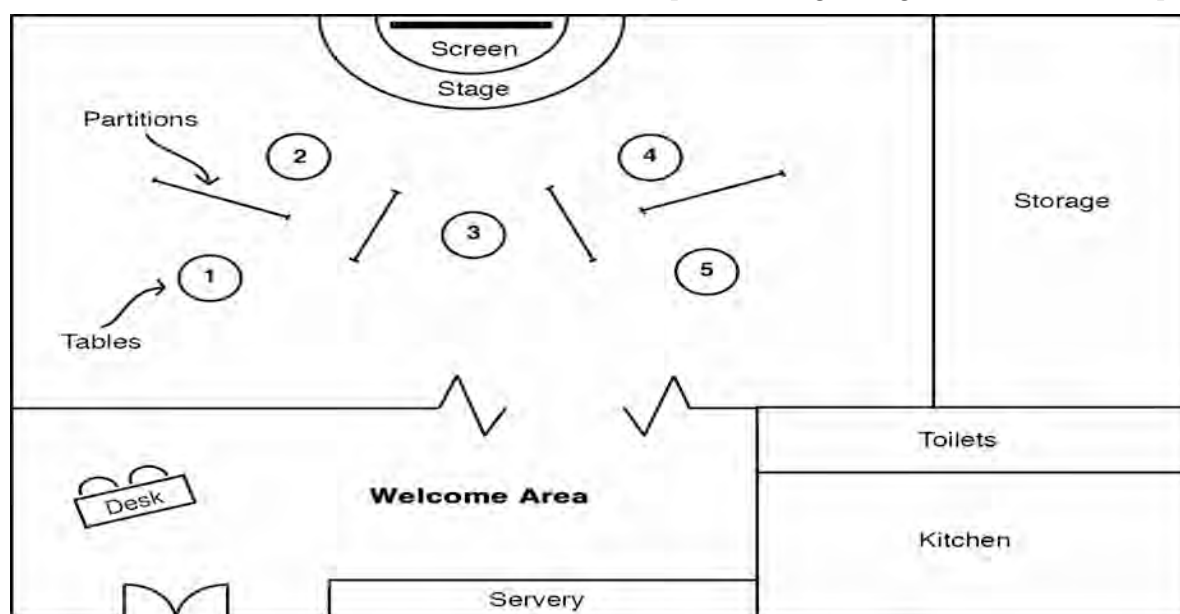
If you must use a rectangular table, you should probably sit at the head of it yourself since you will be more aware of the advantage of that position and can restrain yourself from dominating the group.

Who sits where? Since people will be more likely to interact with individuals sitting close to themselves, you may want to ask people not to sit near their close friends or the people they know best, if a different arrangement is comfortable for them. This is especially important for many different individuals in the group to interact.

By sitting next to people they do not know as well, group members will be encouraged to get to know others in the group. This will promote a friendly atmosphere and help counteract any "cliquishness" in the group. In some situations, for reasons of solidarity, local people may choose to sit with their neighbours. If that is their clear choice, they should not be forced to separate themselves from their neighbours.

*Below:*

Example of seating arrangement for a workshop





# Introductions

**I**ntroductions are very important: both the facilitator's introduction to the group and the introduction of group members to you and each other.

## Your introduction

Your introduction (as Facilitator) should include your credentials -- what it is about you that justifies your being there.



## Introduction of group members

We strongly recommend that you learn the participants' names as quickly and as best you can. This requires some extra attention, but the group will appreciate it and it will allow you to relate to participants more personally.



One way to help yourself to do this is to draw a seating chart with each person's name as participants go around the room introducing themselves.

This will allow you to learn names without having to ask each individual for his or her name over and over. Name tags are another good aid, especially when the participants are strangers to each other.



# CODE OF RESPONSIBILITIES: ETHICS FOR FACILITATORS

There are a number of ways that the role of Facilitator can get out of hand or be used unfairly. Often this happens without either the group or the Facilitator realising it. It is your responsibility to prevent abuse of your position as Facilitator. Maintaining your integrity is significantly easier if you have thought through the following code of responsibilities and perhaps discussed them with other Facilitators.

