



From the website: <http://www.selba.org/EngTaster/Social/Facilitation/WhatToObserveGroup.html>

What to observe in a group

One way to learn facilitation skills is to observe and analyse what is happening in one's group. All of us have spent a good part of our lives in groups of various sorts, but rarely have we taken time to stop and observe what is going on in the group, and ask why the members are behaving the way they are. The following list include some of the aspects you should pay attention to any group:

1. Content and Process

In any group we will find two main elements:

- **Content:** what is being said, the matter under discussion
- **Process:** what is happening to the group itself, the way things are being accomplished.

The content may be seen, as the part of an iceberg out of the water, while the process is the part under the water, not easily seen but very important and influential.

2. Issues involved in any group

- Problem of **identity** and **acceptance** within the group. Who am I in this group? Where do I fit in? What kind of behaviour is acceptable here? Do I belong?
- Problem of **goals** and **needs** of the group. What do I want from the group? Are its goals consistent with mine? What help have I to offer the group?
- Problem of **power, control** and **influence**. Who is in charge? Who will control what we do? How much influence will I have?
- Problem of **intimacy**. How close will get to each other? How personal will things be? How much can trust each other?

3. Roles or qualities to watch for in a group

- **Leadership** – Assuming or representing authority
- **Dependency** – Leaning on the leader or on anyone who represents authority
- **Counter-dependency** – Resisting anyone who represents authority
- **Pairing** – seeking one or more supporters
- **Fighting and controlling** – Asserting personal dominance, attempting to get one's own way, to satisfy one's own needs, regardless of others

- **Withdrawing** – Taking no part in the group to escape the sources of an uncomfortable feeling

4. Clues to help us observe

- Who talks? For how long? How often?
- Who do people look at when they talk? At the group? At one person? At the floor?
- How do people speak? What tone of voice?
- Who talks after whom? Any small asides between couples?
- Who interrupts? Do they interrupt the same person constantly?
- What gestures are used?
- How do people sit?
- Any yawns, twiddling of thumbs, gazing out of windows?