

# Turntable

*Turntable* is a revolving discussion in which everyone can speak on all sides of an issue. People get to understand other points of view by expressing views that may not be their own.

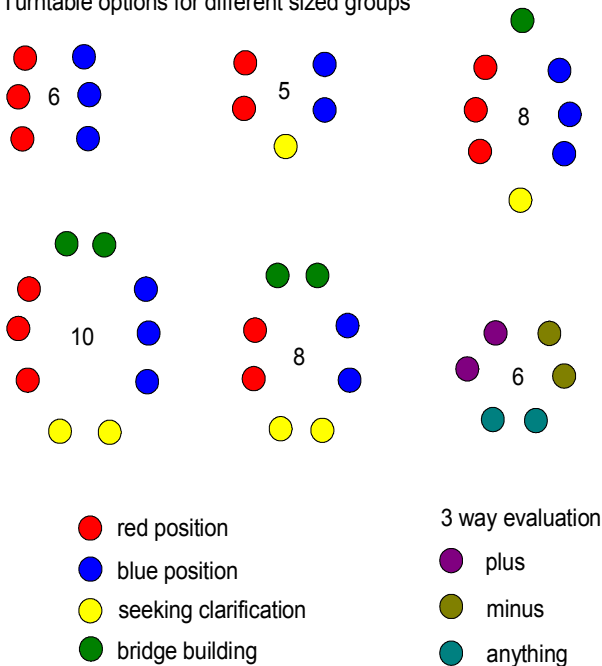
## Why would I use Turntable?

- ✓ to enable participants to *explore* and *understand* two or more sides of an issue
- ✓ to generate a *lively discussion* that allows everyone to 'change their tune'
- ✓ for participants to enjoy the *fun* of contradicting their previous position
- ✓ to develop *debating* skills
- ✓ to develop skills for *bridge building* or *conflict resolution* or *creative compromising*
- ✓ to develop *facilitation* skills

## How Turntable turns

Participants sit in a circle that is divided into 2, 3 or 4 sections. Each section represents a different perspective on the chosen issue. On a given signal, everyone moves to their left. After one circuit (of about 10 minutes) everyone will have had the chance to speak from each perspective.

Turntable options for different sized groups



## How many sides?

In the basic form of a *Turntable* discussion two sides face each other in semicircles. Extra sides can be added (This is recommended for larger groups). One extra side can be for listening or recording. Or it can be for representing a third alternative or for creative thinking. Another extra side can be for mediating roles such as conflict resolution, bridge building or for practising facilitation skills.

## Briefing Turntable

Explain the purpose. For example: “*By speaking on all sides of this issue you should gain new insights into other viewpoints even if your own underlying viewpoint does not change.*”

Explain the process: For example: “*You may find yourself saying things you don't really believe. That's OK: you may adopt an attitude that is not your own, but do not make up untrue facts. Try to present a positive case for the side that you are temporarily representing. If you criticise what others say, criticise their views but without criticising or offending the person. Every minute or so I will give a signal for you to move one or two places to your left.*”

## Judging the pace of Turntable

Take the role of timekeeper when you first try this method, so that you can use your judgement and be flexible. (A timekeeper can join in.) There are many variables to consider, but aim for one complete circuit taking about 10 minutes.

## Variation if moving round is difficult

Instead of people moving, the roles move round. Use hats to represent roles: hat-wearing people represent one view, hatless people represent the other view. Or just pass round written signs.

## Ending: stepping back into your own shoes

After any role play, it is good practice to help people get out of role and back in their own shoes. In *Turntable* you can achieve this by asking everyone to stand in their favourite part of the circle (similar to *Horseshoe*). This reveals everyone's true position, which may or may not have changed during the exercise.

## Applications of Turntable

*Turntable* is a revolving discussion in which everyone can speak on all sides of an issue.

Add a 'facilitation' side to these 2- or 3-sided discussions unless you choose to take that role.

| Cheerleaders   | Critics |
|--|---------|
| <p><i>Turntable</i> can help cheerleaders become more critical while helping critical team members become more appreciative. At a team level it can help complacent teams become more critical, or it can help demoralised teams become more hopeful. And it can help <i>any</i> team reflect on its strengths and weaknesses in a balanced way.</p> <p><u>General outcome</u>: teams are more likely to welcome and talk about both perspectives.</p> |         |

| Plus  | Anything | Minus |
|---|----------|-------|
| <p>This triangular <i>Turntable</i> can help with the evaluation of <i>anything</i>: experiences; a proposal; a team performance; the quality of a product, task or service; the impact of a change; 'what if?' scenarios. The 'Anything' side is an invitation to look from <i>any</i> perspective that is neither plus nor minus, such as character, style, originality, a real or metaphorical comparison...</p> <p><u>Expected outcome</u>: a more rounded evaluation including some less obvious perspectives.</p> |          |       |

| Opportunities  | Solutions | Problems |
|--|-----------|----------|
| <p>People in the <i>Solution</i> seats try to respond to issues raised by those in the <i>Problem</i> seats. The starting point is a situation that creates opportunities and problems such as: a new challenge; less/more time; less/more resources; a special time-limited resource; a new leader; a change of task; the availability of new learning/capacity.</p> <p><u>Expected outcome</u>: people get beyond first assumptions and think more creatively about the possibilities afforded by the situation.</p> |           |          |

| Pessimists   | Realists | Optimists |
|--|----------|-----------|
| <p>When looking to the future, it is helpful for pessimists to listen to optimists and vice versa. Better still: experience speaking in both roles. The realist side is optional: role-playing a 'realist' position can cause confusion. This is a <i>prediction</i> exercise, so if you want the group to work on <i>solutions</i> include a <i>solutions</i> side.</p> <p><u>Expected outcome</u>: better prepared people who have anticipated a range of possibilities.</p> |          |           |

| Proposal 1   | Proposal 2 | Proposal 3 |
|--|------------|------------|
| <p>Helps participants appreciate the merits of all proposals by having everyone speak in favour of all proposals. If there are just two proposals then a third side could be used for generating another proposal that builds on the best features of the other two. A similar structure can be used for exploring moral dilemmas.</p> <p><u>Expected outcome</u>: leads to wiser decisions.</p> |            |            |

| Stakeholder 1  | Stakeholder 2 | Stakeholder 3 |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| <p>Everyone speaks on the issue from the perspective of each stakeholder. Within each stakeholder side there can be a range of views.</p> <p><u>Expected outcome</u>: leads to wiser decisions</p> |               |               |

### Do *Horseshoe* questions work with *Turntable*?

*Horseshoe* is a large curved spectrum on which people show 'where they stand' on an issue.

Most questions that work for *Horseshoe* would also work for *Turntable*. But there are some key differences between these two similar methods:

- *Turntable* can produce fun and laughter and may be less well suited to sensitive issues.
- *Turntable* requires quick-thinking and role-playing, whereas *Horseshoe* gives people time to think through their true position.
- In *Horseshoe* you can explore subtle shades of opinion. *Turntable* risks stereotyping or misrepresenting different positions.
- *Turntable* invites full participation but may not achieve it. *Horseshoe* is more inclusive.