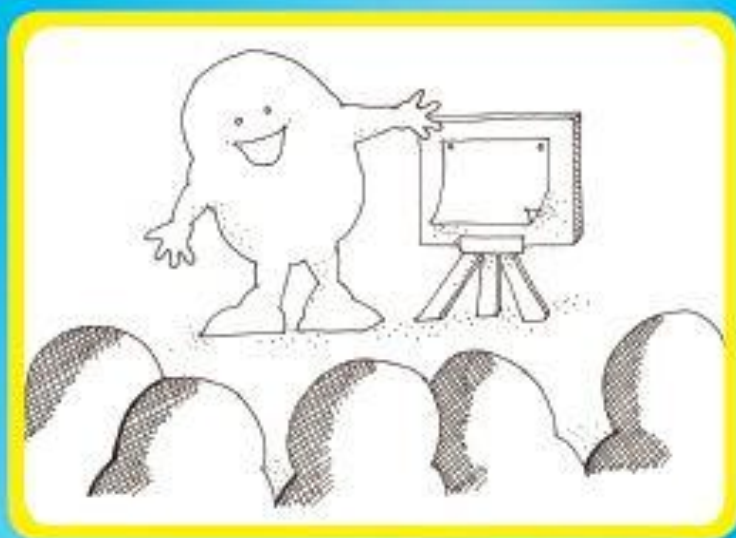


THE GROUPWORK TOOLKIT

How to convert your one to one advice skills
to work with groups



ANN REYNOLDS & JULIE COOPER

Contents

FOREWORD	Page	7
Is this book for you?.....		7
Who are Julie and Ann?.....		9
PART 1 TRANSFERRING YOUR SKILLS		13
Have you got the skills you need to carry out effective groupwork? Here we compare and contrast the processes of one to one interviews and groupwork, to help you recognise the skills you have and identify areas you need to explore further.		
Transferring your advice skills.....		13
Groupwork skills checklist and development plan..		33
PART 2 HOW PEOPLE LEARN		37
Here we run through the basics of how people learn, referring to several popular theories and good practices to equip you with the knowledge you need. You will find out what learning means, why people learn, and how. We'll explain the learning cycle and learning styles.		
What is learning?.....		40
What happens when we learn?.....		41
The learning cycle.....		41
The nine events of learning.....		45

The three domains of learning.....	46
How do people learn?.....	58
Reinforcement.....	58
Feedback.....	59
Modelling.....	63
Learning styles.....	65
Aptitude – Ability – Intelligence.....	77
Prior learning.....	79
Bite-size chunks.....	80
Learning curves.....	81
Consciousness about competence.....	82
Why do people want to learn?.....	85
Motivation.....	85
Process and Content.....	91
Ethics and client centred groupwork	92
PART 3 PLANNING THE SESSION.....	93
We present a model to help you plan a groupwork session, with a range of activities you can adapt to suit your group. We explain how to set objectives and think about evaluating the session. There are a few session plans to use as examples.	
A six-stage model with Toolkit of activities.....	94
1 - Focus attention and break the ice.....	98
2 - Agree objectives and ground rules.....	110
3 - Recall prior learning and present new learning.	122
4 - Allow performance and provide feedback.....	135
5 - Evaluate learning and prepare for ending.....	147
6 - Plan next steps and say good-bye.....	154

The Session Plans.....	160
PART 4 MANAGING THE GROUP.....	173
This section is about balancing individual and group needs; managing behaviour and group dynamics; enabling and motivating group members. We will also look at strategies for dealing with common problems and concerns.	
Dealing with the group.....	174
Rule no 1.....	174
Rule no 2.....	177
Side conversations.....	179
Shifting your attention.....	179
How are groups different?.....	181
Dealing with individuals.....	189
Group dynamics.....	205
NEXT STEPS – FURTHER DEVELOPMENT.....	209
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	215
INDEX.....	219

Part Three

Planning the Session

Enough of the theory! In this section we roll up our shirtsleeves and get very practical, giving you the tools of the trade to prepare and run a successful group session. You will find out how to prepare and structure your session, with lots of ideas for exercises, different ways of getting your message across and some example session plans that you can use or adapt to save you time.

