

Public Sphere Club Facilitator Guide

General Responsibilities:

- Lead the breakout group
- Pose guiding questions to the group
- Lightly moderate
- Take notes!!

1) Lead the breakout group

The primary duty of the facilitator is to lead the breakout groups during the Public Sphere Club events. **This means that YOU are the DISCUSSION LEADER!**

Tips for leading the breakout group:

- **Be YOURSELF!** Don't be afraid to bring in your personality. You don't need to be too formal. Have fun with it!
 - Create an atmosphere of "chill vibes"!
- Encourage **cameras to be turned on**, but do not demand it.
- **Mention using the "Raise Hand" feature** for participation but also encourage organic conversation. During the session, be mindful of people raising their hands and call on them.
- **Mention using the "Chat" feature for participating if that feels more comfortable**
 - The facilitator should keep track of Chat and read aloud any important points.
- **Start with a short "Introduction" for the group.** Ask everyone to briefly answer these questions. Be sure to answer the questions yourself first! Improvise on this if you feel like it, but don't spend too much time on Intros.
 - **What's your name?**
 - **If you like to state your pronouns, let us know.**
 - **Where are you from?**
 - **What are you most excited about, or what happened that was positive today?**
- **Before you begin, remind everyone to be mindful of others!**
 - This means that we **want to hear from everyone**
 - Participate in **good faith**
 - **Work towards understanding while keeping room for difference**
- **You should be constantly thinking about how to get participants to talk to each other!** A successful public sphere breakout group is one in which people WANT to contribute and are ENGAGING with each other. **The point is to make the experience better for other people.**
- **Remember that awkward moments and interactions are normal.** People might not always say the "correct" thing and expect not-so-great contributions. Be forgiving and accommodating. Remember that we are all working through these ideas together! **You are the one who "smooths" things over. You are the linchpin of the group!**
- **Above all, remember that the goal is to generate dialogue!!** Discussion is okay too, but we want people to be sharing experiences and building off each other.

2) Pose Guiding Questions to the Group

Tips for posing guiding questions:

- **Pause and leave room for silence after asking a question and after people respond.**
 - Your goal is to generate participation from everyone! **Try not to rely on only one or two participants and be encouraging of those who haven't spoken to contribute.** This also means making space for these individuals to contribute, which may feel awkward but is necessary to allow for silence.
- It is okay to provide some of your own views as the facilitator. But remember that the primary goal is to get the participants talking. **Contribute your own ideas only to stimulate the participants to talk! Validate the ideas of contributors to make them feel comfortable!**
- **You will determine the pace of the group and when to move onto the next question. Don't rush through the questions!** Allow space and time for people to contribute. Transition to the next question only after talk has faded.
- **Think about transitions between questions.** You do not ***have*** to follow the order of questions as they are listed. Use your best judgement! Skip around if it feels right. Tie questions together by saying something like "sounds like we are getting into this question..."

3) Lightly moderate your group

Tips for moderating:

- **Most importantly, if you feel overwhelmed or anxious, send a direct message in Teams to Steve or Rachel if you need backup or "muscle"!**
- Remember **the pivot!**
 - If a topic is getting out of control, or if things are getting too "heated" (a moderate amount of spiciness is okay), pivot to another question.
- Remember **the boot!**
 - You have the (soft) power to recommend that someone be booted for not abiding by the public sphere rules out of the group. **Before you do this, remind the person that they are not participating in good faith, and that they need to abide by the guidelines in order to continue.** If the behavior continues, you can ask the person to leave. If they won't leave, ask the organizer of the event to remove them from the meeting. This probably will never happen, but this would be the correct protocol.
 - Only use this function as a last resort.
- What is more likely is that you might have one or two people that are dominating the space by constantly talking. **Be assertive and say something like "I really appreciate your contributions, but I want to hear from other people in the group."** Redirect to people who haven't talked much.
- Remember that **you can mute a participant**, but again, that **should be a last resort!**

4) Take Notes

Tips for taking notes:

- **You do not need to record everything said in the meeting.** This would be far too distracting, as you need to pay attention to group dynamics.
- **Take notes on points of agreement or disagreement.**
 - Are there any common themes emerging?
 - Were there any areas of tension and disagreement?

- Take notes on an **interesting moments!**
 - Cool stories
 - Unique interactions
 - Memorable quotes

As you can see, **being a facilitator requires attention, engagement, and quick thinking.** The facilitator should be constantly aware of what is happening in the group. Don't get distracted!!

You all are awesome and have the skills to do **GREAT** in this role. Have **confidence** in yourself!