



# F A C I L I T A T I O N G U I D E

## THE BASICS OF PLANNING AND FACILITATING A SESSION



**KIDCARE**  
**CANADA**  
nurturing the best possible start



***When you facilitate, you are a leader and you are modeling the behavior you would like to see in the participants. These guides will help you be the leader you want to be.***

Good to keep in mind...

When you lead a session, you are sometimes a facilitator, sometimes a teacher, and other times a learner. And you are always a leader. As in parenting, in every situation you are modeling behavior, whether you realize it or not. Inevitably, you will see your actions, words and tone reflected back.

# THE BASICS OF PLANNING AND FACILITATING A SESSION



You have chosen to lead a session to share exciting research that can change children's lives, and maybe even change society. It's a journey that can be compared to a road trip.

When you organize a road trip, the first thing you typically do is to think back to previous trips. However, if you are planning your first "road trip", you may want to learn from the experiences of others. In either case, this guide will help you to prepare and lead your session.

Whether you are a new or experienced facilitator, or simply want to have an informal get together with friends or family, you can use KIDCARECANADA videos to inform people about the science of early childhood development. The engaging approach these videos offer will enable your participants to learn trustworthy content that they can review again and again.

**Please consider this guide as support from a knowledgeable friend who has travelled a lot! It links to materials to support you every step of the way.**

As a bonus, the material in the Learning Guides is useful for all types of presentations. The steps are universal.

KIDCARECANADA videos are appropriate for many different groups including

- Parents
- Caregivers
- Family, friends
- Early Childhood Educators
- Parenting educators
- Social workers
- Health professionals such as doctors, nurses, midwives, doulas, lactation consultants, etc.
- Prenatal instructors
- “Best Babies”, “Mother/Babe” or Family Place programs
- Mother Goose and preschool instructors
- Specialists working with children such as occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech therapists
- Perinatal educators
- Hospitals (maternity, psychiatric, pediatric)
- Students
- Teachers
- Professors
- Home visitors
- Policy Makers
- Native Friendship Centres
- Infant Development Programs
- Aboriginal Infant Development Programs
- Family resource programs
- Neighborhood houses
- Community centers
- Mothers in prison
- Refugee camps

And any individuals or organizations supporting families!

At the end of this document you will find a grid that will help you choose the documents that are relevant for you.

## Session Facilitation:

The next pages of this document are your **foundational pointers, an overview of facilitation steps.**

You will find other resources and additional information in the documents below:

### **“Planning and Room Preparation “**

Helps you be ready with the right materials and venue

<http://kidcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/learningguides/planningandroompreparation.pdf>

### **“Agenda Guide”**

Provides you with templates to help you build and follow an effective agenda

<http://kidcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/learning-guides/agendaguide.pdf>

### **“Teaching Framework and Quick Facts about Adult Learning”**

Provides you with a teaching template and the basics about how adults learn

<http://kidcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/learningguides/teachingframeworkandquick-factsaboutadultlearning.pdf>

### **“Video Specific Discussion Questions”**

Helps you work with the main points of the video(s)

<http://kidcarecanada.org/content/video-specific-discussion-questions>

### **“Feedback and Evaluation”**

Provides you with a method and tool for you to learn from your participants

<http://kidcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/learning-guides/feedbackandevaluation.pdf>

### **“Adult Learning Overview”**

Gives you more in-depth knowledge about how adults learn

<http://kidcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/learning-guides/adultlearningoverview.pdf>

# FACILITATION STEPS

## Introduce yourself and your topic

Look at your participants, smile and then briefly and warmly share your name and background and why you are leading this particular session. If the group size lends itself, it is ideal to try to remember people's names. If you have trouble remembering people's names, you might want to look at the helpful tip in the "Experience" section of the Adult Learning Overview document that is part of this series.

Explain to your participants that you look forward to getting to know them – or if you already know them, are delighted to see them again.

Prepare a strong statement that conveys your most important point, pause and **say that statement and then pause again**. Some examples follow:

"What happens early in life has an impact throughout life"

"Early experiences change a child's biology"

"Early nurturing has an impact on the child, the family and society"

"Children thrive when they feel safe"

"The more we talk to babies the more likely they are to talk to us"

"Optimal brain development occurs when a child is cared for and feels safe."

## Share the agenda

Now that your participants are focused on the topic at hand, you can give a rough outline of the plan for the session, including breaks and duration, and other housekeeping information, such as location of the bathrooms. You will find additional information in the "Agenda Guide" and the "Adult Learning Overview" documents that are part of this series.

