



# Facilitation

fact sheet

## What is Facilitation?

Facilitation increases the efficiency of running meetings and ensures ideas represent the group. Facilitation

- literally means “making things easier”
- helps people make decisions and achieve results in meetings and groups, etc.
- draws on the ideas of all
- does not allow a few to dominate, and
- ensures that event output are captured and presented in an easily understandable form

## 6 steps for good facilitation

1. **Clarity.** Clearly state meeting objectives, desired outputs and time available.
2. **Behavior.** Set ground rules for behavior – e.g., 1) Participate! 2) It is okay to disagree, but discuss the issue (don't be personal). 3) Allow others to speak. 4) keep on time 5) Keep on topic
3. **Focus.** Develop **discussion** questions to help meet objectives and produce the type of output desired (e.g., “What is the problem with...?”). Distinguish essential and non-essential contributions – Use meeting objectives to keep people focused.
4. **Manage the process/Use Interactive skills**
  - Engage people to maintain interest
  - Make participants feel valued – be positive. Do not argue or embarrass people
  - Collect the groups' ideas – do not push your own agenda; clarify ideas, but do not interpret ideas your way; allow silence when appropriate. Do not let individuals dominate.
  - Question (i.e., ask open questions and avoid Yes/No questions)
  - Listen (and process key points or concerns from the speaker)
  - Give constructive feedback
  - Build consensus and keep the group engaged.
  - Manage conflict. Allow disagreement but keep it positive; capture people's concerns for *win-win* outcomes.
  - Teach as appropriate

## 4. Manage the process (Continued)

### Collect information

- Use flipcharts and whiteboards to capture input.
- Run brainstorming sessions
- Use cards to collect, sort and categorize information
- Conduct debates (people take turns to debate different sides of an issue)
- Develop future scenarios (i.e., describe a future date (e.g., 2020) and the success desired – now work backwards with the group to see how success was achieved.)
- Be flexible and open to change either in topics discussed or meeting structure
- Orient the group to action. Ask what people would do.



Good facilitators capture the wealth of knowledge from groups.

5. **Summarize.** Assess the groups' understanding throughout the meeting; use group output to support points
  - Look for commonalities, themes and trends.
  - Identify the “critical mass” required to move on (i.e., not every one has to be convinced of a course of action; only the key people forming the “critical mass”)
6. **Next steps.** Capture major output and action points

## Facilitation can vary

Facilitation has differing forms of involvement and interaction:

	Process monitoring	Discussion facilitation	Presenting
Interaction	Low	Medium-High	Low
Contribution	Low	Medium	High

Reference: Townsend, J. and Donovan, P. 1999. *The Facilitator's Pocketbook*. Management Pocketbooks. Hampshire, UK.

**For more information visit:** International Programs: [ip.ucdavis.edu](http://ip.ucdavis.edu)  
Prepared with input from M.A. Bell, D. Shires and P Marcotte December, 2013  
Copyright © UC Regents Davis campus, 2013. All Rights Reserved.