

# THE ABCs OF FACILITATION

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**EXERCISE MATERIALS, HANDOUTS AND SLIDES**

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# Effective Questioning Means ...

*(Taken from Facilitating with Ease! by Ingrid Bens)*

## Asking the right question at the right time

- Select the right type of question and phrase it so that it solicits the best possible response.
- Then, direct it to the right person.

<i><b>If you want to ...</b></i>	<i><b>Then...</b></i>
...stimulate everyone's thinking	...direct the question to the group
...allow people to respond voluntarily or avoid putting a individual on the spot	...ask a question such as: <i>"What experiences have any of you had with this situation/problem?"</i>
...stimulate one person to think and respond	...direct the question to that person: <i>"How should we handle this Bill?"</i>
...tap the known resources of an "expert" in the group	...direct the question to that person: <i>"Mary, you have a lot of experience in applying these techniques to working with people. What would you do in this case?"</i>

## Using techniques to elicit responses

- Wait at least 20-30 seconds for responses. Silence is acceptable to allow people time to think about the question and frame their response. The more time you give the better the answers you will receive.
- Ask concisely worded questions and speak clearly when you ask them.
- Only ask one question at a time.
- Rephrase a question only after the wait time.
- Don't answer your own questions.
- Ask a question of the group and then let them think of the answer instead of putting someone on the spot

## Handling answers to questions

- Positively reinforce all correct answers.
- Don't go overboard praising ideas and compromise your neutrality.
- Acknowledge all efforts of any group member to answer questions, regardless of answers given.
- Minimize potential embarrassment for wrong or incomplete answers.
- Don't ignore wrong answers. Tactful responses to wrong answers can include:

*"I can see how you came up with that."*

*"That's an interesting point. Who else has an idea?"*

*"You are on the right track. Do you have any other ideas?"*

## Responding to questions

- If someone asks you about content or directly asks for your personal views, you have three options:
  1. Redirect the question to someone likely to have the right answer or refer it to the group as a whole.
  2. Defer any questions that are beyond the scope of anyone present and commit to getting back to the group with an answer later.
  3. Provide the answer yourself only as a last resort, or when you are the only person who can come up with the right answer.
- Other techniques include:
  1. Clarify what the individual said by repeating, rephrasing or writing on the board. Help him/her to develop a response rather than filling in the gaps yourself. Ask:
    - 'tell me more about that'
    - 'what do you mean by'
    - 'why do you think that'
    - 'could you clarify that further'
    - 'please repeat'
    - 'I don't understand what you mean by'
  2. There are NO stupid questions - don't treat questions as stupid and don't let individuals define their questions as stupid either.
  3. Once you receive a response, find a way to enter into a discussion with the person, rather than asking another question right away.

## Being aware of questioning Do's and Don'ts

### *Do...*

- Ask clear, concise questions covering a single issue.
- Ask challenging questions that will stimulate thought.
- Ask reasonable questions based on what people know.
- Ask honest and relevant questions.

### *Don't...*

- Ask rambling, ambiguous questions that cover multiple issues.
- Ask questions that don't provide an opportunity for thought.
- Ask questions that most people can't answer.
- Ask 'trick' questions designed to fool people.

# Questioning Formats

*(Taken from Facilitating with Easel by Ingrid Bens)*

Scenario: You are facilitating a focus group who has gathered together to determine if the commissary is meeting the needs of the community.

**Fact-finding questions....** are targeted at verifiable data such as who, what, when, where and how much. Use them to gather information about the current situation.

*"How often do you shop at the commissary?"*

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**Feeling-finding questions....** ask for subjective information that examines the participants' opinions, feelings, values, and beliefs. They help you understand other's views and usually contain words like think or feel.

*"How do you feel about the choices that are offered in the commissary?"*

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**Tell-me-more questions....** can help you find out more about what the participants are saying. They encourage the speaker to provide relevant details.

*"What is it about the produce section that you like in particular?"*

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**Best/least questions....** help you understand potential opportunities in the present situation. They let you test the outer limits of the participants' wants and needs.

