

12 STRATEGIES TO **INCREASE PARTICIPATION** IN YOUR NEXT MEETING



PEOPLE DON'T HATE MEETINGS



People hate *bad* meetings.

No one wants to be in a meeting, training, or workshop and be thinking, “This could have been an email.” And we don’t want to lead those sessions.

We know as facilitators that people want to participate, be engaged, and be involved in the process.

In this guide, we’re going to take you through four common meeting scenarios and share three Facilitator Cards you could use in those moments. We’ll tell you why it works and give you tips for how to run the process.

Let’s get into it!

TL; DR

This guide gives you 12 cards to facilitate common meeting scenarios guaranteed to increase participation and engagement in any session you lead.

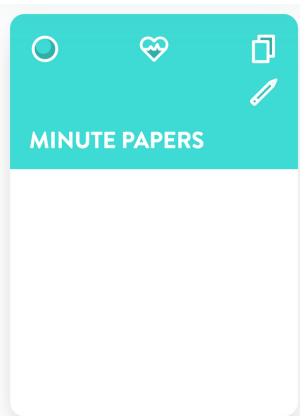


We’ve even included tips for implementing these practices online!

"HOW'S EVERYONE DOING?"

When we start meetings with this question (or any question) and don't get much of a response, it sets the tone for a lack of participation for the rest of the meeting.

It's important when we're checking in with folks to give structured and specific instructions that help people know how to respond. Use one of these three methods to kick off your meeting and get a read on where the group is at.



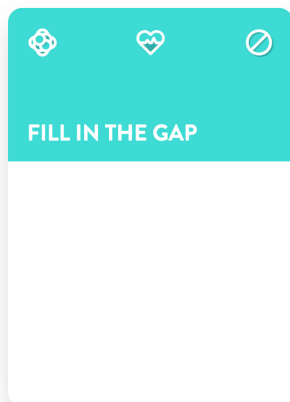
MINUTE PAPERS

Ask everyone to take a minute or two and write down how they are doing today. Ask participants to then share one thing they wrote down, either with the large group, in the chat, or in small groups. Be sure to state your intentions for sharing before everyone starts writing.

WHY IT WORKS: People are more likely to share when they've had a chance to collect their thoughts.



Have people turn off their camera when writing and back on when done. Doing this gives them a break from screens and signals when they're done!



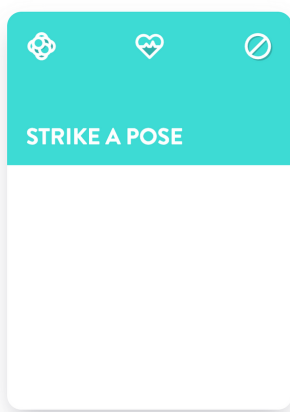
FILL IN THE GAP

Share a sentence that contains an important gap. For example, "Today I'm feeling _____ but also _____." Then prompt the group to say the whole sentence and to fill in the gap. You can do this out loud or in the chat.

WHY IT WORKS: By giving people a creative constraint, this question invites them to think past their first thought and makes it quick for people to share.



Be sure to put the sentence you want people to respond to in the chat for easy reference.



STRIKE A POSE

Explain to the group that you're going to give them a prompt and they'll have five seconds to think of a way to express their reaction using their bodies. Ask everyone to strike a pose that embodies how they are doing today. After a five-second countdown, everyone strikes their pose, holding it for a moment so others can look.

WHY IT WORKS: It creates a way for folks to initiate participation without having to actually share out loud.



While you can do this exercise sitting down, it can also be a nice chance to get out of your chair, stretch, reset your energy, and do a full-body pose.

"DOES ANYONE HAVE ANY IDEAS?"

Asking for ideas is an important moment. You want to get good ideas without stifling creativity or going with first instincts. Often in brainstorming, what's said first gets unearned priority. Use any of these three methods to avoid groupthink and create a generative ideation space—to allow for the best ideas to come to the surface.



OPPOSITE THINKING

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Prompt the group to come up with ideas on a given concept that are the opposite of what you're actually looking for. For example, "How could we guarantee failure in Q3?" Write down all unique suggestions.

WHY IT WORKS: It's more fun to come up with horrible suggestions—and they often point toward the same positive conclusions!



Have everyone type their thoughts in the chat and hit send all at once! Chat storm!



DIFFERENT ANGLES

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Assign each group a different angle from which one might view a central concept. For example, ask for different time frames (e.g., past, present, future), components (e.g., people, rules, physical space), or processes (e.g., planning, delivery, accountability). Have each group discuss ideas, then present a summary of their conversation to the full group.

WHY IT WORKS: By requiring specificity up front, the ideas generated will reflect the question more directly, rather than everyone doing a generalized brainstorm.



Put folks in breakout rooms and assign someone to take notes for the group!



STICKY NOTE GENERATOR

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Ask participants to come up with ideas regarding a concept, one idea per note. Have them write their ideas in there and then when time is up, move all the sticky notes where people can see them.

