

## Meeting Facilitation Skills

### Skills for Leading a Meeting or Being a Contributing Team Member

1. **Paraphrase:** “So what you are saying is that evening reading assignments exhaust him and are unduly stressful.”
2. **Check for Meaning:** “Are you saying that his reading is progressing or not?”
3. **Give Positive Feedback:** “That’s a good point. I’m glad you brought that to our attention.”
4. **Redirect:** “This is not on the agenda and I am making a note so we can consider it after the meeting. Can we return to discussing the service hours?”
5. **Expand:** “Your comments provide an interesting point of view to this discussion. It would also be useful to know how his classroom teacher feels about this.”
6. **Increase the Pace:** “Let’s look at all the annual goals quickly for an overview, then return to review one-by-one.”
7. **Devil’s Advocate:** “I can see where you are coming from, but I’m not sure that what you are describing is always the case. Has anyone else had a different experience?”
8. **Relieve the Tension:** “I think John and Mary are really not disagreeing with each other but are just bringing out two different sides of this issue.”
9. **Consolidate:** “John and Mary have complimentary ideas and we can probably arrange a plan that addresses both of them.”
10. **Change the Process:** “Let’s work backwards and discuss what we would like Kendra to be able to do as an adult.”
11. **Summarize:** “We have been discussing different concerns about reading acquisition skills, and I believe all are looking at 1. Comprehension 2. Decoding.”

### Dealing with Difficult Situations

If a meeting becomes difficult, facilitators should use the following strategies.

- Remind yourself that everyone wants to be heard.
- Ask if you are becoming defensive, or could be perceived as being defensive.
- Watch body language and tone of voice, both yours and others.
- Sandwich difficult statements with positive ones.
- Check with parents and listen until everyone understands what they are trying to express.
- Don’t take complaints personally and remind others to keep comments to issues, not personal.
- Use clear, careful and specific language to make difficult statements.
- Be aware of words and statements that convey emotion and avoid them.
- Adjourn the meeting if it becomes unproductive.

### 10 Things to Avoid

Being diligent about this ‘do not’ list can make a faster more productive meeting.

1. Do not start late.
2. Do not interrupt.
3. Do not come in and out of the meeting.
4. Do not have side-bar conversations.
5. Do not ask vague and overly general questions.

6. Do not make sarcastic or defensive comments.
7. Don't leave the meeting to get items you forgot to bring.
8. Don't let unanticipated issues sidetrack you from the agenda; record them as "issues to resolve later" and return to the agenda.
9. Don't "birdwalk". Stay on topic.
10. Don't dominate the conversation, or allow another team member to do so

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