



A Facilitator Is...

A facilitator helps lead a group to work together toward a shared goal/purpose. Being a good facilitator is a skill of all good leaders. Everyone can learn how to be a facilitator and most people have facilitated before, but just didn't know that was what it is called.

This tip sheet is about what it takes to be a good facilitator.

Teaching or Facilitating?

When we think of a person who leads a group of people, we often think of teachers. Yet, facilitating a group and teaching a class are two very different things.

What is the difference between a facilitator and a teacher?

A teacher:

- is “in charge”
- is the expert, the one who knows all of the information
- has knowledge the students must learn
- knows best
- decides what the students are doing
- evaluates the student, figures out how much the student has learned, how “well” the student has done

A Facilitator:

- is responsible for helping the group get things done
- finds out what the group wants to do
- is not the expert or the only one with all the knowledge/information
- makes sure everyone in the group listens to each other
- asks questions to help the group decide what to do
- lets the group evaluate themselves and figure out how “well” they’ve done



Active Listening

To be a good facilitator and a good leader a person needs good listening skills. What is good listening? We've all had an experience talking to friends or family members and wondered if they were listening. Maybe other things going on were distracting them, or maybe they really weren't interested in what you were saying. What did they do to make you feel that way?

A good listener is an active listener. Active Listening is listening and facilitating together.

Active listening is:

- listening to the entire statement before you respond
- listening with empathy [empathy means that you try to understand how that person feels] and trying to understand where the other person is coming from [their perspective]
- not judging what others say
- paraphrasing, or summarizing, what others are saying in your own words and then asking them if it is right
- clarifying, asking questions that get to the point of what others are trying to say
- is using youth friendly/accessible language
- making sure the group understands what people are saying/sharing

Active Listening is NOT:

- jumping to conclusions
- cutting the person off
- adding in your opinion while someone else is speaking
- being distracted [by other things going on around you, the time, or how the person looks]
- being bossy