

Table Leader Guide: 2.5 Leading Small Group Discussion

How to Lead a Small Group Discussion

Guidelines for Table Captains

Small Group discussions – Key Components

- Set the Tone
- Navigate
- Environment
- Facilitate
- Dealing with Silence
- Encourage

Set the Tone

Create an open prayerful environment

- Listen actively
- Encourage participation
- Help members feel at ease

Members look to you for guidance and leadership

Navigate

Keep the conversation on track

Focus on topic and questions for discussion

It is ok to digress to the extent group is willing to “go there” **BUT**

- Be mindful of the relevance of discussion to the overall theme of the day
- Relate the “off-topic” discussion back to the general theme of the session

Foster an atmosphere of acceptance of each member’s point of view

Let the group explore various related themes to the topic at hand but do not hesitate to steer the discussion back to the main point of the discussion

Environment

Everyone who wants to speak should have the opportunity to do so

- Create an environment where members feel comfortable speaking freely
- Encourage others to listen – the speaker should have the ability to finish his thought before someone else jumps in

The ideal table complement is five members

- Be aware of the tables around you
- If there are too few or too many people at your table make an effort to encourage consolidation

Be sensitive to body language

- Someone may not be speaking but their actions may indicate that they are uncomfortable with a particular discussion thread

Attempt to steer the conversation away from a topic that may make someone uncomfortable

Facilitate

Keep the conversation moving when it appears to be slowing

- Attempt to connect the points members have made on a particular subject

Do not let any one person, *yourself included*, monopolize the discussion

- Try to keep everyone engaged and sharing

Draw those who have a tendency not to speak into the discussion by actively seeking their views on the question; but do not press if they are not ready to speak.

What about Silence

Do not fear silence

- Members may be digesting a question and trying to frame a response
- Silence may be awkward but it is OK

If silence persists, move to another question and suggest that the group can come back to the topic later if there is time remaining

Encourage

Encourage sharing by affirming the input being given by members

Share with the larger group important points that may have been discussed

- These comments could be of a general nature
- Or, if they are personal make sure that your group is comfortable sharing.

Small Group discussions Final Thoughts

Additional helpful suggestions

- When meeting with a new group for the first time, go around the table and ask each member to introduce and share a little about themselves
- Familiarize yourself with the weekly reading ahead of time
- Read aloud or ask a volunteer to read aloud each question then ask the group if any specific question is resonating with them. Who would like to begin?
- Do not focus on one person and do not let one person drive the discussion
- Keep the members of your table at ease by creating a warm relaxed environment
- Share your own personal experiences when appropriate as a way to encourage others to share, but avoid pressuring anyone to speak
- Laughter can be a great way to put the group at ease and make members more inclined to share. However reestablish a more serious tone when the time is right to move on