

Group Discussion: Tips to Improve the Group Discussion

How to overcome the challenges of facilitating the Group Discussion

Facilitating a Group Discussion is exciting, but not always easy. At the beginning, you may feel less comfortable and the children may participate less actively. This is normal.

However, with experience, both you and the children will find Group Discussions to be easier, richer and more interesting. Here are tips to help you overcome some of the challenges you might face:

What to do if...

Nobody wants to speak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be the first to share your observations and opinions of the game, and then ask the children if they agree with you and why. • Invite another leader to take part in the Group Discussion.
Children are not listening to each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the "talking stick" (see the back of this sheet). • Have the children play <i>The Noisiest Game in the World</i> (Activity 25) and lead a Group Discussion on the importance of listening.
It is always the same ones who speak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite the children to take turns speaking one after the other, around the circle. • Suggest that each child speak at least once before a child who has already spoken is allowed to speak again. • Pass the "talking stick" until it has gone around the whole circle. Suggest that everyone get equal speaking time, for example 30 seconds. • Give each child 2 or 3 "chips." Each time a child speaks, he or she hands you 1 chip. When a child has no chips left, he or she can no longer speak.
A child does not want to speak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage them to speak, but do not force them. If they do not want to speak, invite them to listen. • Explain to them that you would enjoy hearing what they think. • Ask them to respond to someone else's idea. • Give them a specific responsibility, such as being the "Key Listener" in charge of ensuring that silence and speaking time limits are respected.
Some children are not fluent in the language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translate for them if possible. You may also ask a child, who is able, to act as an interpreter. • Ask very basic questions that can be answered with gestures. For example, you may ask the children to put their thumbs up when they like a game or when they agree, or down when they do not. • Invite the children to draw or choose a picture that expresses how they feel. • Try some of the variations provided on Reference Sheet 17, especially "Green, Yellow, Red."

The group is very big	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide the group into smaller teams for discussion. If possible, try to have a leader to facilitate the Group Discussion in each team. • Allow each child to speak only once.
The group includes children of all ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the children to speak in order of their age: from the youngest to the oldest. • Try out the variations for a multi-age group (see Reference Sheet 17).
Many children did not like the game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the children why they are not happy: Why didn't you like this game? Why do you say it's boring? • Ask the children to suggest ways to improve the game or to create variations.
A child makes an inappropriate comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intervene immediately or, if the time is not right, mention to the child that you would like to speak with him or her later about this incident. As much as possible, avoid ignoring the incident or acting as if it were harmless behaviour. • Refer to the tips on <i>Stopping Verbal Abuse</i> (see Reference Sheet 12).
Some children say they do not like Group Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the children are not familiar with this type of activity, encourage them to be open-minded and to try something new. • Try out the variations provided on Reference Sheet 17.
A child shares a difficult personal experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show empathy for what the child is going through. Be supportive, reassure the child, and thank him or her for sharing this experience with the group. • Encourage the other children to be supportive, respectful and discreet about what they heard. • Explain to the child that you are available to talk if he/she feels like it. In the days following the discussion, be especially available and supportive of the child's needs. • Remember that you must do something if a child tells you that he/she is being abused or mistreated. Immediately inform the appropriate people of any situation that poses a threat to the safety of the child.

The talking stick: a fun way to promote listening

Some indigenous peoples use a sacred object to indicate the right to speak. When a person holds the object in their hands, no one else may say a word. During a Group

Discussion, the leader may use this technique to promote listening. When someone wishes to speak, they must raise their hand and wait until they have the sacred object (such as a stick or scarf) in their hands before they can speak. When they have finished speaking, they hand the object over to someone else whose hand is raised.

Group Discussion: Variations

How to vary your approach to Group Discussion

If you lead Group Discussions frequently, it may be a good idea to vary your approach to increase the children's interest. Here are a few ideas to inspire you:



6-8 years old

Green, Yellow, Red

Give each child a green, a yellow and a red piece of cardboard. Have the children answer simple questions by holding up the colour corresponding to their answer choice. Example:

- If you liked the game a lot, hold up the **green card**.
- If you liked the game a little, hold up the **yellow card**.
- If you did not like the game, hold up the **red card**.

This variation may be useful with a group of children who are not fluent in the language.

The Interview

Conduct a mock interview to spark the children's interest. Make a fake microphone and pass it from one child to the next. Remember to encourage those children with soft voices to speak clearly into the microphone. As a good journalist, make sure to write down some quotes in a notebook!

The Memory Photo

Explain to the children that you would like to take some pictures to remember the game. One by one, the children should pose to show how they feel about the game: happy, angry, tired, etc. The other children should guess what feeling is being acted out. Next, ask them why they feel that way.

9-10 years old

Draw Your Face

Ask the children to draw a face that shows how they feel about the game. Example:



Next, ask them why they feel that way, and then continue with other questions.

