

# Running a peer meeting – useful facilitation skills

## Introduction

One of the most important skills in running a successful peer group is facilitating the meeting.

Ensuring all participant's voices are heard, the group stays on track, decisions are made and problems resolved when they occur, is essential to a successful meeting and cohesive peer group.

As the facilitator it's your job to lead the group, and make things easier for the group but remain neutral and not let your opinions or ideas override those of the group.

## Let's make it happen

1. **Create a welcoming space:** as much as possible make sure the place you meet is comfortable, meets people's accessibility needs, and able to freely move around. Being inviting is not just the physical space, ensure you too are welcoming, and work on building rapport and trust with group members.
2. **Set the context for the meeting:** ensure people know at the beginning why they are there, what they will be doing at the meeting, and review (if necessary) the rules of the group  
If giving instruction, keep it short and to the point.
3. **Encourage participation:** ensure everyone in the group is given the time and space to have their say, in a respectful and open way.
4. **Be comfortable with silence:** allow time for people to think about the topic being discussed, or to form an idea.
5. **Avoid leading the group:** keep your questions or discussion points open and broad, try not to let your own opinion steer the direction of the conversation.
6. **Avoid dependence:** the group should be able to work without you, so make it your goal to enable participants to learn the techniques you use to be able to step in and operate independently
7. **Be aware of time and pace of the meeting:** be aware of group members energy levels, vary the pace of the meeting/conversation. You may need to slow things down, or speed things up. Make sure you finish on time, and adjust the agenda if necessary to do so.
8. **Close the meeting:** thank all participants for their input, contributions and energy in making the meeting a success ... and let them know when next you will meet!

### **A note on facilitator self-care:**

## QuickGuide

It's hard work facilitating a group, and takes lots of time and effort to keep a group on track, especially as they explore issues or struggle with decisions and concerns.

Be self-aware and know when YOU may need a break, or some support too!

It might be that you form a peer group with other facilitators so that you can talk about some of the key skills and challenges of good facilitation.

*Being a good facilitator is both a skill and an art. It is a skill in that people can learn certain techniques and can improve their ability with practice. It is an art in that some people just have more of a knack for it than others.*

**The community toolbox:** facilitation skills

### Where you can find more information

**The community toolbox:** facilitation skills: This looks at learning to plan well, keep members involved and create real leadership opportunities in your peer group

<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/group-facilitation/facilitation-skills/main>

**Facilitating Tip Sheet:**

[https://www.cdc.gov/phcommunities/docs/plan\\_facilitation\\_tip\\_sheet.doc](https://www.cdc.gov/phcommunities/docs/plan_facilitation_tip_sheet.doc)

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