



# Tools for Meetings and Workshops

**Includes Tools for:**  
Introductions and Starting Meetings  
Building Trust  
Tackling Issues

Encouraging Participation  
Resolving Conflict  
Energisers and Games  
Evaluating

This is a compilation of tools that we have found useful when working in groups. Often it is best to have someone facilitate these exercises and to set some groundrules together with the group, such as 'No-interrupting' and 'Stick to time'. Some general points to bear in mind:

- ★ Every group is different. Some tools may not be appropriate in a specific group or situation. Don't force a tool on a group or an individual, do let people decide for themselves to what extent they want to participate.
- ★ Be flexible. Don't let the process dominate the spirit of the group, but allow tools to evolve organically with the group. Be creative and invent your own tools.
- ★ Make use of visual aids such as blackboards. Use them to write down instructions, questions to consider and to record responses from the participants.
- ★ Be aware that people might not be happy to share with the whole group everything that was said in a pair/small group.
- ★ Do explain the purpose of a tool before asking the group to use it. That way people feel in control of what they are doing, allowing them to participate more fully.

## Tools for Introductions and Starting Meetings

These tools help people get acquainted with each other and are best used at the beginning of a meeting. Check out the web for more ideas, for example:  
[www.wilderdom.com/games/gamesspecific.html](http://www.wilderdom.com/games/gamesspecific.html)

**Personal Introductions:** Each person gives their name, where they are from and one other fact about themselves. This third fact could be freely chosen by each individual or the facilitator could suggest a theme (e.g. What kind of food they like, why they are at the meeting, something good that happened in the last week).



**Pair Introductions:** Ask people to pair up with people they don't know or know less well. One person interviews the other for three minutes, then roles are swapped. Questions can include the reasons why the person is there and what they are hoping to learn/achieve during the meeting/workshop. When the whole group re-forms the pairs introduce each other, giving as much detail as they can remember. The facilitator could also suggest specific themes to be included in the interview.

**Name Games:** There are countless games that help people remember everyone else's name. Here's one of our favourites: The group stands in a circle facing each other. Everyone needs to think of a verb (action word) that begins with the same letter as their name. Have an initial go-round where everyone says what their name is (e.g. jumping James). When everyone has said what they're called, start off by throwing a (real or imaginary) ball to someone while saying their name and acting out the verb (so you throw a ball to Jumping James, and Jump while you say his name). James then throws the ball to the next person, while saying and acting out their name (Laughing Lindsay)...

**Cocktail Party:** Ask people to imagine that they are at a cocktail party and get them to mill around, meet each other, shake hands and chat. You can change the scene after a bit to a nightclub, on the beach, etc.

**People Map:** Create a human map to show where people consider their home. Indicate North, East, South & West, and allow participants to position themselves to create a map. Ask people furthest away where they are from. Proceed to each cluster of people. People can also reposition themselves. You could vary this by asking where people would like to live/go on holiday etc.

**Excitement Sharing:** People share something exciting that has happened to them recently. Examples are: *'I've harvested the first peas of the year'*, *'My friend from New Zealand came to visit'*, *'I've got a new job'*. This creates a lot of positive energy for the meeting and puts people more in touch with each other's lives. You can use this instead of introductions when people already know each other. Make sure people keep it brief. Discourage comments or questions. Don't confuse excitement sharing with announcements.

**Feeling Sharing:** Ask people to listen inwards and to consider how they feel. Then have a round with people describing in a couple of sentences how they feel, for example curious, nervous, tired, excited. This allows the facilitator and the group to tune into each other. If people are tired have an energiser and open the windows. A variation is to ask people to visualise a plant that relates to how they feel and to share this with the group.

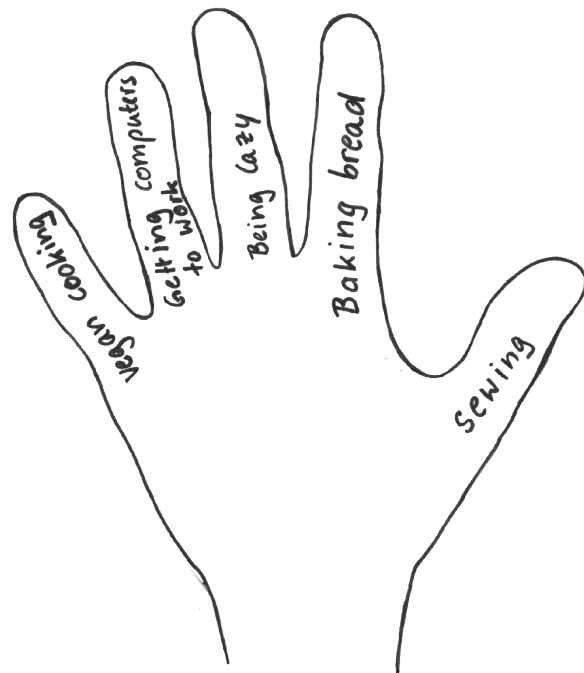
**Getting Present:** Sit in a circle so that everyone can see and hear each other. Ask people to share in turn bothers, distractions and events that are on their mind. For example: "I'm giving a presentation this afternoon and I feel nervous." "My daughter had a baby last night. It's my first grandchild." Ask everyone to give their full attention to the speaker. As facilitator you can help people if they appear stuck. Interventions could include: "Is there any action you want to take?" "Is there anything else you want to say about that?"

