

Facilitators’ Meeting responsibilities consists of:

1. **Reading the Primary Script, Topic Script, the associated script questions (Level 1)**
2. **Acknowledging participant contributions (“shares”) (All Facilitators)**
3. **Ensuring the meeting runs smoothly by administering the Meeting rules. (All Facilitators)**

1. Read the Primary Script, Topic Script, and associated script questions.

The [Primary Script](#) and [Topic Scripts](#) are located on the main [San Diego SMART Recovery website](#). Check back as new Topic Scripts are added frequently to expand the topics available. Each Topic Script includes related questions to encourage interactive dialogue and individuals’ participation within the group setting.

2. Acknowledge participant contributions (“shares”)

How to (*very briefly*) acknowledge contributions:

Many contributions can be acknowledged by a simple “Thank you.” Other acknowledgements (always very brief) could be:

- Basic: “It’s good to have you here today.”
- Congratulate: “Congratulations, 3 months is great!”
- Show Compassion: “That’s bad news. I’m sorry to hear it.”
- Show Appreciation: “Even though it was a rough week, you came to this meeting and you’re telling us about it. I’m glad you’re here and I think we can all benefit from hearing about your experience.”
- Offer Good Wishes: “Good luck in that job interview!”

Other brief personal comments (if the participant is known to you):

- “It’s good to see you back.”
- “Your new hairstyle looks great on you”
- “It’s good to see you smiling again.” (This last option is the riskiest, and probably best avoided in your first meetings.)

3. Ensure the meeting runs smoothly by consistently administering the Meeting rules.

Administering/enforcing rules during a meeting is a vital way group norms are established. This is an important component of any cohesive community as participants feel more comfortable when they know what to expect of others and what others expect of them.

Some questions to consider about enforcing rules:

- Was it appropriate/necessary?
- Was I brief?
- Was I gentle?
- Was I accurate?
- Did I speak confidently?

a. **Attendance is participation. No one is required to participate beyond attendance.**

Occasionally a participant wants to force another participant to say something. Simply repeat the rule.

b. **No one gets to talk too long or too often.** This is the most challenging rule to enforce, even for long-standing facilitators. It needs to be enforced flexibly, because someone who experienced a major trauma last week might get more time than someone who just wants to recount the events of the week. You may find there are some people who have to be reminded of this rule repeatedly but consistency will help the entire group. “I’m interrupting you because we need to keep the conversation going. It’s time to move on to the next person.”

c. **We don’t give advice.** “I’m interrupting you because that sounds like advice. Would you like to restate what you are saying as a summary of your own experience, or possibly as a suggestion for an idea to consider?”

- A potential issue that falls under this rule is that while participants are free to tell their own stories with their own language, they should not apply terms or labels to other participants. Participants may wish to use the terms “addict” or “alcoholic” or other traditional terms to describe themselves, even though SMART participants typically do not use these terms. We do not want to criticize anyone for the language they use to describe themselves and their own experiences.

d. **We stay focused on making progress with addictive problems and building a better life.**

This rule also needs to be enforced flexibly. A 30 second digression to talk about Valentine’s Day, or the Super Bowl, or a holiday party, or recent national news, can be part of being together in community. A 10 minute conversation about any of these topics would be too long. “I’m interrupting you because, as interesting as this subject is, it’s time to get back to our primary topic, which is making progress with addictive problems and building a better life.”

- In the event of a major event that also touches SMART (e.g., the death of a participant), an extended discussion may be appropriate.
- One specific off-topic subject is criticism of other approaches to change, especially AA. “I’m interrupting you because you are entitled to your opinion about AA. However, in this meeting we stay focused on doing SMART Recovery. Perhaps you would like to transition your comments by telling us what you like about SMART.”

We encourage participation from each individual. Sometimes a talkative or oblivious participant can break the “too much, too often” rule and/or get off topic.

It is the responsibility of the facilitator to address this, guide the group back to discussing progress and change, and ensure that the meeting is not being dominated or taken off course and is instead a collaborative effort where each participant feels welcome and confident to contribute.

How to interrupt a participant that is speaking too long or getting off topic:

While this is most effective in person, employing non-verbal cues can also help direct the person back on track, even through Zoom interactions.

1. Shift your body position/lean forward.
2. Use other gentle nonverbal cues like a hand moving forward to signal an interruption is coming.
3. Begin nodding and agreeing “Uh huh”.
4. Interrupt by using reflective listening to summarize what the participant has said then explain why you interrupted and what you’re going to do next.

How to manage a repetitively disruptive participant:

It is possible that a participant is unable or unwilling to follow the rules even after they have been reminded using the default format. In this case, you may request that they just listen for the remainder of the meeting:

“I’m interrupting you because it sounds like you are having some trouble following the meeting guidelines. You are welcome to stay if you are ok with just listening to others for the rest of today’s meeting.”

If you are facilitating a Zoom meeting, it is ok to mute or remove participants.

How to manage a participant that is under the influence:

One scenario that often concerns facilitators is how to deal with a participant who is under the influence during a meeting. Unless the person is being disruptive, they are generally allowed to stay in the meeting as it may be supportive for them.

In the rare case that a participant is under the influence *and* disruptive, it is appropriate to manage them as any other repetitively disruptive participant up to and including removing them from a meeting.

Additional issues: With experience you will develop your own style of enforcing rules. Any challenge you have experienced in a meeting is a great topic for our monthly community development meeting, or for a discussion with your mentor or the Training Director.

There may be an occasion where you are unclear about what is happening, and you may have a sense that you have lost control of the meeting. With luck this will not happen (ever!), but if it does you may consider:

- “I’m interrupting because somehow we have got off track. Our primary job is to ‘do SMART Recovery’.”
- “It is my sense we are no longer doing SMART Recovery. So, let us move on with [the next person, the next question, the next section of the meeting, etc.]”
- “I’m interrupting because we have come up with a question that I don’t know the answer to. I will consult with the local organization and report back next time. For now, let us move on with [the next person, the next question, the next section of the meeting, etc.]”

If you do not have another approach to enforcing rules, a simple formula is “I’m interrupting you because [state the rule].”