If you come across anything here that doesn't quite add up and you've skipped reading the theory in Part Two, it may be worth going back and leafing through, to see the thinking behind the activities. Use the index to find a particular topic. On the other hand, if you've read the theory and you're wondering how on earth to apply it and turn it into action, you should find some answers here.

We've already seen why a group session needs to be more adviser-led than a one to one advice session. Even in client-led one to one work, a model structure can help the adviser keep it focused and effective. For your group session, you will definitely need a session plan.

So what needs to be planned?

- the **content** – the tasks to be achieved
- the **process** – how we go about the tasks

We have combined a few of the models from Part Two to provide a structure for your session. This structure is geared towards one stand-alone session rather than part of a series. It is not prescriptive, but it does give you a good starting point. You can adapt it if your particular group has an agenda that does not include all six stages.

Later, we'll look at how to produce your session plan. For now, we are going to concentrate on considering how we can achieve each stage of the model. If you take an idea or two from each section, you will already have the bare bones of a session plan.

Here is the model:

1	Focus their Attention <i>and</i> Break the Ice
2	Agree Learning Objectives <i>and</i> Set Ground Rules
3	Recall Prior Learning <i>and</i> Present New Learning
4	Allow Performance <i>and</i> Provide Feedback
5	Evaluate Learning <i>and</i> Prepare for Ending
6	Plan Next Steps <i>and</i> Say Good Bye

And for those of you in a hurry, on the next three pages is a quick overview of some of the suggestions we give in the rest of Part Three, where we discuss each stage in a lot more detail.

Stage	Suggestions
<p>1</p> <p>How will I get their attention?</p> <p>And keep it!</p> <p><i>More detail on page 98</i></p>	<p>Find out before the session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's their history and background? • What else is likely to be on their minds? • What do they care about? <p>Choose something from your findings and link it into your opening remarks.</p> <p>Start with High Energy!</p> <p>Make an impact!</p> <p>Surprise them.</p> <p>Ask questions.</p> <p>Be observant throughout: Note what is competing for their attention and deal with it, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing it. • Using it as an example of a learning point. • Giving him/her something to do.
<p>2</p> <p>How will I agree the objectives with them?</p> <p><i>More detail on page 110</i></p>	<p>Ask them what they want to get from the session.</p> <p>Link what they tell you to the objectives you had already planned for the session.</p> <p>Reassure them that they will get what they want, tailoring your planned input to what they tell you.</p>
<p>3a.</p> <p>How will I help them recall what they know already?</p> <p><i>More detail on page 122</i></p>	<p>If possible, find out beforehand what they know already.</p> <p>At the start, ask them what they already know – they may actually learn from each other.</p> <p>Prepare questions, a quiz or discussion to find out.</p> <p>Link your new information to their existing knowledge. Refer back to what they have told you.</p>

Stage	Suggestions
<p>3b.</p> <p>How will I present the new learning to them?</p> <p><i>More detail on page 125</i></p>	<p>Vary your methods - Take them through each stage of Kolb's Learning Cycle: Present information, allow activity, encourage reflection and let them draw their own conclusions and plan action.</p> <p>Divide information into chunks and present it in an organised manner.</p> <p>Use a variety of media – spoken, written, visual, diagrams. Use methods to suit all learning styles.</p> <p>Help them link it to what they already know.</p> <p>Provide different examples.</p> <p>Describe it in different ways.</p> <p>Tell stories to illustrate it.</p> <p>Make it relevant to their lives or job roles.</p> <p>Rhymes, Mnemonics, Repetition, Problems to solve.</p>
<p>4a.</p> <p>How will I enable them to perform?</p> <p><i>More detail on page 135</i></p>	<p>Provide opportunities for them to apply learning to different problems in a variety of situations.</p> <p>Give them things to do:</p> <p>Practice, Things to make, Tests or Questions to answer, Present to each other, Games, Case studies to discuss.</p> <p>Simulations. Exercises. Tasks. Assignments.</p> <p>Role play. Present to the group. Written answers to questions. Real life trials.</p>
<p>4b.</p> <p>How will I feed back on their progress?</p> <p><i>More detail on page 142</i></p>	<p>Short comments throughout the session.</p> <p>Provide information on performance, in comparison with a standard.</p> <p>Remember the rules of feedback and the effects of positive reinforcement.</p>

