

TOOL DESCRIPTION

Open Space



The Open Space method is based on the idea that the best connections and learning happen outside of an agenda and emerge from participants within a space. In an Open Space setting, participants create their own agenda in parallel working sessions on a central theme.

The idea is that participants can move around freely and contribute to the topics that they identify with the most strongly.




They should follow 4 simple principles. Other than this, it is up to the participants to decide how they want the session to go:

1. Whoever comes is the right person
2. Whatever happens is the only thing that can happen
3. Whenever it starts is the right time
4. Whenever the session is over, it's over

Additionally, during the Open Space, the Law of Two Feet dictates that, if any person finds themselves in a situation where they are neither learning nor contributing, they must use their feet and go to a more productive place.

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| Duration 2–3 h | Participants 30–100 people | Facilitation some kind of room labeling needed, (post-it notes or templates) |
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Open Space | Process

| Setting the stage approx. 30 min  | Running the Open Space sessions 45–60 min  | Reflecting on the Open Space approx. 10 min  |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Before the workshop, participants propose a question/topic and are invited to host that discussion. Similar topics can be consolidated.• Topics can also be generated by participants at the beginning of an Open Space session.• Proposed topics are presented in the plenary session of the workshop.• Depending on the size of the plenary group, 3–10 small group discussions are held per time slot. One slot lasts for 45–60 min to maintain a high energy level.• If there are more topics than fit in the time slots, participants vote on the ones they would like to address by using sticker dots. Extra topics can be saved until next Open Space.• 2-slot sequences are usually optimal (2 x 45–60 min). | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Everyone should have access to clear and simple directions regarding where each session is.• Other than that, just follow the principles:<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Whoever comes is the right person.2. Whatever happens is the only thing that can happen.3. Whenever it starts is the right time.4. Whenever the session is over, it's over. <p>Additionally, during the Open Space, the Law of Two Feet dictates that, if any person finds themselves in a situation where they are neither learning nor contributing, they must use their feet and go to a more productive place.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Come back together for a debriefing session to discuss your conversations. Have the group discuss and reflect on these questions.• You could prompt this as a personal journal reflection, a pair share, or a group discussion, depending on the energy in the room. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What happened at the session(s) you attended? What did it feel like to be in the space you created?2. What new things did you learn? Were you surprised by anything? Did anything about this Open Space process challenge you?3. What will you do with what you learned as you move forward? Will the conversations you had affect the way you live your life in the future? |