World Café activity

**What is a World Café?**

Visit <http://www.theworldcafe.com/tools-store/hosting-tool-kit/> for information from the World Café Community Foundation about hosting a World Café session. This page includes the [Café To Go!](http://www.theworldcafe.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Cafe-To-Go-Revised.pdf) hosting guide.

Drawing on [seven integrated design principles](http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/design-principles/), the World Café methodology is a simple, effective, and flexible format for hosting large group dialogue.

World Café can be modified to meet a wide variety of needs. Specifics of context, numbers, purpose, location, and other circumstances are factored into each event’s unique invitation, design, and question choice, but the following five components comprise the basic model:

1) *Setting*: Create a “special” environment, most often modeled after a café, i.e. small round tables covered with a checkered or white linen tablecloth, butcher block paper, colored pens, a vase of flowers, and optional “talking stick” item. There should be four chairs at each table (optimally) – and no more than five.

2) *Welcome and Introduction*: The host begins with a warm welcome and an introduction to the World Café process, setting the context, sharing the Cafe Etiquette, and putting participants at ease.

3)*Small Group Rounds*: The process begins with the first of three or more 20-minute rounds of conversation for the small group seated around a table. At the end of the twenty minutes, each member of the group moves to a different new table. They may or may not choose to leave one person as the “table host” for the next round, who welcomes the next group and briefly fills them in on what happened in the previous round.

4) *Questions*: each round is prefaced with a **question** specially crafted for the specific context and desired purpose of the World Café. The same questions can be used for more than one round, or they can be built upon each other to focus the conversation or guide its direction.

5) *Harvest*: After the small groups (and/or in between rounds, as needed), individuals are invited to share insights or other results from their conversations with the rest of the large group. These results are reflected visually in a variety of ways, most often using [graphic recording](http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/graphic-recording/) in the front of the room.

**How to host a World Café:**

You can host a World Café session to discuss ideas and values, or to generate ideas and new knowledge, about any issue. It is particularly useful to get input about new concepts or to address complex problems or that do not have simple answers.

* Choose a topic or goal.
* Logistics: One question is addressed at each table. The optimal number of people per table is 4-6 people. If you have a large group, you can use the same question at more than one table. Ideally, your group will be large enough to have three or more tables. If you have less than 15 participants, consider using the questions for several rounds of discussion or brainstorming with the whole group.
* Develop questions. The number of questions will depend on your topic, the number of people attending, and how much time you have. It is a good idea to use open ended questions, and to provide probing questions for the table hosts in case they need help to get the conversation going. For more information about designing useful questions, see <http://www.theworldcafe.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/askingbig.pdf> and <http://www.theworldcafe.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Strategic-Questioning.pdf>.
* At each table, the group discusses one question. The discussion is led by a table host, who may be identified in advance or could be a volunteer in the session. The host takes notes and makes sure to keep the conversation going.
* The World Café operates in “rounds.” Each round is 15-20 minutes. After the allotted time, participants get up and move to a new table to discuss a different question. Table hosts stay at the same table for the full session.
* In subsequent rounds, the table hosts start by introducing the question and summarizing what has been discussed so far. They then encourage the group to continue the conversation and bring in new ideas.
* After 2-4 rounds (depending on how much time you have), each table host summarizes the conversation at their table and provides a few highlights. Someone at the front takes notes using a whiteboard or easel (or graphic illustrator if available).
* Consider preparing a summary report after the session to share with participants and to guide any action to follow the session (i.e., to meet the session objectives).

**Room set up:**

* Group discussions work best when people can sit in small groups at round tables, rather than clustered in chairs.
* If the session is long, consider having the refreshments available for people at the tables instead of disrupting the café sessions.
* Try to set up the room as much like a café as possible. This creates a more relaxed atmosphere and supports creative thinking. This kind of environment helps shift thinking from “business as usual” to “what could be possible?” A small vase of flowers on each table is a nice touch.
* Consider having tablecloths with large sheets of brown paper on top that people can write or doodle on during the discussions. Provide markers, pens, note paper, and sticky notes.

**Instructions for participants:**

The World Café is a method for hosting conversations about specific questions. As a Café participant, you will move around to different tables for 3 rounds of conversations to link and build on ideas developed throughout each conversation.

At each table, you will find:

* copies of the question that will be discussed
* a paper table cloth and colourful markers
* sticky notes
* individual note pads

During your conversation, your table host will jot down important ideas that are discussed, but every participant should feel free to write, doodle, or draw on the table cloths – writing on the table cloths is encouraged! Additionally, participants can write ideas/points on sticky notes and post them on the wall.

Each round of conversation will run for about 20 minutes. A bell will signal the end of a round, at which point each participant should move to a different table. You may wish to sit with a different question at each round or carry on with the same question at different tables throughout the session.

We will all converge to share ideas at the end. We, your hosts, will compile everything into a summary document that we will share with you, and with relevant decision makers and policy makers. If there are key contacts who you would like us to send the report to, please provide us with their contact information.

The World Café is based on a series of principles:

* FOCUS on what matters
* CONTRIBUTE your thinking
* SPEAK your mind
* LISTEN to understand
* LINK AND CONNECT ideas
* LISTEN TOGETHER for insights, patterns, and deeper questions
* PLAY, DOODLE, DRAW
* HAVE FUN!

Try to be open to new and different ideas, be reflexive in thinking about your own ideas and assumptions, try to find commonalities and connections in different ideas, and be open to change your perceptions. Mostly, be creative!

**Instructions for table hosts:**

One person at each table will be designated the table host. The table host will remain at their table throughout all 3 rounds of conversations.

The main responsibilities of the table host are to:

* record ideas throughout the conversation and to summarize these ideas/points in the summation portion of the workshop
* remind people at your table to note down key ideas, insights, connections, and new questions on large sticky notes to contribute to the final report
* at the beginning of each round of conversation, briefly share key ideas from the prior conversation so others can link and build using ideas from their previous conversations

At the end of the café, we will reconvene as a large group to share what came out of the table discussions. We will ask the table hosts to summarize the main ideas that emerged at your tables.

**Supplies list:**

* White board or easels with paper at the front of the room for sharing key points at the end
* Large sheets of paper and markers for taking notes on the tables
* Masking tape for posting large sheets of paper for viewing by all
* Sticky notes, note pads, pens, etc.
* Consider having water, flowers, tablecloths for each table
* Refreshments for longer sessions
* Consider printing the agenda like a café menu:
  + Apéritif = Introduction
  + Appetizers = Presentations
  + Main Course = Café conversations
  + Dessert = Plenary summations
  + Digestif = Next steps and summary

**World Café agenda template**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 5 min | **Session introduction** |
| TBD | **Presentations**   * Short presentation(s) to provide background on main topic and issues |
| 5 min | **Intro to World Café format -** *about 5 people per table so # tables depends on registration & room size*   * Overview of workshop agenda and objective |
| [15-20 min per round – then move to next – there will be [3] rounds in total] | **Café rounds** –*prep probing questions for each café table*  Workshop participants will engage in [three] rounds of conversations based on [three] questions relating to [Topic].  Time 00:00:00: Round 1  Time 00:20:00: Round 2  Time 00:40:00: Round 3 |
| 30 min (varies depending on number of tables) | **Table summaries -** Each table host reports 2-3 highlights or key messages from their discussion to the plenary. |
| 5 min | **Summation and next steps**   * Summarize session and let participants know about any summary report or next steps |