

An illustration of a virtual meeting environment. It features several overlapping video call windows. One window shows a man in a brown sweater, another shows a woman in a purple top, and another shows a man in a suit. There are also icons for 'LIVE', a globe, and a microphone. In the foreground, a person is sitting at a desk with a laptop, looking at a video call window. The background is a stylized, colorful grid pattern.

# Conducting Focus Groups in a Virtual Environment: A Review of Best Practices in Methodology

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Rosanne Brown, Ed.D.

Shaz Akhtar, M.Ed.

Laura Edge, M.A.

# What are focus groups?





# **Comparisons** of Best Practices for In-Person and Virtual Face-to-Face Focus Groups



<b>Logistics</b>	<b>In-Person</b>	<b>Virtual</b>
<b>Recruitment</b>	Theoretical sampling Purposeful sampling	Recruit more participants due to a higher attrition rate
<b>Confidentiality Agreement</b>	In-person	Secure link sent prior Verbally obtain informed consent to record
<b>Size</b>	6 to 8 10 if the topic is not too sensitive	4 to 6
<b>Length</b>	90 minutes to 2 hours	60 to 90 minutes
<b>Room Set-up</b>	Around a table	Video-conferencing tools

# Types of Questions

## Opening

Quick  
round  
robin type

## Introductory

Introduce  
topic and  
open  
discussion

## Key

2-5  
questions  
that goes  
into  
greater  
depth

## Conclusion

Brings  
discussion  
to a close  
and allows  
for other  
questions

# Best Practices for Virtual Face-to-Face Focus Groups

Prior to the  
Session

At the  
Beginning of  
the Session

During the  
Session

Technological  
Considerations

After the  
Session

# Prior to the Session

- Correspond in advance
- Send a test link
- Neutral background
- Send the actual link an hour prior to the session.
- Sign in 10-15 earlier
- Share any information necessary
- Pseudonyms

# Beginning of the Session

- Obtain informed consent
- Set ground rules
- Notepad or Paper
- Mute microphone
- Use the “raise-hand” feature
- Addressing a situation which contravenes ethical procedures



# During the Session

- Use the polling feature
- Be knowledgeable about collaboration tools
- Off-line topics
- Video/Camera use
- Use an independent audio recorder

# After the Session

- Access to secure online discussion board
- Send a thank you note

# Technological Considerations

- Connection Issues
- Dial-in number
- On-call technical support
- Headset with a microphone



# Video-Conferencing Tools



Google Meet



**8x8**



# Facilitator - Role and Best Practices



# Facilitation Techniques and Strategies

The Pause  
The Probe  
Excessing Probing

The Echo  
Reflective Listening  
Diverting Back to the Topic





# **Challenges of Conducting Virtual Face-to-Face Focus Groups**

- Technology issues

- Virtual face-to-face focus groups do not completely replicate the experience of in-person focus groups

- Distractions

- Privacy Issues

- Online Conference Fatigue



**KEEP CALM**

**AND**

**CARRY ON**

**RUNNING**

**FOCUS  
GROUPS**



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