

# **FACILITATOR CARDS 101**

## **FACILITATOR WORKBOOK**



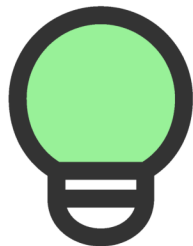
# Put Your Cards to Work

The best way to get to know your deck is hands-on practice. In this workbook, we'll walk you through a meeting scenario so you can begin to think through how Facilitator Cards can help plan ahead.

After working through each of the four categories of cards, you will have created a complete agenda to use for the meeting.

## The Scenario

You are planning the second year of an event. Your team has different ideas and desires for the event this year. You need to check in to see where people are coming into the project, brainstorm ideas for different possibilities, clarify the ideas you're moving forward, then plan the next steps and assign tasks.



## How to Build Agendas That Work

Facilitator Cards are divided into four categories:

**Connect**

**Brainstorm**

**Clarify**

**Decide**

Meetings often naturally flow through these four steps. We start by checking in and **connecting** with who is present; spend time **brainstorming**, **clarify** those ideas; and finally move into **decision making**.

To practice structuring an agenda like this, we'll focus on each step, asking you to **pick a card** you think could work well to **address that specific challenge**.

This workbook is broken down into four categories so you can practice thinking through which card you might select and **why**. **We recommend having your deck in-hand and pulling out all the cards as we go.**

Each category also contains sample prompts and why it works for the scenario. **At the end of the workbook, we share three different agendas and explain how they work and why the flow makes for a great meeting.**

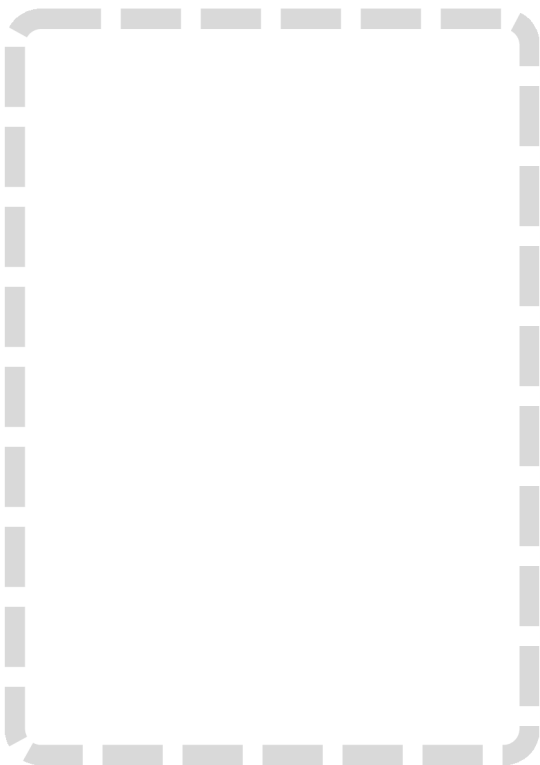


# First Task: Connect

You want to start the meeting by helping the group identify what **emotions, feelings, and frustrations** they have when they think of this year's event without the meeting becoming an endless vent session.

When you think about what you want to do in this first step we want to help people **surface and connect to their emotions** and that's what the blue cards are best at.

Pick a BLUE card that you could use to help the group identify their emotions in a contained way.



**I picked:** \_\_\_\_\_

**This is why my card will help the group connect and prevent a vent session:**

A large solid rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for writing a response. An arrow points from the text above to the top right corner of this box.

There are multiple right ways to respond in this scenario and whichever blue card you chose, will help create a container for people to consider and share their emotions which will help ensure it doesn't spin out of control.

*Continue to the next page to see three of our ideas and why they would also work for this scenario! (And set aside the card you picked for later in the workbook!)*

# Connect Cards

There is no "correct" answer when it comes to Facilitator Cards. Each process provides a different method by which to get results. If you're not familiar with the process, we recommend reading the card in your deck. Read below to see what our selection thought process and what works about the possible processes.

## Journal Journey

### Journal Journey

Silent journaling exercise for people to process their thoughts alone.

#### Why it works:

- Gives time to think through a number of different reactions.
- Allows everyone to complete an emotional arc without having to wait for others.
- Acts as a release valve for private frustrations.

