

# FACILITATOR TOOL KIT

A GUIDE FOR HELPING GROUPS GET RESULTS

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# Facilitator Tool Kit

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The facilitator tool kit is a comprehensive, easy-to-use guide to tools, methods and techniques for assisting groups with planning and improvement projects and interactive meetings. Its clear, simple explanations and directions lead the reader through the selection and application of practical tools that have been tested with university groups.

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## EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Meetings – no other single activity consumes as much time in today’s working world. Planning and conducting meetings that accomplish their aims is a leadership skill worthy of cultivating.

### Potential Influences

Seasoned facilitators will tell you that it is not only necessary, but also critical, to check the physical environment, audio-visual set-up, your equipment bag and your briefcase prior to a facilitated session. It’s also helpful to think proactively about other potential influences.

**Physical** – Make sure the room is available and set up for your needs. Check seating, lighting, technological equipment, print materials, flipcharts, tape, self-stick note pads and paper at least 20 minutes prior to your session.

**Professional** – If your participants are preoccupied with news or events occurring at the time of your session, it might be effective to begin with a brief conversation or check-in that acknowledges key factors such as a recent administrators’ resignation, death of a professional peer, budget cut, fire on campus, etc...

**Group “frame of mind”** – Groups take on a collective identity once assembled even if they’ve never met before. Ask the group members to observe the “100 mile rule.” They must pretend they are 100 miles from work or home and cannot be reached or interrupted. Ask their support and assistance in accomplishing goals within the time scheduled. Let them know that they either will get a scheduled break or should exit and return quietly to take care of personal needs.

**Facilitator “frame of mind”** – No one can predict in advance or prevent a personal distraction such as a severe headache, concern over a sick child, or a sudden, unexpected project deadline. If a clear focus for facilitating is impossible, ask another facilitator to conduct your session. If you plan to tackle the session even with the additional concern, let the group know – very briefly – that you are coming in from other important responsibilities but that you see this session as an opportunity to clear your mind and focus on a very productive agenda.

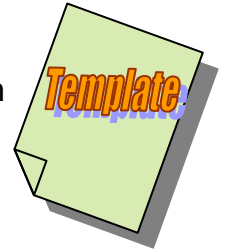
## **Before, During, and After**



A meeting may be thought of as a three-stage process – before, during, and after. Following are suggestions for making each stage efficient and effective. A *Meeting Planner Checklist* can be found in [Appendix D](#).

### ***BEFORE the Meeting***

- Create an agenda (with input from sponsors, group leaders, and participants). A Meeting Agenda Template can be found in [Appendix B](#).
  - State items in action terms (E.g., “Review plans for XYZ”).
  - Assign a time limit for each item.
  - Assign someone to lead discussion of each item, if not the facilitator.
- Ensure agenda is posted, sent out, and archived as required by the school, college, or department.
- Ensure that appropriate information is circulated with the agenda beforehand (in time to be useful).
- Ensure that room arrangements are made.
- Arrange for note taker and process to distribute minutes afterwards.
- Ensure that member name/address roster is created to facilitate communication after meeting.



### ***DURING the Meeting***

- Start the meeting on time.
- Ensure quorum (if required).
- Review agenda.
- Keep discussion focused on agenda items.
- Encourage full participation.
- Help group reach decisions (consensus vs. voting).
- Summarize decisions at the end.
- Agree on action: what needs to be done by whom and by when.
- Draft agenda for next meetings(s).
- Evaluate the meeting. What went well? What could be improved?

### ***AFTER the Meeting:***

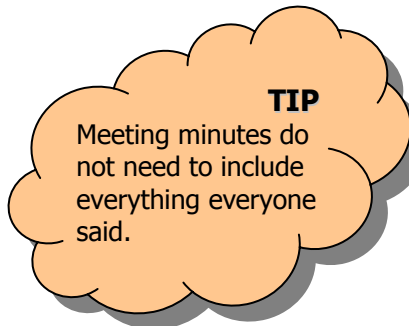
- Ensure that minutes are produced and promptly distributed to participants and guests. See [Appendix C](#) for a



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Meeting Minutes template. Figure 8 lists items that meeting minutes typically need to include.

- Ensure that agenda, minutes, and meeting supporting documents are kept together if archiving is required.
- Communicate as needed to ensure that action is happening as agreed.



### Meeting Minutes Typically Need to Include:

- Date, time, location
- Attendees
- Key points discussed and decisions made
- Voting results (if votes are taken), including who made the motion and who seconded it
- Who is responsible for what follow-up action, by when?

Figure 8. What to Include in Meeting Minutes

## Roles and Rules

Having some structure for handling key roles and establishing some guidelines for how participants will interact can help meetings run more smoothly.