WHY IT WORKS: Giving everyone time to think on their own avoids groupthink and assumes that everyone has ideas!

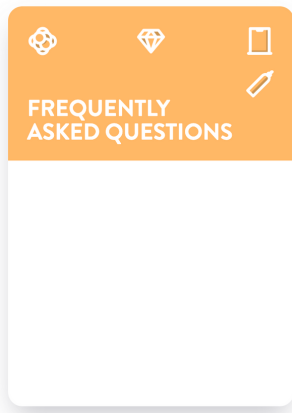


Use MURAL, Miro, or Jamboard (our favorite collaborative whiteboard apps)!

"ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THAT?"

Asking questions requires taking a risk. When we are at work, we want people to know that we know things. It can feel high stakes to admit confusion or concerns.

We need to make it as easy as possible for people to ask questions. We do that by creating explicit containers that assume questions exist and give a particular way to express them.



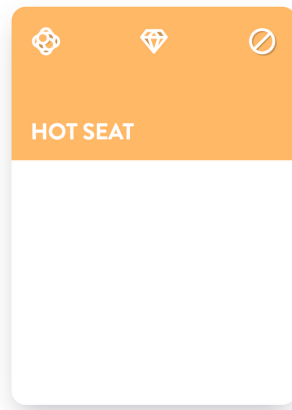
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Prepare a numbered list of questions you anticipate your group might have or questions you want to make sure to address. Ask people to shout out the number of the question they want answered. Read the question aloud, then answer it.

WHY IT WORKS: Having a prepared list normalizes that people have questions while simultaneously suggesting which questions they might have.



This is one of the few times where using a slide will actually encourage participation!



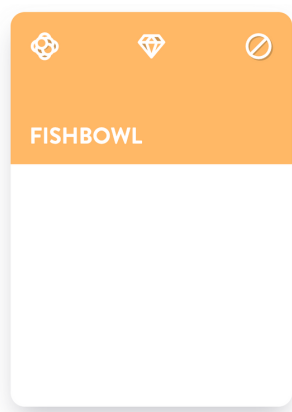
HOT SEAT

Choose one participant, based on a role, experience, stance, authority, etc., to answer questions about a given topic for a set amount of time. The rest of the group is tasked with asking them questions about the topic, including follow-up questions and clarifying questions.

WHY IT WORKS: By explicitly stating whom your participants can direct questions to and for how long, you can help create a container for the relevant questions to be directed to the right person.



Spotlight this person on the virtual platform you're using and have people chime in with questions by "raising their hands" on Zoom.



FISHBOWL

Ask folks to raise their hands if they have questions, then invite those people into the fishbowl. People in the fishbowl will be the only ones having the conversation. Everyone else will be on the outside to watch and listen. The goal for those in the fishbowl is to discuss and refine their questions through a small group conversation.

WHY IT WORKS: Oftentimes Q&As can get cluttered with so many people chiming in. Fishbowl reduces the number of people in a conversation to just a select few, while keeping others present and involved.



When online, have everyone else turn their cameras off while the folks in the fishbowl leave their cameras on.

"WHAT SHOULD WE DO MOVING FORWARD?"

Taking the ideas you've spent so much time coming up with in a meeting and moving them forward can make or break whether people feel that the time in a meeting was well spent.

Prioritizing these plans and making them actionable is an essential task and should not default to whoever was first to answer the question.

VANISHING OPTIONS

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When you have multiple options for a decision, start by having the group strategically remove one or two. Give time for the reduced set of options to be considered, and continue to repeat and discuss as needed.

WHY IT WORKS: Humans take in all the information we're given. Reducing the amount of information in front of us reduces the cognitive load and allows us to make more strategic decisions.



Use a live polling software like AhaSlides that allows for flexibility in voting options.

INSIDE VS. OUTSIDE THINKING

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View your potential options from two angles, the insider and the outsider. What do you know, as insiders, that is informing your decision? What might someone else, an outsider, use to inform their decision, not knowing what you know?

WHY IT WORKS: It's easy to get hung up on a decision around what WE think. It's clarifying to invite multiple perspectives at decision time.



Make two lists that everyone can see using a whiteboard or slide, and note what people say as they share.

URGENT VS. IMPORTANT GRID

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Create a grid with four quadrants. Along the top, label the first column "Not Important" and the second "Important." Along the left, label the first row "Urgent" and the second row "Not Urgent." Use sticky notes to place individual tasks or plans into the appropriate quadrant.

