

# FACILITATION SKILLS

Effective facilitation involves the use of presentation, attending, observing, good listening, and questioning skills.

## PRESENTATION SKILLS

### VISUAL:

**Appearance    Posture    Gestures    Eye Contact**

#### Tips for improving your visual presentation:

- Focus on one person and maintain eye contact for about 2-3 seconds.
- Use your hands to emphasize the points you are making.
- Stay centered in front of the group -- don't pace, rock, or stand off to the side where the group can't see you.
- Use visual aids -- overheads, flipcharts, etc., to create pictures for your audience. Many people are visual learners.

### VOCAL:

**Volume    Inflection    Pace of Voice**

#### Tips for improving your vocal presentation:

- Speak louder than you think you need to.
- Modulate your voice to emphasize key points.
- Pause when necessary. Don't panic when you pause. Pausing actually expresses confidence and control.
- Don't rush or run words together or go so slow that you put your audience to sleep.
- Be aware of sounds that distract from your presentation and reduce them if necessary and possible.

A banner with a ribbon-like design, featuring a central rectangular box with the text "FACILITATION SKILLS" in bold, uppercase letters. The banner has decorative triangular flaps on the left and right sides.

# FACILITATION SKILLS

## ATTENDING SKILLS

Attending means presenting yourself physically in a manner that shows you are paying attention. When you use attending skills, you are building rapport with your learners. You are communicating that you value them as individuals and are interested in their learning.

Attending also helps you gather information from your participants. Learners' behaviors are important sources of information for you in assessing how the training is being received. Attending also encourages the participants to interact verbally with you.

There are four attending behaviors that show you are interested in your learners:

- 1. Facing the audience**
- 2. Maintaining appropriate eye contact**
- 3. Moving toward the audience**
- 4. Avoiding distracting behaviors**

The chart on the following page provides guidelines in using attending skills.

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GUIDELINES FOR USING ATTENDING SKILLS	
DO	DON'T
Position your body so you face everyone.	Talk to visual aids.
Continually scan the group with your eyes.	Turn your back to part of the group.
Walk toward audience.	Stare at individuals.
Smile at individuals.	Avoid eye contact or scan the group too rapidly.
Nod affirmatively.	Distance yourself from the participants.
Circle the room during exercises to check progress.	Stand in fixed positions.
Use natural facial expressions in talking with people.	Shuffle papers or look at your watch while someone is talking.

# FACILITATION SKILLS

## LISTENING SKILLS

Listening, as we define it here for our purposes, means hearing verbal information from your participants and verifying that you understand what they are saying. Good listening skills allow us to show participants that we understand and respect their perspective. This is perhaps one of the most critical messages that we can express to learners. Good listening is a key to promoting positive participation. Listening involves two key steps:

### **Step One: Listen to the words being expressed.**

As you listen to the words being expressed, try to grasp both the content and the meaning of the words from the learner's perspective. The major roadblocks to listening are the internal and external distractions that compete with good listening habits.

**INTERNAL DISTRACTIONS** are the competing thoughts inside your head while the participant is talking. In a training environment, thoughts about the training often distract presenters and they can go off on a mental assessment of what to say or do next in the program. We must reduce these internal distractions so that we can focus on what the participant is saying.

**EXTERNAL DISTRACTIONS** are the things that are happening while a learner is speaking. They can be other participants, sights or sounds. Ignore these distractions or at least defer giving attention to them until the person has finished talking.

Once you have focused on what the person has said, you should proceed to the next step -- demonstrating your understanding of what was said.

### **Step Two: Paraphrase what was said to demonstrate understanding.**

Paraphrasing to demonstrate understanding requires you to verbally interact with the person. The interaction is either to get additional information or to verify what you think was said. Finally, your response to participants should convey respect and an appreciation for their contribution.

# FACILITATION SKILLS

## QUESTIONING SKILLS

Effective questioning is perhaps one of the most critical facilitation skills. It serves several functions:

- Helps you to determine what participants already know about a topic so you can focus on what they need to know.
- Invites participation and involvement in the training process.
- Provides feedback about how the training is received.
- Enables participants to assess their learning.

The three skills associated with effective questioning are **asking questions**, **handling learners' answers to questions**, and **responding to learners' questions**.

### 1. Asking Questions

#### Question Types

Asking questions effectively during training is one of the most important skills you can develop. Asking questions effectively means selecting the right type of question, phrasing it so it elicits the response you are after, and then directing the question appropriately.

TYPE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Requires more than a “yes” or “no” answer.</li><li>• Stimulates thinking and discussion.</li></ul>	What ideas do you have for explaining the changes to clients?  Usually begins with a “what”, “how”, or “why”.
Closed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Requires a one word answer.</li><li>• Closes off discussion.</li></ul>	"Does everyone understand the changes we've discussed?"  Usually begins with “is”, “can”, “how many”, “does”.

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## Phrasing Questions

Once you have decided on the type of question you will use, you need to determine how you will phrase it. There are important considerations in phrasing questions so that the individual will focus on the precise information you are trying to obtain.

DO	DON'T
Ask clear, concise questions covering a single issue.	Ask rambling ambiguous questions covering multiple issues.
Ask reasonable questions based on what people can be expected to know at this point.	Ask questions that are too difficult for the majority of people to answer.
Ask challenging questions which provoke thought.	Ask question which are too easy and provide no opportunity for thinking.
Ask honest, relevant questions which direct people to logical answers.	Ask "trick" questions designed to fool people.

## Directing Questions

The final consideration in asking effective questions is how to direct your question. You can direct your question to either the group or to a specific individual.

If you want to ...	Then ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Stimulate thinking of all participants</i></li> <li>• <i>Allow people to respond voluntarily</i></li> <li>• <i>Avoid putting an individual on the spot</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Direct the question to the group.</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Stimulate one person to think and respond</i></li> <li>• <i>Tap the known resources of an experienced person in the group</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Direct the question to an individual.</b></p>

# FACILITATION SKILLS

## 2. Handling Participants' Answers to Questions

The second skill associated with questions involves the way in which you handle participants' answers to your questions. To insure maximum learning, you need maximum participation. The way in which you respond to a person's answer has an impact not only on the individual but also on the amount of future participation you will receive from everyone.

Some ways to handle answers to questions that will maintain a high level of participation are to:

- Use positive reinforcement for correct answers.
- Acknowledge the effort of the respondent, regardless of whether the answer is right or wrong.
- Minimize potential embarrassment for wrong or incomplete answers.

## 3. Responding to Participants' Questions

The third skill associated with the questioning process involves responding to questions from the group. Participants' questions provide an opportunity to enhance the learning for the group as well as for the individual. The way in which you respond to questions also affects whether people feel free to ask future questions during training.

There are three suggested ways to respond to questions:

1. Provide the answer yourself. This is most appropriate when you are the only person who can provide the answer.
2. Redirect the question back to the person or to another participant. This is appropriate when there is a high probability that the person will be able to come up with the correct answer.
3. Defer the question. This is appropriate when:
  - The question is beyond the scope of the session
  - The question cannot be handled in the allotted time frame
  - The answer will be provided by material covered later in the session
  - You need time to think about it or research the correct answer