This tool is suitable for groups that work together closely and where there is a high level of trust.

## Tools for Building Trust

These exercises help build trust in a group by sharing personal details and feelings with each other.

**Skilled Hand Exercise:** Hand out paper and pens. Ask everyone to draw around their hands and to write something they do well into each of the fingers. Split into pairs. Take turns discussing things you do well and how you acquired those skills. This exercise not only helps people find out more about each other, but also develops people's confidence.



**Picture Yourself:** Hand out coloured paper and coloured pens. Ask people to draw/paint a picture that expresses who they are. When everyone has finished ask people to pair up and explain their pictures to their partners. The partners then introduce each other to the group using the picture.

**Alternative CV:** Hand out coloured sheets of paper and coloured pens. Ask people to draw a pattern of their choice on their piece of paper. When everyone has finished ask people to fill the pattern with words or phrases describing what they like about themselves, skills they have and skills they would like to have. Ask people to write their name on this. Pass around the finished patterns for everyone to look at or hang them up on the wall. This exercise helps people to appreciate themselves and others for who they are, laying a good foundation for working together.

**A Journey of Discovery:** Go outside into a garden or woodland. Form into pairs. One person closes their eyes, the other guides that person by the hand and takes them to discover natural objects with all their senses apart from sight. Swap roles after a set time. Participants need to be very careful not to abuse the trust placed in them by their partners. It is very pleasant to touch and smell a flower, but not a thistle! This can be quite a lot of fun especially after or in the middle of a long, tiring session.

**Mirroring:** Split into pairs standing opposite each other. One person makes movements, the other tries to mirror them as well as they can. Swap roles. When both have played both roles, they can try to coordinate movements with each other, so that both become player and mirror at the same time. This works best with slow movements and needs a lot of concentration. Try not to talk while playing.

## Tools for Tackling Issues

**Brainstorms** are a tool for sparking creative thinking and help to quickly gather a large number of ideas. Begin with stating the issue to be brainstormed. Ask people to call out all their ideas as fast as possible - without censoring it. The crazier the ideas the better. This helps people to be inspired by each other. Have one or two note takers to write all ideas down where everyone can see them. Make sure there is no discussion or comment on others' ideas. Structured thinking and organising can come afterwards.

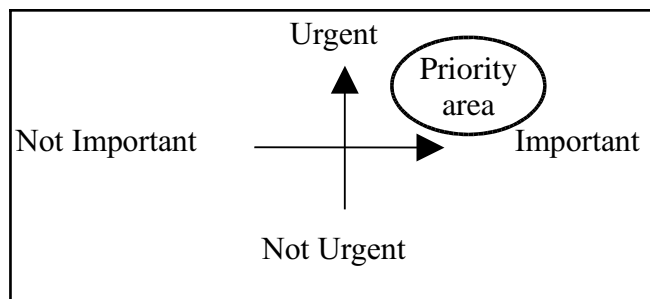


**Pros & Cons:** Got several ideas and can't decide which one to go for? Simply list the benefits and drawbacks of each idea and compare the results. This can be done as a full group, or by asking pairs, or small groups to work on the pros and cons of one option and report back to the group.

**Spectrum Lines:** They help to explore and visually rank the different views on an issue within the group. Start by creating an imaginary or real line through the room (chalk or masking tape are good for indoor spaces). One end stands for “I agree completely”, the other end for “I disagree completely”. Outline the issue under debate and formulate it into a statement to agree or disagree with. Ask people to position themselves along the line according to their views. They may try out several spots before making a final choice. Ask them to have a short conversation with the person next to them, explaining why they are where they are. Then invite participants to share their viewpoints and feelings with the group. Repeat this exercise with other statements that explore the issue under discussion and see whether and how people’s viewpoints change. You could also use a curved line so that people can see each other. This exercise taps into both our intuitive and rational sides and needs to be done quietly and thoughtfully. A Spectrum Line may require strong facilitation to stop the group from slipping into general discussion.

### Urgent/Important Grid:

A classic time-management tool that can be applied to group prioritisation! You can use this tool on paper, or as a ‘Spectrum Line’ (see above). The group can rank ideas according to their urgency and importance:



To use as a Spectrum, divide up the room into 4 quarters. Get the group to imagine the axes (marking these out with chalk or tape on the floor will help). Label the axes ‘Urgent’, ‘Important’, etc. as in the diagram and ask people to stand where they feel appropriate for the first option, then the second etc. Your priority should be the things that most people feel are both “urgent” and “important”.

**Clearing Out:** Agree on a topic (“Things that make us angry”, “Destruction of the Earth” etc.) Ask everyone to write down things that come into mind onto a large piece of paper. Give the group the chance to look at all that has been written down, then get everyone to tear up the