

The Final Word Protocol

Useful for short reads, processing ideas, and bringing closure to a discussion. The ideal group size is 3 – 4 participants. The suggested time required is approximately 30 minutes.

Step 1: Identifying significant ideas (3 minutes). Each participant identifies what he or she considers to be the most significant idea addressed.

Step 2: Sharing, Round One (4 minutes)

1. One member of the group shares his or her significant idea (a sentence or a passage) but does not elaborate on it.
2. The other participants each have one minute to respond. They can agree or disagree, offer examples, raise a question, contribute details, or otherwise share their thoughts. No one else talks, until it is his or her turn to respond.
3. Once everyone has responded, the first person may respond to and build upon what the others in the group said, thereby getting ‘the last word’.

Step 3: Sharing, Round 2 (4 minutes). Step 2 is repeated, but with a different participant initiating and ending the dialogue. Repeat until everyone has shared and had ‘the last word’.

Step 4 (Optional): Open Discussion. If participants wish, they can have an open discussion about the steps above.

Step 5: Debriefing. Participants reflect on the process and the protocol.

Critical Elements: Listening well is critical for this protocol. Participants should be encouraged to listen to the very end of the initiating person’s statement before beginning to frame a response. Participants may jot down notes or reminders. Participants are also invited to pause before they respond and perhaps restate what they heard before proceeding.

This is a self-facilitating protocol. To adhere to the time frames adhere to norms such as avoid side conversations and resist the impulse to break into discussion.