Refer to a flipchart agenda that you have posted in advance. Even if you use a PowerPoint presentation with everything embedded, you may still want to post or hand out an agenda or outline of the session.

Start and end on time. Keep to the approximate time frames you have planned for each section of your presentation to ensure that you have time for all of your key points. Do this gently by encouraging participants to use the posted flip chart paper called “Parking Lot” if they have questions you prefer to answer later, and by introducing the next section of the session. Always thank participants for their questions and comments. If there is a question that requires a lengthy response and you are concerned about having enough time, explain, “This question deserves a thoughtful response. May I get back to it at the end of the session?” Make a note for yourself so as to remember to do this, or write it on the “Parking Lot.”

## Have participants introduce themselves.

Ask participants to keep to a 30-second limit as each one gives their name and the response to some other question pre-decided, e.g. their role, their reason for attending, etc. This is a helpful way for you to learn more about the participants and what they may already know about the topic.

Refer to the posted flipchart where you will have pre-written these questions. Or if you use a PowerPoint presentation make sure the questions to guide introductions remain on the screen.

## Create a safe environment for learning

Adults, like children, learn best when they feel safe.

Decide if you want to establish some ground rules (e.g. perhaps you want an environment where nobody interrupts when another is talking). You might want to ensure that everyone agrees, “what happens in the room will stay in the room, unless you have permission to share.” You might want cellphones turned to vibrate during the session, etc.

If it seems appropriate, quickly summarize the key points on flip chart paper and post for all to see.

## Use an Icebreaker

Once the introductory material has been conveyed, it might be time for an icebreaker. An icebreaker helps people get a sense of who else is in the room. Icebreakers are ideal for longer sessions (half-day or longer) but probably are not needed for one to two hour sessions where introductions have been shared. You need to avoid spending too much time on the icebreaker relative to the total session.

### **Icebreaker Strategies**

Plan an ice-breaker that is appropriate to your audience – health professionals, parents, colleagues, people you know or don't know, people who know each other or don't.

Whatever icebreaker you choose, it's very good to have written instructions visible at all times.

We highly recommend icebreakers related to the topic that will be discussed – this gets people's brains 'warmed up' or creates a mood we want to encourage.

You might already have activities you like to do to serve this purpose, but if not, here are some examples of simple, new-parent (or those who work with them) appropriate icebreakers.

### **Fun and fast icebreaker ideas:**

An idea that can be fun and effective is word association. It's a quick and easy icebreaker. The facilitator says, for example, "when I say the word 'baby', what is the first word that comes to your mind?" If you have a helper, that person might write down the words for discussion later in the session.

### **Other ideas:**

“What do you think...” then present a possibly controversial – but safe – statement that we know will be addressed in the video, and that can make people think or laugh.

- “Babies can manipulate parents”
- “Babies are listening when they are sleeping”
- “Dads can get postpartum depression”

Or a question

- “What advice do you think would be helpful for new parents?”
- “What advice did you receive that you did not find helpful?”

Other ice-breakers that work really well include having participants share something personal without it sounding personal – e.g.

- “What encouraged you to work in childcare?” or
- “What did your parents do when you were little that you want to do with your family?” or
- “When you are working with families what makes you happiest?” or
- “What does your child do that makes your heart melt?”

Answering a question like this is low-risk and a short answer can sometimes loosen things up for everyone and provide you with crucial information you can refer back to later in the session to make the content personally relevant to participants. Encourage people to say a few words about their choice.

## Icebreakers that might take a bit more time

“Do parents need workshops on parenting?”

or

If the workshop is about communicating, your icebreaker question might be “What is the value of talking to newborn/young babies? For parents? For the baby?”

A final thought: During an icebreaker, it’s a good idea to be ready to quickly move on if something isn’t working out or if it’s taking too long. A “Funny Baby” story might not be appropriate if you know that someone has a sick child. In that case, it might be best to switch to having the participants talk about something related to parenting (if working with parents.) Perhaps you could talk about the music their child responds to or some other topic. Be flexible! If anything doesn’t feel quite right, use your best judgment to modify it.

## Now, the topic

If this is part two (or beyond) of an ongoing series of sessions, you would likely begin with a recap of last time, including an opportunity for participants to explain something that actually changed in their life based on what they’ve learned here.

Here is a link to a set of discussion questions. Each is related to a specific KIDCARECANADA video: <http://kidcarecanada.org/content/video-specific-discussion-questions> and there is a version of each document with questions only, as well as one with suggested answers.