*"What is the best thing about having a commissary on post?"*

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**Third-party questions....** help uncover thoughts in an indirect manner. They're designed to help people express sensitive information.

*"Some people find shopping at the commissary saves them money. How does that sound to you?"*

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**"Magic wand" questions....** let you explore people's true desires. Known as "crystal ball" questions, these are useful in temporarily removing obstacles from a person's mind.

*"If time and money were not obstacles, would you still shop at the commissary?"*

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**Closed questions....** require a one-word answer like "yes" or "no". When asked, they close off further discussion. This type of question usually begins with "Is", "Can", "How Many" or "Does".

*"Does anyone not shop at the commissary?"*

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**Open questions....** require more than a "yes" or "no" answer. They stimulate thinking and discussion. This type of question usually begins with "What", "How", "When", or "Why".

*"What ideas do you have for the commissary manager?"*

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# Listening Skills as a Facilitation Technique

*Adapted from Infoplease: <http://www.infoplease.com/homework/listeningskills1.html>*

## Tips for being a good listener –

- **Give your full attention to the person who is speaking.** Don't look out the window or at something else going on in the room.
- **Make sure your mind is focused too.** It can be easy to let your mind wander if you think you know what the person is going to say next. But you might be wrong! If you feel your mind wandering, change the position of your body and try to concentrate on the speaker's words.
- **Let the speaker finish before you begin to talk.** Speakers appreciate having the chance to say everything they would like to say without being interrupted. When you interrupt, it looks like you aren't listening, even if you really are.
- **Let yourself finish listening before you begin to speak!** You can't really listen if you are busy thinking about what you want say next.
- **Listen for main ideas.** The main ideas are the most important points the speaker wants to get across. They may be mentioned at the start or end of a talk, and repeated a number of times. Pay special attention to statements that begin with phrases such as "My point is..." or "The thing to remember is..."
- **Ask questions.** If you are not sure you understand what the speaker has said, just ask. It is a good idea to repeat in your own words what the speaker said. Be sure your understanding is correct. For example, you might say, "When you said that no two zebras are alike, did you mean that the stripes are different on each one?"
- **Give feedback.** Sit up straight and look directly at the speaker. Now and then, nod to show that you understand. At appropriate points you may also smile, frown, laugh, or be silent. These are all ways to let the speaker know that you are really listening. Remember, you listen with your face as well as your ears!
- **Remember: time is on your side!** Thoughts move about four times as fast as speech. With practice, while you are listening you will also be able to think about what you are hearing, really understand and give feedback to the speaker

# Why We Are Not Better Listeners

*(Adapted from Clackamas Community College, Carol J. Evans)*

There are many reasons for poor listening. Here's a list of problems that result from weak listening skills.

- **Daydreaming** is probably the most common listening problem because it affects everyone. Frequently someone in the group will mention some person or thing that triggers an association in our minds and we start daydreaming. When we return to reality and start listening again, we may find that the third point is being discussed. And then we have no memory of points one and two. Most people can talk about 125 words per minute, which is often challenging to follow.
- **Closed-mindedness** is a challenge that many face and few will admit. We often refuse to listen to the other side of the argument, especially when we've already made up our minds. We think there's no use in listening since we know all there is to know! Anytime you fail to listen with an open mind, you may lose valuable information.
- **False attention** is a protection technique that everyone uses from time to time to fake out the speaker. When we're not really interested in what someone is saying, we pretend to listen. Conveniently, this listener can go through the motions of listening, even make an occasional comment, while giving real attention to something of a "higher" priority.
- **Intellectual despair** means giving up before you even get started. Listening can be hard to do sometimes. Occasionally, you may feel the urge to give up. This listening despair is a self-defeating behavior and may lead to a negative self-fulfilling prophecy. It's your responsibility to ask questions when you don't understand something. As a matter of fact, it's your responsibility to ensure that all of the participants understand the question. Discuss the material with another person. Attack the problem as soon as you identify it.
- **Memorizing** is a problem that happens when listeners try to memorize every word the speaker says. Often when our goal is to listen too well, we end up committing this listening fault because of our desire to hear everything. There's no way to remember everything a speaker says. When you try, you miss the overall sense of the statement.
- **Personality listening** is something we all do. It's natural for listeners to evaluate a speaker, but our impressions should not interfere with our listening. The content (the subject matter) should be judged on its own value to you. Sometimes you may be tempted to tune out the speaker because of his or her appearance or attitude. Avoid this temptation and don't let your personal feelings interfere with your listening.

