



# FACILITATION TOOLKIT

Tips and tricks for participatory  
and empowering facilitation

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## Tips and tricks for participatory and empowering facilitation

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Transgender Europe (TGEU) is a European-based umbrella organisation supporting, fighting, and advocating for the rights of trans people across Central Asia and Europe. TGEU is committed to intersectional justice and trans rights through advocacy, campaigning, researching, community building, and networking with alliances. TGEU represents more than 100 member organizations in 42 countries and coordinates global projects such as Trans Murder Monitoring. TGEU's vision is a world free from discrimination where every person can live freely according to their gender identity or expression without interference.



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# FACILITATION: QUICK STEPS

This is to use as a quick recap and summarises the overall toolkit. Each step is explained more in depth throughout the toolkit.



What it usually involves	Why
<b>Planning a session/workshop</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set a purpose and outcomes</li> <li>• Set an agenda</li> <li>• Review the accessibility of the workshop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People are here for a reason</li> <li>• Helps guiding the workshop, knowing the overall plan and keeping time</li> <li>• Making sure your session can include participants with different accessibility needs</li> </ul>
<b>Introductions</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome people to the space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps put people at ease</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who you are</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Builds trust and legitimacy</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The purpose of the space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates agreement about why people are there</li> <li>• Clarifies shared goal</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The process of the session</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants understand the logic of what they are being asked to do</li> <li>• Agreement on how to get from here to the purpose</li> </ul>
<b>Build trust</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Names, pronouns, icebreakers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps break down anxieties and nerves</li> <li>• Helps people get to know each other before diving in</li> </ul>

## FACILITATION: QUICK STEPS

What it usually involves	Why
<b>Participation and discussion</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give clear instructions (might involve explaining them in a series of different ways)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes people feel included</li> <li>• Increases trust</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn and use people’s names and pronouns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps people feel they belong</li> <li>• Builds trust</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge when you make mistakes</li> <li>• Model vulnerability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates integrity, commitment to the group</li> <li>• Puts people at ease</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask questions</li> <li>• Try to leave them open ended</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps to move the conversation</li> <li>• Ensures people are being heard not just listened to</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notice who is and isn’t talking and try to include everyone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates belonging</li> <li>• Addresses power dynamics</li> <li>• Increases meaningful participation</li> <li>• Leads to better outcomes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be responsive to the energy and mood of the group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Builds trust</li> <li>• Demonstrates commitment to the group</li> <li>• Makes people feel included</li> <li>• Leads to better outcomes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep everything to time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeps the process on track</li> <li>• Leads to better outcomes</li> <li>• Builds trust</li> </ul>
<b>Ending/Closing</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarise the outcomes of the space and next steps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures everyone is included</li> <li>• Ensures people are heard, not just listened to</li> <li>• Ensures there will be a follow up in some way</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure everyone understands the agreed next steps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Builds trust</li> <li>• Makes the next steps easier and more likely to happen</li> <li>• Gives purpose</li> </ul>

## OVERALL TIPS TO HELP FACILITATE

**Be adaptable** to participants needs and ready to adapt your agenda on spot. People might be late and/or need longer time than planned, sometimes the conversation people \*really\* want to have isn't the one planned, sometimes what you planned doesn't go to plan.

**Reflect on yourself** as a person and as a facilitator to consider the impact the conversations are having on you.

**Be open and transparent** with mistakes.

Know whether you are taking the role of **“neutral” facilitator** or **invested facilitator** and **be transparent** with the group and yourself about which approach you're taking (ie. are you there as an impartial facilitator to stay neutral and help the group move through the discussion, or are you there to facilitate because you know/care about the discussion and have insights to offer).

**Manage the group energy** (are they over enthusiastic and finding it hard to stay on track, is the conversation draining people's energy? do people need to re-energise?).

Keep the group on track and to time. Also make sure there is a **record of the discussion** and the outcomes.

**Summarise the outcomes** and action points frequently.

**Always have energisers, icebreakers and grounding activities** to hand (some further in the toolkit).

# INTRODUCTION TO FACILITATION

## WHAT IS FACILITATION?

The word “Facilitate” comes from the Latin *Facilis*, which means “easy.” Making conversations, decisions or workshops easier for the group you are facilitating.



