

GO-ROUND

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ICE-BREAKER

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IDEASTORM (ROVING)

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PARKING SPACE

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Literally go round the circle of participants, giving each person an opportunity to speak; the facilitator can offer the chance to anyone who didn't say anything first time to contribute after going once-round. It's helpful to give thinking time to those about to speak, by indicating which way round you'll be going. It can be combined with methods to limit the length of time of each contribution.

A way to introduce people to each other, encourage them to speak, relax, open up and feel they have a right to be there. It can be the start of building trust. They could share names and some personal details or experiences. A level of risk-taking or self-disclosure can help build a safer 'container' for the group.

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If there are several issues to get ideas about, the group can be split into small groups, and move from issue to issue on flipcharts on walls, to put ideas on each and add to others. They are given an allotted time which reduces as the sheets are filled.

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When issues or questions arise in discussion which will take too much time or that don't seem immediately relevant to the current purpose, they can be written on a sheet to be looked at later on. Ensure you do come back to them!

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SMALL GROUPS

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PAIRED LISTENING

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HOT SEAT

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SPECTRUM LINE

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Split the group into small groups or pairs to support everyone to be involved in discussions. It benefits quieter and marginalised participants, aids deeper conversations and thinking, and allows for quality participation. A rhythm of alternating small and whole group discussions provides variety and integrates discussions had at different levels.

As with small groups, it is a method of bringing out everyone's ideas and opinions in a setting where power is more equalised than in many large group settings. Each person actively listens to the other and does not express their own opinion, sometimes taking notes, they then swap over.

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When a group is given or has encountered a problem, arrange the seats in a circle with an empty chair. People take it in turns to jump in the 'hot seat' to practice what they would do in that situation. Don't describe what you would do, instead give it an actual try.

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A way of indicating participants' agreement/disagreement or feelings about an issue. Create an imaginary line on the floor; in most cases, the two ends of the spectrum will be 'strongly agree' or 'strongly disagree'; participants line themselves up accordingly. The facilitator can elicit reasons, to open up further discussion and encourage movement along the line as people listen to each other.

FISHBOWL

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REVERSE IDEASTORM

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ENERGISER

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DEBRIEF

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For larger groups, this is a method of observing an activity or discussion, and giving feedback. One group does the activity, the rest of the group form a circle around them to observe, monitor and note. There are alternate versions, for example, with an empty seat in the inner circle, which allows people from the outer circle to take the seat and join the discussion. facilitate • innovate • grow

Instead of getting ideas on an issue, turn the issue on its head e.g. instead of: 'what makes a good meeting?', use 'what makes a bad meeting?' Adds humour and also elicits people's intrinsic knowledge and understanding. facilitate • innovate • grow

Usually used when a group is flagging or stuck, or after lunch, to refresh and get the blood flowing. Should involve brisk physical movement, some can involve brisk brain activity too. It can serve other purposes appropriate to that specific point of proceedings, for example an exercise that you can then debrief to draw out issues related to team-work, co-operation or diversity. facilitate • innovate • grow

A debrief is a discussion that takes place following a shared task, activity, decision or action. It can be used, for example, to analyse what was done successfully and what was not, or to explore what was learned at a group or individual level. facilitate • innovate • grow

EVALUATION

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THROWING IT BACK

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WEATHER REPORTING

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ACTIVE LISTENING

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Usually the final activity, evaluation can be done verbally in a go-round, and/or on flipchart sheets or specially designed forms. It should reveal what people have got out of the session, how they feel about the facilitation methods, what has worked well and what needed doing differently. Where people are writing their own thoughts, anonymity can be used to encourage honesty.

When a question arises, often directed at the facilitator, it can be thrown back to the group for answers or comments e.g. "That's an interesting question/comment Mo, what does anyone else think?" It can be used when as facilitator you do not know the best way forwards or want to encourage the group to take ownership, e.g. "I'm unsure about what we should do next. We've heard...and also... What suggestions are there of next steps?". It is an important way of shifting responsibility to the participants.

A vital skill in a facilitator, being able to assess the 'temperature' of a group and then naming it e.g. "I sense there is a lot of anxiety at this point". Naming it may be enough, it may need discussing or you could suggest a change of direction or tempo such as getting everyone to do a short physical exercise, take a break or pause for a moment.