# Positive Steps to Help Improve Listening Skills

*(Adapted from Clackamas Community College, Carol J. Evans)*

- **Prepare to listen.** Before you start, make the mental decision that this session will go well and you will be a good facilitator. Use positive self-talk. Commit yourself to this learning experience.
- **Watch the audience.** Eye contact is a very important part of the active listening process. When you look away, you'll be aware of visual distractions that compete with the audience for your attention. You have to listen with your eyes and your ears!
- **Try to develop an awareness of your mannerisms.** Gestures, tone of voice, and other body language usually emphasize a speaker's remarks. Some experts say that tone of voice and body language are 95% of the listening communication process. All speakers communicate physically as well as orally, so you must watch as you listen.
- **Pay attention to questions.** If you listen with a questioning attitude, communication will be easier for you. Speakers' questions should be designed to help the audience listen and learn. You can give a more detailed explanation (after an individual answers the question), repeat the point, or give examples to help all group members understand better.
- **Listen creatively.** You should not be listening and thinking about other things at the same time. You should be evaluating and organizing the audience gestures, facial expressions, responses, etc. To listen completely, you have to react by putting your mind to work. Like a computer, start to process the data coming in.

# Brainstorming as a Procedure

Brainstorming is a group problem-solving technique that involves the spontaneous contribution of ideas from all members of the group.

## Procedures:

1. Write all suggestions on a flip chart.
2. Set a time limit (3-5 minutes) to generate ideas.
3. As the group contributes ideas, do not comment or criticize them during the brainstorming process. Don't worry if some ideas are similar or the same. Just keep going.
4. When the allotted time is finished or the group is out of ideas, stop the brainstorming.
5. Once you have the list of ideas, consolidate them and eliminate the duplicates.
6. Discuss the ideas with the entire group.
7. Have the group prioritize ideas in order of importance.
8. One method to narrow down priority order is the 3-vote method. Each member has 3 votes to identify the 3 most important ideas. You can record the votes on the flip chart. Number the ideas in descending order from most votes to least.

## Rules:

- All ideas are welcome! Everything will be written down.
- Nobody is allowed to judge the responses or ideas.
- Piggy-back on the ideas of others. One idea will trigger another.
- Think outside of the box and be creative.
- Everyone participates.

# Consensus

<p><b>Consensus <u>is</u>:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Finding a proposal or solution that is sufficiently acceptable so that all members can support it</li><li>■ No member opposes it</li></ul>	<p><b>Consensus <u>is not</u>:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ A unanimous vote. may not represent everyone's first priority</li><li>■ A majority vote</li><li>■ Everyone is totally satisfied</li></ul>
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## Consensus requires

- Time
- Active participation of all group members
- Communication skills and active listening
- A shared objective
- An open mind and creative thinking

## Consensus Decision Guidelines

- Explore choices
- Avoid arguing for your own ideas
- Don't change your mind to avoid conflict
- Yield only to ideas that have objective and sound foundations – don't allow yourself to be bulldozed
- Look for alternatives

## Behaviors that Prevent Consensus

- Backing people into a corner
- Making people feel foolish
- Imposing a right or wrong or win or lose attitude.

***The key to achieving consensus is that everyone can live with the solution!  
Crucial question to answer: "Can you live with that?"***

## Conditions for Consensus

- Group norms are established and revisited.
  
- Adequate time is given to work through the issue or issues.
  
- Compromise and teamwork are expected and encouraged to move toward consensus.
  
- Fact is emphasized over opinion.
  
- Giving in on a point is *not* losing; gaining on an issue is *not* winning.
  
- Group members don't give in just to avoid conflict.
  