The Game Review

Do a mock review of a sports game to spark the children's interest. Have the children form a tight circle with their arms around each other as for a team huddle. Use questions such as:

- How did the game go?
- Did you give 110%?
- What is our game plan for the next game?

The Trigger Word

One by one, ask the children to say the first word that comes to their mind when they think about the game they just played. It could be an emotion, an adjective, or even a colour. Ask them why they chose that word and then continue with other questions.

11-12 years old

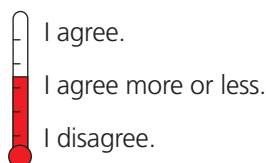
The Call-in Show

Create a mock radio or TV call-in show to spark the children's interest. Begin with a theme tune from a popular TV show. Use sentences such as:

- Okay, we have a call on line 2. Good morning Madam! You are on the air: go ahead!
- Can you tell our 100,000 listeners what you think of....
- Thank you very much for calling. Onto our next caller...

The Thermometer

Show the children an imaginary line, representing a thermometer, along a wall. Specify that 1 end of this thermometer means "I agree," the other end means "I disagree" and between the 2 ends, positions are somewhat mixed.



Make statements about the game, for example:

- I liked the game.
- I felt excluded during the game.
- I did my best to participate.

Ask the children to indicate whether they agree with each statement by positioning themselves along the thermometer. After repeating the exercise with 5 or 6 statements, get back in a circle for children to comment on their answers.

Multi-age Group (6-12 years old)

From 1 to 10...Fingers

Ask the children to grade different parts of the game by showing only a few fingers for a weak part and several or all fingers for a strong part, for example:

From 1 to 10...fingers

- Did you like the game?
- Did you participate actively?
- Would you like to play this game again?

For each aspect of the game, ask the children why they graded it the way they did.

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

Provide the children with a few pages from catalogues or flyers and ask them to choose a picture that reminds them of the game. This could be a face that expresses a particular feeling, an object, a landscape, or a person's particular position. Ask them why they chose that picture, and then continue with other questions.

Skits

Ask 1 or 2 other leaders, or some older children, to help you act out situations related to the way a game is played or the values it promotes, such as an act of exclusion or bullying. Children are then invited to comment on these situations.

From the Youngest to the Oldest

With a multi-age group, it is better to let the youngest children speak first, and then the older children.

Group Discussion: Variations for 6-8 Year Olds

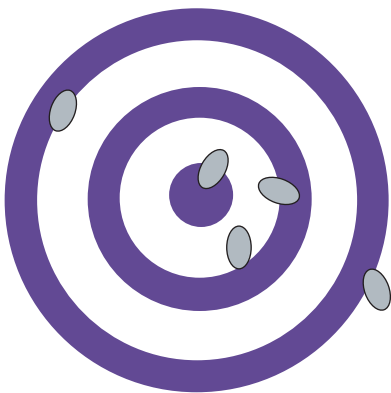
How to vary your approach to Group Discussion?

If you lead group discussions frequently, it may be a good idea to vary your approach to increase the children's interest. Here are a few ideas to inspire you.

The Bull's Eye

Location: Indoors/Outdoors
Group size: 6-20

1. Draw a bull's eye on the ground. If you are outdoors, trace a bull's eye in the sand or draw on the sidewalk with a piece of chalk. If you are indoors, draw a bull's eye on a large piece of paper.
2. After the game, give each child a small object (stone, pebble, cork, etc.). If you are outdoors, ask each child to find a pebble.
3. Ask the children to evaluate the game by placing their object somewhere on the bull's eye. If they really enjoyed the game, they put the object close to the centre; if they liked it less, they put it further away.
4. Have the group form a circle around the bull's eye. Invite the children who wish to do so to explain why they placed their object where they did.



Picture This

Location: Indoors
Group size: 4-10

1. Ask the children to draw something they liked or learned during the game or the day.
2. Divide the group into teams of 2. Ask the children to explain their drawings to their partner.
3. Have the group form a circle. The children then take turns describing their partner's drawing to the rest of the group.
4. Display the children's drawings.

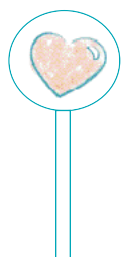


Heart, Head and Hand Signs

Location: Indoors/Outdoors

Group Size: 3-20

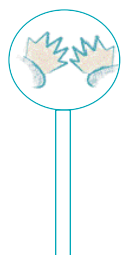
1. Prepare 3 pieces of cardboard and draw a heart on one, a head on another and hands on the third. Glue a stick on the back of each piece of cardboard to create a sign.
2. After the game, ask the children to sit in a circle.
3. Begin a discussion by pointing to the "heart" sign and by completing the sentence: "After this game, I feel ...". Invite the children who wish to do so to take the sign and complete the sentence themselves.
4. Continue the discussion by pointing to the "head" sign and by completing the sentence: "During this game, I learned ...". Ask the children to complete this sentence as well.
5. Complete the discussion by pointing to the "hands" sign and by completing the sentence: "Next time I play this game, I am going to ...". Ask the children to say how they would complete this sentence.