### Committee/Team Roles

Key roles can be filled by designated individuals, or different members can fulfill these roles on a rotating basis. Key roles in many kinds of meetings are:

- **Facilitator** – Takes responsibility for guiding process of discussion and decision-making. Does not ordinarily engage in meeting content.
- **Timekeeper** – Lets everyone know when time for a given agenda item is almost up and is really up.
- **Recorder** – May write on flip chart or PC/projector or overhead to create a visual record of points being made.
- **Participant** – Share responsibility for:
  - ~ Bringing a runaway conversation back
  - ~ Encouraging others to participate. *"I would be interested in what others think who haven't said anything yet."*
  - ~ Respecting time limits
  - ~ Noting when ground rules are being violated

### Why post a list of ideas for all to see?

The human brain can only hold a limited amount of information (3-7 items) in short term memory.

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### ***Ground Rules***

- Are guidelines on how your committee will function
- Should improve effectiveness and efficiency
- Should minimize confusion, disruptions, and conflicts that take away from the real work.
- Each committee should discuss and agree to its own ground rules
- Ground rules should be reviewed and updated annually as new members join

### **Most groups violate their own ground rules sometimes...**

- Any member can remind the committee of particular ground rules
- If a ground rule is broken repeatedly, either discuss with "offender(s)" as a group and/or decide if the rule should be changed

#### **Sample ground rules**

- ✓ Everyone turns off cell phones.
- ✓ We begin and end on time.
- ✓ Information shared in meetings can be shared with others unless a member asks that it be kept confidential.
- ✓ Consensus or Voting? Decide ahead of time how decisions will be made.

*Figure 9. Sample Ground Rules*

### **Jump-Starting a Stalled Meeting**

- Go back to the question at hand or goals of the meeting. Restate.
- Summarize what has already been accomplished or agreed to.
- Ask if there are data to support various points of view.
- Try a non-verbal activity – ask people to write (without talking) what they feel is most important of the points being made.
- Take a break for 5 minutes.
- Ask for a new approach – let the committee members be responsible for getting things moving.
- Ask what issues "drive" the others? Try to separate causes from effects.
- Prioritize items with stickers or check marks and deal only with high-scoring items

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### ***What About the Meeting Dominators?***

- Structure the discussion rather than just asking “What do you think about this proposal?” Ask, “*What do you see as a strength of this proposal? What causes you concern? What did we miss?*”
- Create a visual record of ideas discussed to discourage rehashing. Restate what you heard and ask for confirmation that you’ve written it correctly, or ask the person to help you “headline” the comment so you can write it on the flip chart.
- Ask the group questions that both help process the comment and allow additional input, such as:
  - ~ “*I heard Joe say xxx. What is another way to look at it?*”
  - ~ “*Do others feel the same way?*”
  - ~ “*Is that how you would summarize what Joe said?*”
  - ~ “*What do Joe’s comments bring to mind for you?*”
- Move across the room and ask for comments only from those who haven’t yet spoken.
- Ask participants to bring up only new topics that have not been covered yet in view of the time remaining.
- Instead of brainstorming as a group, ask individuals to write down their ideas, then go round-robin with each person sharing ONE idea that is different from what’s already been said.
- Incorporate small group work whenever possible. This ensures that even quiet people have a chance to discuss their ideas in a smaller, less threatening situation.
- A “ticket to talk” can be effective if the group really wants even participation.

**Ticket to Talk**  
**Good for 30 Seconds**

**Valid only on December 12**

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- Participants may agree to slide the “evil star” over to people who interrupt others or start evaluating during a brainstorming session.



- Employ the “wedging” technique, a concept developed by Steve Davis, founder of *Master Facilitator Journal* (<http://www.facilitatoru.com/referral.html>; <http://www.masterfacilitatorjournal.com/home.html>).
  - ~ First focus all of your concentration on the speaker. While the tendency is to ignore a dominator, resist this urge and really listen fully and deeply. Leave the rest of the room totally behind. This may seem strange, but often people who talk a lot or dominate groups are so accustomed to being ignored that they repeat themselves or overemphasize their points. You want to make sure you hear exactly what they are saying.
  - ~ Next, begin to verbally acknowledge the person. Say out loud, ‘yes’, ‘I see’, ‘right’ or other words that let the speaker know you are actively listening. By taking up a small amount of “verbal airtime” you are subtly intervening or wedging yourself into the conversation in a respectful way.
  - ~ Lastly, verbally summarize what the other person is saying and make sure it is accurate. If the person has something else to add, he/she can do this. If he/she continues to speak about the same topic or ideas, you can ask if you have misunderstood his/her ideas.

For additional meeting tips, see the OQI web site, *How to Lead Effective Meetings*, at <http://quality.wisc.edu/effective-meetings.htm>