

Basic Principles of Moderating

An effective moderator--

- **Remains neutral about the subject of the forum.** Avoid expressing your own opinion or evaluating the comments of the participants.
- **Does not take on an “expert” role with the subject matter.** Your role is not to teach the participants about the issue - even if it is a subject you know very well.
- **Keeps the deliberation focused on the approaches.** When comments go astray, bring participants back to the issue book framework. Make sure that each approach receives equal consideration.
- **Listens for values that motivate a participant’s comments.** In deliberation, the participant’s values and motives are just as important, if not more so, than their opinion. Sometimes people with different opinions share the same motive or value, and that similarity can form the basis for common ground.
- **Intervenes as necessary.** If the conversation begins to focus on personalities rather than issues, gently remind the group of guidelines or refocus the dialogue back to the issue.
- **Asks clarifying questions, if necessary.** If you are not sure what a participant means, chances are good that others are unclear also. You may ask participants to clarify what they are trying to say and ask if you have understood correctly [if absolutely, but be aware that people can get the impression that they are not being articulate.]
- **Encourages everyone to join in the conversation.** Be careful. Comments like “that’s a good idea” may make the speaker feel welcome in the conversation, but participants who disagree may think you are being biased.
- **Asks thoughtful and probing questions to surface costs and consequences.** Make sure that the participants have considered the potential outcome of their comments. Help draw out what people are willing to accept and are not willing to accept.
- **Helps participants find common ground.** Participants will not always agree and may sometimes be in direct conflict with each other. Recognize it and seek to focus on “What can we do together even if we don’t fully agree?”
- **Encourages deeper reflection.** Ask participants to share what is important to them about the issue or why they feel a particular approach is valuable.