Stage	Suggestions
<p>5</p> <p>How will I evaluate their progress?</p> <p><i>More detail on page 147</i></p>	<p>Unless you are training people for a qualification, you may not need to do a final assessment.</p> <p>Ask them to evaluate what they have gained from your session.</p> <p>Give them a form to complete – one they can keep, incorporating an action plan.</p> <p>Asking them to complete an evaluation or feedback form for you is a separate exercise.</p>
<p>6a.</p> <p>What next steps should I plan with them?</p> <p><i>More detail on page 154</i></p>	<p>Ask them how they can reinforce this new learning and put it into practice?</p> <p>Ask them what further help they need and how they can get it. Add your own suggestions.</p> <p>Give handouts and further exercises.</p> <p>Suggest further practice tasks.</p>
<p>6b.</p> <p>How should we say Good-Bye?</p> <p><i>More detail on page 157</i></p>	<p>Summarise what they have achieved during the session.</p> <p>Encourage them to value the steps forward, and be proud of their own efforts.</p> <p>Praise and celebrate.</p>

I Focus Attention *and* Break the Ice

First Things First

When does your group session actually begin? Some people will turn up early, others may drift in after the advertised start time. At a given point, you must decide to make a start. The need to focus people's attention is one difference between individual and group work. At the same time you still have to consider individuals' anxieties and fears, and remember to create an appropriate atmosphere right from the very first contact - which can be difficult, because *your* attention may well be on other things (the projector, the layout, finding enough pens...). Remember that they will interpret every facial expression as an indication of your attitude towards them. We have already covered many of the basics of setting a group at ease in Part One, when we discussed creating a friendly, encouraging atmosphere.

You need to engage and motivate your group and to allow it to form. You want members to get to know each other and to feel:

- I like being here
- I feel comfortable
- It's going to be fun / interesting
- It will be useful to me
- I want to join in and give it my best
- I will stop thinking about my to-do list, stop talking to my friends, and give this my full attention

Stop and think about your group – which of the above will need more work? A group who already work or play together, gathered in their own school or workplace, may need less of the ice-breaking and more of the focus. The reverse is probably the case with a group who have come together for the first time on premises they don't know.

First, we'll look at how you grab the group's attention and focus it on the activities you've planned. Then we'll provide a Toolkit of ice breakers that have worked well for us.

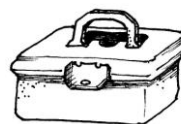
Focusing their Attention

There may be distractions – it may seem more fun to carry on talking about what happened at the pub last Saturday, to flirt with the boys in the group, to catch up on the gossip from friends or colleagues you haven't seen for a while.

Then there may be anxieties – you have a feud with another person in the group, all the other people look cleverer than you, you don't want to speak out in front of everyone. Sitting still and listening might be the most boring thing to you. You don't like the look of the group leader standing up there at the front, he reminds you of someone you used to know.

The best way of making sure you get everyone's attention is to be democratic and share yourself around equally between all the learners, so that no one falls through the net. This includes smiles and eye contact as you present to the whole group and the amount of time you allow each person to speak – balanced with the fact that some prefer to remain in the background.

Toolkit for Focusing Attention



1. Use your Body

You need to be noticed! Your body language needs to counter their reasons for not wanting to focus. Body language speaks volumes and will override any words you speak, so give it sufficient attention. If you are not sure what your body language conveys, ask a colleague for some honest feedback or watch yourself on video.

The message is:

Hey, notice me, I am here, Now!
I am a nice person, I like you and you'll like me.
I know I can make this interesting and useful to you.
I'm confident and well organised.
This is going to be fun too, you will enjoy it.