## WHAT KIND OF LEARNING STYLES ARE THERE?

Learning styles describe common ways that people learn. Some people find that one learning style is more useful to them than others, and some prefer a mix. Some of the different learning styles are:

### CONVERSATIONAL LEARNING

A learning style based on interactive communication. People who have this learning style will struggle with a lecture, as they prefer having the chance to interact with content and talking to someone about it. Method examples:

- Discussions
- Buddy-time and paired discussions
- Q&A

### VISUAL LEARNING

A learning style that is based in visual perception. People with this learning style prefer learning through pictures, videos, drawings, graphs, diagrams etc. Method examples:

- Mind-maps
- Graphic recordings

### MOVEMENT LEARNING

A learning style that is based in movement. People who have this learning style can take in information through moving their body, seeing movements, seeing themselves and other people in a space. Method examples:

- Constellation game or moving debate
- Minutes and notes spread around a room

### AUDIO LEARNING

A learning style that is based in sounds. People who have this learning style prefer learning with music and different kinds of sounds. Method examples:

- Intro with different sounds (i.e. people sing their names)
- Certain energisers

## WHAT ARE THE SKILLS OF A GOOD FACILITATOR?

A facilitator's aim is to support a group without being dominant or necessarily seen in the group; also called "holding the container" in facilitator jargon. This means holding the edges, boundaries and culture of a group without them necessarily being aware you are doing it.

### 1. Have a good understanding of the group's desired outcomes

Set a clear POP (Purpose, Outcomes and Process) for the session.

- **Purpose:** what's the overall aim of the session?
- **Outcomes:** what are the things that the session hopes to achieve in order to meet that aim?
- **Process:** how are you going to structure the session in order to achieve the purpose and outcomes?

### 2. Communicate instructions clearly and support the group to understand each other

Make sure that content is clear and understood in the group, especially before decisions. Don't worry about "wasting time" on making sure everyone has understood and summarising. Adapt the agenda if something takes a lot more time than anticipated.

Tips for doing this include:

#### **Verbatim reflection:**

Say back word for word what someone says.

This shows you're listening, and offers them the opportunity to hear what they said from the listeners perspective.

**Summarise:** "This is what I understood from what you said. Is that what you meant?"

This helps you and the group clarify the nuance, intention, and meaning of what someone is saying. It also supports participants through bigger discussions

**Summarise the highlights:** pull together the main topics of the conversation so far.



### 3. Ability to listen attentively to all members of the group

Keep track of who has and hasn't spoken in the group. Try to **find out why people aren't talking** (they could be shy; identity, power, and privilege are making it hard for some people to speak; or the session is not accessible for everyone to express themselves.)

Find suitable **ways to intervene** in the situation:

- If someone is dominating say "I've noticed you've answered 3 times already, let's hear from others."
- Avoid putting people who haven't spoken on the spot individually. Try something like "I'm going to invite people who haven't spoken much yet to contribute."
- If there are identity/power and privilege dynamics showing up then consider whether it's useful to name them, or to support other voices to feed in and take up more power in the room in gentler ways (asking them to contribute, asking for other voices, asking for other perspectives.)

**Reflect back what you are hearing** to be sure you've understood the conversation adequately and to clarify for all participants that they are on the same page. It goes with summarising content at different points during your session.

Listen for what is not being said and non-verbal communication. Be attentive to body language, dynamics between people, levels of engagement in the group. You might notice things like:

- People not trusting each other.
- People “checking out” of the conversation.
- Frustrations that aren't being named.
- Confusion, tiredness.
- Distrust between members of the group and the facilitator.

#### **4. Keen self-awareness of your own needs, thoughts, ideologies and emotions / Ability to put these to one side in service of the group**

Facilitating involves managing, holding, supporting, reading and talking about people's emotions, even when the topic seems unemotional.

Practising self-awareness of our emotions and experiences and how we might be influencing the group, and/or the group might be influencing us is key. It will help us identify the situation and take a step back.

Create debrief time after facilitating sessions - whether with other people, or on your own, to process any feelings you have.

If someone in the group is upsetting, annoying or angering you - consider if:

- It is about their behaviour and the impact they are having on the group (in which case, you should intervene).

