

General Guidelines for Group Discussions



1. Plan & prepare

- Understand the topic of discussion and the potential aim(s) of the session.
- Consider any materials you may need (e.g. notepaper, flip charts) and remember to use different types of tools to draw out diverse learning styles.
- Keep in mind possible scenarios that may come up in discussion.
- Develop a few potential discussion questions.

2. Create a safe and open environment

- Welcome those who attend.
- Create time for introductions if the group is not familiar with one another. Remember to introduce yourself!
- Use eye contact and inclusive body language to promote participation by all group members.

3. Develop a set of ground rules

- Develop ground rules with the group to establish a sense of ownership and agreement in how the process should go (e.g. one person speaks at a time, respect others' opinions).

4. Guide the group process

- Pay attention to each group member and whether they are participating too much or not enough—ensure everyone has a chance to speak.
- Tools and materials can be used to enhance discussion. Be aware that they may become distracting or overemphasize a leadership role.
- Restate and summarize important topics throughout conversation.
- Use probing questions to keep the discussion going.
- Help the group reach a unified outcome or goal.
- Do not intervene unless absolutely necessary.

5. Bring closure to the end of the discussion

- Summarize the key points that were discussed.
- Allow the group members to share any last thoughts or comments.
- Thank the participants for sharing their ideas and opinions.

