

RLI

Leading a Breakout Session Best Practices

Today you are not a teacher – you are a facilitator. Facilitation is the process of making something easier, such as a meeting or a discussion. Facilitators are neutral individuals who guide and monitor the discussion so the participants are able to have a high-quality exchange of ideas.

To be an effective facilitator, utilize as many of these skills as you can:

- **Listen** – Your participants should do 75% or more of the talking. Listen actively and hear what every participant is saying. Encourage explanations to go more in depth
- **Ask Questions** – Use questions to encourage your participants to share
- **Share** – create an environment that encourages ideas and discussion.
- **Resolve Conflict** – Don't gloss over conflict between participants. Rotarians are strong business leaders with strong opinions. Help the group work through conflict without judging
- **Empathize** – See the issue from a variety of perspectives
- **Lead** – keep the group focused and on task
- **Time Management** – stay aware of your time constraints

Best Practices

- Listen intensely, paraphrase and mirror to ensure you understand the intent
- Maintain good eye contact
- Trust the resources of the group
- Ask open ended questions
- Ask "relay" questions (present the question to the group)
- Use names
- Be a facilitator, not a performer or a teacher
- Keep track of who talks and who doesn't, encourage involvement
- Be a guide, not the leader
- Organize, summarize and connect the dots to achieve closure & a sense of completion
- Speak slowly and clearly, no acronyms or colloquialisms
- Use examples and stories
- Avoid interrupting participants
- Don't answer a question immediately
- Avoid jokes
- Don't touch participants unless they initiate
- Use your voice and body to support your message
- Use an open palm instead of pointing
- Allow your arms to hang at your sides comfortably