- It is about your own personal feelings towards them (in which case you need to challenge yourself to not act on those feelings while with the group).

Sometimes we facilitate things and don't have the emotional capacity for them. We also need to recognise our limitations and learn when we need to ask other facilitators to take the role on for us.

## **5. Awareness of power and privilege and how they might be affecting communication and dynamics in a group**

Systems of power operate in the world at large and give some people more access to resources than others. Facilitators must therefore be aware of the ways these dynamics show up and support the group to navigate them.

People from more dominant social groups are socialised to talk more, to believe their ideas are more valuable, not to listen or respect people who aren't part of their social grouping. This might present itself as cis men talking more in meetings, as white people only taking on board the points other white people make, non-disabled people patronising or talking over disabled people and so on.

This is because **part of the way privilege and power work is to make it invisible to the person who has it.**

The key thing to remember is that even if these acts are rarely done with a conscious bad intention, the impact can still be painful for the receiver and damaging to the group dynamic (not least because they might be missing out on vital perspectives).

Things you can do as a facilitator:

- Encourage people with less power to take up more space (this could be in front of the group, or by asking them what support they'd need to do so in a less public conversation.)
- Naming the dynamics to the groups
- Reflecting back to the people with more power what is happening (either publicly or privately.)
- Asking the group to make an agreement about these dynamics before the session.

### **6. Ability to set and focus on the objectives and outcomes of a group**

#### **Be able to set the direction of a group and be directional, even in the face of more dominant voices**

- When the group goes off topic, reflect back to them and remind the purpose and objectives set.
- Clarify whether the diversion is important and whether they want to amend the objectives in light of it. You can also create a “bike rack” or “side list” to come back to these topics later.
- If there is a disagreement, you will need to make the decision for the group and be clear about why you are making a suggestion.

#### **Be reflective on a groups needs and check in with them if they change from the original purpose of a session as the conversation emerges.**

You could use the “temperature check” as a tool. This is a way of asking with the group how they are. People who are in favour (hot) wave their hands HIGH, people who don't have an opinion (warm) hold their hands out in the MIDDLE, and people who

disagree (cold) put their hands LOW. This tool works well with big and small group sizes.

### **THINGS TO AVOID DOING**

- Putting your own opinion or voice into the group conversation, especially if you aren't being transparent and accountable that's what you're doing.
- Talking over, for or on behalf of participants. Your role is to support your group in sharing and communicating with each other.
- Making value judgements about what people are saying.
- Over-identify with participants in the conversation (or at least without being aware that's what you are doing, and that it may bias your ability to hold the space for people.)

# HOW TO STRUCTURE AND RUN A SESSION

## PLANNING AND STRUCTURING THE SESSION

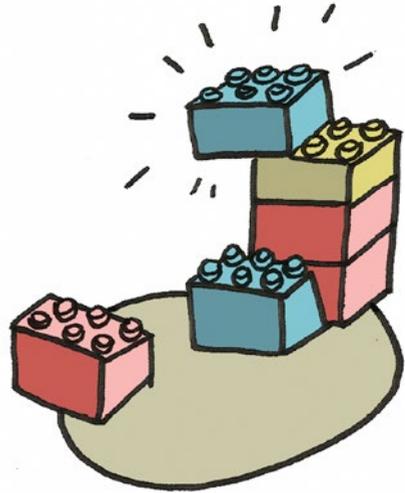
### Have a purpose

Set the purpose of the discussion with the group and clarify that all attendees understand and agree on the purpose.

### Have an agenda with planned breaks

Classic agenda to solve an issue can be:

- Introduction (purpose, objectives, outcomes, agreements, needs, etc.) can be set prior or collectively (if collectively, how to)
- Icebreaker
- Getting group input on a topic (different methods)
- Cluster and break into small working/discussion groups (mapping the situation > highlight the problem > come up with 1 solution)
- Bringing back collectively
- Summarising the collective agreements and disagreements
- Next steps



### Be clear about what outcomes and objectives the group is hoping to achieve

Objectives are the goals and intentions of the discussion and outcomes are the things that will be done or achieved in order to meet the goals.

