

## MEETING FACILITATION

Based on training by Caroline Estes and information from Margot Helphand  
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### Process types

Robert's Rules, implied consensus, formal consensus

### Consensus decision-making

old tradition - native tribes - Friends meeting formalized 300 yrs ago as

“God in everyone” and “sense of the meeting”

secular version “everyone has a piece of the truth”

- not same as general agreement, is process, not product

- consensus = unity (can live with decision), not uniformity nor unanimity

UO is usually one or two, not three, but there are exceptions

Importance of externalizing process before conflict erupts.

Difficulty of switching to consensus process in a conflicted group.

Challenges of very large or very small numbers.

In Robert's Rules, role of chair, interaction with role of facilitator

In implied or formal consensus, roles of

presenter(s), if used

facilitator

note-taker (visible)

time-keeper

back-up facilitator

participant

observer

Facilitator's loyalty to process, not specific outcome

thus important to not speculate on or predict results

### Meeting prep

Meeting time set by egalitarian method (e.g. not by those attending) that ensures participation by key participants

Meeting location convenient to participants, as appropriate (as opposed to planners)

Agenda 24 hours ahead, possible agenda-setting meeting of leadership

Facilitator arrival to set up 15 to 30 minutes ahead

Writing surface for visible notes: flip chart & tape, or chalk board, or ??

Provide air

Provide daylight and views

Provide comfortable chairs

Consider food and drink

## GROUND RULES FOR ALL MEETINGS

Written, preferably visible agenda, preferably with times

start with light/quick items to build momentum and sense of completion

if meeting more than 90 minutes, no more than 60 minutes without break

Visible notes

Start on time, end on time (or agree to extend), switch to time discussion when down to 10 or 15 minutes.

Closing statement, evaluation, act, or song (soooo Eugene, hold hands and sing Kumbaya)

Distribute very abbreviated summary (about one page max) within 48 hours

## CONSENSUS

Three possible positions in a consensus process:

- consensus
- standing aside
- blocking
  - = feels that for the good of the group, a serious mistake is being made
  - requires blocker to express concern during discussion/process
  - requires blocker to take responsibility for finding consensus for alt.
  - 6 in a lifetime is more than enough; must be fundamental
  - if simply a difference of values, should stand aside instead
  - if one individual blocks repeatedly, probably they're in wrong mtg.

Consensus process values

democracy  
cooperation  
egalitarianism  
responsible for actions (e.g. no snide remarks)

Process order

presentation of proposal (or issue, or question, but best proposal), best written use of [true] brainstorming, and double bell curve of discussion

facilitator may control flow, esp. in larger groups

train people to say simply "I agree with so-and-so", not easy w/ academics

round-the-table (or circle) vs. popcorn vs. popcorn no repeat

round is very time consuming

"call-on" variant on popcorn as technique to get diverse opinions

facilitator may need to cut off the most talkative or the direct responders

if someone is interrupted, facilitator interups and gives floor back to 1st.

monitor the non-dominants, eye contact, watch hands

facilitator stays out of discussion, or must step out, at least in part

(back-up?)

watch out for weak side (based on right-eyed vs. left eyed)

if issue is "iceberg", early intervention to create committee or defer

finding consensus

facilitator has sense of possible consensus during discussion

or states possible lack of

listing (writing) areas of visible consensus as they develop

testing with straw poll, thumbs up/sideways/down or five fingers

## IMPLIED CONSENSUS

Implied consensus is like above without explicit statements at beginning about process nor near end about consensus.

## ROBERTS RULES

Many consensus techniques apply, but ask for vote instead of asking for consensus.  
Don't forget to ask for pros, cons, and **abstentions**.