

10 Facilitation Principles and Tips

Good facilitation combines skill, intuition and practice. If you are new to facilitation, or in need of a refresher, these 10 principles and tips will help you on your way to success.

1. Facilitators need to be clear of the discussion goals, and time available. This will ultimately dictate their facilitation style – for example, one style is to let the discussion flow freely where another style is to direct speakers by asking a lot of guiding questions.
2. Facilitators are a “content neutral” party who do not advocate for one point of view, but rather assists groups in achieving fair, open, and inclusive procedures to achieve goals.
 - Sam Kaner. (2007). *Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*. Jossey-Bass: USA.
3. Separate the people from the problem. Be hard on the problem, soft on the people.
 - Roger Fisher and William Ury. (1983). *Getting to Yes*. Penguin Books: USA.
4. Create a space that is respectful of different points of views. Encourage participants to respond to others with “yes and” rather than “no but.” This does not mean that everybody has to agree, but rather that everyone withholds judgements, and respects different perspectives.
5. Allow opportunities for a range of people to participate (not just the individuals with the loudest voices, or the quickest to respond). You will need to identify how you are going to manage this from the outset (i.e., a speakers list, show of hands, etc.).
6. Acknowledge emotions and take a break if things get too heated.
7. If the discussion falls flat, have some ‘back-pocket probing questions’ to ask the group.
8. Actively listen and paraphrase/summarize what is being said.
9. Give warning that the end of the discussion is approaching.
10. Leave enough time on the agenda for a final summary, and to state next steps.
11. Bonus tip: have fun!