

Open Space Workshops

The 'open space workshop' is a widely used method for facilitating discussion in fairly large groups. The role of the facilitator here is not to intervene actively in the discussions, but to set up and manage the overall structure of the event.



A typical open space workshop would go like this:

- The space is prepared: chairs, ideally in a circle; a bulletin board listing the different spaces for group-work, a time-table, and blank spaces for topics.
- Participants sit in a circle. A facilitator explains the purpose of the session and the procedure.
- Participants are invited to identify issues they'd like to hold discussions about. They write their issue on a sheet of paper or card, with their name. Individuals read out what they've written, and place the sheet on the bulletin board in a place / time slot. Several issues can be dealt with in one discussion group if there are more issues than slots.
- Everyone gathers round the bulletin board and signs up for the sessions they'd like to take part in.
- The discussion sessions take place. Results are recorded and afterwards posted on the bulletin board.
- The whole workshop ends with everyone getting together again as one group for a general debate, reflection and summing up.

The facilitator is responsible for circulating a report after the workshop.