

Buzz Groups . . . the sound of groups concentrating!

(The Art of Teaching Adults: How to Become an Exceptional Facilitator, By Peter Renner)



'Keep the process simple and instructions clear. Provide the group with structure to do its work, but try to control it. Enjoy what you do. Be genuinely yourself and you will be respected' based on the teachings of Lao Tzu

Buzz groups are best for . . .

- stimulating individual input
- breaking the ice at the outset
- warming up the group to a new topic
- measuring previous knowledge and experience
- generating lists of questions
- gathering opinions and identify preconceived ideas
- ranking-order items to create an agenda
- obtaining feedback on virtually any topic
- tackling a wide range of problems
- gathering ideas on group procedures
- ensuring individual 'air time', regardless of class size and time constraints

Group size . . .

- 3-6 members, any larger there is a tendency for subgroups to form. Participants may complain of a lack of coordination, insufficient opportunity to have a say, and poor use of time.

Time . . .

- allow four to six minutes for the "BUZZ"

Room Setup . . .

- facing each other

Steps . . .

1. explain the procedure
2. form BUZZ GROUPS with specific directions – "turn to the people sitting near you", or "get together with someone you know the least".
3. describe the task, writing it on an overhead, so it is in plain view throughout the discussion so groups can refer to it to stay on track.
4. specify a time limit – four to six minutes are typical time spans for small tasks.
5. ask for recorders to be selected by the groups.
6. recommend a process of introduction and information sharing within the group.
7. monitor the process, circulating from group to group.
8. act as timekeeper, announcing "half-way through" or "two minutes remaining" remembering to be flexible!
9. invite the recorders to report, posting the summary sheets as you go along.
10. process the information. If you want peoples input, you need to acknowledge their contributions and then act on them.

Other uses . . .

1. use as a warm up with new groups to encourage involvement from the outset and providing a say in how time is spent.
2. use prior to a lecture to determine what is already known about a topic, what people expect to learn and what is important to them.
3. intersperse a lecture with BUZZ GROUPS to foster comprehension and bring out questions.
4. conclude a lecture by asking groups to integrate new information with previous learning.
5. after a difficult session, BUZZ GROUPS could be asked to collect questions and issues that need clarification.
6. BUZZ GROUPS provide a safe way for participants to make constructive comments on course content and instructor performance.

