

TOOL STACKING

OVERVIEW

Stacking is a simple tool wherein the facilitator or meeting leader establishes the order in which people will speak. This provides an opportunity for everyone's voice to be heard.



To stack:

- 1) Acknowledge who wants to speak or whom you would like to hear from.
- 2) Create a speaking order by announcing who will be first, second, third, and so on.
- 3) Prompt people when their turn has arrived.
- 4) If more people want to speak after your initial stack, repeat the process.

WHEN TO USE

Quieter Groups

Each group has its own way of interacting with one another and with the facilitator. Though sometimes the silence after posing a question can feel daunting, there are times when groups are naturally quieter and will need to be drawn out further. When this happens, stacking is useful. It lets the group know when they will speak and allows them to spend more time listening rather than avoiding speaking or hoping someone else will speak up first.

Lively Groups

On the flip side, other groups encounter constant interruptions, side conversations, and/or multiple folks trying to find their opportunity to speak simultaneously. Eager participants are not a bad thing for facilitators. However, it is essential to allow everyone to speak and have an environment conducive to dialogue. In this instance, stacking also allows people to drop into the conversation fully because they know when their turn to speak is.

HOW TO USE

In-Person Meetings

At the beginning of the meeting, stacking can be useful to bring in everyone's voice. This can be done simply by posing the question and announcing you'd like to hear from everyone in the room about the question. Then, you can allow for a



pause to allow someone to speak up first, when you observe that happens, allow them to speak and state that after they're done the next person over will speak in a counterclockwise manner, for example.

In other circumstances, when the discussion is rich and folks want to contribute, that is a good time to build a stack. Again, this allows people to know when their turn is and not worry about finding the time to speak. To quickly do this, you can use a hand to indicate an order of speakers. To do this, you would gesture with your hand and say:

"We're going to go here [gesture to person], then here [gesture to person], and then here [gesture to final person]."

Or if you know participants by name, you can call them by name:

"We'll go to [insert name] next, then we'll hear from [insert name] before we hear from [insert name]."

You may also notice that some people are quieter or falling into the background, this could be for a lot of reasons. As a facilitator, you can add them to the stack. This draws them into the group and allows them to speak if they are having a hard time finding the moment to speak. You can give them an opportunity to speak by saying:

"Next, I'd like to hear from someone we haven't heard from yet."

Or by calling someone into a conversation by name:

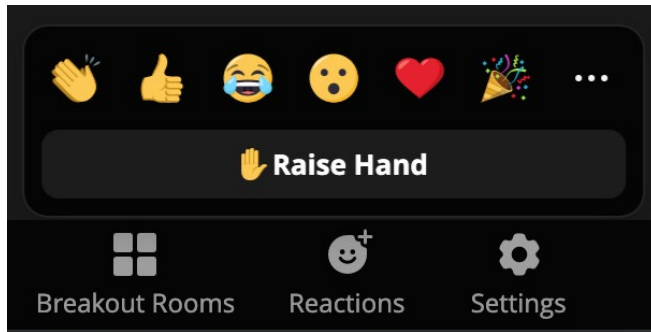
"We haven't heard as much from [insert name] or [insert name]. Would one of you be willing to share your perspective next?"

In all these cases, intentionality and listening from the facilitator will allow for a smooth stacking process.



Virtual Meetings

In virtual meetings, some of the visible or auditory cues that someone is trying to speak are minimized. Due to that, creating a stack will be extremely helpful for allowing people the opportunity to speak and avoid interruptions. Like in-person meetings, when folks know when their turn to speak is, they can then focus on the conversation and not on when their turn to speak is.



In virtual meetings, you can use the same auditory cues you do in person by calling on the next speaker. You can, however, also use digital tools to help designate an order of speakers. You could add a list of names to the chat or to a slide you screen share to let folks know when it will be their turn. This can be useful when you have a

starting question that you would like everyone to answer. Once folks have answered this first question, they'll be more likely to naturally start engaging in discussion. Alternatively, if multiple people start trying to jump in, you can message in the chat to say, "After this person speaks, we'll hear from [insert name], then [insert name]."

You can also ask for participants to give you digital cues to let you know they'd like to speak. Different platforms have emojis people can use to raise their hand or give you a thumbs up. Indicate that you'd like people to take a certain action when they want to talk and you'll make sure everyone has time to be heard. Be sure to explain directions for how to use the digital tool in new groups. Some folks may be familiar with how to raise their hand in a Zoom meeting, but others may need more direction to be able to participate fully.

COMMUNITY LEARNING MODEL

Dialogue

Create a high-quality conversation that clarifies values, surfaces tensions, and taps into creativity; leading to concrete plans that achieve results. Establish conditions of genuine respect for the views and needs of the other.

Stacking is a tool for the Dialogue phase of the Community Learning Model. To learn more about tools for dialogue and the other areas of the Community Learning Model, visit

civiccanopy.org/clm.