How are you going to convey this message? A short cut is to believe it yourself – our body language always showcases our feelings, so you must feel and believe your own message. We discuss this further in Part Four – Rule No 1. Meanwhile, here are some hints:

- Take a deep breath
- Stand up straight – shoulders back, head up, chest out
- Eye contact with group members – a firm gaze, shared between all, moving round the room as you speak
- Smile as you would if welcoming friends to your home
- Slow, calm movements – nothing too jerky
- Open posture – arms out away from your body, open hands
- Take another deep breath
- Inject plenty of energy
- Voice – loud enough – aim it at the people at the back of the room
- Slow, calm voice – you want everyone to hear and understand
- Plenty of pauses – pause after each phrase of a few words – look at people especially during your pauses as if to say “this is important – I know you want to really take it in”

“Hi / Good morning”

(pause, breathe, smile, eye contact)

“My name’s Ann / Ann Reynolds”

(pause, breathe, smile, eye contact)

“I work for CareerTrain and I’m a Guidance Adviser”

(pause, breathe, smile, eye contact)

“It’s good to see you all here....”

(pause, breathe, smile, eye contact)

2. Ask a question

If your group appears interested and focused already, you could simply introduce yourself.

If not, or as a follow on, a question is a useful tool for drawing people in. As guidance advisers, you already know that the best questions are open questions:

- Why are we here?
- Who am I?
- How are you today?

If you ask a question, you will have decided what kind of answers you are expecting and what you'll do with the answers; and what you'll do if no one replies.

Why are we here? can lead neatly into your next task – agreeing objectives – you can confirm or correct their perceptions – if you have a flip chart, you can write down everyone's ideas and then go through and explain which you will cover and how. You will acknowledge every idea (however off the wall it may be), to build everyone's confidence at this early stage.

Who am I? can help you introduce a bit of humour as you field the responses – depending on how well they know you. It allows you to introduce yourself but raises their energy levels – having to think how to answer the question, plus taking a breath of air to speak, both get the heart beating a bit faster and wake people up, whereas just listening is passive and more likely to send them off to sleep.

How are you today? is a question we often use when meeting people who are likely to be unhappy or angry. If we are worried the session might get off to a negative start, we give out an A4 sheet of cartoon faces showing lots of different moods and we ask people to work in pairs and choose one or two faces that most closely express what they feel. Feeding back can be more orderly than a free for all – as each pair says their piece, we acknowledge what they say (write words on flip chart?) – empathise and say how we hope our session will help. We can be honest and realistic by admitting there will be

limits to what we can do about it, while still showing that we care. Allowing feelings to be expressed early on can defuse a possible explosion later at the storming stage (see group dynamics in Part Four). This question “*How are you today?*” can also help people express their shyness or fears about the session, and lead us into explaining how we work (respect, kindness, etc).

What’s on your mind? We know that we are competing for people’s attention with other, often more pressing, concerns. We want them to put these to one side for the duration of our session, so that they can focus on what we have to offer them. One colleague has an excellent way of getting people to articulate their concerns and then put them to one side. She gives each a small piece of paper and asks them to write down the distracting concern (or they could draw it if they don’t like writing). She then walks round with a bin and asks them to screw up the paper and throw it in. Symbolic physical gestures like this can work wonders, not least by releasing pent up feelings in a fun way. People don’t need to tell anyone what they wrote on the paper, but to quote our colleague: “it’s a good way of forgetting about cross husbands, late trains, unpaid bills and a whole range of other things”.

Rhetorical questions – ones you answer yourself – are an absolute no-no in one to one advice and guidance. However, they can have a place at this Focusing stage of a group session. They serve the purpose of waking people up, while allowing you to rescue them by providing the answer, once you have aroused their interest.

- How long does the average employer spend reading each CV that crosses her desk?
- What’s the worst thing that can happen at an interview?
- Is there such a thing as the perfect job?
- How many people look forward to job interviews?
- Is money more important than job satisfaction?
- How many 16 year olds from this school got apprenticeships last year?