## Declarative Pairs

### Declarative Pairs

Have everyone process their thoughts out loud in pairs.

#### Why it works:

- Gives people a chance to express feelings quickly.
- Allows people to vent efficiently!
- Everyone gets to feel heard and express themselves without involving the group.

## Thinking & Feeling

### Thinking & Feeling

Asks the entire group to share two answers in a one-sentence response.

#### Why it works:

- Logical answers create a buffer for intimacy within the group.
- Gets people used to sharing out loud in front of the group so they can practice participating in a low-risk way.
- Short shares (one or two sentences per person) keep the meeting from turning into a vent session.

# Second Task: Brainstorm

Next, you want to have the group **brainstorm** ideas for this year's event. Your goal is to get a **wide variety of ideas** and **make sure that everyone gets a chance to contribute**.

When you think about what you want to do for the second step, consider what outcomes you hope to get from the brainstorm. The best brainstorms happen when **everyone is able to contribute** and **no single idea dominates the conversation** too early in the process.

Pick a GREEN card that you could use to help the group brainstorm.



I picked: \_\_\_\_\_

**This is why my card will help the group brainstorm and get the best ideas:**

A large solid rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for a student to write their reasoning. A curved arrow points from the text above to the top right corner of this box.

There are multiple answers to this question. Whichever green card you choose will help define *how* the group is going to approach the brainstorm, which will allow for the widest range of answers from the group.

*Continue to the next page to see three of our ideas and why they would also work for this scenario. Remember to set aside the card you picked for later!*

# Brainstorm Cards

Each process creates a different artifact that captures the group's ideas. Sometimes the easiest way to pick a process is by thinking about how the ideas will be captured or referenced by the group later. Consider how you want to interact with the ideas (sticky notes, flip chart lists, etc) when selecting a process.

## Reverse Engineering



### Reverse Engineering

Have everyone think from the end to beginning of a project to create their own future road map.

#### Why it works:

- Helps people remember that there's a goal in mind.
- Participants feel less stuck because we begin at the finish line and work backwards.
- Solo ideation allows everyone to have ideas before having a discussion. Groupthink decreases and participation increases.

## Mind Mapping



### Mind Mapping

Small groups generate ideas in detailed subcategories.

#### Why it works:

- Ideation at different levels helps distinguish between categories of ideas and more specific changes.
- Mind maps happen in small groups so one person can't take over the whole meeting.
- Information ends up grouped into pods; people will talk about their ideas and you can naturally move on to other voices.

## 100 Ideas



### 100 Ideas

The entire group participates in generating a large number of ideas.

#### Why it works:

- All possibilities are displayed before they get narrowed down.
- No single voice can dominate discussion because everyone has time to come up with ideas.
- Outlandish and unfeasible suggestions spark interesting discussions and open up new paths.

# Third Task: Clarify

Now that you have all of the ideas, your next task is to help the group ask the important questions and narrow the selection. Through clarifying we can **identify sticking points, check in with the experts in the room, and generate authentic buy-in from the group.**

When you think about what you want to do for this step, think about what **questions you want the group to consider** about their ideas and *how* you can **help them listen with curiosity to any questions or suggestions.**

Pick a YELLOW card that you could use to help the group clarify their ideas.



**I picked:** \_\_\_\_\_

**This is why my card will help the group clarify and narrow their selection:**

A large solid rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for writing a response. A curved arrow points from the text above to the top right corner of this box.

The clarify cards have a wide variety of ways for the group to interact with their ideas. Approaching the clarifying process with a clear sense of strengthening the ideas helps the group avoid conflict during the conversation.

*Continue to the next page to see three of our ideas and how we would use them for this scenario! (Line your chosen yellow card up with your other cards! Almost there!)*

# Clarify Cards

It can be tempting to assume the group is ready to move forward with an idea without letting them clarify. Answering questions and gaining perspective is essential to getting everyone on the same page before making a decision. Skipping this step = more work later!

## Five Whys

### Five Whys

Dig deeper into *why* to help everyone understand the bigger picture.

#### Why it works:

- Invites deep introspection and gets to the root of the opinion being held.
- Helps people understand their own reaction without being influenced by the opinions of others.
- Because the activity begins with silent writing, the follow-up debrief conversation starts with informed opinions.

## Fishbowl

### Fishbowl

A small group conversation that the full group listens to.

