



13.2 Facilitator Proficiency Scale

Your level of facilitation can be characterized on a scale from *Novice* to *Highly Accomplished*. In *Lemons to Lemonade: Resolving Problems in Meetings, Workshops, and PLCs*, Garmston and Zimmerman (2013) describe these levels. Use their rubric to characterize your level of facilitation. They offer suggestions for next steps at each level.

Facilitator Stage	Facilitator Characteristics	Group Response	What You Can Do
Unaware	Lacks knowledge or information about facilitation or intervention skills. Passively accepts what happens in meetings as outside of her or his control. Attributes problems to others, not to her or his leadership of the meeting.	Groups respond with frustration and report that meetings waste time, overwhelm them, have unproductive conflict, and often spin endlessly on topics of little value.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acquire essential foundation knowledge of facilitation work by reading the seminal book <i>How to Make Meetings Work</i> by Doyle and Straus (1976), <i>Unlocking Group Potential for Improving Schools</i> by Garmston (2012), <i>Manager's Guide to Effective Meetings</i> by Streibel (2003), or <i>Best Practices for Facilitation</i> by Sibbet (2002).
Novice	Knows basic facilitation skills—how to get a group's attention, set focus and agenda, and manage transitions. May have difficulty leading decision-making processes. Sees the difficult participant as an impediment to progress and lacks skills to intervene effectively.	Meeting tones are not consistent; sometimes the work goes well and other times it is stalled. This inconsistent positive reinforcement may give the illusion that the group is more capable; however, when things get tough, the meeting breaks down. Groups blame a difficult person for the problem and are not aware of any contribution they, as a group, might be making to problems. When the difficult person is absent, everyone notices how well the meeting went.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Volunteer to facilitate portions of meetings to automate basic facilitation moves.• Practice facilitation principles and moves when working with students.• Observe colleagues. Take notes about their decisions and explore their thinking after the session.• Cofacilitate and have a reflecting conversation afterward.• Facilitate and seek coaching.• Learn more about problem-solving in groups and intervening by reading books such as <i>Unlocking Group Potential</i> by Garmston (2012), <i>Don't Just Do Something, Stand There! Ten Principles for Leading Meetings That Matter</i> by Weisbord and Janoff (2007), or <i>The Leader's Handbook: A Guide to Inspiring Your People and Managing the Daily Workflow</i> by Scholtes (1998).

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Facilitator Stage	Facilitator Characteristics	Group Response	What You Can Do
Proficient	Has basic facilitation skills and can manage routine problems effortlessly in meetings. Views exceptional problems as challenges to solve over time. After a meeting, reflects and learns by mentally revising the possible interventions and outcomes. Considers multiple options to employ should behaviors happen again.	Groups perceive their meetings as effortless and may not attribute the success to the facilitator. However, when the facilitator is absent they begin to notice a qualitative difference. A strong facilitator can become paternalistic—keeping order, but not helping group members grow and learn. Groups can become dependent on the leader and stuck in their growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• View <i>Focusing Four</i> video to observe a master facilitator conducting a consensus session (Garmston & Dolcemascolo, 2009).• Schedule a planning conversation with a colleague prior to a difficult meeting and reflect with him or her after the session.• Seek every opportunity to practice and schedule a planning conversation with a colleague before the meeting and reflect with this person after the meeting.• Become a facilitative participant in meetings you attend. This means you practice these skills when not the formally appointed leader.• Seek new references that have skill-building information and read and envision how to apply the skills. Find an opportunity to practice.• Create a quick reference library with books such as <i>Thinker Toys: A Handbook of Business Creativity</i> by Michalko (1991), <i>The Presenter's Fieldbook: A Practical Guide</i> by Garmston (2005), or <i>Resonate: Present Visual Stories That Transform Audiences</i> by Duarte (2010).

Facilitator Stage	Facilitator Characteristics	Group Response	What You Can Do
Accomplished	Is able to respond, adapt, and improvise in the face of uncertainty. Sees self as responsible to the group's success and does not blame others. Consciously works to shift responsibility for facilitation and intervention principles to the group. Able to teach facilitation skills and interventions.	Groups report that they learn not only about how to do their job better but also how to work effectively with others. They begin to appreciate the quiet voice that finally speaks up or the loud voice that shows humility. They understand how dissenting views can be catalysts for deeper thinking. They transfer facilitation and intervention skills to other aspects of their life. Skilled facilitators quietly celebrate when they observe explicit carryover of skills used in one setting to another. For example, a teacher might use paraphrasing as a way to help students hold onto ideas; a PLC member may use outcome thinking to keep the group focused.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn from a master by reading books such as <i>The Skilled Facilitator</i> by Schwartz (2002). • Set specific goals for yourself, such as using certain strategies should an opportunity arise or paraphrasing before taking new comments. • Seek out colleagues with similar skill sets and collaborate on ideas. • Keep a facilitator's notebook with ideas, references, and reflections. • Join an online community or follow a blog on organizational development. See the list created by Terrence Seamon at http://learningvoyager.blogspot.com/2006/12/od-blogs-abound.html. • Seek opportunities to teach about facilitation and interventions.
Expert	Acts intuitively. Has many sets of linked steps that are performed unconsciously. Conscious of choices being made and could reveal the meta-cognition of facilitation to others. Regularly teaches the group about interventions using graphics, modeling, and third-point teaching.	Groups report that they are also learning to facilitate groups in effective ways. Members are increasingly willing to and capable of assuming leadership positions in this and other groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn about how stages of adult development affect decision-making by reading books such as <i>Immunity to Change: How to Overcome It and Unlock the Potential in Yourself and Your Organization</i> by Kagan and Lahey (2009). • Teach, observe, and coach others.

Source: Adapted from Doyle, M., & Straus, D. (1976). *How to make meetings work: The new interaction method*. New York, NY: Jove and Garmston, R. J. & Zimmerman, D. P. (2013). *Lemons to Lemonade: Resolving Problems in Meetings, Workshops, and PLCs*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.