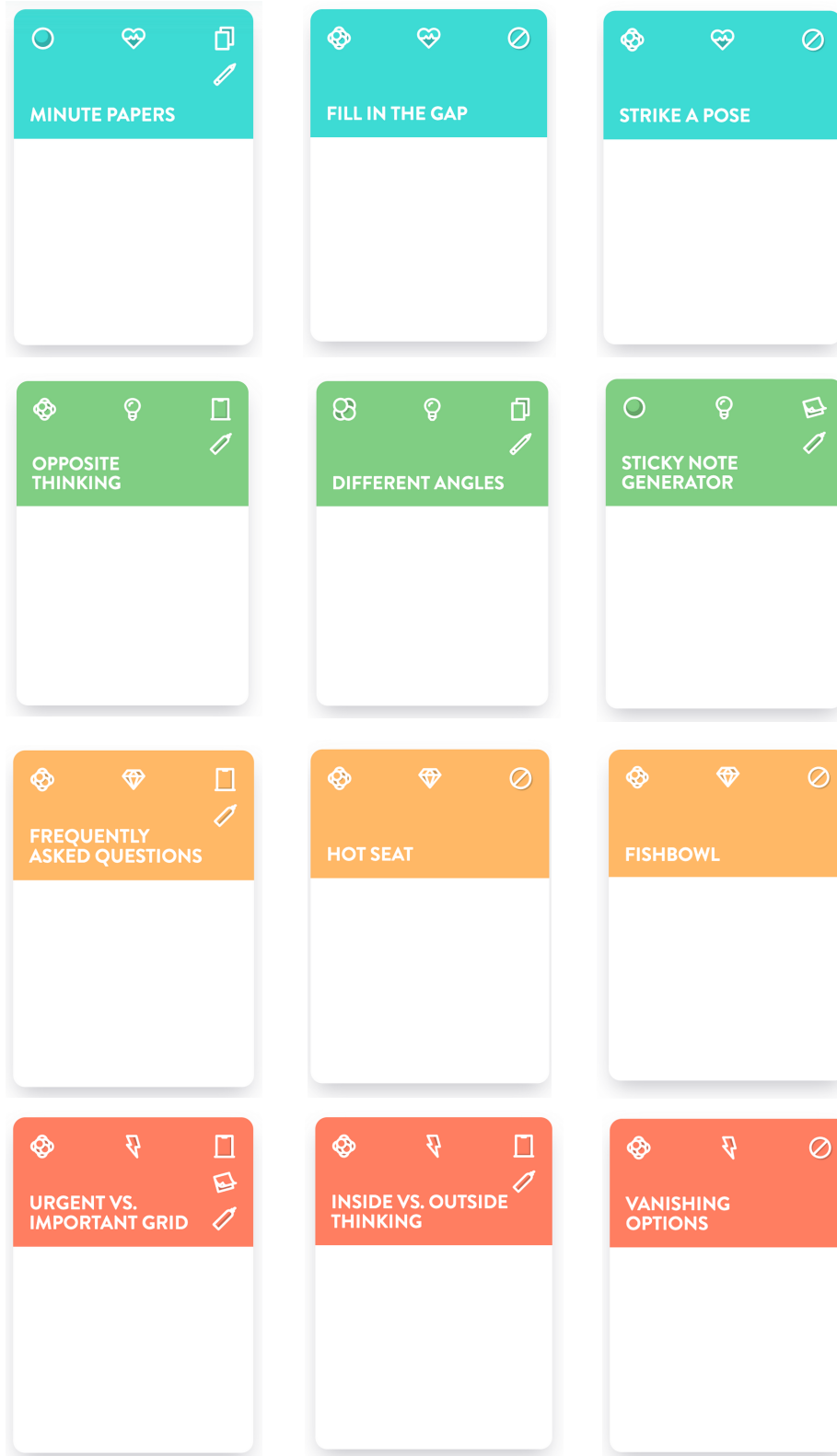
WHY IT WORKS: Organizing and prioritizing next steps is vital to making them. With the grid, you don't have to put them in number order or get rid of any, but you can still make the priorities evident.



Use the whiteboard feature on Zoom for the most basic version of this, and Miro or MURAL for the most professional solutions.

DECKED OUT

For those following along, here's your mini deck from this guide!



YOU'VE GOT THIS

Like it says on the box, we've got your back!

If you're reading this guide, you're someone who wants to bring more intentionality to your meetings. You want to get people's input, hear their opinions, and value their engagement.

We hope this guide has given you ideas for how to use your Facilitator Cards to make the most of any meetings.

A PLACE TO START

We've heard from many Card Carriers that getting started with Facilitator Cards can be tricky. They feel like they need to know the whole box in order to get started, and we totally understand the feeling.

But you don't have to know all of the deck, or even most of the deck to get started. Making mini decks, trying them out, seeing if they work, is a great place to start!

You can also connect with our community of other facilitators in our Card Carriers group on Facebook, [click here to join!](#)



MORE WAYS TO LEARN

If you want more hands-on ways to learn, practice, and get to explore your Facilitator Cards, we've got a few offerings that might interest you!

The first is CARD SHARKS our monthly session just for Card Carriers where you can practice building agendas, getting to know your cards better, and connect with other facilitators!

You can find this session and other events including one-day intensives, exclusive events, and more at our [events page](#).

STAY IN TOUCH

We're always sharing facilitator tips, advice, and resources. Find us where you are.



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