#### Why it works:

- Moves through conversation thoroughly and quickly by limiting the number of people having the discussion.
- Satisfies the need for the whole group to hear the conversation.
- Allows everyone to participate through speaking or active listening.

## Hot Seat

### Hot Seat

Have the group ask clarifying questions to a chosen expert for deeper insight.

#### Why it works:

- Lets one person (or a select group of people) share insights that are helpful for the rest of the group.
- Creates a container for the discussion by passing the mic rather than allowing a participant to take it.
- Putting one person on the spot creates a smooth transition from the Fishbowl to the next part of the meeting.



# Final Task: Decide

You want to end the meeting by creating a list of the next steps and identify who is responsible for which task. Have the group **compare the ideas, outline and evaluate the plan**, and **commit to specific tasks** and deadlines.

What would you like the group to focus on when determining their decisions? How do you want to structure the priorities so that no one leaves wondering if anything will actually get done?

Pick a RED card that you could use to help the group identify their emotions in a contained way.



**I picked:** \_\_\_\_\_

**This is why my card will help the group make final decisions:**

A large solid rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for writing a response to the prompt. A curved arrow points from the text 'This is why my card will help the group make final decisions:' to the top right corner of this box.

Depending on your clarify process, the group may be ready for a final vote, while others will want to have time for deeper analysis before making a final decision.

*Continue to the next page to see three of our ideas and why they would also work for this scenario! Set aside your red card to create your **complete agenda!***

# Decide Cards

By allowing the group to come to a consensus on what the priorities are, there will be mutual understanding about the necessary next steps to put all of the brilliant ideas they came up with during this meeting into action. Don't assume everyone knows what comes next – encourage specificity!

## Ranked-Choice Voting



### Rank Order Voting

Rank preferences in a private ballot.

Why it works:

- Makes priorities of the entire group clear.
- If there's a large consensus, it will help narrow the focus immediately.
- Helps the group understand where each member is at via private ballot so there's no risk of appeasement influencing the initial vote.

## 10/10/10 Analysis



### 10/10/10 Analysis

Partners analyze an ideas impact across different time horizons.

Why it works:

- Allows people to unpack their top choices and make forecasts.
- Serves to clarify whether their top choice is something they want to go to bat for. They might realize it won't feel that way in the future!
- Helps narrow ideas because each person picks only one idea to analyze.

## Urgent Vs. Important



### Urgent Vs. Important

The full group ranks ideas on a matrix of urgent vs. important to determine next steps.

Why it works:

- Every idea gets to be present on the board, but is then distinguished by priority.
- Helps people narrow the options by explicitly prioritizing them via comparison – is this idea as urgent as this idea?
- Distinguishes urgency to make the next steps more clear to the group.

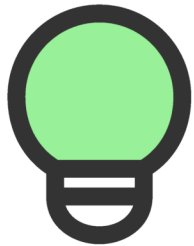
# Cards on the Table

Now that you've selected four cards, lay them on your desk in a row. Think through what it might look like and feel like to facilitate your group through this agenda.

How do you feel about your plan now that you see all of the cards? Did you choose different processes by using the cards? How did making choices for each step of the agenda shape your final plan?

## Reminder: The Scenario

You are planning the second year of an event. Your team has different ideas and desires for the event this year. You need to check in to see where people are coming into the project, brainstorm ideas for different possibilities, clarify the ideas you're moving forward, then plan the next steps and assign tasks.



## Energy Flow & Directions

Now that you're more familiar with how you want to move through each category – **connect**, **brainstorm**, **clarify**, and **decide** – imagine how the group's energy changes throughout the agenda.

- Are you starting with a high-energy activity right out of the gate?
- Or are you easing into the meeting with a chance for quiet reflection?
- Which one do you think your group will engage with more?
- What sets you up for the rest of the meeting in terms of trust, vulnerability, and social safety?

You could have crafted a wide variety of agendas during the scenario – and each of them would have changed how the meeting would happen. There is space for working through your agenda on the next page!

**There is no "right" answer when it comes to facilitating; there is just a variety of choices to make.**

On the following pages, we've put together three different example agendas. We'll get into why they work, what the energy flow feels like, and what materials we would prep ahead of time.

# Evaluate Your Agenda



Now that you've selected four cards, lay them on your desk in a row.

