



**The Harriet W. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning  
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**Self-Checklists for Facilitating Effective Group Discussions**  
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**Preparing for Group Discussions:**  
**Did I...**

- Determine learners' relevant experiences, needs, strengths, and interests?
- Identify learning goals for the group (or identify learning goals with the group)?
- Plan activities for the learners to prepare them for the discussion?
- Read and reflect on the topics planned for the session?
- Find or create appropriate resources?
- Attend any relevant lectures or other sessions that the learners attended prior to the discussion (if appropriate)?
- Identify and work on the understanding and skills I have for leading the session?
- Develop a well-structured (yet flexible) plan for the session?

**Conducting the Discussion:**  
**Did I...**

- Create an inclusive environment in which learners feel they can take risks?
- Do an initial assessment of the learners' levels of readiness?
- Initiate the discussion with an engaging, relevant topic or challenge?
- Use mainly open-ended questions or comments?

**... encourage learners to participate?**

- ... allow sufficient "wait-time" when learners or I ask questions?
- ... listen actively and non-judgmentally, and encourage learners to do likewise?
- ... use strategies for involving all the learners, including the quiet ones?
- ... keep the discussion from being dominated by a subset of learners?
- ... build what learners say into the discussion?
- ... make clear that my statements are open to further discussion?

**... help learners communicate clearly?**

- ... model being patient and encourage learners to do likewise?
- ... ask for clarification and encourage learners to do likewise?
- ... help learners reframe their ideas and comments, when needed?
- ... help learners focus or expand their ideas, as needed?

- Encourage active listening?
- Foster dialogue amongst the learners and help them to consider multiple points of view?
- Probe the learners' understandings and foster higher-level thinking and discussion?
- Help the learners digest what they are hearing?
- Monitor and facilitate the flow of the session?
- As needed, help the group reach a satisfactory closure?