

**Design workshops. Design workshops. Design
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Meetings at which a group of people engage in intensive discussion and activity on a particular subject or project.

Collaboration

People are there to develop content together

Exploring different options and possibilities

Unknowns to explore

Engaged participants

Equal contribution

Dynamic

[illegible]

1. To gather information from a range of people
e.g. from your clients to inform the brief; to find out more about a subject from a range of experts; to get people to share information, air views and opinions, share knowledge; or get more information about an existing problem.

2. To generate ideas

e.g. create new possibilities for a project, campaign, design, etc., together with people involved in the project or outside experts.

3. To make decisions

e.g. to present ideas to a client for them to make choices so that you can build ideas further.

Often, workshops will be a mix of all of these – many workshops work through these three reasons as a sequence – but you might decide to focus on one. You may even decide to run a series of workshops to meet all of your goals. We'll get onto timings and structure later.

[illegible]

You're there to inform or for general updates

You don't have a facilitator – this is key; if a workshop is

You already know the answers – make sure you genuinely

[illegible]

Now that we're clear on the reasons for running a workshop, you need to set expectations for yourself and the people that will be attending.

Be clear on your role as a facilitator. Put your pre-determined ideas aside and focus on gathering ideas from the participants, ensuring they are engaged and working together, and that the discussion is owing.

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There are various elements that you'll need to plan for – how long the workshop will be, who will be there, and where it will take place. You might have influence over all or none of these factors. The more freedom you have, the more organising you have to do, but this also gives you an opportunity to build your workshop exactly as you want it.

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Be clear on the purpose of the workshop.

Which of the three main reasons for running a workshop – gathering information, generating ideas, or making decisions – do you need to address?

What is the project's history and current situation?

What are the main challenges or questions to be addressed?

What needs to happen by the end of the workshop?

What do you want participants to get out of it? What should they be able to do?

What are your participants' expected aims for the workshop?

What outcomes/outputs do you want – anything specific?

Think beyond the end of the workshop.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Go back to the workshop purpose that you outlined, and review your intended post-workshop outcomes. Now your job is to create the missing middle that will help you get from the start to end.

Brainstorm all of the questions that you want to address: what are you interested in finding out? What are the unknowns? What do your participants need to explore and discover together?

Break it up.

The power of Post-it Notes.

Get up, stand up.

Keep the focus (generate ideas or decide).

Alone time.

Boost your brainstorming (quantity, no criticism, unusual ideas, combine & improve ideas).

**Frameworks: IDEO's Design Kit / Hyper Island
Toolbox / Design Sprint / Design Studio**

...or design yourself

[illegible]

As a facilitator, you're there to guide your attendees through activities and discussions productively, and to smoothly move a project to the next stage.

So the first rule of great facilitation is: you cannot participate and facilitate at the same time.

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Practical skills

The most obvious responsibilities you'll have as a workshop facilitator are to take notes, introduce exercises, and keep time. These tasks are the very least that your participants will be expecting from you. If you are just starting out in facilitation and lack confidence, this is the best place to start. Make sure you've spent good time on designing the workshop outline and if possible have a co-

Content skills

The next level of facilitation skills involves how you gather information, probe participants for deeper answers, and help move them along in discussions. You'll need to synthesise information and ask great questions to keep the workshop moving forward. Get more involved in the discussion, remembering to stay objective. Review and present content back to the participants to

The art of asking questions

Framing your questions in the right way is key to getting good answers. As a facilitator, questions will be your main form of communication during the workshop. You'll encourage people to expand on their responses and stretch their thinking. As a general rule, open questions, which require a longer, more thoughtful answer, are much better than closed questions (which generate only a yes

Summarising, synthesising and noticing patterns

To make the content digestible to participants, start to pick up on the key themes and words that come up frequently. You'll need to do this in real-time during the workshop, so don't worry about it being a perfect synthesis. It's a way of making sense of the large amount of content that will be generated. It's fine if themes overlap, and you can also invite participants to challenge your

People skills

This level of skills relates to you more as an individual and how you interact with other people. It's how you respond to questions, deal with ambiguity, and how empathetic you are towards participants. These are soft skills that you can also practice outside of workshops, and that you'll see have the biggest impact on your wider work environment. Ironically these are the things in the

Active listening

Good listening is a skill we can all benefit from. As a facilitator, you have lots of opportunity to practice this, as you're not simply waiting for your turn to speak. Your job is to capture the true essence of the discussion, record it, and push for more elaboration if necessary. You will need to repeat and reflect back what you've heard to make sure you've fully understood and to acknowledge

Flexible and open to surprises

You may need to change your outline during your workshop and the more you facilitate, the better you'll get at reading the room and the energy. If participants need slightly more time for an exercise, alter your outline if it helps to meet the workshop's purpose. Don't be precious about your workshop structure. Know when the change is productive and if it will get you to where you need

Dealing with ambiguity and chaos

It can often feel like parts of a workshop are chaotic and messy – this is the nature of generating ideas and creativity. But trust that with your well-designed workshop structure, you'll gradually gain clarity as you progress, and part of your job as a facilitator is guiding your participants through this uncertainty.

Being patient and comfortable with silence

You'll learn to distinguish whether an uncomfortable silence is due to disengagement or people having a good think about what they're going to say. When you ask a question to a group, there will almost always be an initial silence. Don't feel that you always need to fill the gaps. You often have to wait just beyond what is comfortable, and someone will eventually respond

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01. Make sure a collaborative workshop is the right approach
02. A workshop is part of a bigger project to move it to the next stage
03. Have a clear aim and think beyond the end of the workshop
04. Give yourself enough time to prepare – good organisation is key
05. Get the right people, right room, and right materials
06. Have a basic knowledge of group dynamics.
07. Make the exercises and activities themselves dynamic
08. Get skilled in asking good questions.
09. Don't try to facilitate and participate at the same time
10. Follow-up quickly to keep momentum going

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Book the room

Send out invites

Design the outline

Practice with colleagues

Prep the room

Run the workshop

Send around notes and write-up