Check out the information at the bottom of each card to see what group sizes they'll be working in, what materials you'll need, and how much time it generally takes to facilitate that process. Considering those elements can also help you evaluate your agenda, which is what we'll invite you to do on the rest of this page!

## **Evaluation #1: Do your cards have different group sizes?**

How do you think the different group sizes might effect participation?

## **Evaluation #2: Do your cards have different materials?**

How do you think the materials might effect participation?

## **Evaluation #3: Do your cards have different time frames?**

How do you think the time frames might effect participation?

**When you vary group sizes, materials, and time frames you create opportunities for different types of people to give different types of input.** The energy will also vary throughout the session which will keep people engaged and participating.

On the following pages, we've put together three different example agendas. We'll get into why each of them work, what the energy flow feels like, and what materials we would prep ahead of time.

# Meeting Agenda #1

This agenda starts with Declarative Pairs: **partners** share out loud with each other, which gets everyone participating and more comfortable using their voice. 100 Ideas is a **full-group** activity where no idea is a bad idea! Then we transition to Fishbowl to have a **small group** discuss options while the rest of the group listens in. Finally, we use Ranked-Choice Voting to cast **individual** private ballots to select the ideas the group most wants to move forward.

## Declarative Pairs

Give participants a set amount of time during which they will say declarative "I" statements uninterrupted to a partner. Instruct participants to start every sentence the same way: "I believe," "I know," "I am," etc. The listening partner remains silent and keeps track of time. Once time is up, have partners swap roles and repeat.



Connect



Pairs



No Supplies



5 Minutes

fc.cards/declare

## 100 Ideas

Provide a prompt and have the group collectively generate 100 ideas captured on sticky notes, one idea per sticky. Emphasize that any idea counts —this is about quantity, not quality. Aim for 100 ideas, or set a short timer and generate until time runs out.



Brainstorm



Everybody



Stickies & Markers



10 Minutes

fc.cards/100

## Fishbowl

Give participants a prompt or question, then select a small group of volunteers to have a discussion while the rest of the group silently observes. Have volunteers sit in chairs in the middle of a circle or at the front of the room to allow everyone to easily see and hear their conversation.



Clarify



Everybody



No Supplies



10 Minutes

fc.cards/fish

## Ranked-Choice Voting

Have participants vote on a set of potential options by putting them in rank order. Tally all of the first-ranked votes. If a clear majority has been reached, that is the end of the process. If a majority has not been reached, add in the second-ranked votes. Continue adding ranks until there is a majority winner.



Decide



Solo



Pen & Paper



5 Minutes

fc.cards/rank

## Why it works:

When we picture how the energy would flow during this session, it resembles a bell curve. Most of the energy is concentrated in the ideation and discussion around the central issue we're trying to solve.

## This agenda lowers the stakes on purpose:

- Participants start by sharing to one other person.
- The group creates a bunch of ideas with permission for all of them to be "bad" without judgement.
- Only a small group of volunteers is needed for the fishbowl discussion.
- Voting is anonymous.

## Materials prep:

- Stickies and markers (100 Ideas)
- Paper and pen (Ranked-Choice Voting)

# Meeting Agenda #2

This agenda starts with Thinking & Feeling, in which the **full group** shares a one-sentence response to a prompt. This gets everyone used to responding out loud. Then, move into a **solo activity**, Reverse Engineering, where the participants will start at the finish line and work backwards to come up with ideas. They'll **clarify those ideas solo** by digging in with Five Whys and wrap up by analyzing their solutions with a **partner** using 10/10/10 Analysis for further investigation.

## Thinking & Feeling

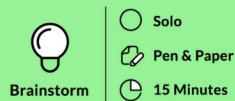
Share a prompt or question, then ask each participant to share one thing they think and one thing they feel in response. Shares should be brief and should reflect both logical and emotional responses to the prompt.



fc.cards/think

## Reverse Engineering

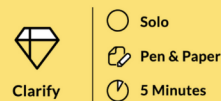
Have participants imagine they are in a future where their goal has already been accomplished. From that vantage point, have them write down the steps and milestones that were necessary to fulfill the goal. Participants should brainstorm from the end result, working backwards.