Your objectives might be to build trust and set an action plan for the next 3 months for a group. The outcomes might be that everyone leaves knowing each other's names, and that they have clear roles and responsibilities with a 3-month timeline of activities.

### **Know the group details**

Be clear how many people are participating and the length of time you have so that you can ensure all activities and processes are fit for purpose.

### **Understand your group's needs and requirements**

Ensure you know your participants' access requirements.

Asking questions about what the group you are facilitating might need in advance of the conversation lets people know that you care about their participation, and also means you can adjust your facilitation to the group.

Ensure there is space in the agenda for people's needs and requirements, for example:

- Where language is a barrier - more time for the conversational parts or lots of smaller group work.
- Enough breaks for people with mental or physical access requirements.

## **RUNNING THE SESSION**

### **Introduce the session**

Present the POP:

- Purpose (aims)
- Process (including the agenda)
- Outcomes (what you will achieve)

If necessary, decide on a notetaker, timekeeper, etc.

### Icebreaker

If the group knows each other find a way to ease them into the conversation, a way of checking in together. Depending on the group and session it could be serious or silly like:

- An energiser
- A question about their hopes and fears of the session
- How they are feeling right now
- Their favourite way to eat potatoes

If the group doesn't know each other, some people may be feeling anxious, others excited, some suspicious, others tempted to leave. Find a way to communise the space and help people feel more comfortable and trusting with each other with:

- A name round
- A silly gesture to introduce their mood
- An interesting fact about them
- Why they've come
- What do they expect from the session
- How are they feeling

### Be mindful of who is speaking a lot and who isn't

If you take hands, keep this in mind when you pick set a speaking order.



### **How is language being used?**

- Are English-speakers dominating?
- Is the language using local jargon or too academic?

Challenge the language by asking “what does X mean?” “Can you rephrase?” even if you know what it means. This is also a good way to include your group into that, achieving more self-reflection and takes the pressure of the people who didn’t understand a word and shift the responsibility to the collective.

### **Are there things that can be done to support the people not speaking so much?**

Perhaps they don’t like speaking in big groups and would prefer more small group break outs.

- “Speak with someone you haven’t spoken to.”
- “Speak with someone you feel comfortable with.”

Perhaps there is a lack of trust in the group that needs addressing before moving on. Perhaps they are waiting to be invited into the conversation, ask them: “would you like to add anything?” in the group session; or let them know that you’ve noticed they are quiet and ask if there’s a reason or if there’s anything you can do to help them speak up.



#### **Is the group going off-topic?**

Remind them of the purpose and bring their focus back.

### **Keep the group on track**

Summarise where you’ve got to in the conversation/decision making process regularly so that the group is able to stay on track and keep track of time.

Check-in with your group if you feel that participation is low.

## HOW TO STRUCTURE AND RUN A SESSION

Things that might help are:

- Energisers.
- Summarising past content and clarifying where the conversation is.

Make sure to summarise the next steps for the group before closing the session.

### **End the session clearly and constructively**

Wrap up clearly and ensure everyone understands the next steps and their responsibilities or action points following the meeting.

You can also think about what kind of needs the group still has, which conversations still need to be had and set someone responsible to take it further.

## **AFTER THE SESSION**

### **Minutes and notes**

Ensure all notes are shared accessibly in the agreed format and timelines.

### **Gather feedback**

Seek honest feedback from participants: facilitation is a practice and hearing what you did well and where you could improve will help you develop your skills.

### **Self-reflect**

Key to being a facilitator is being responsible for evaluating our own skills and performance, build in the time to reflect - if you have a team, try to support/coach each other.

# ICEBREAKERS, ENERGIZERS, TEMPERATURE CHECK

Facilitators need to be able to offer different kinds of methods and tools that accommodate different learning styles and access needs. The wider range you know, and the more you will give everyone the chance to participate in some way.

## ICEBREAKERS

Icebreakers are meant to lighten the atmosphere and get your group more comfortable with each other. This is especially useful for groups that don't know each other well.

### Sound/Movement introduction

Everyone assembles in a circle. One person introduces themselves through a sound or movement. Afterwards everyone in the circle repeats the sound or movement and the next person introduces themselves. Afterwards the first person's sound or movement and the second person's sound or movement are repeated by the circle and so on.

