

Example script for a structured dialogue for the facilitator

0:00 The purpose of the event

Welcome everyone. The purpose of this discussion is that we learn from each other and hear everyone's point of view. The intention is not to persuade, argue or convince the others about our own view – but to allow room for different perspectives and build an understanding based on each other's comments.

Our discussion will consist of three stages. First, we will learn to know each other and define the topic that we will be discussing. After that, we will focus on the discussion. In the end, we will use some time to condense the main content of the discussion into a form in which it can be forwarded to other people.

The objective of this dialogue

I hope that you will have an opportunity to learn and form a new point of view and have a chance to talk about your experiences and values profoundly. I also hope that you will listen to each other's experiences and acknowledge them, especially if they are different from those of your own.

I hope this will give you a new understanding of what is important to the others and a deeper understanding of what is important to you.

As a facilitator, I will be leading this conversation and will make sure that

- Everyone has a chance to speak
- We follow the ground rules for discussions.

Which are:

- Repeat the previously mentioned ground rules for a constructive discussion, to which the following points have been added:
- Only one person speaks at a time
- Time limits are respected.

Commitment to the ground rules

Do you find these rules good or would someone like to add something? Does everyone find these rules acceptable? – Good, then we will observe them.

0:05 Introduction

Let's introduce ourselves next. We will do it with the help of the following question:

Say your name and mention one thing that you are committed to and want to promote in your community. (community = family, neighbourhood, work community, relatives, circle of friends).

Think about it on your own for a moment; if you wish, you can write your answer down. So:

Say your name and mention one thing that you are committed to and want to promote in your community. (community = family, neighbourhood, work community, relatives, circle of friends).

0:15 Question 1: Initial question

The following question has been planned for starting a new discussion on **topic X**. If you do not understand the questions, let me know and I will try to clarify them. After the question, you will have two minutes to think about what you want to say. We will then listen to what each of you has to say. Everyone will have two minutes to speak. Before you start to speak after the previous person, take a moment to allow yourself to internalise what has just been said.

Tell a personal experience that has contributed to how you think about topic X today.

During the next two minutes, make notes of what you intend to say so that you can then concentrate on listening to what the others have to say.

2 MINUTES

When you listen to each other, listen in order to understand, not to judge or to look for faults or mistakes. You may hear things that you want to ask about – write your questions down so you will be able to ask each other those questions later. Do not interrupt at this stage, unless it is entirely impossible to listen to the other person.

I will take care of watching the time. When you are ready to speak, I will start the two minutes. When the two minutes have passed, I will let you know and you can finish off your sentence, but not continue the story.

Are you ready to start (Ask the person next to you)? *Write the main things about the experiences onto the flip board.*

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Before we go on to the next question, have a think about what you have just heard. Is there something that you would like to ask later? Are you wondering or curious about something? Is there something you would like to hear more about? Write these questions down so that you can ask them when we reach the question stage.

Go over and structure what you have written about progress on the flip board, what it seems to mean at least for this group.

0:30 Question 2

Now we can move on to the second question. The purpose of this question is to provide an opportunity to reflect on values. Everyone will have two minutes to speak.

What touches you most or is most important about topic X?

During the next two minutes, make notes of what you intend to say so that you can then concentrate on listening to what the others have to say.

2 MINUTES

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Before we go on, think back to what you have heard. Write down the questions you may have so that you will remember them when it is time for questions.

00:45 Question 3

Let's move on to the third question. This question is meant to provide an opportunity to reflect on your own complex thinking about the topic. You will all again have two minutes to speak:

When you think about topic X, is there something you find confusing? Or something you would rather not think about or would like to forget?

Is the question clear enough? You can again think about it for two minutes and write down your thoughts.

1:00 Questions arising from genuine interest (among the participants)

Let's move on to the question stage. Now, the aim is to understand more about what the others have said and combine your thoughts and what you have heard. It is important to remember that we are not here to argue or to change anyone's mind, but curiously finding out about things in order to better understand each other.

Therefore: Are you curious about something someone said, or would you like to be able to understand someone better?

Do you assume something and would like to find out whether your assumption is correct? You can either pose your question to the whole group or to an individual person. The others are welcome to continue the discussion based on this question.

You have 20 minutes and I will let you know when you have about two minutes left. Now, think about the questions you would like to ask the others for a moment. When someone has a question, you can go ahead and ask.

As the facilitator, monitor who poses questions and who answers so that everyone will definitely have a chance to participate. When the 20 minutes have gone, say something like this to the participants:

There is never a perfect time to end this stage, but because we want to respect the schedule we agreed on together we shall move on to end this discussion.

1:20 End of the discussion

This has been rewarding. We have to finish now, but before we do that, I would like you to think about the following:

What will you take home from what you have heard here and what would you like to continue reflecting on either in a discussion or by thinking about it?

Think about this question for one minute and I will then ask someone to start. You will each have one minute to answer.

Today, you may have taken the risk to talk about matters that are important to you and to listen to the others profoundly. Although this group discussion is now ending, we hope that you will continue a constructive discussion and listen to each other.

If the intention is to draw conclusions or communicate information about the discussion externally, the following section can be implemented.

1:40 Conclusion

In the conclusion (20 minutes), the entire group collaborates to go over the recorded discussion and modifies it into a more compact form. Everyone has the right to have a deviating view recorded – regardless of the point it concerns.

Let's start to summarise the content of the discussion together. The script written by the recorder will support us and serve as a basis for this work. At this stage, it is important that we can together agree on which parts of our discussion will be made public. If there is something you do not want to be recorded, it will not be recorded to the summary. The summary does not need to be unanimous, it is quite desirable that it reveals the differences of opinion and the different points of view. Let's proceed with this summary step by step.

- 1) The main topics of discussion – (the topics that were agreed on more widely)
- 2) What are the main differences of opinion within these topics?

We will go over each topic starting from the beginning of the discussion until the group is satisfied with the whole.

At this stage, the following will be added at the end of each topic:

- 3) What topics should be discussed further and who should continue the discussion?

Material from a dialogue training by Bob Stains (2017) has been used as the source for this example script for a structured dialogue.