After this game, I feel...



During this game, I learned...



Next time, I am going to...

The Spider Web

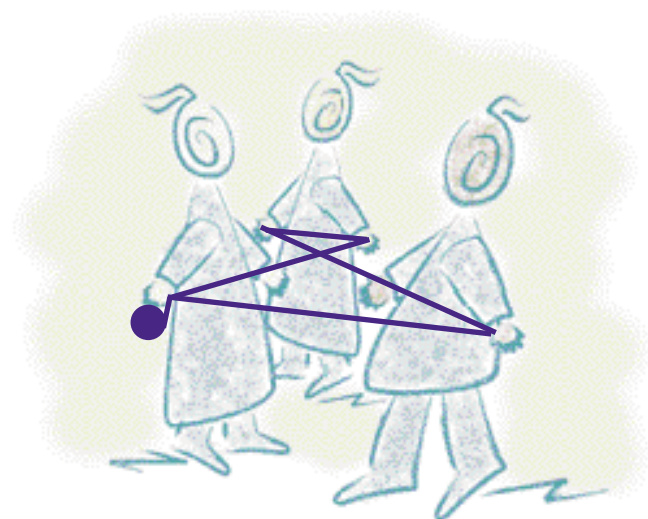
Location:

Indoors/Outdoors

Group Size:

6-15

1. After the game, ask the children to sit in a circle.
2. Hold the end of a ball of yarn in your hands.
3. Explain that everyone will be asked to give their opinion of the game by stating something that they liked, didn't like or learned. Begin the activity by giving your opinion.
4. Throw the ball of yarn to someone while holding on to one end.
5. The child who catches the ball gives his or her opinion about the game, then throws the ball of yarn to someone else, without letting go of a strand.
6. Continue the discussion until all the children have caught the ball of yarn once. As the discussion progresses, the shape of a spider web is formed.



Group Discussion: Variations for 9-10 Year Olds

Through My Telescope

Location: Indoors/Outdoors

Group Size: 3-20

1. Make 3 telescopes by doing the following:
 - **"Positive aspects" telescope:** Paint an empty toilet paper roll pink.
 - **"Aspects to improve" telescope:** Paint an empty toilet paper roll grey and glue on some stars.
 - **"In the future" telescope:** Paint a long, empty paper towel roll green.
2. After the game, ask the children to sit in a circle.
3. Begin the game by showing everyone the pink telescope. Ask the children to pretend they see the game through this telescope and to say what they think were the positive aspects of this game.
4. Continue the discussion by showing everyone the grey telescope with stars on it. Ask the children to pretend they see the game through this telescope and to say what they think could be improved.
5. Complete the discussion by showing everyone the green telescope. Ask the children to pretend they see the game through this telescope and to make suggestions for improving it.



I see something positive...

I see some aspects that need improving...



In the future, I see...

Remember the Chant

Location:

Indoors/Outdoors

Group Size:

6-10

1. After the game, ask the children to sit in a circle.
2. Using a rhythmic beat, make a short statement like "In this game, I liked ...". Ask the group to repeat the chant.
3. Explain that everyone should complete the chant by adding something they liked about the game. However, before giving their own opinion, each child needs to repeat what has been said before.
4. Ask the group to repeat the chant, and then ask one child to begin by adding something he or she liked.
5. Have the group repeat the chant. Then, go around the circle to give the next person a chance to add something he or she liked. Remember that everyone needs to repeat what has been already said before adding something new.
6. Continue the activity until everyone has had a chance to add something. The group always starts off by repeating the initial chant. Then, each child needs to repeat what has already been said. The group can, however, help out, if someone is having difficulty remembering.



Roll the Dice

Location: Indoors/Outdoors

Group Size: 3-30

1. Make a large dice out of a small box. On each of the sides, draw a picture and write down one of the following sentences to be completed:

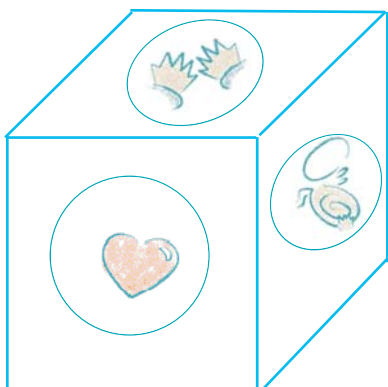
- **Heart:** I liked ...
- **Heart:** I didn't like ...
- **Head:** In this game, I learned ...
- **Head:** This game reminds me of ...
- **Hands:** To improve this game, we should ...
- **Hands:** In the future, I am going to ...

