

Fabulous Facilitator

As a student leader you may be asked to serve as the facilitator of a meeting, a workshop, or a discussion. Leaders are often naturally looked to as individuals who are prepared to facilitate groups of any shape and size. Don't worry; you are up for the challenge! But to assist you along the way, consider these basic tips for the fabulous facilitator.

Top Ten Characteristics of an Effective Facilitator

- An effective facilitator intentionally uses the time and space allotted.
- An effective facilitator listens deeply for participant understanding.
- An effective facilitator uses humor appropriately.
- An effective facilitator provides the map but allows participants to lead the way.
- An effective facilitator demonstrates preparedness and organization.
- An effective facilitator consistently recognizes participant contributions.
- An effective facilitator provides ample time for participant reflection and processing.
- An effective facilitator watches for, and listens to, nonverbal cues.
- An effective facilitator leads the celebration of big AND small group accomplishments.

One of the first steps in successful facilitation is creating the environment! As a facilitator...

...what seating arrangements do you want to use?

...how do you help groups you facilitate consistently get to know each other?

...how are you at remembering names? What are some tricks you use to remember people you work with?



Take some time
to keep in Mind ...

... an effective facilitator listens more often than talks, and asks more often than tells.

What Exactly is Facilitation?

It is the process of leading people through an experience toward mutual goals in a manner that encourages participation, ownership, and learning from all involved.

In short, the literal definition of "facilitate" is defined as "to make easier!"

...how do you get to know the participants you facilitate—their personalities, learning styles, involvement in the group, etc.?

...how do you encourage participation in discussion or activities?

...how do you create a safe place for participants, while also stretching comfort zones?

Facilitation Fundamentals

There are some fundamentals that all facilitators should consider when preparing to facilitate a group:

- Always state the purpose of the gathering.
- Be respectful of participants, their opinions and their contributions.
- Call participants by name.
- Encourage active participation while allowing participants to choose their participation level.
- Recognize all contributions, big and small.
- Be careful to not give answers or your opinion too often.
- Ask open-ended questions and use exercises that promote sharing.
- Expect respect of each other.
- Watch the clock, don't devalue participant's time.
- At the conclusion, do a quick assessment of what each participant now knows, believes and will do based on what they learned today.
- Ask for feedback of your facilitation style – use evaluations, assessments or just index cards – so you can continue to improve.

Adapted from handout provided by the Department of Leadership, Service and Involvement at St. Norbert College, DePere, WI.