Good for	Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Getting people “into their bodies.”</li><li>• People who interact through movement more than words.</li><li>• Everyone being silly together can release tension in the space.</li><li>• “Movement” isn't prescriptive of how someone can move. their body so it's inclusive to most physical access.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some people are very uncomfortable doing body/voice things</li></ul>

### Two Truths and a Lie

Split into buddies/pairs. Each participant comes up with three

## ICEBREAKERS, ENERGISERS, AND TEMPERATURE CHECK

statements about themselves - two that are true and one that is a lie. The pairs tell each other their statements and have to guess which ones are true and which one is a lie.

Good for	Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Getting to know each other at a deeper level.</li><li>• Using our imaginations.</li><li>• Being silly.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some people dislike games that test their trust in other people.</li></ul>

### The Danger of Words

You set a list of words (for example: tolerance, respect, diversity) and give participants an activity to define each word. This helps to navigate the complexity of language and meaning cross culturally. These words can be seen as problematic in some cultures and empowering in others. The fact we all mean different things by them leads to miscommunications. You can set your own words that feel relevant to your context.

Good for	Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Raises awareness about language and its boundaries.</li><li>• Raises understanding of each other.</li><li>• Getting to know each other on a deeper level.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This might be a struggle for participants who don't share the dominant view of a term.</li></ul>

### 10 things in common

Divide into smaller groups. The task for the group is to find ten things that they have in common. This list should not be based on super obvious things like "We all have brown hair". Afterwards feedback to the wider group the ten items you have found.

Good for	Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting to know each other on a deeper level.</li> <li>• Being silly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some people dislike games that test their trust in other people.</li> </ul>

### Superpower & Kryptonite

Ask participants to use pens and paper to visualise/ chat about their super power (something they do really well) and Kryptonite (Something that draws their energy).

Good for	Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting to know each other on a deeper level.</li> <li>• Strengthening participants believe in their strengths.</li> <li>• Building support for each other in a group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some people dislike games that test their trust in other people.</li> </ul>

### One day in utopia

This can be done in small groups, buddies or the plenary. The participants are asked to imagine and share a day in their own utopia. They can go into a detailed description. There is also the possibility to use visual ways (i.e. drawing) to share their imaginings. This exercise is meant to encourage visioning and imagining what participants really enjoy doing and how they see the world.



Example: “In my utopia I would wake up in the morning and make pancakes. I would go in the communal garden and have breakfast on the grass with everyone on my block.

## ICEBREAKERS, ENERGISERS, AND TEMPERATURE CHECK

Good for	Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Getting to know each other on a deeper level.</li></ul> For participants to connect with their dreams and visions individually (which we often do not have space to do.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some people might struggle to do this exercise with people they have just met.</li></ul>

### **Illustrated cards, stickers or different images**

Spread them on the floor or table and ask everyone to pick one card that expresses their expectations for the session or how they feel.

Good for	Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Easily liberates people to speak, good for shy group.</li><li>• Allows space for interpretation.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Needs material.</li></ul>

## **ENERGISERS**

Energisers are meant to re-activate your group. It is especially helpful when your group is on low energy or mood and or right after a break to get people motivated and ready to continue.

### **Shopping List**

Participants are assembled in a circle. One participant starts by saying “I went shopping and I bought...”. The next participant repeats this and adds to the shopping list. Each participant adding an item to the shopping list needs to repeat all the previous items, too. If a participant forgets the previous items, the circle goes through the shopping list together and the next person continues.

Good for	Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being silly.</li> <li>• Getting more comfortable with each other.</li> <li>• Group support when a participant forgets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not everyone will be able to repeat other participants movements or sounds.</li> <li>• Some people dislike memory games.</li> </ul>

### Why... Because...

Half of the group writes down a “why” question (i.e. “Why is the grass green? Why the sky blue?” etc). The other half writes down a “because” answer (i.e. “Because I said so. Because it can float.”). There is no guidelines for the purpose or on the type of questions and answers people should write. After each group has written down their questions and answers, the “Whys” read one of their questions that the “Becausess” have to read one of their answers to.