These can help you prepare for your topic and you will have starter questions to guide you. The documents provide you with examples of questions to ask as part of step one of the teaching framework “Previous Learning.”

THEN....

*Tell them what you're going to tell them.*

The goals of this session should be explained, and written for all to see.

*Tell them* (show the video and do whatever else you're doing)

- The ideal is to be able to show the whole video first, without pauses or comments
- Then ask for immediate impressions, explaining that you will later show small sections at a time, pausing for questions and comments. If time is limited, and you are not able to show the video a second time, encourage your participants to watch it again when they get home. The second viewing will be a much richer experience for them after your session!
- Your flipchart is a place to write bullets of points you want to address
- On the second viewing of the video, be ready with places to hit pause and encourage conversation
- If you are showing a very short video, you may want to show it in full, discuss it briefly and then show the full video again to lead to a more in-depth discussion

## Have a conversation

This document <http://kidcarecanada.org/content/video-specific-discussion-questions> provides discussion questions for specific KIDCARECANADA videos.

Here are some discussion starters for all topics

- What surprised you in this video? Why?
- Do you think your grandparents' generation might have known any of this? How did they show it?
- What's an easy change you will make from what we learned today?
- What other changes will you make?
- What are you already doing that you will continue to do because of what we have learned today?
- Did anything feel overwhelming?

## Ask Questions

Questions can be asked by participants and by facilitators. They are a powerful tool. In your session, let people know there will be scheduled time to hear their comments and questions.

Some facilitators like to address questions as they go along but, remember, questions can take you off track so you might want to encourage people to write their questions down. Ensure you save time for those questions. Always keep in mind that the primary outcome is to meet the needs of the whole group.

Remind everyone that they can use paper and pen for note-taking or if they want to jot down a comment or question and don't want to interrupt the flow of what is happening.

If people don't have a way to capture their thoughts, they have difficulty listening. Instead, they focus on their own thoughts and comments or questions. Let participants know they can post their comments or questions to the flip chart paper on the wall with "parking lot" at any time.

There are different kinds of questions and they serve different purposes.

“Yes/no” or other “short phrase answer” questions can be very helpful for warming up the room, for moving along a discussion and for getting lots of participation (e.g. show of hands). However, they generally do not encourage deep thought. Example: “how many people here have a child under age 1?” or “how many people have worked with families for fewer than three years?”

To encourage discussion and deeper thought, you may ask open-ended questions. These require more time for a response. E.g. How can you play with a small baby? or a statement that requires sharing of views, opinions and feelings, encouraging people to think and reflect, e.g. “Should parents strive to be perfect?” Questions you prepare in advance help you to envision the session.

There are things to consider when asking questions.

Pause during the session to ask different kinds of questions, depending on what you want to accomplish at that time. E.g. open-ended questions (questions that allow a range of possible answers) are great to open up the lines of conversation. Other times, yes/no questions are good for a quick reading of the room or to encourage people to be “present”.

Another way to get a quick reading of the group or encourage participation without taking a lot of time, is to make a reinforcing statement about a key message from the video and ask by a show of hands, how many agree. E.g. “How many have experienced that babies pick up on our emotions?” or “How many agree that parenting is a tough job?” or “How many have received advice – from a parent, an in-law, a close friend – that their instinct told them not to follow?” These questions can also be a terrific ice-breaker as they quickly reveal people’s values and approach to parenting. Repeat each question or comment when it is asked so everyone can hear - this also serves to show that you value participation.

When asking a question, always pause a moment to give people time to answer. If no one responds, it often helps to give them a bit longer than you might think is necessary. Look relaxed and silently count to 10 while taking a sip of water and then smile or nod to the group. If no one says anything then, it is OK to give a view explaining “many participants often share ... this comment” or rephrase your question if you really want to know what the group thinks – then give wait time again.

### **Be ready for Challenges**

A top challenge, identified by our focus group: If someone is dominating, recognize the person with a smile and a nod. Then you might want to look at someone else and make a simple, non-threatening statement like “I think Judy has something to say” which can allow another to join in.

Giving a less talkative role (like note taking) to a dominating participant can make them feel valued and also allows others a chance to speak.

Overall, your objective is to build bridges rather than divide people – your session will be at its best when it respects and validates the participants. This doesn’t mean you have to compromise what you know to be true – for instance, when someone makes a statement that is completely incorrect, thank them and explain that “many people think in a similar fashion” however... in fact, the research now shows that ... and explain or point to resources etc.

See the appendix of this document for a more in-depth look at this and other challenges you might encounter.

