

Facilitation Fun!

Tips & Tricks from the Trenches By Practitioners, For Practitioners

Facilitated by [Jamie Champagne](#), [Filip Hendrickx](#), and consolidating inspiration from global facilitation enthusiasts

“Facilitation is the craft of guiding a group through a participatory process that makes it easier to achieve their goals.”

— [SessionLab](#)



0. Workshop Planning & Structure

(Before the workshop, setting objectives and logistics)

- Use a **facilitator's guide** to define goals and expected outcomes.
- Build **shared understanding** by agreeing on objectives upfront and distinguishing **decision rights vs. responsibilities**.
- Choose the **right group size**—smaller groups encourage direct facilitation, while larger groups promote peer-to-peer engagement.
- Utilize **project planning tools** (e.g., Smartsheet, MS Project) to track progress efficiently.



Tool tips

- [Workshop Tactics Card Deck](#)
- [18 Free Facilitation Resources We Think You'll Love | SessionLab](#)
- [Making Workshops Work](#)

1. Check-Ins, Ice Breakers & Warm-Ups

(Starting the workshop with energy and connection)

- A **structured check-in** helps participants feel comfortable and engaged from the start.
- Icebreakers are particularly useful when participants don't know each other well—this helps **reduce anxiety and encourage interaction**.
- Tailor the warm-up activity to the **workshop's purpose** (e.g., a fun game for creativity, a reflective question for serious discussions).
- In remote sessions, simple activities like **polls, personal fun facts, or quick team-building exercises** can break the initial awkwardness.
- Ensure the activity is **inclusive**—avoid ones that might alienate introverts or people unfamiliar with the group.



Tool tips

- [DARESAY Check-in generator](#)

2. Stakeholder Engagement & Participation

(Ensuring active involvement throughout the session)

- Engage stakeholders **before** the workshop—clarify roles, purpose, and expectations.
- Encourage **silent stakeholders** by engaging them in one-on-one conversations, using direct invitations, and leveraging informal settings.
- Use **interactive tools** (whiteboards, sticky notes) to create a safe space for participation.
- Address **unequal engagement** by balancing contributions from company employees and contractors.
- Set **clear expectations** at the beginning regarding participation, purpose, and outcomes.



Tool tips

- [Wheel of Names](#)
- [Mentimeter](#)
- [Poll Everywhere](#)
- [Collaboration Superpowers Goodies](#)

3. Facilitation Techniques & Best Practices

(Core skills and strategies for effective facilitation)

- Ask **good questions** and let participants do the talking—don't answer your own questions.
- **Remote facilitation tips:** Get participants on camera, assign responsibilities beforehand, and build rapport early.
- Use **storytelling** to structure discussions and make abstract ideas more tangible.
- Experiment with techniques that **break analytical thinking**, like analogies, drawings, or role-playing.
- Be **comfortable with silence**—it encourages deeper reflection.
- Use the **“Yes, And”** technique to build on ideas constructively.

Tool tips

- [Liberating Structures](#)
- [Periodic Table of Facilitation and Collaboration Techniques](#)
- [Facilitation Techniques and Workshop Activities | Library | SessionLab](#)

4. Maintaining Control & Flow of Conversation

(Managing discussions and keeping them productive)

- Redirect off-track discussions using a **“parking lot”** for later discussions.
- Politely manage over-talkers by acknowledging their input but providing structured time for others.
- Balance **extroverts and introverts**—call on quiet participants by name and use turn-based speaking.
- Keep meetings focused by **modeling expected behavior** and setting clear guardrails while allowing flexibility.
- Manage time with **visible clocks or countdown timers** to maintain pacing.

Tool tips

- [How ELMO can be useful for you and your team? | by Jakub Jurkiewicz | Clean Agile | Medium](#)
- [Big Timer](#)

5. Managing Conflicts & Difficult Stakeholders

(Addressing disagreements and challenging dynamics)

- Reframe the issue: **There are no difficult stakeholders, only difficult conversations.**
- When facing bad-faith negotiators, aim for **micro-agreements** rather than large commitments.
- Use **decision tables** to make agreements transparent and ensure accountability.
- **Trust is key**—build it by demonstrating competence, honesty, dependability, and fairness.
- Look for **silent dissent**—quiet teams may indicate underlying tensions.
- Have a **neutral escalation point** (e.g., a respected mediator) to help resolve disputes.

Tool tips

- Can you write out the issue? Then brainstorm solutions on the issue written out
 - [Mural](#)
 - [Miro](#)

6. Overcoming Personal Challenges as a Facilitator

(Personal growth and confidence-building)

- **Introverted facilitators** can excel by focusing on **steering** rather than leading conversations.
- Reduce fear by remembering that **participants are more focused on their own concerns** than the facilitator.
- Use **pre-meeting preparation** (diagrams, structured agendas) to keep discussions simple and clear.
- **Enjoy the process**—fuel your energy by observing participants' engagement and progress.



Tool tips

- Use a facilitator's guide.