Good for	Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being silly.</li> <li>• Getting more comfortable with each other.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some people might find this game too fast.</li> </ul>

### The big wind blows

There are chairs in a circle for all, except for one participant. One participant is “the Big Wind” in the middle of the circle. The person in the middle makes a true statement about themselves, such as “The Big Wind blows everyone who has been to Canada” or any other true fact. Any of the players who share this characteristic (including the person who is currently the Big Wind) must stand up and quickly find a new seat. For each statement, no player is allowed to sit in the same seat or a seat directly adjacent to their previous seat. One person will be left without a seat. This person becomes the new “Big Wind” for the next round.

## ICEBREAKERS, ENERGISERS, AND TEMPERATURE CHECK

Good for	Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Getting people “into their bodies.”</li><li>• Getting to know each other.</li><li>• Being silly.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some people will not be able to stand up and sit down.</li><li>• Some people are very uncomfortable doing body things.</li><li>• Some people might find this game too fast.</li></ul>

### Rain

A facilitator talks the group through this energiser. Get everyone to stand up. Start tapping your head lightly with your fingers imagining soft rain. Let it slowly get heavier the further you move your hands down your body. Let the rain turn into a thunderstorm on your calves. Clap them hard with your hands. Then move your hands back up your body, ending with soft rain on your head.

Good for	Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Getting people “into their bodies.”</li><li>• Activating people’s senses.</li><li>• People who interact through movement more than words.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some people are very uncomfortable doing body/voice things.</li><li>• Some people are not able to do these movements.</li></ul>

### Chanting

Get your group to repeat a chant. This could be a protest or resistance chant. These chants are already being used to energise, motivate and unite in protests, and often have a similar effect on participants. Furthermore, it allows to share information of its history.

Good for	Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creating a powerful atmosphere.</li><li>• Connecting with participants histories.</li><li>• Making participants feel like part of a group.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some people are very uncomfortable doing voice things.</li></ul>

### GROUNDING ACTIVITIES

Grounding activities are a good tool to support your group after or during a difficult and/or very emotional and deep conversation.

Everyone is spread in the room. This can be in a circle or more arbitrarily. Participants should choose whichever positions they are most comfortable in. You set a soothing scenario, i.e. nice weather. There is little instructions from what participants feel or think, but you can ask questions that participants can keep in their mind, i.e. “what is around you?”, “Who is around you?”, “What do you want to do?”. The exercise usually lasts for around 5 - 15 minutes.

#### Good for:

- Getting people “into their bodies” and “into their minds.”
- Participants can process their own emotions and feelings.

### TEMPERATURE CHECK

A temperature check can be done with hand signals or with a sound. It is meant to support you in assessing your group’s needs and is quicker than discussions. Make sure to ask clear temperature check questions, i.e. “Who feels like they need a break?” “Would you like to do an energiser?”

Hands up: yes.

Hands middle: no preference.

Hands down: no.

## DIFFERENT FORMATS FOR RUNNING SESSIONS

Having different formats enables to adapt to different accessibility requirements and learning styles.

### **FACILITATING A CONVERSATION**

Participants are introduced to a subject and have a conversation around it. Usually hand signals are taken and the facilitator picks the order of who speaks. The order does not always have to be on 'first-come' basis. If some participants have spoken a lot, a facilitator might chose to pick another participants.

This technique usually allows for the room to stay the way it was. No moving for participants necessary and participants gain a view on how the group is feeling about a topic. Keep in mind that this format often favours people who are already confident at speaking.

### **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS (Q&A)**

This is especially good for doing logistics sessions or present processes, as it allows participants to ask questions. However, Q&As are not discussions. In these sessions participants are asking questions and the facilitator or trainer answer them. If you are facilitating and answering questions you will need to know a fair bit about the topic and collate questions you couldn't answer.

## **FISHBOWL**

Participants form a chair circle. In the middle of the circle, there are a few chairs (usually around five or six). One of the chairs in the middle stays empty, while the other ones are taken by participants who discuss a topic of choice. The seats on the outer circle are also taken by participants who listen to the discussion. While the discussion is happening, anyone on the outer circle can occupy the empty seat in the middle to join the discussion. When that happens one of the people in the middle needs to voluntarily take their spot on the outer circle.

This format gives participants the chance to listen and observe as well as join a discussion flexibly to their liking. In the beginning, it's usually more confident people that speak.

