

Tips for facilitating the Confidence with Numbers Session

The one-hour Confidence with Numbers Sessions are not designed to be simple information exchanges. Rather, to achieve maximum impact, they need to become discussion and sharing opportunities. This can present some challenges, so we have put together some tips to help you.



1. Encouraging participation

It's important that everyone feels comfortable to engage actively with the activities and discussions. There are lots of common reasons why someone may not be active in the workshop, but there are ways a facilitator can overcome these:

- Set up the workshop as a discussion rather than a training session
- Join in with groups that don't seem to be discussing the topic in the first activity. Prompt conversations about maths by asking additional questions such as what maths was like for them at school or how their parents felt about maths
- Directly ask quieter members of the group to share

- Ensure that you ask different people each time you ask the group to contribute
- Ask probing, but friendly questions during the discussion like, "Tell me more about that," or "What was that experience like?" This invites people to share more
- Ensure people feel listened to by displaying active listening skills and paraphrasing back to them what they have told you



2. Easing anxieties

Many people feel anxious, not only about maths, but even about being in a discussion about maths. A key role of the Numeracy Champion facilitating the session is to put people at ease. Some tips include:

- Follow the guidelines in the workshop plan when setting up the session and responding to participants in the first activity
- Reflect similarities between the experiences shared in the group – to create a clear feeling that those struggling are not alone

- When people feel strongly, be clear that this is very common and that it is not surprising or unusual to feel anxious
- Ensure the National Numeracy Challenge is not framed as a test, but rather a supporting learning tool



3. Reinforcing core messages through stories

Stories, case studies and other people's experiences can be a powerful way to link back to these in a way that feels relevant and relatable for participants:

- Link the messages to stories or case studies from the real world
- Use your own experiences as examples – this demonstrates that there is no need to be ashamed of finding maths difficult
- Link the myths in the Myth Buster activity to the things that people have already shared with you



4. Managing group dynamics

Every group will have its own individual dynamics and set of characters. Sometimes, this may need managing to ensure participants get as much as possible from the session:

- Don't allow people who are confident with maths to become dominant; this may make people feel worse about their anxieties
- Try to keep people on topic but without dismissing what they are saying. If possible, make a link to the core messages. If this is not possible, acknowledge that what they are saying is interesting but that you need to move on.
- Avoid getting involved in arguments in the Myth Buster: introduce the message that participants should take from the activity, without dismissing other views as simply incorrect. Find the parts of what they are saying that you can agree with as well as introducing the differences between the key messages and their point of view.