## Conclude the session

*Tell them what you've told them.*

There are many ways to summarize. It is important to highlight key points and bring closure to the session.

You want to tap into and reinforce what people will remember from this session. If you are partway through a series of sessions, remind your participants that at the next session, they will have a chance to share things that changed because of what they learned.

You can ...

- Summarize what they've just seen and heard.
- Ask the participants to share something they will continue to think about or want to remember.

When participants hear what others will be “taking away” with them, it helps them recall concepts from the session they may have forgotten.

Consider writing Tweets as a summary for your presentation. Twitter forces you to say what you mean in 140-characters. Here's a trick to add to your session. Try writing a few tweets you might send to sum up key points if you were sharing this experience as a participant. It's an exercise that helps you focus and you could even present your results to participants to assist them if they want to tweet about what they're learning.

Encourage participants to share through other social media as well, such as Facebook, etc.

Finally...

If it hasn't come up, you will probably want to end each session with open-ended questions like:

- What changes will you make?
- What might you do differently?
- What are your ideas for future sessions?

You might want to refer back to the strong statement you made at the beginning and ask how that makes sense for participants.

To help your participants continue with their learning, you can walk them through the KIDCARECANADA website to show how easy it is to locate videos or learn more about the organization.

The complete set of documents for your sessions is available here:  
<http://kidcarecanada.org/learning-guides>

This grid can assist you in finding the documents that meet your needs.

Who Are You?	What do our documents offer you?						
	Learning Guides Outline Provides you with the basics of planning & facilitating a session	Video Specific Discussion Questions Helps you work with the main points of the video(s)	Planning and Room Preparation Helps you be ready with the right materials & venue	Agenda Guide Provides you with templates to help you build & follow an effective agenda	Quick Facts about Adult Learning Provides you with the basics about how adults learn	Adult Learning Overview Gives you more indepth knowledge about how adults learn	Feedback & Evaluation Provides you with a method & tool for you to learn from your participants
Home visitor Recommend 1 hr session	✓	✓	?	?	?	?	✓
Teacher of ece/nursing students Recommend 1 hr session	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓
Informal small group (e.g. friends or family) Recommend 2 hr session	✓	✓	?	?	?	?	?
Peer facilitator for health Professionals and ECE Recommend 2 hr session	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓
ECE (or similar) leading a session for parents at a community centre Recommend 3 hr session	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	★	✓
Trainer of facilitators Recommend 3 hr session	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	★	✓
I want to offer a Multi day workshop	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	★	✓

all recommended duration times are suggestion only. You may wish to lead longer or shorter sessions depending on your circumstances.

-  Recommended
-  Highly Recommended
-  ???

We also have a checklist you can use during a session, Available as Appendix 2 of this document.

## APPENDIX 1 – What to do if

Here is an appendix with ideas about some of the challenges that might come up during a session – online, this is an interactive space where people can contribute their own challenges.

### Answers to some questions about “Leading a Presentation”

WHAT TO DO IF...	
<b>More people turn up than you expected...</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>You can get people to pair up for activities or create even larger teams. Just go with the idea that relationships will form within the teams and there may not be time for everyone to get to know everyone else. The important thing here is that you want your participants to feel welcomed and be engaged (engagement <i>*is*</i> learning). Better that they are active in a smaller team than sitting passively in a large group.</li></ul>
<b>Someone is dominating the session</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Giving a less talkative role (like note taking) to a dominating participant can make them feel valued and also allows others a chance to speak. Gently suggesting that another person seems ready to share something can also draw new voices into the conversation.</li></ul>

## WHAT TO DO IF...

### **An Icebreaker is not working**

- If it becomes clear there's a problem (for instance, you can see that it will take too long to cycle through all participants or if people are showing confusion) it's time to move forward and switch to something faster and simpler. E.g. have each person say their name and give a one-word statement of something relevant to your topic. You might ask each person to say "what do you think of when you hear the word 'baby'?" Ideally, this will give everyone a chance to quickly speak and you can move forward.

### **Someone makes a comment that others might object to**

- This might be a time to refer to your ground rules. You want to show respect for all viewpoints and don't want to compromise what you know to be true. So, do your best to keep it impersonal – e.g. draw out the comment and detach it from the person who made the comment. Allow the person to "save face" with a comment such as, "For a long time many people believed that" and respectfully provide the correct information, "We now know through current research that in fact ...".

