



Organizing a Fishbowl

Step by Step

Before the Meeting

- Four to five chairs are arranged in an inner circle, and the remaining chairs are arranged in a concentric circle outside the fishbowl. A few participants are selected to fill the fishbowl, while the rest of the group sits on the chairs outside. In open fishbowls, one or more chairs are left empty; in closed ones all chairs are filled.

During the Meeting

- The facilitator introduces the topic and the participants start discussing it. The audience outside the fishbowl attentively listens to the discussion.
 - **Open fishbowl:** The initial participants sit in the inner circle and participate in the discussion. Any member of the audience can, at any time, occupy the empty chair and join the fishbowl. After he/she made a comment or asked a question and received an answer, he/she should leave the chair empty so that someone else can occupy it. If no chair is free and someone wants to join the discussion, he can stay behind one of the participants until one of the seats gets empty.
 - **Closed fishbowl:** The initial participants speak for some time. When time runs out, they leave the fishbowl and a new group from the audience enters the fishbowl. This continues until many audience members have spent some time in the fishbowl. Once the final group has concluded the discussion, the facilitator closes the fishbowl.

In both cases, there is an important rule to follow, no-one from the audience can express his/her opinion. In the case of the open fishbowl they have to occupy an empty chair, in the closed ones they have to wait the change of participants. If someone doesn't follow the rule, the facilitator should immediately remind all the participants about it.

After the Meeting

- The facilitator summarizes the discussion.



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