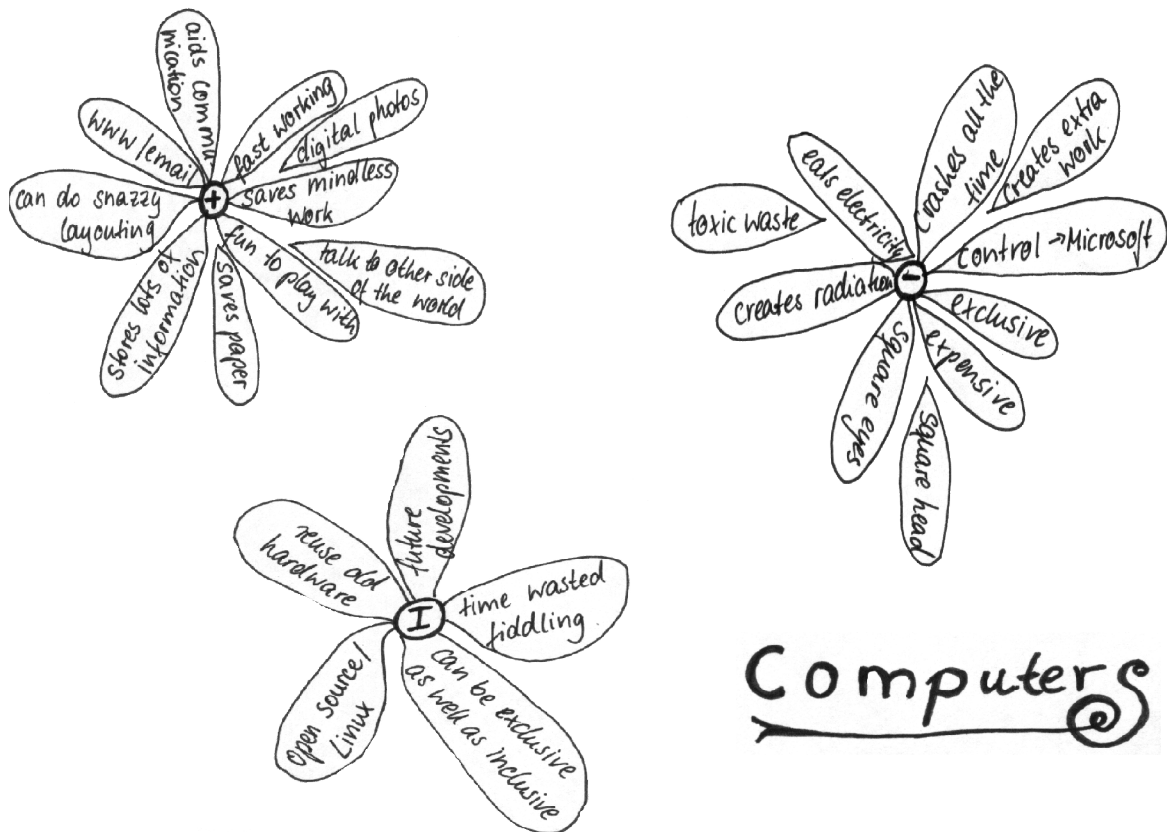


sheet of paper and to drop it into the bin or the fire bit by bit. It's very liberating after an analysis of the depressing state of the world and before brainstorming actions that we can take, as it helps us to overcome the feeling of being helpless. It's also great fun.

**Mapping:** Use large writing where everyone can see it. Arrange key words in groups or out on their own. Use connecting arrows, colours and pictures. This is a lot more organic and fun than a simple list. It can allow people to make new connections. The writing could be done by one person or everyone in the group.

**Plus-Minus-Interesting (PMI)** is a process that allows the expression of opposing views without generating too much conflict. This tool can be used in the whole group, in small groups or individually. Write the topic across the top of a large sheet of paper. Draw a plus sign, a minus sign and an "I" (which stands for Interesting). Start with the plus and ask people to list anything that they feel to be positive about the topic. Write these without comment around the plus sign. When everyone has had their say move on to the minus sign and list everything that people feel to be more negative. Around the "I" sign list everything that people find interesting, ideas that could be explored further etc. Then move back to the plus sign and start a second round. The first round finds out what's happening with the group. The second round builds upon it. One particular issue can come up in every section as people might have different opinions. Issues can have both a positive and a negative side!