An important skill for a facilitator, to be always listening to the group and their needs, encouraging, reflecting what is being said, re-stating points being made, clarifying what is happening, checking and focusing. It is also an important skill to encourage in all participants.

FORUM THEATRE

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PARALLEL LINES

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GALLERY REPORT-BACK

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OPENING A WINDOW

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A problem-solving method. Participants act out the story of the problem to the rest of the group, who, when they have an idea about how things could have been handled differently, jump in, take the appropriate role and let the action flow from there. More complex than hot seating.

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A problem-solving method, where participants line up facing each other and therefore in pairs, and take or are given roles to explore ways to respond to a particular situation or behaviour. It is one-on-one and so unobserved except by the facilitator.

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A good alternative to lengthy report-backs to the whole group. Each small group prepares a flipchart summarising its discussion. This encourages groups to identify key conclusions that can be clearly understood by people who weren't in the discussion. Everyone else wanders around at their own rhythm to take in the flipchart gallery on the wall. One person might stay with each flipchart to answer questions.

An action which can very much help change the mood of a group; it's surprising how much a discussion and some individuals can be affected. It can provide a short break, allow things to cool down, and let oxygen or cool air into the room!

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REFRESHMENTS

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STRAW POLL

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EVALUATION

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SHARED EXPERIENCE

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Essential to the maintenance of a group and energy levels. Provides a break from discussion and enables informal social interaction and thinking time, processing whatever is needed, intellectually and psychologically. They may be provided for the whole group in a break, at a self-selected time that suits each small group, or always available for individuals who are flagging to help themselves.

When it is useful for the group to have an indication of what everyone is thinking on an issue, a straw poll or show of hands can be used as a test of opinion. It is not a vote, and therefore not decisive. For more nuanced polling, coloured cards showing red for 'no', green for 'yes' and yellow for 'more thought or discussion needed'/'undecided' can be used.

Evaluation of a meeting or workshop is usually done filling in forms. There are many participatory methods, such as the dart-board - divide the target into segments to evaluate different aspects; ask people to put a dot in each segment, the nearer to the bull's-eye the higher the rating; leave space at the edges for qualitative feedback on post-its that you distribute to participants. Don't watch too closely!

Experiential learning comes from designing a participative activity or challenge that builds a relevant shared experience. It can then be debriefed by the group, reflecting on the experience, before learning the lessons (generalising) and thinking about what that means for their specific situation or issue (applying).

Instructions for using Rhizome's facilitation tools and techniques cards

These are a selection of tools and techniques - both formal and informal - for facilitating meetings, workshops and events. Many can be used in decision-making, problem-solving and when it is opportune to bring a new approach or energy to the proceedings. Most provide ways to ensure everyone has the opportunity to be fully involved and is able to contribute.

Print double-sided on A4 paper and cut them up into separate slips. There are a variety of different ways they can then be used, with some examples for you to mix and match below:

- Distribute the facilitation tools and techniques cards - with the name face-up - round the room either stuck on the walls, or scattered on a table or the floor. Take into account the physical environment, participants' mobility and whether there's the need to get people active.
- In small groups or pairs, ask participants to pick a tool they are slightly less familiar with and would be willing to demonstrate (e.g. if you've done an ideastorm lots yourself, then pick another tool, but if you've seen it used and want to get more confident...).
- In their small group/pair, share why they chose it. Ask them to remember an occasion when they used this tool or saw it being used; briefly talk it through with another person, explaining for example, what the facilitator did, what happened as a result, and what they liked about it.
- Participants can then demonstrate the tool or technique's use to the whole group who will be 'the facilitated'. After each practice, debrief - using questions such as "how was that for you?", "how did it go?"
- Then get small groups to take a set of the cards and do PMI (plus, minus, interesting) sheets for each, and see how many they get through. Focus less on the positive & negative if they are obvious, and instead on the interesting aspects of the tool - e.g. "what likely problems might arise with this tool?", and as the facilitator, "what adaptations could you think of?"

Do please let us know how you get on with them, and any other feedback or suggestions, on [our blog](#) or [get in touch](#).