In group facilitated sessions, the facilitator often verbally asks questions and gives instructions to participants. Participants may ask the facilitator to repeat or rephrase the questions or instructions because they are uncertain about what they are being asked. To avoid misunderstandings and to enhance sessions, facilitator clarity is critically important. To enhance understanding and accommodate different learning styles, the facilitator should pose questions and give instructions both visually and verbally.

Verbal and visual learning styles (Felder & Soloman)
Two types of learning styles are summarized below.

- Visual learners learn best from pictures, diagrams, demonstrations, timelines, and flowcharts.
- Verbal learners learn best from both written and spoken words.
- Most people are visual learners, but they learn best from a combination of approaches.

Since a combination of verbal and visual styles facilitates learning for most, one might practice both styles simultaneously to enhance group effectiveness. Examples of how these styles can be integrated into a group session by facilitators are discussed in the following section.
Two approaches of integrating verbal and visual learning styles in facilitation

**Instruction**: The facilitator asks participants to break into small groups.

**Approach**: The facilitator reads the instructions that are written on a flipchart or overhead transparency. The facilitator then reviews a diagram of the room with key room features to orient the participants.

"All people designated #1, go to the north side of the room, over by the coffee pot, and all those designated #2, go to the south side, over by the door."

**Question**: Facilitator asks participants to brainstorm ideas related to specific questions.

**Approach**: The facilitator reads the questions on a flipchart or overhead transparency. By offering more than one question, participants are provided a choice in how to prepare a response. The facilitator then provides a diagram and asks participants to identify issues that threaten or could positively impact (for example) a farm or ranch.

"Economic, social, and environmental forces influence the sustainability of your ranch or farm. You can look at these forces from a negative, glass-half-empty perspective or from a positive, glass-half-full perspective."

What issues threaten the sustainability of your ranch or farm? OR What issues, if successfully addressed, would positively impact your ranch or farm?

Ranch/Farm Sustainability Components

- Social
- Economic
- Environment
Conclusions
This tip sheet provided specific illustrations of how appropriate questions and instructions are provided in verbal and visual forms. Group effectiveness is enhanced when facilitators recognize and accommodate the different learning styles of participants. Facilitators will increase participant engagement by adjusting their facilitation styles to accommodate both visual and verbal learners.

Resources