

# Facilitation

This sheet outlines the basics of facilitating a Wrench meeting. Check out: [www.consensus.net/ocaccontents.html](http://www.consensus.net/ocaccontents.html) for more information

## Facilitation

The word *facilitate* means to make easy. A facilitator conducts group business and guides the consensus process so that it flows smoothly. Rotating facilitation from meeting to meeting shares important skills among the members. If everyone has firsthand knowledge about facilitation, it will help the flow of all meetings.

## Before the Meeting

As facilitator, your job is to be prepared to conduct a smooth meeting. First, be mentally prepared. Don't walk into the meeting without having thought about it all day. Think about what projects the group will be discussing, what issues have been contentious of late, and how you can help confront unequal power dynamics within the group.

Most concretely, being prepared means having a draft agenda. Send a message to the discuss list several days before the meeting that makes a call for agenda items (announcements, old business, proposals etc.) Pay attention to the last meeting's content and the material on the discuss list during the week, so you can include items on the agenda, even if no one specifically mentions them. Remember though, the agenda might be modified by the group at the beginning of the meeting. Use the Wrench sample agenda as a starting place

## A Facilitator's Responsibilities

During the meeting it is your job to:

- *Perform non-directive leadership.* Don't jump in the conversation without giving the role of facilitator to

someone else. Don't dominate the discussion. Just help the group have a good conversation by employing the techniques on this page.

- *Equalize Participation.* You are responsible for the fair distribution of attention during meetings. You call the attention of the group to one speaker at a time, recognizing each person in the order in which hands are raised.
- *Clarify Process.* Periodically summarize where a conversation is, or how a proposal is understood. Always be reviewing what has just happened and what is about to happen.
- *Honor the Agenda Contract.* The agenda is a contract amongst group members. We need you to help us stay on task and stick to the work we have agreed to do in the time allotted
- *Assume good will.* Assume every statement and action is sincerely intended to benefit the group. Assume that each member understands the group's purpose and accepts the agenda as a contract.

## Techniques

These are tools for accomplishing the above goals. Some used more often than others:

If many people want to speak at the same time, you might have them count off (**stack**) and then have them speak in that order. If the pace is too fast, if energies and tensions are high, if people are speaking out of turn or interrupting one another, anyone can suggest a moment of **silence** to calm and refocus energy. **Call For Consensus** by first asking if there are any unresolved concerns which remain unaddressed.

You might choose to focus what has been said by **summarizing**. After a long discussion, it sometimes happens that the proposal becomes modified without any formal decision—in this case, **reformulate the proposal** with the new information, modifications, or deletions. To “test the waters” during a conversation you can try a **straw poll**, in which the group gives thumbs up/down on a decision (this isn't a vote—no decision is made). Sometime a **go-around** is useful, in which members go around the table and *each* make a *brief* statement. Use a **big picture discussion** if there is a clear need for a discussion of strategy or group direction

## A Sample Meeting Agenda

Introductions  
Agenda Review  
Roles Assigned:  
Facilitator  
Co-Facilitator  
Note Taker  
Vibes Watcher  
Time Keeper  
Public Scribe  
Reportbacks  
Welcome to New Folks  
Announcements  
Proposals  
Big Picture Discussion  
Closing Thoughts

*Meetings are an hour and a half and only go over time if the group agrees to.*



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For more information visit: <http://resist.ca/~mangus/wrench>