Mobretreat

Day of mobretreat is a full day of practicing collaborative software development as a mob of 4-5 people with TDD and refactoring.

Exploring different mobbing styles in each round, sharing experiences and evaluating the differences.

twitter hashtag #mobretreat

Day schedule

The retreat consists of 4 to 5 rounds. Each round takes about 75 minutes.

- 75 minutes * 4 rounds + 45 minutes lunch break = 5 hours 45 minutes
- 75 minutes * 5 rounds + 45 minutes lunch break = 7 hours

Participants build mobs of 5 people (recommended) or 4 people (when needed).
If there are 6, 7 or 11 participants, you might need to build a mob of 3 or 6 people.

Like a coderetreat, at the beginning of the first round each group decides which programming language is used for writing code. Each round has its specific constraints.

Unlike a coderetreat, the code is kept and incrementally developed by the mob during the whole day. Changing constraints relate to communication, not to the code. The mob keeps most of their original members, but after each round one person per mob joins another mob.

Round schedule

Each round starts with an introduction made by the retreat facilitator. At the end of the introduction each participant should understand the objectives and the constraints of the round. Like a coderetreat, the facilitator introduces different constraints with each round.

Unlike a coderetreat, these constraints are designed to explore different styles of mob programming.

The introduction is followed by 45 minute periods of coding followed by a short retrospective inside each mob.

At the end of each round there is short discussion-round between all mobs. The discussion is followed by a short break.

Rotations

A mob always has one driver, one navigator and the rest of the group are mobbers.

Mob participant names are put in a list ordered by descending experience level

The first in a list becomes NAVIGATOR and the last becomes DRIVER

The roles are changed by ROTATION.

Each ROTATION, DRIVER becomes MOBBER, NAVIGATOR becomes DRIVER, one of the MOBBER becomes NAVIGATOR in a cycle shown below.

1.		2.		3.
Alice (5) N		Alice (5) D		Alice (5)
Bob (4)		Bob (4) N		Bob (4) D
Charles (3)		Charles (3)		Charles (3) N
Diana (2)		Diana (2)		Diana (2)
Ellie (1) D		Ellie (1)		Ellie (1)

Rotation timer

After first 3 minutes NAVIGATOR MAY initiate a ROTATION.

The ROTATION MUST happen within the following 2-3 minutes. So there MUST be a ROTATION each 3 to 5-6 minutes.

Therefore after each ROTATION the new DRIVER starts a timer giving an acoustic signals and always shares computer sounds with their screen.

Groups may try to rotate roles after certain events instead of using the timer (e.g. implementation or refactoring finished). However, the roles should be rotated fast enough.

Demo

Round 0: Read the manual and setup the tools

- Vending Machine Kata
  - text

- Choose your language at Cyber Dojo
  - People attending the mobretreat for the second time could try a new language

- Check the timer

  - 3 minutes + 2 minutes

The participants are given 10 minutes to read the kata description
While they are reading, the host assigns the participants to their rooms at the beginning of the round.
After all participants are assigned, the rooms are opened.
Now the room occupants can introduce themselves to each other.
Now the participants can prepare their cyber dojo sessions and try out the timer.

Test-Driven Development structures time

1. Write a failing test
2. Make it pass (which means it must also compile)
3. Make it clean

Unit tests

Fail → Pass → Refactor
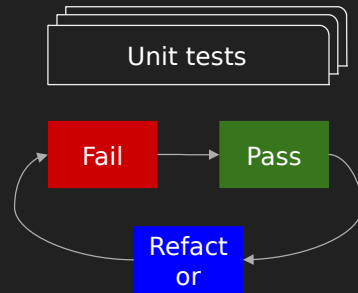
Emphasize the THINKING that goes before writing the test.

Round 1: The Commander leads strong

	Practice	Do	Don't
Navigator - Commander	lead, find solutions, speak to the group, communicate goals (what to achieve) and reasons (why that), give instructions to DRIVER (what to implement) at the level they are able to execute, ask for help, listen	• tell DRIVER what to do based on your choices. You are the decider. • Whenever you need, ask for suggestions from the MOB.	
Driver	listen to the NAVIGATOR, ask for clarification or technical help	• follow NAVIGATOR instructions • ask NAVIGATOR questions	Don't • offer ideas • type anything before being told by the NAVIGATOR • argue. The navigator decides.
Mob	listen, be patient, respond to NAVIGATOR, find solutions	• Allow the navigator's vision to play out. Create a space for learning. This may prove difficult	Don't • ask NAVIGATOR questions or offer suggestions before the NAVIGATOR request

The navigator has a full control: If they have an idea they go for it, otherwise they can always ask for help.
The mobbers are helpful and encouraging.
The driver functions as an intelligent input device.

