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

## Facilitation Techniques

There are thousands of good techniques to make our meetings productive, participative, friendly, cooperative... and fun! (See note aside).

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### 1. Think and Listen

Work in pairs for a Think and Listen. For half the time one person is the thinker and the other is the listener. The thinking turn is for the thinker's benefit. It is a time for the thinkers to collect and develop their thoughts at their own pace, in their own way and using their own language if they choose. The listener makes no comments and asks no questions, but does make encouraging sounds and movements to indicate that their attention to the thinker is active. Common time periods for a Think and Listen are between two to five minutes each. What the thinker speaks about and how their thinking develops is confidential, unless otherwise agreed. When you are the thinker, remember: the time is for you, and you do not need to appear bright or knowledgeable. When you are the listener remember: look at your partner and be active in your listening. Do not interrupt or ask questions.

### 2. Go-Round

In a Go-Round everyone gets to speak for a short, equal time, taking turns, often going round a circle of people. In meetings the facilitator can offer topics or headings to guide contributions, such as "Say your name, where you are from and how you are feeling today."

### 3. Brainstorming

One of the easiest and most enjoyable ways to quickly generate a lot of ideas is to brainstorm. A successful brainstorm helps:

- Encourage creativity
- Involve everyone
- Generate excitement and energy
- Separate people from the ideas they suggest. What becomes important is the idea itself, not the person who suggests it.

#### Guidelines:

- Start by reviewing the topic; make sure everyone understands the issues.
- Give people a minute or two of silent thinking time.
- When ideas start to flow, let them come. Freewheel-don't hold back.
- No discussion of the ideas during the brainstorm. That will come later.
- No criticism of ideas - not even a groan or grimace!
- Hitchhike - build on ideas generated by others in the group.
- Write all ideas on a flipchart so everyone can see them.

### 4. Check In

A facilitator will need to know how the participants at a meeting are doing. Is their energy level OK? Do people need a break? Can people keep going for another 10 minutes so we can finish this item before lunch? Are people warm/cool enough. Is fresh air needed?

As an alternative to hearing from everyone, as when using a go-round for a check-in, the 'thumbs' method is a swift alternative. As an example for knowing the energy level of the group: show your thumb up for good energy level, thumb down if you need a rest, and thumb anywhere in between to show how you are.

### 5. Mind Maps

Mind maps are freehand diagrams that start from a circle in the middle and have 'arms' or 'branches' radiating out at all angles. Mind maps give a visual representation of the whole of a subject and allow the main points to be easily identified. They are a flexible way of presenting information that allows for alteration and making connections between topics much more easily than linear text. See image aside for more information about how to create a mind map.

### 6. Affinity Grouping

Step 1. Write a sentence or question describing a situation and post it on a wall or flipchart where everyone can see it.

Step 2. Brainstorm all the ideas or issues related to the situation or answering the question and write each idea on a sticky note. Depending on the size of the group, this can be done as a full group, in small groups, or silently as individuals. If the topic is sensitive, working individually provides anonymity and allows controversial or emotional things to come to light.

Step 3. All group participants work simultaneously to sort the ideas into 5-10 clusters. The sorting is done without speaking and it is only after it is finished that the logic of the group will emerge. If the group is large, the original sort can be done in small groups and then merged into a large group.

Step 4. A group consensus is used to create a label to summarize or give a title to each cluster.

## 7. Multivoting

Step 1. Brainstorm the list of issues, problems, or solutions to be prioritized and write the statements on a flipchart.

Step 2. As a group, discuss the list to eliminate duplicate ideas and to clarify the meanings of any of the statements.

Step 3. Rewrite the final list of statements on a flipchart, leaving room for votes. For easy reference, you can label each idea with a number or letter.

Step 4. As a group, decide what criteria to use in evaluating and rating the ideas.

Step 5. – Voting by one of various methods

- Each person silently ranks the ideas and writes the rankings on the flipchart. The ideas with the highest totals are the ones to consider for implementation.
- Each person ranks only what he/she considers the 4-5 best ideas.
- Use dot labels or stickers for voting. Each person has a certain number of dots (3-5) to "spend" on ranking, and can disperse them on several ideas or use all on one great idea.
- Two colors of dots can be used. Everyone gets 3-5 dots of one color and one "super dot" of another color which is worth more points.

Step 6. Discuss the results as a group.

## 8. Six thinking hats\*

The person who facilitates the meeting wears the blue hat. This is the hat that controls the other hats (although eventually this person may want to pass the blue hat to another person). The person with the blue hat can at any moment invite the group to put on any of the following hats:

- **White:** with this hat you have to bring up facts, numbers and objective information.

- **Red:** you can speak about your feelings, sensations, intuitions, what is going well or bad for you.
- **Black:** it is your time for criticism and for bringing up the difficulties or pitfalls of any proposal.
- **Yellow:** you can bring up new ideas and suggestions to improve any proposal.
- **Green:** this is the creative hat. It allows you to say whatever comes up to your mind.

The facilitator (blue hat) decides whether everybody wears the same hat, or just a part of the group wears a given hat and others wear a hat in a different colour, depending on whether the facilitator wants to generate more ideas or to increase the depth of the debate.

\* This technique has been created and developed by E. De Bono in his book Six thinking hats. [Click here for more information](#)

## **9. World Cafe\***

The big group is divided in small groups of 4-5 people sitting around a table with a paper tablecloth —to write, draw, or doodle in the midst of the conversation— and talking about a given subject presented under the form of a question. In each table there is a table 'host' who stays at the same table throughout the process. After 20-30 minutes the general host invites participants to change tables. The table host explains briefly the essence of the previous conversation to the guests who arrive for the next round. After three rounds of progressive conversation there is a dialogue among the whole group with the intention of gathering and recording key ideas, questions or insights that might be useful for action planning or other purposes.

\* This technique has been created and developed by Juanita Brown and William Isaacs in their book The World Cafe. [Click here for more information.](#)