1. It is not enough that you yourself have the values of cooperation and egalitarianism. Most people are accustomed to participating in groups where one person acts as leader and where that one person is treated as someone important, someone with special power and wisdom. Unless the group understands your role, they will probably perceive of you as an authority and allow you to influence them unduly. It is important for you to come down off your "pedestal" and let the group see you as "human". This is called demystifying your role as Facilitator.
2. Even though you conscientiously demystify your position, however, you may find that people depend on you. They may concede some of their power as participants to you and look to you to make decisions, define a situation, etc. This is probably the strongest test of your own values - whether you accept and use this power, or whether you reflect back to the group their need to take responsibility for decisions and definitions. The temptation to use the power delegated to you to fill your own needs (increase self-esteem, manipulation of a situation for your own benefit, even simple expedience) will be strong. The fact that the group has delegated the power to you is no excuse.
3. A similar potential for abuse arises out of the fact that the Facilitator performs a subtle, non-directive role. The passive friendly, well-meaning Facilitator can be manipulative in ways that an aggressive, forceful leader could never get away with. The difference between a charming manipulator and a domineering dictator may only be a matter of whether or not the group is conscious that their leader is controlling them. It is your responsibility not to use facilitation techniques to control a group. This is especially true for group participants, not in any open leadership role, who are using these techniques during a workshop.
4. Being a Facilitator does not mean that you are qualified to be a psychotherapist, either with a group of people or in a one-to-one situation. Because of the stress on human values and feelings that facilitation involves, Facilitators are often seen as resources for personal psychological problems as well as for organisational problems. So participants sometimes reach out to Facilitators, either directly or indirectly, with their emotional needs. This reaching out can be interpreted as a statement on the lack of resources available for people's problems rather than as a comment on your skills as a therapist. Please be careful.
5. Also, please remember that you, as Facilitator, cannot expect that you will meet your own emotional needs working with groups.
6. Finally, it is the Facilitator's responsibility to be sure the group understands what you are doing with them: what your goals are, how you expect to meet their needs, what you can give them and how you are going to do it. It is your responsibility to represent yourself fairly, to be open to criticism from the group (you are there for their benefit), and to consider altering your own goals to meet the group's goals. It is the group's right to hold you accountable for what you do with them.

# RECORDING

## The role of a recorder

**R**ecording or writing down the content of group discussions is a useful function in many situations. The Recorder can be either a Facilitator (in the case of team facilitation) or a group member. In either case, participants should understand the purpose of this role and how it will be useful to the group.