It doesn’t really matter if the question is impossible to answer. In fact only the last one of these could be answered with any degree of

accuracy, though you might find research that provides an answer to the CV question (we've heard it's half a minute).

Nor does it matter whether people come in with answers to the question – if they do, of course you will acknowledge their input, and then go on to what you wanted to say. The point of asking questions is to make your job easier – the job of focusing attention.

3. Surprise them

There was a time when job vacancies came to careers offices on continuous print-outs that were usually torn at the folds into separate job cards. One adviser used to introduce herself to classes of year 11 students by taking in a long stream of these still joined up vacancy cards. It was a period of high unemployment and she wanted to show these school leavers that there were still jobs out there.

She would first ask a question like “How many jobs for school leavers do you think we've got at the careers centre?”. Then she'd let the cards unfold and as they reached the floor, she'd lift her flowing skirt and climb in her Doc Martens first onto the chair, and then onto the teacher's desk as the cards opened out like a concertina down to the floor. She generally got their attention as she made her point, and could go on to deliver her message through activities using the vacancy cards.

This was a surprise for the group because teachers didn't generally do that kind of thing. It worked because it was relevant and carried a message linked to the topic of the session. Depending on how much of a performer you are, you can choose all manner of ways to surprise your audience. Here are some ideas:

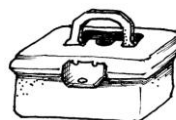
- A joke
- An item of costume
- Something bright and colourful that moves or makes a noise
- A piece of music
- A work of art – poster, picture, small statue, ornament

- An artefact from previous times
- A new gizmo or gadget

In fact, anything as long as it has some relevance to the topic and does not patronise your audience by being too childish. If you are seeking inspiration, try thinking through your five senses. Julie still remembers her very first French lesson: “The teacher began by giving us Camembert. I’d never tasted it before so it has stuck in my mind ever since.”

You may also be aware of the danger of over-stimulating certain audiences – if they are already lively, your surprise might tip them over into a riot. You may need to make a judgement call about whether to use the planned surprise when you assess the atmosphere in the room.

Toolkit - Ice Breakers



1. Questions to discuss in pairs

After a very short introduction by you, ask the group to work in pairs, usually with the person they happen to be sitting next to. Give them one or more (up to three) questions to answer, each in turn, ready to feed back to you and the whole group. Questions should be easy to answer, and you can try to make them fun too. They will depend on who is in the group and what you know about their background, also how well they already know each other. We have used:

- Tell us three things most people don't already know about you.
- Describe your day so far.
- Tell us about one item of clothing you are wearing – or the last item you bought.
- Take one thing from your pocket or bag and tell us what it says about you.

- Take relevant initials (eg: for a CV session, the letters C and V) and talk about one C and one V that is important to you. Of course, you can use their own initials too.
- Tell us about this school / your workplace / where you live / this area: the best thing, the worst thing and one interesting thing.

If you use this exercise, it's important first to establish the ground rules about Confidentiality (will anything go outside this room?) and the Right to Remain Silent (you can choose what information you do and do not share about yourself).

If you want to get them moving around, there are many ways of dividing them into pairs or small groups besides working with the person next to them. Here are some ideas:

- Find the person whose birthday is nearest yours
- Get every other person to move round one
- Find someone wearing a similar colour/hairstyle, pair of shoes to you
- Count round, going up to half of the group number, then start again. They have to work with the person who has the same number as them.
- Work with the person sitting opposite
- Choose someone you don't know very well

As you can see, many of these ideas are icebreakers in themselves. They are also useful for energising groups later in the session - it can keep them alert if they are never quite sure how they are going to be divided!

2. Play ball

Have a soft ball, bean bag or similar. You ask a simple question such as:

- Is anyone's birthday in January?
- Who's got a cat?
- Has anyone here got a black car?

