

Discussion Rules of the Road

1. Keep on track, avoid tangents, topic jumps
2. Be brief, avoid repetition, detail overload
3. Listen actively, seek understanding
4. Avoid side conversations
5. Don't interrupt, dominate or "clam up"
6. Monitor non-verbal signs, stay attentive & respectful
7. Keep sense of humor and appropriate fun
8. Analyze thoroughly
9. Don't debate with win or lose but dialogue & discuss
10. Avoid defensiveness, stay open to others

Group Process Techniques

1. Brainstorming

- a. No evaluation during the generation of ideas
- b. Piggyback on ideas
- c. Record without distortion or additions
- d. Leave explanations & clarifications until later. Move quickly
- e. Encourage "wild" ideas to stimulate thinking

2. Consensus

- a. Goal is to have more dialogue and more solution finding rather than debate
- b. No voting, majority does not rule
- c. Don't give up because consensus doesn't come easily
- d. Don't argue for your own position, reason with logic & facts
- e. Don't give in just to reach agreement
- f. If an alternative is acceptable to you, say so and why
- g. Don't pretend to support an alternative if you really don't
- h. Use descriptive, non-judgmental language
- i. Ask questions, listen, analyze – more than stating your opinion
- j. Avoid satisficing – going with the first acceptable solution.

3. Stacking

- a. If multiple people want to contribute at the same time, facilitator notes names and then calls on each person in order. (everyone will get a chance to contribute)

4. Round Robin

- a. Facilitator asks everyone to contribute starting with one person and going around the table in order. Everyone gets a chance to speak – even the quiet ones!

5. Intentional Silence

- a. The facilitator asks for 2-3 minutes of silence. This will allow people to gather their thoughts and emotions without interruption.

6. Brain Writing

- a. Everyone is asked to write their thoughts down on the topic being discussed. Facilitator then asks people to read what they have written or reads them for the group. It encourages everyone to think independently without group bias or dynamics.

7. Parking Lot

- a. If a topic comes up that is clearly outside of the meeting agenda but appears important, it is written down on a separate paper. At the end of the meeting, the parking lot topics are addressed or put on a future agenda.