- Flipping a coin or taking a simple majority vote is not a viable alternative to sharing information, debating points, providing data and exploring other alternatives.

## Tips on Overcoming Roadblocks to Reach Consensus

- Agree to disagree and then move to a related issue. If necessary, return to the original issue at a later time.
- Change topics for a while.
- Take a break!
- Work toward a compromise decision knowing it may not be the best decision.

# Voting Methods for Consensus

Voting is often a very effective tool to use when a team just can't reach a consensus. Use it after the group has brainstormed, combined ideas, and come to agreement on the options available but still has not reached consensus.

There are three primary types of voting for the express purpose of this course: Simple, Multi and Weighted. For most local-level facilitation sessions, these three voting processes are more than adequate.

## A Simple Voting Process:

Use this type of voting method when you are short on time and you need the group to reach consensus to move forward.

1. Count the total number of options available.
2. Divide the total number by 3. This is your "voting amount" (e.g. If 15 options are available, your voting amount is 5).
3. Assign everyone in the group a "voting amount" quantity of stickers to place next to their top choices. You can also have the group place check-marks instead of stickers.
4. Count the total number of stickers or check-marks next to each option and place the total in a circle next to each option.
5. Come to an agreement within the group so that the option with the highest count will be used. Of course, the group should know and have agreed to this at the beginning of the process. Otherwise you may have wasted precious time.

## A Multi-Voting Process:

This method is a technique to reduce the number of ideas to a manageable size. The objective is to reduce the number of ideas, not to arrive at a final choice. It can be used when brainstorming has generated too many items to be addressed at one time.

1. In Round 1, the group members may vote for as many ideas from the list as they wish, but may cast only one vote for each item. They should only vote for items they believe are important.
2. The list is trimmed by one-half; those ideas having the fewest votes will be dropped.
3. In Round 2, each member votes on half of the remaining ideas. Once again, participants should not vote for an item more than once.
4. The voting process continues until the predetermined number of ideas is reached. At this point, each participant is allowed one vote for the remaining items.
5. When a round results in three items or less, the process is completed.

## A Weighted-Voting Process:

This process enables groups to put in order of priority their various preferences. No decision factors or criteria are applied to any of the items to be voted on. All items are taken at face value. Votes by the group members are recorded. There is no effort to reach agreement on a single issue. This method works well when you are trying to select a top three or top five for example.

On a flipchart, list the issues on which you wish your group to vote.

1. Each group member gets three notes numbered 1, 2 and 3. Individuals put the number 3 note on the item they feel is their top priority.
2. With the number 2 note, they will put on the item that they feel is the second priority.
3. They would then put the number 1 note on the item they feel is the third priority.
4. The points are then tallied by the facilitator.
5. The three items with the highest points are the "winners".

*NOTE:* Weighted voting does not make decisions. It merely provides information about prioritizing issues and establishing where members stand. This voting process must be followed if consensus is to be reached.

# Facilitation Techniques

## Go Around:

A technique used to encourage contribution toward group decision making.

The facilitator begins at one end of the table. Each person is given the chance to say how he or she views the issue, state their idea, etc. If a person chooses to say nothing in this round, he or she says "pass." Each person should be satisfied that he or she had a chance to influence the decision and declare a willingness or unwillingness to support it.

The term *consensus* means that support is derived from each person feeling heard and understood. This technique helps build and maintain group cohesiveness.

## Please State Your Needs:

A technique used to gain clarity and honesty.

Simply ask the person or ask the group (by using the *Go Around* technique) to please state their needs. Here's an example: The facilitator senses the group needs a break even though it is not scheduled and they would say, "Please state your needs. I need to know if you feel a short break is appropriate."

## The Constructive Response:

A technique used to create a product from a breakout groups' individual products.

This is a very simple and very effective technique used by facilitators.

## Basic Version:

Using the *Go Around* techniques have each person:

1. Say what they like about the idea or proposal under consideration.
2. Ask each person to state their concerns.
3. Assist and encourage people to find ways to overcome their concerns.