The first person who says "me" is the one you throw the ball to. They then say their name and throw the ball to anyone they choose. That person catches the ball, says their name and throws it to someone they choose. Carry on till everyone has caught the ball and said their name. People really do need to be sitting or standing in a circle for this to work – but we believe sitting in a circle, square or horseshoe is more friendly anyway, certainly better than sitting in rows.

3. Repeating names

Go round the room asking each person to say their name. They should put an adjective in front of their name that starts with the same letter, for example "I'm Anxious Ann" or "I'm Joyful Julie". The next person has to repeat the previous person's name and then state their own: "That's Anxious Ann and I'm Joyful Julie". The next person has to start repeating the first person's name, then the second, then their own.

As you go round the circle there are more names to remember, which makes it harder, but the names get repeated, which helps. Other group members can come in and help out if the person gets really stuck. Instead of getting each person to give themselves an adjective, you could ask them to say "My name is And my favourite animal is a" Or "my favourite colour is ..." Choose whatever feels right for this group.

4. Who are you?

Asking people to introduce themselves and give a bit of information about their background is the most obvious activity at this forming stage (see Group Dynamics in Part Four) of your group. Depending on the type of course you are running, you and the other group members might like to know: What is their job role? What organisation do they work for? What previous experience have they got of job interviews? How did they find out about today's session? One adviser facilitating a session about careers in child care asked every person to say what their favourite toy was when they were young.

5. Arrange yourselves into alphabetical order

An idea suggested by Jenny Rogers in her book "Adults Learning" (Rogers, 2007) is especially good for making sure no one gets excluded if some, but not all, of the members already know each other. Re-arranging themselves means that everyone has to speak to everyone else and get to know their names. People are energised by the action of getting up from their seats and talking – you can help them focus this energy to use in your session. If they all know each other really well, you could use some other order, eg:

- Distance travelled to get here today
- Birthdays, starting with January
- Height
- Place of birth on a north to south range

6. Word Association

Make a pack of cards with a word or phrase on each one. Lay them out and ask everyone to choose three cards, then explain to the group or a partner why they chose those particular cards. Here are some ideas for what to put on the cards:

- Personal attributes (Words like: kind, friendly, calm, smiley, serious, thoughtful, lively, talkative, independent, etc)

- Skills (Phrases or words like: being on time, organised, maths, writing, filling in forms, gardening, using the internet, speaking up for myself, following instructions, having ideas, being creative, decorating, etc)
- Job Titles

7. Bingo

Give everyone a handout you have prepared earlier with a table something like this on it:

Likes football	Can draw	Has a dog
Has a brother and a sister	Went to the cinema in the last month	Likes gardening
Watches the Simpsons	Goes to the gym	Uses the library

You can make up the contents depending on the group. Ask them to circulate and talk to each other to find someone who fits in each box. As the purpose is to break the ice, it does not matter if your group fails to yield someone for every box. By briefly discussing the results you can soon build up a picture of the group members.

8. Home Improvement

Give each pair a small household or office item (or even a toy) and ask them what they would do to improve it. This might be difficult for them to get into, so give them an example to give them the idea, eg:

“Here’s my tea strainer. It’s a bit small for my favourite mug, so I’d make it a bit bigger, with a better hook on it. It’s getting a bit discoloured so I’d like it to be stain proof, in red to match the mug.”

Of course, ideas like this are fun but not directly related to the content of the session. You could adapt this idea and use objects that are related to the session, for example:

- Leaflets from different agencies – Ask them:
 - *How could you make this leaflet better?*
 - *Is it clear what the agency does?*
 - *Do you like the colour and print size? Graphics?*
- Job adverts – Ask them:
 - *What’s good about this job ad? What’s bad?*
 - *Does it tell you what you need to know? Anything missing?*
 - *What would make it perfect?*
- Pictures of people – Say:
 - *These people are dressed for an interview at a shop/office/factory.*
 - *What would you change about them to make them better dressed?*
 - *What do you like about what they are wearing?*

This last set of activities has enough content to be part of your learning session – stages 3 or 4 of your plan – “present new learning” or “allow performance” to see how much they have learned. You can use the same activity for different purposes.