

# Focus Group Facilitation Guide

A comprehensive guide for planning and conducting effective focus groups to gather qualitative insights.

## Phase 1: Planning

### Define Objectives:

- bullet Clearly state what you want to learn
- bullet Identify specific decisions or questions the research will inform
- bullet Determine how insights will be used

### Participant Recruitment:

- bullet Define target audience/profile
- bullet Recruit 8-10 participants per session (plan for 6-8 attending)
- bullet Schedule multiple sessions if diverse perspectives are needed
- bullet Offer incentives appropriate to your audience
- bullet Screen for relevance and availability
- bullet Send confirmation reminders with location details

### Logistics:

- bullet Choose a neutral, comfortable venue
- bullet Ensure proper viewing for observers (if applicable)
- bullet Test all recording equipment
- bullet Arrange refreshments
- bullet Prepare name tags and materials

## **Phase 2: Discussion Guide Development**

### **Introduction (10 minutes):**

- bullet Welcome and overview
- bullet Purpose of session
- bullet Ground rules (confidentiality, no right/wrong answers)
- bullet Recording explanation
- bullet Participant introductions

### **Warm-up Questions (10 minutes):**

- bullet Easy, non-threatening questions
- bullet Build comfort and rapport
- bullet General topic context setting

### **Core Discussion (45-60 minutes):**

- bullet Main research questions
- bullet Use funnel approach: broad to specific
- bullet Include projective techniques if appropriate
- bullet Allow for natural flow and follow-ups

### **Wrap-up (10 minutes):**

- bullet Summary questions
- bullet Final thoughts/additional input
- bullet Thank participants
- bullet Distribute incentives

## Phase 3: Facilitation Best Practices

### During the Session:

- Arrive early to set up
- Start on time
- Establish welcoming atmosphere
- Follow guide but remain flexible
- Encourage participation from all
- Manage dominant personalities gently
- Probe for deeper understanding ('tell me more', 'why')
- Maintain neutrality throughout
- Watch body language and non-verbal cues
- Keep track of time
- Have a notetaker or assistant

### Question Techniques:

- bullet Open-ended questions (avoid yes/no)
- bullet "Tell me about..." vs "Do you like..."
- bullet "In what ways..." instead of "Do you..."
- bullet Use laddering: ask 'why' repeatedly to uncover root motivations
- bullet Employ projective techniques: "If this brand were a person..."

### Common Pitfalls to Avoid:

- bullet Leading questions that suggest answers
- bullet Complex or jargon-heavy questions
- bullet Letting one participant dominate
- bullet Sharing your own opinions
- bullet Rushing through important topics

## Phase 4: Analysis & Reporting

### Immediate Post-Session:

- Debrief with observers
- Capture initial impressions while fresh
- Note key quotes and moments

### Analysis:

- bullet Transcribe recordings if budget allows
- bullet Identify themes and patterns across sessions
- bullet Note surprising insights and contradictions
- bullet Extract representative quotes
- bullet Determine frequency and intensity of opinions

### Reporting:

- bullet Executive summary with key findings
- bullet Organize by research objectives
- bullet Include participant quotes to illustrate points
- bullet Note areas of consensus and disagreement
- bullet Provide actionable recommendations
- bullet Append with full discussion guide and participant profiles

### Sample Timeline:

*Planning: 1-2 weeks | Recruitment: 2 weeks | Sessions: 1 week | Analysis: 1 week | Reporting: 1 week*