fc.cards/reverse

## Five Whys

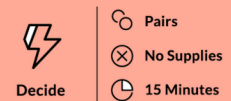
Ask participants a question and have them write their answer as a single sentence. Then, ask them to write another one-sentence response to this prompt: "Why is what you just wrote down true?" Ask "Why?" three more times, instructing them to respond in relation to their previous answer each time.



fc.cards/why

## 10/10/10 Analysis

Have each participant choose their ideal option from a list of possibilities. Then, in pairs, have them discuss the potential impacts of selecting that option along the time horizons of ten minutes, ten months, and ten years. Once both partners have gone, repeat the process with the other options.



fc.cards/ten

## Why it works:

This agenda is perfect for a more mellow energy. The group gets a chance to connect right away before having a quieter round of brainstorming and clarifying. Having time to further interrogate their ideas before sharing them allows a final result that everyone has contributed to, which produces a higher level of buy-in throughout the group.

## This agenda keeps things introspective:

- The group connects on what they're thinking and feeling.
- Ideas are generated in a novel way – we rarely start from the end result in order to determine next steps.
- Participants are able to interrogate their own ideas and motivations.
- After working solo and with the group, participants will share a polished idea with one other person.

## Materials prep:

- Paper and pen (Reverse Engineering)
- Stickies and markers (Five Whys)

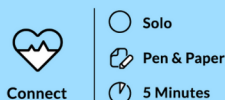


# Meeting Agenda #3

This agenda starts with a **solo** writing exercise (Journal Journey), then moves to **small groups** where ideas will be expanded on (Mind Mapping). To clarify those ideas, have experts in the group come to the front for Hot Seat to answer questions **the full group** has about what came up while making mind maps. Then, **everyone** will rank ideas in Urgent Vs. Important, which makes clear what steps need to be taken next and which of those should come first.

## Journal Journey

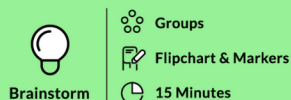
Invite participants to write silent reflections in response to a series of related questions or prompts. Let them know before they begin writing whether their papers will be collected by the facilitator, shared with others, or used solely for their own reflection.



fc.cards/journal

## Mind Mapping

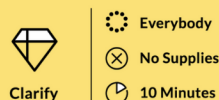
In groups, have participants brainstorm by drawing a web of connected information about a concept on their flip chart paper. Start with the central concept in the middle, then branch out, identifying various components. Continue to capture further insights to create subtopics.



fc.cards/mind

## Hot Seat

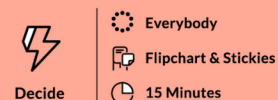
Select a participant to answer questions from the group on a specific topic for an allotted amount of time. The person in the hot seat may be selected based on expertise, role, stance, or other traits.



fc.cards/hot

## Urgent Vs. Important

Create a four-quadrant grid, labeling the columns Important and Not Important and the rows Urgent and Not Urgent. With elements of the plan written on individual sticky notes, have the group discuss where the stickies should be placed on the matrix.



fc.cards/urgent

## Why it works:

This agenda slowly builds towards higher energy and large group sharing. By starting solo, moving to small groups, and then opening it up, everyone has a chance to settle in before hearing from the rest of the group.

## This agenda keeps everyone in the know:

- Quiet activity comes first so everyone knows how they feel.
- Mind maps are expansive – every idea gets recorded and categorized.
- The group comes to an understanding together, reminding them of the wealth of information they already know.
- The team ranks the next steps in the urgent vs. important.

## Materials prep:

- Paper and pen (Journal Journey)
- Flip chart paper, tape, and markers (Mind Mapping)
- Flip chart, stickies, and markers (Urgent Vs. Important)

# Now you're off!

Facilitator Cards were created to help you make the best plans. Every group needs something a little different, and these processes are there to help you run your best workshops, meetings, and sessions.

Whether you casually flip through the deck of Facilitator Cards for reminders or keep one deck on your desk and another in your backpack to be able to plan at any moment, we hope you get the most out of your cards.

## What's next?

Come to Facilitator Cards 101 live!  
[Check out our events calendar for details.](#)

**Follow us on social media!** We post tips about facilitation as well as card-specific info and updates.



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*This document was last edited March 2025*

*For questions, feedback, or to just say hello - email [hello@facilitator.cards](mailto:hello@facilitator.cards)*