

As a facilitator, you need a well-stocked bag of tools. I'm not talking about techniques and ideas (although you need those too.) I'm talking about whatever materials or supplies you are going to use to walk your group through their process.

For me, there are few things I like better than a blank piece of flip chart paper and a new set of markers. And I haven't yet found other tools that are as flexible or intuitive as good old-fashioned paper and something to write with.

Here is an eclectic list of tips about materials, many learned the hard way and most falling in the category of "I wish I'd known..."

- **Bring what you need with you.** Don't rely on the client or events manager to provide exactly the supplies you prefer.
- **Bring lots.** I often change my process ideas "on the fly" and end up using a different combination of materials than I'd expected. So don't count out "just enough."
- Pick materials that suit your topic, your crowd and your space.
- If you plan to stick things on walls, ask specific questions about the walls. Are they empty? Are they smooth? Are you allowed to stick things on them? Can people see them easily from where they will be sitting? Some people carry their own pin boards. Easels can work. In a pinch, I've used table tops or the floor instead. But you can't beat a nice smooth empty wall.
- To me, self-sticking flip chart paper (i.e. 3M flip-chart size post-it paper) is worth its higher price. Using it avoids hassles with tape or sticky tack needed to attach standard flip chart paper to walls. But did I mention it's pricey?
- If your writing is not legible, my advice would be: don't write publicly. You don't want that to be a distraction for participants.
- I used to spend crazy amounts of money on post-it notes. More recently, I rely heavily on coloured paper and my sticky wall (ICA Store: Facilitation Tools > ToP Sticky Walls; <https://www.ica-usa.org/store.html>).

It's definitely my go-to item. (To be honest, once I saw it, I thought I could make it myself. It's the same fabric as a tent or a windbreaker and it doesn't arrive sticky. You need to spray it with repositionable adhesive aerosol spray, available at all craft and some hardware stores. Needs to be done in advance – too potent to use in a session. But then I tried to make one, using three different types of fabric. Dismal failure. So I ordered two more!) The sticky wall comes in large and small – I use both. "Frog tape" is heavy-duty painters' tape that works well to attach it to the wall. The key: use papers/post-it notes that can be rearranged easily, as much of the time you'll be moving them around.

## Facilitation Supply List

- My experience has been that the new "post-its" that are the size of flip chart paper (or half that big) and stick fully to the wall (rather than just at the top) don't actually stick very well. Be warned.
- Encourage participants to use a writing tool that is legible from a distance. Black markers are way better than pens and pencils.
- Your local office supply store might give you a business discount and/or deliver directly to your office or meeting site. (You probably already knew that. It took me awhile.)
- Take photos before removing things from the walls after a session. They can be included in the notes to remind people visually of what happened, and they are back-up for you if some papers or post-its get lost in transit. (Did I tell you about the time a sudden gust of wind carried off my little, multi-coloured slips of paper set carefully on the back seat of my car after a workshop? Kudos to the kind souls who chased them down the street with me...)
- Some helpful facilitation visuals (large blank planning templates etc.) are available for purchase at [www.grove.com](http://www.grove.com).

My "bag of tricks" stays in my car. Not everything fits, but strategically packed small plastic storage boxes inside a larger suitcase on wheels seem to do the trick for most supplies. It currently contains:

- Paper, in various colours and sizes
- Scissors
- Frog/painters' tape – usually in multiple widths and colours
- Flip chart markers in various colours
- Fine point Sharpie black markers
- Pens – in various colours
- Name tags
- Sticker dots
- Sticky wall
- Post-its – in various sizes and colours
- Flip-chart paper – usually two sizes, often on their own cardboard easel
- Glue sticks
- Business cards
- Playing cards
- Sometimes things for people to 'fiddle with' on the tables
- Projector, power bar, extension cord (if needed – check in advance)
- (I have a colleague who brings along a plant, just in case people can't see nature out a window!)