## Alternative Version:

This technique is especially valuable when a facilitator has a large group and must break them out into smaller groups. When each group brings their proposal or solution back to the whole group, use *The Constructive Response* technique to examine each group's proposal.

On the easel or chalkboard, list the *likes* and list the *concerns* of each group's proposal. Place them with that proposal on the wall or hang them together using easels. When this is completed, the facilitator begins the process of having the group obtain the final product. One of two things generally happens:

1. The group combines the *likes* from each sub-group and there is no further need for the *concerns* lists.

2. The group combines all the *likes* from each sub-group and uses the *concerns* list as a check to make sure the group product has avoided anything that has caused concern to someone. If there is a *concern*, the group talks it out.

### **Take Five:**

A technique used to accommodate different thinking styles or preferences used to help discussions begin quickly and remain on track.

Individuals have preferences in how they think and make decisions. Some people are extroverts and prefer thinking out loud. Introverts prefer thinking silently. The *Take Five* technique guarantees those with an introverted thinking style the time and silence they need to organize their thoughts. Understanding others without trying to alter or judge their behavior is an important ability in itself. Allowing for differences maximizes each person's ability to contribute.

Begin the session by stating the purpose for bringing the participants together. Acknowledge the different preferences or styles that people may use during the session. Tell them you have a technique that will accommodate different thinking styles. When assigning members to breakout groups, suggest each person take a few minutes (like five) to organize their thoughts and ideas. They can make a written list if they wish. You may ask participants to do this before the session begins and bring their notes. After this brief quiet period, the group then begins the discussion. This procedure permits those who need it a quiet time to organize their thoughts without distraction.

It's *always* advisable to provide advance information about a meeting. Extroverts don't need it and probably won't even read it, but introverts DO read it and WILL need it.

### **Put It In the Hangar:**

A technique used to avoid sidetracks.

During the session, it's easy for groups to get off the issue or get sidetracked by other issues, ideas or even people. Although such issues or ideas may later be determined to be relevant, their relevance is unclear at the moment. To capture these issues, label a piece of flip chart paper as *The Hangar*. Whenever a side issue or idea emerges, list it there. These issues can be addressed at a later time.

This technique captures all ideas and issues during a session. It acknowledges the contribution or participation of each member, even if their idea or issue is not the primary one under consideration.

## Energy Levels

Techniques to use to alleviate energy blocks:

- **When energy is at an ebb, let it ebb.** Take a break, walk away. Breaks should be scheduled as needed unless you have no control over the timing. For an after-lunch session, a break every 60 minutes or so will allow for the digestive slump that always follows a meal.
- **Try a change of scenery to stimulate energy.** You may want to have people break into small groups and then allow them to go wherever they wish; – for example, on the lawn, in the lounge or the chairs in the hall.
- **Stop for an exercise break.** Let people reach for the sky, touch toes, do a neck stretch exercise (make a figure eight slowly), or sit on the floor. Such exercises take only a few minutes and can get things moving again.
- **Increase participation.** Break up into subgroups, giving each group one aspect of the problem on which to work. Such specific tasks stimulate greater involvement. Smaller group sizes involve everyone. In large groups, it is easier for people to withdraw and not participate.
- **“Play” for a while.** Stopping a dragged-out serious debate for a five-minute joke session will make for a livelier debate when you get back to it.

## Energizers

Energizers are used to get a group moving, give a break from long periods of sitting down, and excite a group about the next portion of the program. Use them in small doses to rejuvenate a group after lunch or first thing in the morning.

- **A-Z Relay Game** (submitted by Cathy Sork, Ft. Vancouver H.S.)