<b>WHAT TO DO IF...</b>	
<p><b>The unlikely situation occurs where someone makes an overtly racist or other discriminatory comment –</b>  <b>NOTE: <i>it is important to take a stand.</i></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking a stand in a situation like this might mean you say “I value every person here. This is a safe environment and it is not acceptable to make a comment that is personally hurtful or contravenes the Charter of Rights.”</li> <li>• Remember, discriminatory comments generally come from ignorance – or how people were raised. The important thing is to show it is not acceptable. The person who was insulted and the rest of the group will feel relief when you show leadership in this way.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nobody is responding</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smile, wait ten seconds. People often speak if you give them a bit more time. If that still doesn’t happen, consider rephrasing the question.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The technology fails</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part of your preparation should include this scenario. You know the content and if you can’t show it through the videos, etc., you <i>*can*</i> talk about it and get participants to share their own stories.</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 2 – Checklist to use during a session

### Checklist: PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

Step by step, this is a list of the things you will do as you lead your presentation. This part of the checklist is your “cheat sheet” reminder.

- Start with a self-introduction – smile, explain why you are leading this session.
- Next will be your strong sentence to summarize the key message of the session – (write yours here as a reminder)
- Now you can provide housekeeping details (probably you have written these details about session breaks , bathrooms etc. on a flipchart in advance and it has been visible to the group.)
- You will want to share the Plan/overview (probably you have written these details about goals of the session etc. on a flipchart in advance that you will now reveal.)

Now you can continue with:

- Participant introductions
- Session Guidelines – ground rules (safe environment and when to ask questions etc.)
- Icebreaker (if you are doing one)
- Topic – show video
- Conversation
- Questions
- Conclusion

## Some Final Notes on adult learning for lengthier workshops

If you are organizing a lengthier workshop, you will want to vary the sessions and include: experiential activities, simulations, debates, and visual arts activities, such as drawing.

Use presentations, games, writing questions, word problems, journals, rhymes and rhythms, music, storytelling, active involvement, reciprocal teaching -- peer and between different levels. Help your participants to become active learners.

You may want to include tables, graphic organizers – mapping, webbing, models, mnemonics (Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge or our mnemonic, “PREPARE”), writing, interactive notebooks (divide pages down the centre – information is provided on the left side. The right side is left blank for learners to illustrate concepts.) KWL strategy- prior to learning,

1. Identify what you think you Know about the topic.
2. Identify what you Want to know about the topic.
3. After reading, viewing, listening, observing, identify what you have Learned about the topic.

As in all workshops, you will want to create a climate of ‘relaxed alertness’ – that is, support participants so they feel safe and introduce novelty so they remain interested.

If this is part of a series of sessions, summarize participant questions from ‘one-minute papers’ in the previous session. What is a one-minute paper? At the end of a session leave a minute or two for participants to write down what was the key information for them or a question they have for the next session.

Ask participants to summarize previous session.

## Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the many parents and professionals who contributed to this work, in particular:

### Focus Group Participants

- Sarah Amyot, Policy Analyst, Women's and Maternal Health at Ministry of Health, Province of British Columbia
- Miranda Andrews, Policy Analyst, Maternal Health at Ministry of Health, Province of British Columbia
- Elizabeth Cox, Child Development Consultant
- Marlene Dergousoff, Coordinator, Saanich Peninsula Literacy
- Enid Elliot, Early Childhood Educator, Adjunct Professor University of Victoria and Instructor Camosun College
- Michelle Gilmore, Policy Analyst Early Years Policy, Ministry of Children and Family Development, Government of British Columbia
- Stefanie Green, Maternity Physician
- Janis Johnson, Coordinator, Beacon Family Resource Programs & Peninsula Connections for Early Childhood
- Belinda Macey, Program Coordinator, Victoria Child Care Resource and Referral
- Tammy Timms, Registered Nurse, Neonatal Care

### The Victoria Native Friendship Centre

Anita Ferriss: "The Early Years: Investing in our Future 2003"

### The KIDCARECANADA team

- Estelle Paget, Executive Director
- Elizabeth Wellburn, Instructional Designer, Social Media Coordinator and codeveloper of these resources
- Ruthild Ohl, Office Manager and so much more
- Sari Naworynski, Graphic Designer
- Alisa Kerr, Filmmaker, editor
- Rob Lyons, captions on videos

### Advisors

- Dr. Padmapriya Kandhadai, Research Associate, UBC Infant Studies Centre
- Dr. Carolyn Steinberg, Medical Leader, Infant, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Richmond Hospital

The Victoria Foundation and the Province of British Columbia for their financial support.

DISCLAIMER The content of KIDCARECANADA videos is informed by current research and shared by experts in the field. It should not be used for diagnosing or treating, and is NOT a substitute for professional care.