

Section 2.5 - Preparing Yourself for the Discussion

When you study for a test, you generally know if you are prepared. But how do you know if you are prepared for a facilitation experience?

Questions for yourself

1. Do I have the supplies that I need for the facilitation? Generally you will need the following:
 - A flipchart stand
 - Flipchart paper (preferably with self-stick adhesive)
 - Markers (multiple colors)
 - Tape/Stick pins (to hang the completed flipcharts)
 - Post-it notes
 - a watch (place where you can easily see it without distracting from the discussion)
2. Do I know who my recorder or note-taker is? (This is relevant in classes where each discussion team has a recorder or note-taker to assist in taking notes on a pad or lap-top during the facilitation. Not every class uses a 2nd person as a recorder). Given a copy of the agenda, the notes can be better organized and rewritten.
3. Do I know the material thoroughly and am able to lead a discussion to get effective results? (i.e. page numbers to direct the group to if they get stuck and need a little help generating ideas.)
4. Can I do anything to draw the team into the discussion?
 - Tell a story
 - Show a video
 - Play a game
5. Do I have a clear purpose / desired outcome for the meeting?
6. Have I prepared the discussion questions?
 - Write out a few questions you can fall back on if there is a lull in the conversation or if you get stuck.
 - Know which topics to put in the parking lot
7. Do I need to provide my classmates with any materials (written or otherwise) prior to the discussion?
 - Background information?
 - Meeting agenda?
 - Previous meeting notes?
 - Send the agenda previous to the meeting to prepare other attendees
8. Do I have time estimates for the discussion?

Tips to remember

Include a transition from topic to topic. This may include a personal story, a famous quote, or a funny comment. The preceding questions are generally easy to answer. The more difficult questions to answer are the following:

1. Am I prepared to handle any inappropriate behavior of my classmates? Generally you will know who is quiet and who rambles. You probably know who will be distracted by texting. Are you prepared to handle arguments within your group? You need to prepare yourself for dealing with these situations. (See the Section on [Managing Typical Behaviors in Group Discussions](#).)
2. Am I prepared to summarize the discussion on the flip charts? Often these summaries require more intense

listening than most students are used to. (See the topic: [Capturing the Essence of the Discussion.](#))

3. Am I ready to manage the flow of the discussion? This is a skill that requires you to be thinking ahead while you are being in the moment of the discussion itself. (See the topic: [Managing the Discussion Flow.](#))
4. Am I prepared to be a discussion leader? Facilitation often places students into the unc customary role of being in charge. (See the topic: [Being a Discussion Leader](#))

Go back after 30 minutes has passed or you worked on something else and grab your meeting agenda again. Ask yourself if you forgot anything.

Facilitation is a performance art. It's not like a test where you respond to a set of questions. With facilitation, you need to respond to dynamic situations where your responses are likely to determine how the overall discussion unfolds. Taking the time to prepare for your role as a facilitator can help the overall performance of the group.

In ten minutes or so before you hold the facilitation, run through the agenda talking out loud the things you want to go over to help get you warmed up and focused on your topic.

Note

After considering all of the steps above hold a "mock facilitation" at home before your meeting. Consider how your dialogue, flow of questions and body language factor into your facilitation experience. This will help greatly in reducing nervousness. So long as you prepare your agenda and follow your train of thought as you read over the materials in preparation, your group should do just fine in giving you the material to write up on the flipchart and in the notes.