



## Focus Group Moderator Critique

When training a moderator to conduct focus groups, be sure to have the new moderator conduct several pilot focus groups with the *same* target audience. Using the criteria listed below, observe the moderator in the pilot groups. Discuss afterwards.

Directions: check off what you observe in the focus group.

### Good Features: Moderator

- asked all the questions.
- gave minimal encouragers.
- used neutral probes.
- asked for clarification or elaboration.
- commented (into tape) that participants nodded their heads in agreement with whomever was speaking.
- used linking (of ideas that appeared early with those that appeared late).
- let a roll develop and stopped it when it got off the topic.
- used communication tools to create energy.
- stopped a participant when he/she did not answer the question.
- never suggested answers.
- recognized a shy person and brought him/her into discussion.
- courteously but firmly stopped a 'chatty' participant.
- deflected a request by a participant to give your opinion.
- asserted respect for all opinions by handling participant who put another respondent's answer 'down'.
- anything else?

### Poor Features: Moderator

- agreed or disagreed with a participant.
- did not ask questions in a natural voice.
- allowed dominant people too much time.
- anything else?

Nancy Ellen Kiernan, Ph.D., Program Evaluator, [nekiernan@psu.edu](mailto:nekiernan@psu.edu)

The reference citation for this Tipsheet is: Kiernan, Nancy Ellen (2005). Focus Group Moderator Critique. Tipsheet #73, University Park, PA: Penn State Cooperative Extension.  
Available at: <http://www.extension.psu.edu/evaluation/pdf/TS73.pdf>

This Web site is copyrighted by The Pennsylvania State University. The information may be used for educational purposes but not sold for profit.