## **CONSTELLATION GAME OR MOVING DEBATE**

An object is put in the middle of the room, i.e. a pillow. All participants are asked to position themselves around it. A list of statements is being read out. If participants agree with a statement, they move closer to the pillow, if they don't, they move further away. An example would be "getting-to-know-each-other" questions, such as 'I like nature'. After every statement participants get time to look around in the room.

After enough questions to make the game clear, participants get a bit of time with some post its or paper to write up their own statements of things they would like to know about the group. Afterwards the game gets repeated with the new questions.

It equips participants with a good understanding of the group and what everyone is like. It also gives participants an

## DIFFERENT FORMATS FOR RUNNING SESSIONS

understanding of seeing oneself in relation to the wider group but because there are statements being made that reveal info about oneself, it can put people on the spot.

### **BUDDY-SYSTEM**

Participants are paired with one or two buddies. During the session/workshop/conference participants have buddy-time with presented questions that they can discuss with their buddies. This is often used to reflect on an educational session or at the end of the day. Buddies are often previously allocated by facilitator to match participants that can benefit from each other.

It allows participants to form a relationship outside a group setting and reflect on their day, their learnings and have the chance to discuss those in more detail.



### **MIND-MAPPING**

Participants are encouraged to create a mind-map to a topic. That means presenting a topic in a diagram connecting different points to each other. This is especially good for learning about issues or different contexts. For example, participants are asked to create a mind-map about their organisations' history. The name of the organisation is put in the middle and around it different important actions, meetings, strategies etc. are collated. If different points have a connection between each other a line can be drawn between them.

It's a more graphic and visual-based method, especially good because conferences often include a lot of talking.

### **SOLUTION FOCUS (THINK TANK)**

Participants are split into groups of six to ten people and are presented with a subject of discussion. They have clear guidelines of what to discuss, such as 'list two pros/cons, how could this be useful for xyz. The feedback can move from question to question and group to group, so that after each question the different groups have the opportunity to discuss their outcomes.

### **WORLD CAFÉ**

A few tables are prepared. With small groups of participants placed on each table. There is different ways to do a World Café. One way would be that each table receives a question to discuss. After a round of conversation, all participants leave the table and discuss a new question on a different table. A variation of that would be to have one set person on each table who is prepared to start a conversation on their question/topic.

- Participants have the chance to talk to different people in the room and discuss a variety of questions.
- The 'cafe-vibe' takes the formality of discussions and places them more in a conversation.
- It requires good minute-taking in order to not lose the points of conversation.

### **SMALL GROUP WORK**

Participants are split into smaller groups. Either all small groups receive the same task/ question/ point of discussion or they receive different tasks that build on each other. If you are facilitating a session dealing with different kinds of organising structures, each small group could receive a different model to analyse. There is feedback session or recordings to share outcomes from the different groups.

- It gives participants the chance to build a closer relationship and discuss in more detailed way with other participants
- Participants will have the chance to contribute more than in a big group
- People who are shy or for other reasons haven't felt comfortable talking in a big group, have the opportunity to get used to less people and will hopefully feel more comfortable contributing.

## UNDERSTANDING POWER

Power dynamics show up in all sorts of ways in groups. We can bring some systems of oppression into the group from outside (racism, sexism, transphobia, fatphobia, ableism and so on) and the group can have its own dynamics of power (who has social power in the group, for example, it could be within a group of trans people to see how other power dynamics come in play like race, disabilities, region, class, etc.). Looking at who is on the margins of a group and why will help you to address the way both power and privilege might be shaping (and damaging) the conversation. In order to address this there are 4 key steps:



### KNOW ABOUT POWER DYNAMICS

**Dominant groups** are usually the cultural norm, and socialised to take more space, speak more, validate each others opinions and ideas, etc, without knowing it.

- Cis people
- White people
- People from Western countries
- Middle/Upper class background: High education, job position
- Non-disabled people
- Non sex workers
- Atheists and Christians
- European and North American citizen
- Non-exhaustive list

## UNDERSTANDING POWER

**Oppressed groups** are usually socialised to be more quiet or silenced, be interrupted, discouraged to talk by being invalidated, etc.