**Hassle Lines:** are a form of quick role plays. They are great for getting people to explore their emotional responses to a situation, to look at body language or to prepare for a particular situation such as aggression from the public or the police during an action.

Participants form two lines, each facing a partner. The two lines are given roles and a brief scenario and then step towards each other and play their roles. The left row for example may

take on the role of protesters, the other side of unsympathetic passers-by, making a provocative comment such as “get a job, you dirty hippy”.

After a short time (thirty seconds to two minutes) the facilitator stops the role play and asks a few people for their comments, e.g. how it worked and how it made them feel. Roles can then be swapped and scenarios varied.

**Role Plays:** In this form of improvised drama players take on roles in a given scenario as preparation for a real life situation or to evaluate a past experience. Role plays also help to understand people's reactions, and give insights into the thoughts and feelings of “opponents”. Select a situation to be played out. Ask yourself what you want to examine and why. A simple situation is best. Explain the situation carefully, including the groups represented and the physical layout. A role play is used to learn what to do in a situation *or* to study a particular role and reaction. Define one of them but not both as that would restrict spontaneity.

Ask people to volunteer for roles that they do not identify with strongly. Give them a few minutes to get into their roles. Ask everyone who is not playing to be active observers.

The facilitator stops the role play when enough issues have been uncovered, the play comes to a natural end or people want to stop. The play should also be stopped if a player shows great tension / gets too involved. Have a short break and then evaluate the role play.

Evaluation gives players and observers the chance to assimilate and analyse what has happened. Start by asking the players how they felt in their roles. Ask observers for their impressions and then allow discussion. What have people learnt and how they will apply their insights in real life? Discourage comments that tell players what they *should* have done. Compliment people for acting boldly in difficult situations regardless of the outcome. Role plays are there for learning. Use encouraging language such as “Another option that you might try is...”, “Perhaps this would work...”, “I learned ... from your tactic and would like to try...”. Evaluation should not go on too long. If new insights come up the group might want to try them out in a new role play rather than talk about what might happen.

**Reverse Role Plays** allow people understand both sides of a conflict. They can help people entrenched in one position to think more flexibly. They are useful for examining a critical incident that occurs repeatedly or is expected to occur and for developing a definition of acceptable behaviour (e.g. conflicts over power, sexism, ageism etc.).

Set up a situation involving two sides. At an important point in the role play, have everyone freeze. Ask people to take the opposite role and take up the conversation where it left off. The facilitator may have to help people remember what the last lines of the dialogue were. It can help if the facilitator physically moves people to their new positions and says “You are now X, and you are now Y”. Give people a moment to mentally shift to their new identities and resume the role play. Follow the role play with an evaluation.

## Tools for Encouraging Participation

**Hand Signals:** A simple technique that can make meetings and workshops run more smoothly and also help the facilitator see emerging agreements and common ground. Three simple signals should suffice:

★ **Raise a forefinger** when you wish to contribute to the discussion with a general point.

★ **Raise both forefingers** if your point is directly relevant to the current discussion. This allows you to jump to the head of the queue, in front of all those people raising just one finger. Use wisely and discourage overuse!

★ **'Silent applause'** – when you hear an opinion that you agree with, wave a hand with your fingers pointing upwards (also called 'twinkling'). This saves a lot of time as people don't need to chip in to say “I'd just like to add that I agree with...”

**Keeping a Speakers List:** A tool which involves asking people to raise a finger (see *Hands ignals*) when they wish to speak, and noting them down in order. They are then invited to speak in that order. The group will soon become impatient with people that ignore this protocol and just barge in and interrupt.

