



University of Nevada
Cooperative Extension

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Tip Sheet

Visualizing and Verbalizing Questions and Instructions

A Series of Fact Sheets on Effective Group Facilitation

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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.

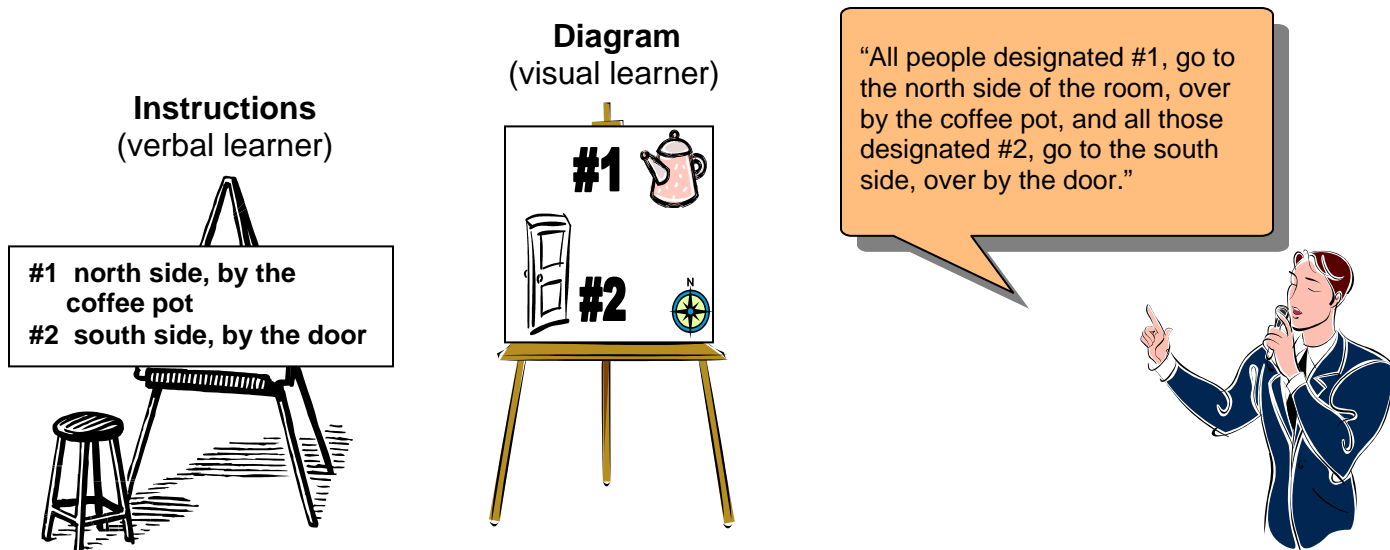
- Visual learners learn best from pictures, diagrams, demonstrations, timelines, and flowcharts.
- Verbal learners learn best from both written and spoken words.
- Most people are visual learners, but they learn best from a combination of approaches.

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

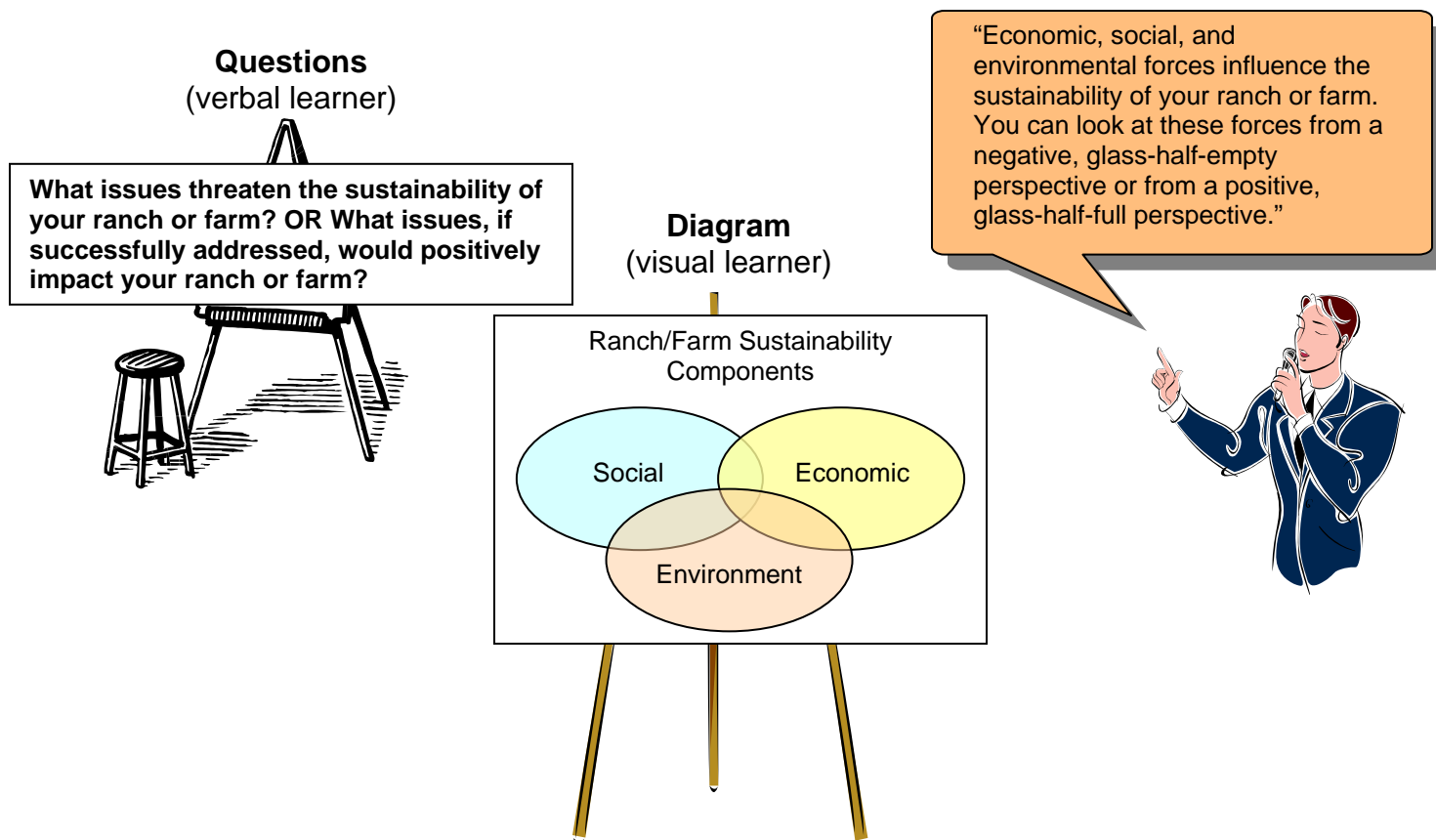
Instruction: The facilitator asks participants to break into small groups.

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.



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.



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

LdPride.net. Retrieved on February 3, 2006 from
<http://www.ldpride.net/learningstyles.MI.htm#Learning%20Styles%20Explained>

Felder, R.M. & Solomon, B.A. Learning styles and strategies. Retrieved on February 3, 2006 from
<http://www.ncsu.edu/felder-public/ILSdir/styles.htm>