On this and all following rounds the host AKA facilitator (and co-hosts moving between the rooms) should communicate with the groups only in one of the following cases reducing the input to the minimum:
- Give help with the online tools (zoom, timer, cyber-dojo)
- Point out the violation of the round constraints
- Help if the mob is totally lost and does not move at all

Micro retrospective

- How did that feel?

- What was the best thing that happened during this round?
  (something we want to keep doing more of)

The break out rooms are closed. Everyone returns to the main room to see the retrospective questions.
Afterwards they are returned in their break out rooms up to 10 minutes to have internal discussions.
They can come back to the main room anytime by themselves.
When everyone returns to the main room each mob shares the summary of their retrospective with the other mobs.

This procedure repeats also after all but the last round

The hosts, co-hosts and facilitators should not observe internal retrospectives to let the mobbers feel more safe and free

Round 2: The Chairman moderates and decides

	Practice	Do	Don't
Navigator - Chairman	moderate the MOB, listen, ask open questions (how, what etc), communicate goals, make decisions, give instructions to the DRIVER	• always ask MOB before doing the next step • moderate all contributions and discussions • tell DRIVER what to do based on ideas coming from the MOB	Don't • tell DRIVER what to do based on own ideas not coming from the MOB • ask closed questions (A or B, YES or NO etc)
Driver	listen, follow NAVIGATOR instructions, offer suggestions, ask for clarification or technical help	• follow NAVIGATOR instructions • raise hands and wait for permission before you talk	Don't • type anything before being told by the NAVIGATOR
Mob	listen, offer suggestions, ask questions	• raise hands and wait for permission before you talk	Don't • talk before the NAVIGATOR request • have any discussions between the mobbers

Navigator concentrates on moderation, encourages different people to contribute and makes sure everyone has an opportunity to contribute. They try to maximize the output of the team by getting all people involved.

To remove pressure on the navigator, the mobbers show that they have ideas or questions by raising hands.
The navigator makes sure all contributions have been expressed before going further.

Round 3: The Observer listens and decides

	Practice	Do	Don't
Navigator - Observer	listen to the MOB, ask open questions, communicate goals, make decisions, give instructions to the DRIVER	● always ask MOB to contribute suggestions before doing the next step ● tell DRIVER what to do based on ideas discussed with the MOB	Don't ● tell DRIVER what to do based on ideas before they have been discussed with the MOB
Driver	listen to the NAVIGATOR, ask for clarification or technical help	● ask NAVIGATOR questions	Don't ● offer ideas ● participate in the discussions ● type anything before being told by the NAVIGATOR
Mob	discuss goals and implementation details without a moderator	● make suggestions, express support or disagreement or ask questions any time	Don't ● talk over one another

Here mob participants feel confident enough to participate in unmoderated discussion.
Navigator decides which suggestion is implemented and instructs the driver.

After this round existing mob groups do not change, nobody is moved to another mob.

Round 4: No explicit NAVIGATOR

	Practice	Do	Don't
Driver	listen, implement ideas coming from the MOB, ask for clarification or technical help	• ask the MOB for clarification • offer ideas to the MOB when needed	Don't • type anything before being instructed by the MOB
Mob	listen, discuss goals, communicate intent and instruct the DRIVER	• make suggestions, express support or disagreement or ask questions any time • establish consensus or consent (no disagreement) • tell DRIVER what to try at the level they are able to execute	Don't • talk over one another

The mob should aim for consensus resulting in a smooth flow.
Keep focussed on the current goal. Always try to do the smallest steps that make sense. If there are no obvious solutions, try each idea in sequence.

(Optional) Round 5: Free style mobbing

Each group decides which collaboration style to use.

Retrospective

- "How can we be effective with 5 people at one computer?"
  "How can we work together as a team without waiting, distraction, interruption or multitasking?" (Woody Zuill, the discoverer of mob programming)

- How have you experienced the state of flow today?

- How might you be able to take this forward, in your daily work?

Credits

Idea: Dimitry Polivaev ([Munich Software Craft Community](#))

Co-author: Bob Allen ([Code Craftsman Saturdays and Sundays](#))

First time facilitators:

- Christian Hujer ([Nelkinda](#))

- Jeff Patterson ([AgilePDX User Group - Portland Metro](#))