

## Virtual Facilitation Best Practices Guide

### Why Virtual Facilitation Matters

Virtual facilitation requires a **different skill set** than in-person facilitation. The lack of physical presence can lead to **disengagement, communication barriers, and technical challenges**. However, with the right strategies, virtual sessions can be **just as engaging and effective** as in-person discussions. This guide provides **practical tips** to ensure a smooth and interactive virtual facilitation experience.

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## 1. Setting Up for Success

### A. Preparing the Virtual Environment

- ✓ **Test technology in advance** – Check video, audio, and platform settings.
- ✓ **Minimize distractions** – Use a **quiet, well-lit space** with a neutral background.
- ✓ **Have a backup plan** – Prepare for **technical issues** (e.g., internet dropouts, microphone problems).

### B. Establishing Group Norms

- ✓ **Set clear expectations** – Cover **camera use, participation, and confidentiality** upfront.
- ✓ **Encourage engagement** – Use **reactions, chat, and non-verbal cues** to involve participants.
- ✓ **Respect different comfort levels** – Some may prefer **chat participation over speaking**.

#### Example Script:

- *"To make this session engaging, let's agree on a few ground rules. Feel free to participate in whatever way is comfortable—speaking, using the chat, or reacting with emojis."*
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## 2. Keeping Participants Engaged

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## A. Interactive Techniques for Virtual Facilitation

- ✓ **Breakout Rooms** – Use small groups for deeper discussions.
- ✓ **Polls & Surveys** – Gather quick input to guide discussions.
- ✓ **Chat Prompts** – Encourage quick responses without interrupting the flow.
- ✓ **Whiteboards & Collaboration Tools** – Platforms like Miro, MURAL, or Google Jamboard can enhance engagement.

## B. Managing Group Energy & Focus

- ✓ **Use visuals & slides sparingly** – Avoid long text-heavy presentations.
- ✓ **Incorporate movement** – Encourage **stretch breaks** or quick activities.
- ✓ **Vary participation styles** – Mix **large group discussions, breakout groups, and solo reflections.**

### Example:

- *"Let's pause for a quick poll—how is everyone feeling about this topic so far?"*
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# 3. Navigating Virtual Challenges

## A. Handling Technical Issues

- ✓ **Provide clear troubleshooting steps** before the session.
- ✓ **Have a co-facilitator** if possible to manage tech support.
- ✓ **Normalize tech hiccups** – Keep calm and adapt when needed.

### Example Script:

- *"Looks like we lost sound for a moment—thanks for your patience! Let's do a quick recap before moving forward."*

## B. Managing Disruptions & Participation Imbalances

- ✓ **Encourage quiet participants** – *"We haven't heard from a few people yet—would anyone like to share?"*
- ✓ **Address dominant voices respectfully** – *"Great insight! Let's pause and hear*

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*from others."*

✓ **Use private chat for redirection** – If someone is disruptive, check in privately.

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## 4. Best Practices for Effective Virtual Facilitation

✓ **Start with an icebreaker** – Helps **build connection** and ease participants in.

✓ **Use names when possible** – Creates **personal connection** even in virtual spaces.

✓ **Summarize key takeaways** – Reinforce learning before closing.

✓ **Follow up with resources** – Share recordings, notes, or additional materials post-session.

### **Final Thought:**

Virtual facilitation is about **intentional engagement, adaptability, and inclusivity**. With the right tools and strategies, you can create an **interactive and meaningful experience** for all participants, no matter where they are.