

Community Consulting Group
MEETING FACILITATOR TIPS

1) Taking turns

Ask a question, give time to participants to take notes, and then announce “we’ll go around the room.” This technique is especially useful in two situations: when the session is just beginning (and people are reluctant or unsure of speaking up) OR later, when the group is “warmed up” but one or two voices are starting to dominate. Taking turns reinforces the value that “we want to hear from everyone.”

2) The probe

Sometimes people just say, "I agree," or "I don't have an opinion." Probes can get them to say more OR make sure you’ve captured their point. Probes can also be a way to control a conversation and keep one person from dominating.

- *Have I recorded your point accurately? (pointing to flipchart, etc)*
- *Would you explain further or give an example?*
- *Has anyone else had that experience?*
- *Does anyone have a different take on the issue (different viewpoint? etc)*

3) The 5-second pause

Novice moderators tend to fill in the silences, to talk too much, to dominate by asking questions. Discipline yourself to pause — you'll get additional points of view and comments will emerge.

4) Nonverbal reinforcers

- *Eye contact*

Eye contact (in a mainstream culture) indicates “you have the floor, we are listening to you.” Breaking the eye contact can be one way to indicate that the person has made their point and should stop.

- *Nodding.*

Nodding can indicate two things 1. I understand your point, 2. agreement with the point. To maintain the group’s confidence in the facilitator’s neutrality, nodding should be limited.

- *How and where you stand.*

Conversation can be controlled by how and where the facilitator stands. Moving toward the group increases the presence and power of the facilitator’s words. Side conversations or dominant speakers can be silenced by standing close to the speakers. Move away from the group to “open space” for other voices.

- *Glancing at watch.*

Glancing at your watch can be a broad hint that the speaker should limit their comments and give the facilitator an opening to introduce another agenda item or transition to another point.

5) Avoid judgmental comments

Try to avoid responding "good!" and "excellent!" when a point is made — it implies a judgment about the quality of comment (and by extension, that other comments WEREN’T “excellent”). Say “thank you!” instead.