**Active Agreement:** is a useful groundrule for every meeting or workshop. It asks everyone to take an active part in making decisions. When the group is asked a question or has to make a decision, insist on active agreement. Too many bad decisions are made because people stare at their feet rather than clearly agree or disagree. Later on those same people may feel that the decision was not one they supported, leading to tension in the group. By insisting on active (dis)agreement this can be avoided and decisions that represent the views of all can be reached. Silent applause, or lack of it, (see *Hand signals*) can be a useful way of showing active agreement.



**The Parking Lot** makes sure all ideas get recorded and participants don't feel like they've been ignored. Whenever anything comes up that's not relevant to the discussion at hand “park” it in the Parking Lot (a large sheet of paper on the wall). In other words write it up on the paper and deal with it later. This allows you to stay focussed but reassures participants they will be heard. Of course if you want to avoid people feeling ignored, make sure you do deal with parked items! Consider having a space reserved on the agenda to deal with parked items.

**Go-rounds:** Everyone takes a turn to speak on a subject without interruption or comment from other people. Go-rounds are useful for equalising participation and giving everyone some clear space to express their opinion. Allowing people to “pass” means that quieter people don't feel put on the spot. To keep it focussed clearly state what the purpose of the Go-round is and write the question on a flipchart where everyone can see it. You can set time limits as necessary.

**Working in Small Groups:** There are many reasons why you may want to split into smaller groups:

★ Large groups can sometimes become dominated by a few people or ideas, stifling creativity and the contributions of others.

★ It can be difficult to discuss emotionally charged issues in a large group.

★ Effectiveness: many topics are discussed more effectively in a smaller focus group - for example the details of laying out a newsletter .

★ Smaller groups allow time for everyone to speak and to feel involved. They are a lot less intimidating too.

Think about the sort of group you need - a random split (e.g. numbering off or by eye/hair colour etc.) or specific interest groups? Explain clearly what you want groups to do. Write specific questions / topics on large paper / a blackboard beforehand and give them to each group. If you are going to have feedback at the end, you need to say clearly what they need to feedback.

**Talking Sticks:** You can use a stick or a conch shell or almost any other distinctive object. Place the talking stick in the centre of the group. Speakers take it from the centre, say their piece and return it to the middle. Only the person holding the talking stick is permitted to speak (you can set a time limit if necessary). This tool allows people to consider and take their time in voicing their views as they don't have to be afraid that some one else might jump in. It also makes people conscious of when they interrupt others and helps them to break the habit.



**Matchstick Discussion:** This can be used to place limits on dominant or over-eager speakers. It also encourages shy speakers to contribute. Each person is given the same number of matches (one to five matches depending on time available.) Every time someone speaks s/he gives up a match. When someone has used all their matches they may not speak again until everyone else's matches are gone too. Decide beforehand whether people may give their matches to other members of the group.

**Cross Exercise:** Draw a cross in the middle of the room with some chalk. This cross symbolises the proposal. Everyone positions themselves in the room - depending on how strongly they identify with the proposal closer to or further away from the cross. This exercise can also be used to find out how strongly people identify with the group.

**Think and Listen in Pairs:** This tool creates a space where everyone is heard, enabling participants to explore and formulate their own thoughts/feelings on an issue without interruption. It can help in uncovering and resolving conflict as well as allowing people to gather and consolidate their thoughts before a group discussion. Listening in pairs is also a good way of developing skills in active listening.

Split into pairs, one person is the listener, the other the thinker. The thinker speaks about her thoughts/feelings on the issue. S/he may also be quiet or laugh. Encourage the thinker to speak first thoughts - that is to speak as thoughts enter the mind without analysing or holding back. This may seem difficult at first - think of it as holding an internal monologue, but out loud. The role of the listener is to give full attention to the thinker without interrupting, questioning or commenting. The listener can provide an attentive and supportive atmosphere through eye contact, body language, encouraging noises, smiles and nods. If the thinker gets stuck the listener may ask neutral questions such as "How does that make you feel? Why do you think that?" After a set time (3-5 minutes is usually plenty of time) thinker and listener swap roles.

This exercise can be followed by a go-round in the full group, with every participant summarising her/his thoughts or summarising those of their partner.