*Divide the group into teams of 6-12 people. Each team will need a set of cards (at least 8.5" x 5.5") with the alphabet on them. Place the teams on one end of a defined area, and place letters on the other end so that they can be spread out on a table. The leader says a word and the team has to send the correct number of people to the table to spell the word. The first team to correctly find the letters and hold them up (one per person) in the correct order wins the round.*

*Use words that relate to leadership or another related topic. A second set of ABC letters can be added to allow different words to be spelled.*

■ **Flying Questions** (submitted as a WACA "It's a Steal" Idea)

*Each person needs a sheet of paper (notebook size works) and a pencil or pen. Everyone starts by writing an idea, subject, or problem at the top of the page. Then each person folds the paper into an airplane.*

1. The leader says "Go" and everyone flies his plane.
2. The leader says "Stop". Each person picks up another's plane, unfolds it, reads it, and writes the first thought that comes to mind.
3. Everyone refolds the airplanes and the leader signals the "Go" and "Stop" process.
4. This process is repeated several times.

*At the end, each person writes a report (or a song, poem, story, picture) about everything that's written on the last page he/she picked up.*

■ **Paint Brush** (submitted by Cathy Sork, Ft. Vancouver H.S.)

*Have the group members stand. Instruct each person to use their right arm to paint their first name in the air. Next, they should write first, middle and last name in the air. Now, put arms behind backs and write their names with different body parts including nose, toe, elbow, and belly button. Remember to dot every "i" and cross every "t."*

■ **Snow Ball Fight** (submitted by Cathy Sork, Ft. Vancouver H.S.)

*This can kick off an idea share activity. Group members write ideas on pieces of scrap paper and crumble them up into a ball. When it comes time to share the ideas, the group has a big paper fight. When finished, people pick up the paper balls, uncrumble, and read the ideas on the paper out loud. Don't forget to recycle the paper at the end.*

■ **Tell Me a Story** (submitted by Cathy Sork, Ft. Vancouver H.S.)

*Each member of the group adds a piece to an oral story, leaving it hanging for the next person. For an energizer, small groups can later illustrate the story on white poster paper. This always makes for a good laugh. Extensions of this activity include starting with a goofy picture and asking the group what is happening.*

## Facilitating Hints Overview

Your role during a group discussion is to facilitate the flow of communication among the participants. It is not necessary to interject your own comments after each participant speaks. However, periodically assisting the group with their contributions may be helpful. Here is a ten-point guide to use as you lead group discussion.

1. **Paraphrase** what a participant has said so that he or she feels understood so that other participants can hear a concise summary of what has been said.

*So, you are saying that families who live in civilian communities in remote locations incur a significant amount of unanticipated expenses.*

2. **Check** your understanding of a participant's statement or ask the participant to clarify what he or she is saying.

*Are you saying that this plan is not realistic? I am not sure that I understand exactly what you meant. Could you please run it by us again?*

3. **Compliment** an interesting or insightful comment.

*That's a good point. I'm glad you brought that to our attention.*

4. **Elaborate** on a participant's contribution to the discussion with examples, or suggest new ways to view the problem.

*Your comments provide an interesting point of view from a family member's perspective. It could also be useful to consider how a commander would view the same situation.*

5. **Energize** a discussion by quickening the pace, using humor, or—if necessary—prodding the group for more contributions.

*Oh my, we have lots of humble people in this group! Here's a challenge for you. For the next two minutes, let's see how many ways you can think of to communicate with other military families in your area.*

6. **Disagree** (gently) with a participant's comments to stimulate further discussion.

*I can see where you are coming from, but I'm not sure that what you are describing is always the case. Has anyone else had an experience that is different from Jim's?*

7. **Mediate** differences of opinion between participants and relieve any tensions that may be brewing.

*I think that Susan and Mary are not really disagreeing with each other but are just bringing out two different sides of this issue.*

8. **Pull together** ideas, showing their relationship to each other.

*As you can see from Dan and Jean's comments, personal goal setting is very much a part of time management. You need to be able to establish goals for yourself on a daily basis in order to more effectively manage your time.*

9. **Change** the group process by altering the method for obtaining participation or by having the group evaluate ideas which have been presented.

*Let's break into smaller groups and see if you can create some ways to access information about local doctors and dentists in areas not too far from military bases.*

10. **Summarize** (and record, if desired) the major views of the group.

*I have noted four major reasons that have come from our discussion as to why commanders do not delegate: (1) lack of confidence, (2) fear of failure, (3) comfort in doing the task themselves, or (4) fear of being replaced.*