

Facilitation Techniques

Technique	Useful When	How to Use	Benefit
Summarizing	Useful when statements are long, confusing, or convoluted.	Use your own words to summarize the speaker's main points.	It can be calming, reassuring, and clarifying. It gives the speaker, and others, an opportunity to "hear" the key points.
Mirroring	Useful when the person speaking is emotional and needs to be heard/understood or when the facilitator feels the need to establish their neutrality.	Repeat the speaker's exact words (if 1–2 sentences) or repeat key words or phrases.	It can help to establish the neutrality of a facilitator and build trust. When you use their words they know you get their point of view and they feel heard.
Drawing People Out	Useful when someone isn't participating in a discussion, is having difficulty clarifying an idea, or their statements are vague or confusing to others.	Use open ended questions to elicit information or gain understanding.	The speaker feels their voice is important and they feel heard and supported when given time to get their thoughts out.
Stacking	Useful when several people have something to say.	Identify, for the group, who will speak and in what order.	It lets everyone know what to expect re: who gets to speak, when, and how they can participate.
Intentional Silence	Useful when people need time to think and process their thoughts or feelings.	Pause after a question is asked or when waiting for a response. Stay relaxed and don't allow others to fill the silence.	It offers time for ideas to sink in and gives participants time to think before speaking. It can change the momentum of a meeting.

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Tracking & Sorting	Useful when people are discussing more than one topic or one topic goes into many directions.	Say out loud the various topics you are hearing. If necessary, summarize the topics into broader categories and/or prioritize what will be discussed then refocus the group and continue.	It gets everyone focused on the same topic, lets the group know all the topics that need to be discussed, and relieves anxiety for those worried their topics won't be discussed.
Encouraging	Useful when there is mistrust, defensiveness, low participation, or participants feel their ideas are not important or won't be well received.	Ask for a different perspective: "Who else has an idea?" or "Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet." Go around the group and give everyone a chance to speak. Try brainstorming.	It can level the playing field by creating a place for everyone to participate without putting anyone on the spot. This should be done at the onset of a discussion to be inclusive of views. It becomes more difficult once a disagreement occurs.
Balancing	Useful when one or more people dominate, or some are perceived as more powerful than others.	Make room in the conversation for "the other side" by asking for different views or ideas. Ask people who have not spoken to give their ideas or opinions.	It challenges the myth "silence means consent." It encourages diverse views and equal participation.
Finding Common Ground	Useful when you are hearing some areas of agreement that have not been acknowledged.	Summarize areas of common ground and the areas that still need discussion. Ask the group if that's accurate.	It can help a group feel hopeful about working together. It can build success and trust by gaining agreement on small issues first and tackling the more difficult problems later.