

TIPS...



Transitioning to Online Sessions

Tips for Moving to the Online Sessions

Everything that you already know about good facilitation applies to online sessions and using the online tools. Along with your normal planning activities, you should pay attention to these additional issues as you plan your online session.

Prepare yourself and participants – Ensuring that your online session time is efficient, productive, and engaging involves careful planning in getting everything and everybody prepared ahead of time. Pre-work can limit the actual session time and ensure that it is focused and productive.

- Provide information to be reviewed and commented on ahead of time.
- Gather data and information that doesn't require real-time interaction before the session.
- Use email to send out session notices and remind people of before meeting activities (ask for acknowledgement and follow-up if necessary).
- Become familiar with the online space and the tools available for participant communication.
- Determine the level of participant interaction that will be required to meet your objectives and when/where this could best be accomplished (online, offline).
- Involve only those necessary. Large numbers of participants reduces the amount of interaction and collaboration.

Engage and focus participants – the lack of visual cues is by far the most challenging aspect of facilitating online sessions. You need to be creative in finding ways to check in with your participants and determine their level of interest and participation.

- Avoid long periods of talking – you should plan to have some level of participant activity at least every 10 minutes. Multi-tasking will be difficult if they are interested and occupied.
- Animate your voice and be as enthusiastic and interesting as possible.
- Vary ways in which people participate – use Participation icons, Polling, Chat, and Whiteboard tools.
- Call on people often in an engaging and conversational way.
- Survey the group often using yes/no questions or the Polling tool.



- Assign participants different responsibilities if possible – note-taking, time-keeping, facilitating small groups, etc.
- Stick to your agenda and timing.

Use the Media Window effectively – Effective use of the media window is an important aspect of the online session. The participants’ focus will be on the content presented in the media window and it is important to bear the following in mind as you prepare your slides:

- Readability – make sure the font is large enough to be read on the screen (no smaller than 16 point) and not too wordy.
- Stick to key points – put only short bullet lists to avoid simply reading your slides.
- Have clear titles – each slide should have a title that clearly summarizes its purpose. Use a large and bold font to make it stand out.
- Keep to a simple background – it should not detract from the message on the slide.
- Use images or diagrams – images will help to break up the presentation and provide some visual interest.
- Don’t have too many slides – keep the information as short as possible – you can provide details verbally.

Use technology effectively – To get good results from your online session it is important to match the tools and technology to your session objectives. The following chart helps match tools with various session objectives:

<u>Objective</u>	<u>Online Tools</u>
Presentation	Audio, Video, Whiteboard, Share
Communication	Chat, Audio, Video, Polling, Participation Icons
Data gathering	Chat, Audio, Whiteboard, Polling, Yes/No
Idea generation	Breakout Rooms, Whiteboard, Chat
Decision-making	Audio, Breakout Rooms, Polling