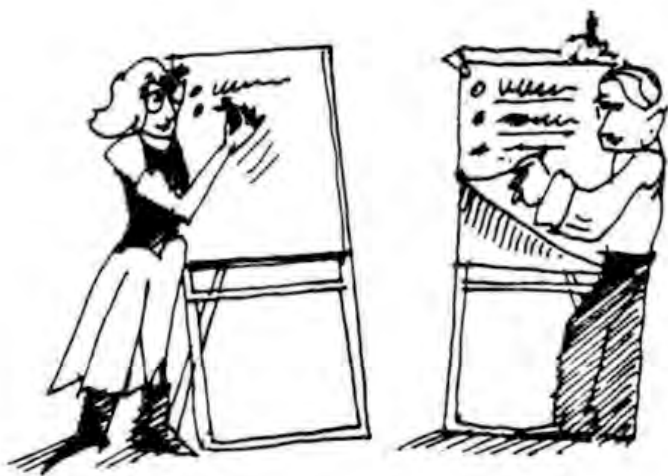


## The role of a recorder has 7 essential elements...

1. The Recorder does not contribute to the discussions at the table beyond seeking clarification of a particular point. They also set the pace at that the table works and can therefore halt discussion in order to ensure that a point is recorded or to ask a participant or Facilitator what is meant by their comments.
2. Everything must be written down publicly and clearly. Usually large sheets of butcher's paper are pinned on notice boards for public recording of the discussion. It is better to record on a vertical surface so everyone can see as the public record emerges, and comment upon and correct your recording if it is inaccurate in any way. It is difficult to record on the table surface, which is likely to be cluttered with cups and papers.
3. In order to help in the interpretation of your notes, it is imperative to use *verbs*, that is, a word that asserts action, occurrence or being. For example to record "traffic" as an issue is meaningless, but by recording "traffic is a problem" or "traffic causes no problems" gives substance to the issue.
4. Remember that all information that you record will be included in the appendix of a report. Please record everything legibly and accurately and so others may understand that it.
5. It is all right for you to seek clarification from the group you are recording. This can be done by simply asking: "Is this what you meant by that statement?" or "I didn't quite get that, could you repeat it please?" It's also a good idea to record as much information verbatim.
6. Generally, it is not the role of the Recorder to report back at the plenary session. The Facilitator will report back to the group as a whole and this will be done from the notes that you record publicly. Please print very clearly.
7. Please be sure that each piece of paper that is recorded on has your table number, the session number from the agenda and also the page number. This is a crucial detail that avoids misinterpretation in the analysis of the information generated.



# Advice to recorders on getting started: the very first steps in a good meeting



## Before you begin

- Take time for yourself to be alone before the session begins. This allows you time to clear your mind, leave your other activities and concerns of the day behind, and focus on the session ahead.
- Make sure your agenda is clear in your mind. This will keep you from getting confused once the meeting begins. In addition, if you are familiar with your plans and purposes, you can be more flexible. It will be easier to modify the agenda if this becomes necessary.

## As you enter the room

The first few moments after participants walk in the door will be important ones in influencing your perceptions of them and their impressions of you. Observe the individuals. You can learn to pick up quite a bit of verbal and nonverbal information which may indicate how well people will work with each other.

- Are people talking with each other as they walk in? If so, what are they talking about? If not, what kinds of expressions are on their faces?
- If the participants vary in terms of age, sex or ethnic group, do they mix freely? If not, there could be tensions and miscommunication among them.

It is important for you to be present on time, if not a little early. Even if you have had a chance to work with or observe the group in the past, this will give you an opportunity to pick up on people's moods and feel out the situation on the particular day of the session. It is also a matter of simple courtesy and respect to the group to be on time.

## Introductions

Introductions are very important: both the Facilitator's introduction to the group and the introduction of group members to you and each other.

## *Your introduction*

- Your introduction (as Recorder) should include your credentials - what it is about you that justifies your being there. This is also an opportunity to begin laying groundwork for egalitarian participation, by presenting yourself as a "person" as well as an "expert". According to the situation (whether it is formal or informal, a mood of seriousness or fun) you can make yourself accessible to the participants and let them get to know you.
- If another person is introducing you, consider how you would like that done. How much detail do you want the introducer to give about you? Would you rather fill in the details yourself?

## *Introduction of the group*

We strongly recommend that you learn the participants' names as quickly and as best you can. This requires some extra attention, but the group will appreciate it and it will allow you to relate to participants more personally. Name tags are a good aid, especially when the participants are strangers to each other.

## **Ethics for recorders**

It is important that all information that is generated through the table discussion be recorded publicly, clearly and concisely. Remember the function of a record is to record and not to interpret, this is vital to ensure legitimate and unbiased data.



# SOME FINAL COMMENTS...

**Y**ou are probably reading these *Notes* because you have been asked to act as a Facilitator, Recorder, Listener, Helper or resource person at a workshop, *SpeakOut*, search conference, community forum, or other community participation event. Please try not to allow the material in these *Notes* to intimidate you. People everywhere--and especially in groups--generally respond to clarity of intent and an open heart.

Be your natural self. Look people in the eye and stay focused on your task.



## REMEMBER

It is work.

It will be demanding.

But it should also be rewarding.

And it should be fun.

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## Notes