

Tips for Facilitating the Media-Smart Youth Program

The following tips come from a diverse group of Media-Smart Youth facilitators who wanted to share their suggestions for successfully facilitating the program.

- ✓ **Give youth ownership** of the lesson content by inviting them to participate, share information, and brainstorm.
- ✓ **Ask open-ended questions** to create discussion, such as “What fruits do you like?” as opposed to “Do you like fruit?”
- ✓ **Affirm/validate youths’ ideas** during discussion to help them feel comfortable participating and taking risks.
- ✓ **Guide youth to the learning points** in the curriculum by asking questions and focusing the conversation to lead them to these points. Use opening phrases such as, “Tell me more about that...,” “I invite you to...,” or “I encourage you to...” to guide youth through the activities.
- ✓ **Redirect youth back to the topic** if necessary, while acknowledging that they are making interesting points.
- ✓ **Create a “Parking Lot”** to note off-topic ideas that youth are interested in discussing. Address these later during a break or after the session.
- ✓ **Show youth respect** through your tone, expression, and body language. Move around the room to connect with youth in various spaces in the room.
- ✓ **Create roles for youth**, such as notetaker, encourager, and presenter. This practice gives youth responsibility and helps manage group dynamics.
- ✓ **Create additional roles or opportunities** to engage youth who need some extra attention, such as helping to take notes on large paper, set up a workstation, or hand out papers to the group. In many cases, young people who are acting out just need a way to focus their energy and will benefit by feeling important to the facilitator.
- ✓ **Allow the youth to be the experts.** Make it clear to youth that they are experts on being youth and that their knowledge is the basis for the workshop and a great starting place to build on. An example of this concept is asking: “What is your favorite TV commercial?” From there, a meaningful discussion about TV commercials can unfold with some guidance from you.
- ✓ **Define your role as the facilitator.** For example: “My job is to guide you through the material in this lesson today.”
- ✓ **Manage the small group and large group activities** by dividing youth into various small groups throughout the workshop. This practice gives all the youth a chance to work with different people and build relationships.
- ✓ **Include contests and games** to add energy and help youth focus and manage time on a given task.
- ✓ **Adapt activities** to recognize and celebrate diversity and culture within your group.
- ✓ **Model the activities** for the youth, such as doing the *Action Break* or trying the snacks. Be thoughtful about other activities you engage in, such as drinking water as opposed to soft drinks, when youth are around.
- ✓ **Allow youth to have individual preferences** on the subjects covered in the workshop—ask them what they think, what they like, etc.
- ✓ **Model a nonjudgmental and respectful approach** to sensitive issues. All youth are different. Help youth feel comfortable with who they are by creating an atmosphere of respect and acceptance.
- ✓ **Be genuine** with youth—they know if you are being real with them, and they need honest adults in their lives.

