

How to Prepare to Facilitate

It is always important for you to be personally prepared for facilitation. This is true whether you are an external or internal consultant. In most cases, you are by yourself as the facilitator, while your group members look to you to guide them through a successful group activity. Depending on the goals of your group and the nature of its members, the experience of facilitation can range from fun and fulfilling to challenging and lonely. The following guidelines will help you to personally prepare for facilitation in any situation.

1. **Always know the goals, structures and membership of the group.**
An important systems principle is that structures determine behaviors, which determine events. The behaviors and events in your group will be determined, in large part, by the structures – plans, roles, policies and procedures – in your group.



See “How to Build Highly Effective Teams” on page 374 for guidelines to carefully design the goals, structures and membership of your meeting.

2. **Know what “centers” you – what calms you down before facilitating a meeting.**
Different people “get centered” by different means. For example, do you meditate, take a walk, or memorize an opening to the meeting? Think about successful meetings that you have facilitated in the past. What worked to keep you centered?
3. **Remember how you successfully deal with feedback and conflict.**
Remember your typical reactions to feedback and conflict and how you have learned to successfully manage those reactions.



See “Understand Your Natural Responses to Feedback and Conflict” on page 48 for guidelines about how you respond to feedback and conflict.

4. **Use your emotional intelligence (EI).**
Remember how you recognize and name uncomfortable feelings and how you have learned to successfully manage those emotions.



See “What is Your Emotional Intelligence?” on page 49 for guidelines to develop emotional intelligence.

5. **Have an opening – something to say when you start the group meeting.**
Always know what you are going to say for the first minute of the meeting. Your sense of purpose and direction will be contagious to group members. For example, memorize a certain opening to the meeting or tell a joke.



See the list of recommended resources about facilitation on page 498.
