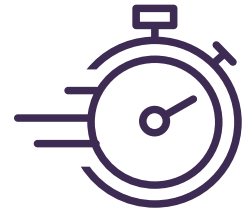


Facilitation Essentials: Managing Time



This quick reference tool is intended for employees at all levels who want to achieve their meeting objectives within the time they have allocated. It includes tips on planning efficient meetings, staying on track and adjusting when things go off track. These strategies help people work together to achieve their desired outcomes.

Summary – Accomplishing your objectives on time

Managing time effectively is one way to help groups meet their objectives and realize their desired outcomes. It requires preparation to keep the group on track and strategies to make course corrections if needed. Groups that stay focused and engaged maintain their momentum and accomplish their goals on time and as planned.

Planning your time

Managing time is an art, but we can plan for it.

- Start by clarifying participants' needs and meeting goals ([Resource: Clarifying Participants' Needs](#)).
- Circulate an agenda in advance, including guidance on preparation.
- Specify meeting start and end times, plus time allocations for each topic. When the time is up, assess whether you've reached your goal and then move on to the next activity.
- Explain how each agenda topic will be addressed, e.g., presentation, discussion, an activity.
- Consider setting up breakout groups where participants can talk through a task together. (If your meeting is virtual, most video collaboration software offers this option or possible workarounds.) This kind of "parallel processing" gives participants more opportunities to share their ideas.
- Consider doing a "dry run" to make sure your agenda, design, technology and logistics all flow well.

Staying on track

- Start on time. Log in or arrive a few minutes early for set-up and to check your equipment. For virtual meetings, encourage participants to arrive early for a sound/technology check.
- Use a timer and make it visible. Consider designating a timekeeper. This gets participants involved in managing the meeting and signals to everyone that you intend to stick to time limits.
- Address participation challenges ([Resource: Navigating Participation Challenges](#)).
- Let people know that the time allocated to an activity or discussion is coming to an end.
- Leave enough time to confirm next steps and accountability for each activity.
- End on time.
- Share the outcome of your meeting, e.g., on a team chat, by email or using social media if appropriate, to recap and highlight its value.



Getting back on track

Have you fallen behind on your agenda? Here are some strategies you can try to address this:

- Ask participants to confirm which topic is most important and amend the agenda accordingly.
- Condense your activities. If appropriate, consider shifting from open discussions to having people work in small groups or to sharing an idea each via chat or whiteboard.
- Take a break. If someone other than you is organizing the meeting, discuss potential changes with them.
- Off-topic issues: note them in a "parking lot" and commit to revisiting the items at the end of the day.

Bonus tip

- Ask the participants for feedback. Include a few minutes for evaluation (e.g., using the "What? So what? Now what?" * technique or an anonymous polling tool).
- If this is a group that works together regularly, initiate an open conversation on meeting design, duration and structure.

* This technique is referenced in [Liberating Structures](#). Following a shared experience, a group can ask, "What? What happened? What did you observe?" Then, after collecting observations, ask, "So what? Why is that important? What patterns do you see?" Then, ask, "Now what? What actions make sense?"