2. After the game, ask the children to sit in a circle.

3. Show the dice to the group.

4. Roll the dice and read the sentence that comes up. Begin the discussion by asking anyone who wants to complete the sentence to put up their hand.

5. Ask the child who completes the sentence to roll the dice, and continue the discussion by asking anyone who wants to complete the sentence to put up their hand.



Spread the Word

Location:

Indoors/Outdoors

Group Size:

6-20

1. After the game, give a small piece of paper to each child. Ask everyone to write down in large letters the first word that comes into their head when they think of this game.

2. Have all the children walk around the room and talk to each other about the words they chose.

3. Ask the children to find someone else with whom they can trade their pieces of paper. In order to trade, both children need to agree with the word the other person has chosen. Set a specific amount of time to trade pieces of paper, say 5 minutes (or however long a song that you play lasts). Specify that the children may trade their pieces of paper several times, if they wish. Everyone should try to trade at least once.

4. Have each child present the word he or she is now holding.



Group Discussion: Variations for 11-12 Year Olds

The Talking Ball

Location: Indoors/Outdoors

Group Size: 5-30

1. Choose a soft ball that you can write on with a marker. Trace lines so as to divide the ball's surface into 8 sections. Draw a picture and write down one of the following sentences to be completed in each section:
 - **Heart:** I liked ...
 - **Heart:** I didn't like ...
 - **Heart:** I feel ...
 - **Head:** I was surprised to ...
 - **Head:** I learned that ...
 - **Head:** I think that ...
 - **Hands:** So that everything runs smoothly, we should ...
 - **Hands:** Next time, I would like ...
2. After the game, ask the children to sit in a circle. Show the ball to the group. Explain that whoever catches it must complete the sentence that his or her right thumb is touching.
3. Throw the ball to someone. Ask him or her to complete the sentence, and then to throw the ball to someone else. If someone really can't think of anything to say, they can throw the ball to someone else right away.
4. Continue the discussion until everyone has had a chance to speak at least once.



Let's Vote

Location:

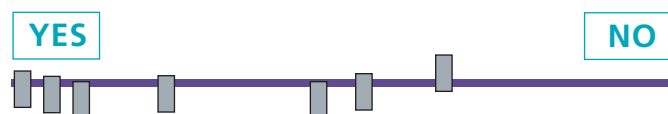
Indoors

Group Size:

10-30

1. Draw a line on the floor or on a wall. At one end write "Yes" and, at the other end, "No".
2. Give a small piece of paper to each child. Explain that this paper is their ballot (Note: you can also use post-its, stones or any other small objects).
3. Ask the group a simple question: "Did you like this game?"
4. Ask the children to answer the question by voting. They can answer "Yes" or "No" by placing their pieces of paper at either end of the line or nuance their responses by placing them somewhere along the line.
5. Ask the group to sit in a circle. Ask everyone to explain their point of view.

Variation: Instead of drawing a line, hang a rope between two walls. Ask the children to vote by hanging up post-its or clothespins.



Spin the Wheel

Location: Indoors

Group Size: 5-30

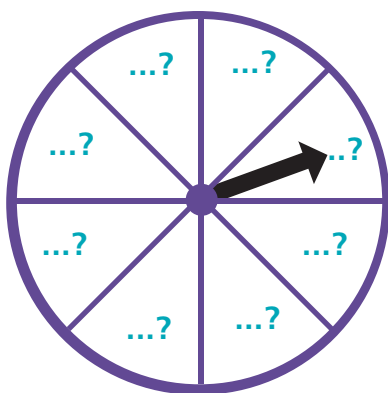
1. Make a roulette wheel by cutting out a circle out of a piece of cardboard and fixing an arrow to the centre using a brass fastener. Divide the circle into 8 sections. Draw a picture and write a question in each of the sections. For example:

- **Heart:** What emotions did you feel?
- **Heart:** What was the hardest part?
- **Heart:** What did you like most?
- **Head:** What did you learn?
- **Head:** What surprised you?
- **Head:** What do you need to do to be successful in this game?
- **Hands:** What would you do differently?
- **Hands:** How can we improve the group dynamic?

2. After the game, ask the children to sit in a circle.

3. Show them the roulette wheel. Spin the wheel and read the question that the arrow points to. Begin the discussion by asking anyone who wants to answer the question to put up their hand.

4. Whoever answers the question spins the wheel. Continue the discussion by asking anyone who wants to answer the question to put up their hand.



Friendly Interview

Location:

Indoors/Outdoors

Group Size:

6-10

1. After the game, form teams of 2 children each.
2. Ask the children to imagine they are journalists and to interview their partners. Each person asks the other what he or she thought of the game. The children can take notes if they want to.
3. Ask the children to sit in a circle.
4. Ask each journalist to present his or her partner's comments to the group.