- Trans people
- Within the community: Trans women and gender non-conforming people are usually more silenced
- Black and people of colour
- People from Eastern European, Central Asian and Global South countries
- Lower class background: No access to education, unemployed
- D/Deaf and disabled people
- Sex workers
- Non atheists and non-christians
- Non European or North American citizen
- Migrant, refugee
- Non-exhaustive list

## KNOW YOURSELF

Understand how your own identity, experiences, privileges and oppression might shape your impact on participants and your ability to hold it.

This could mean recognise you're the wrong person to hold a conversation (for example, because a group of people of colour want to discuss their experiences of racism without white people present and you're white, or because white people are discussing their relationship to racism and as a person of colour you don't want to subject yourself to what might be personally painful things to hear).

## KNOW YOUR GROUP

Understand how the group is functioning and what power dynamics are at play.

- This involves some level of ability to read people and read between the lines; what's being said out loud and what's not being said. Who has social power, and who is being marginalised.
- This could mean explicitly offering space for people who haven't talked yet.
- Or pointing out general conversation guidelines.
- This could also mean basing your group back into the initial conversation, if you have gone off topic.

## KNOW YOUR CONTENT

Sometimes you are required to know about the content of a discussion to facilitate it well, for example, to set activities on a topic to help the group navigate it carefully and effectively.

Sometimes it can actually be useful if you don't know a lot about a group topic so that you can be more impartial and objective to the outcomes of the conversation.

Either way: knowing your topic and how you are supporting the content side of the conversation will help you infinitely in supporting the group to recognise and address the power dynamics.

## CONFLICT TIPS

Sometimes disagreements or conflicts come up and it is the facilitator's role to support those dialogues. Here's some tips:

- Your role is ultimately to keep the conversation/decision making/ action planning on track - so consider carefully whether the conflict that has showed up is relevant to the process or something separate to it.
- More often than not, conflict shows up because people don't feel heard. The best way, in that case, to navigate conflict is to find out what's blocking the person to feel heard and overcome it.



### **If it's not relevant to the content:**

Remind the group of the aims of the session and consider how to tactfully ask the people in conflict to use the space outside of the conversation to navigate the topic.

### **If it's relevant to the content:**

- Consider how moving through the conflict might help or hinder the outcome of the session.
- Consider whether the group will benefit from leaning into the debate or having a break.
- Listen attentively to the core issues people are presenting and try to reflect that back and clarify with the participants - a lot of conflict comes from misunderstanding each others views.
- If the conflict is a not about a misunderstanding think about how you help the group to move through it in a way that builds understanding and an acceptance of the difference.

**If it's around an issue of power and privilege, you have 2 aims:**

- **Support the person marginalised to hold power in the space** and feel empowered
- To help the person doing the marginalisation to understand what it is that they are doing in order to prevent it happening in the future

Our work, activism and lives will be vastly improved if we can navigate difficult issues of oppression and power through building understanding. Ultimately it helps a group culture to be better at confronting oppression, which is better for marginalised people as well as people perpetuating marginalisation.

However, we don't always feel equipped to confront conflict, and it's also okay.

**REMEMBER:** Your role isn't to voice your opinion on the topic but to "make easy" the conflict - be cautious of offering an opinion of advice even if it's a topic you're passionate about. If you do add something to the conversation, question first whether it's in service to helping the group move forward in their aims or whether it's mostly about your own position in the conflict.

## CONSIDERING ACCESS

It is useful to have an idea about your participants' access needs before a session so that you can accommodate them as much as possible.

- Keep in mind when doing for example energisers, different formats that not everyone's mobility is the same.
- Make sure that participants are aware of how the day is planned, the logistics of the space you are in and when the next breaks are.
- Be aware what kind of access needs your group has before a session. Make sure not to share these with the group without the person(s)'s consent.
- Make sure that notes are well-structured and visible for participants. It will help some participants following conversations and also reflecting on a session.
- Be aware of the fact that the language your session is in, will not be everyone first language. Make sure that participants speak loud and slow enough.
- Use different kinds of formats and methods that accommodates different learning styles.
- Don't worry about slowing down a conversation. This might help the person taking minutes to get all the information and help some participants be a part of it.



