

AA District 2 Chairing Meetings Workshop, Part 2

Facilitator Guide (45 Minutes, Scenario Practice): Handling the Room

Workshop Overview

This is the second of two 45-minute Chairing Meetings sessions. Part 1 covered the basics of the chair's job: choosing a speaker or topic, managing time, and the day-to-day mechanics of running a meeting. Part 2 is built from the District's Guidelines for Chairing Meetings, Part B, and is entirely scenario-based. Instead of a panel, volunteer readers act out five real situations a chair runs into, anonymity breaks, outside-issue detours, crosstalk, and a disruptive or hostile member, and the facilitator walks the room through exactly how to respond in the moment. It closes with a fast FAQ roundtable covering the questions chairs most often ask.

Total run time is 45 minutes. All times below are elapsed time from the start of the workshop and can be shifted to match your actual start time. This session can be run back-to-back with Part 1, or scheduled as a standalone follow-up a few weeks later. Because of the shorter format, there is no scheduled break.

Roles and Responsibilities

Give each person below their own copy of this guide, highlighted to their section, at least a week before the workshop. Volunteer readers only need their own scenario lines, not the whole guide.

Role	Responsibilities	Who / How Many
Facilitator (MC)	Opens and closes the workshop, delivers the short teaching segment, leads all five scenarios, and answers the FAQ roundtable. Should know both the Chairing Meetings Guidelines and Part B well.	1 person
Volunteer Readers	Read the member lines in each scenario aloud, cold or lightly rehearsed. Different readers for each scenario keep it fresh. Send them their lines a few days ahead so it doesn't feel like an audition.	4 to 6 people can double up across scenarios
Resource Table Volunteer	Sets up and staffs a table with the Chairing Meetings Guidelines Part B handout and AA literature for anyone who wants to look or take a copy.	1 person
Timekeeper	Optional if the Facilitator wants a dedicated person. Gives a quiet warning before the scenario segment ends, so it doesn't run long.	1 person, or the Facilitator doubles up

Materials and Room Setup

- Sign-in sheet and name tags at the entrance
- Chairs arranged so the audience can see the front of the room, with a small table if readers are seated during scenarios
- Wall clock or visible timer for the Facilitator and Timekeeper
- Printed scenario scripts for each volunteer reader, with just their own lines highlighted
- Printed copy of this guide for the Facilitator, including the FAQ answers
- Resource table: Chairing Meetings Guidelines Part B, The 12 Steps and 12 Traditions, Alcoholics Anonymous (the Big Book)

- Notepad or index cards at each seat, if you want to collect FAQ questions from the room in writing

Run of Workshop

Time	Segment	Length	Lead
0:00 to 0:05	Welcome and Recap	5 min	Facilitator
0:05 to 0:20	Presentation: Traditions, Guidelines, and Judgment Calls	15 min	Facilitator
0:20 to 0:38	Scenario Practice: Five Moments Every Chair Faces	18 min	Facilitator + Volunteer Readers
0:38 to 0:43	FAQ Roundtable	5 min	Facilitator
0:43 to 0:45	Closing and Wrap-Up	2 min	Facilitator

Resources

- Guidelines for Chairing Meetings, Part B (District document)
- The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions
- Alcoholics Anonymous (the Big Book)

Pre-Workshop Checklist

- Recruit 4 to 6 volunteer readers, at least 1 week out. They can double up across scenarios
- Confirm the Facilitator, ideally the same person who ran Part 1 or someone equally familiar with the material
- Send each reader only their own lines a few days ahead, not the whole scenario, so reactions stay natural
- Reserve the room and confirm seating for the audience
- Print this guide for the Facilitator, and print each reader's individual lines
- Set up the resource table with the Part B handout, Big Book, and 12 and 12
- Prepare a sign-in sheet and name tags if needed
- If this is a standalone session, prepare a one-paragraph recap of Part 1 to read at the start

Workshop Format

Welcome and Recap (0:00 to 0:05)

The facilitator welcomes the room and briefly recaps Part 1 before framing today's session.

Welcome back, everyone. Last time we covered the basics of chairing: choosing a speaker or a topic, keeping a meeting on time, and the two Traditions that do a lot of the work for a chair, Four and Ten.

Today we're going to make it real. We're going to look at what these moments actually sound like in a meeting, practice out loud how a chair responds, and answer the questions people usually only think to ask after they've already been put on the spot.

Here's how today goes. We've got a short teaching on the Tradition that ties all of this together, then we'll work through five scenarios as a group, and we'll close with an open FAQ on the situations that come up most. Let's get started.

Presentation: Traditions, Guidelines, and Judgment Calls (0:05 to 0:20)

The facilitator delivers this teaching, word for word, grounded in Guidelines for Chairing Meetings, Part B. Read it in your own words if you're comfortable, but don't cut the detail.

All Traditions Apply Here

All of AA's Traditions are in force when chairing meetings in a Home Group or in Service Work. The principles of anonymity, unity, and mutual respect are to be observed at all times.

No outside issues are to be discussed as topics. The names or experiences of members who are not present should not be mentioned during the meeting. The chairperson's responsibilities include steering the meeting back to the Topic should diversions arise.

Choosing and Holding the Topic

Choose topics from General Service-approved literature or the first 164 pages of the text, Alcoholics Anonymous. If a topic is brought up that is outside the Traditions, the chairperson should seek a relationship to it in the Big Book.

Never mention names, situations, or experiences shared in another meeting. This directly violates Tradition Twelve's principle of anonymity.

Outside issues often arise, but we remember that these are not to be discussed in meetings. The chairperson must guide the meeting back to the topic. This can be uncomfortable, but it is essential.

Tradition Ten, in its long version, reads: No A.A. group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate A.A., express any opinion on outside controversial issues, particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters, they can express no views whatever.

Crosstalk and the Principle of Unity

Cross-talk and advice-giving are not a part of meeting formats. While listening carefully to members' concerns and fears, the chair must remind others that we do not allow the flow of the meeting to be directed at a single member, as this implies excluding others and violates unity of purpose. Rather, steer the conversation to the Solution outlined in our Steps and speak broadly so as to include each participant when sharing.

Tradition One, in its long version, reads: Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live, or most of us will surely die. Hence, our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.

New members may mistake meetings for the group therapy meetings they've attended in treatment and may need guidance to avoid crosstalk and dominance in the discussion.

When Someone Gets Angry or Hostile

Should a member make an angry or hostile comment about someone else in the meeting, or behave aggressively toward another member, the chairperson may ask for help from others and ask that the topic return to the Solution. Occasionally, it is necessary to ask someone to leave, and even more rarely, authorities may need to be called for help.

Example: a member keeps interrupting, is verbally abusive or vulgar, or has threatened others. Here, it is appropriate to say that I think Joe P or Susan L might be able to help you with this concern. Why don't you go with him or her now and discuss it for a moment out in the hallway? These members you mention may explain to the errant member that they could return to the meeting if they agree to adhere to a few simple rules: sit quietly, calmly, and listen.

Individual concerns can always be addressed privately following the meeting. Chairpersons can say, "Why don't you get with me after the meeting, and we'll point you toward someone who can help."

Every scenario we walk through today comes back to the same question: what does this room need right now to stay safe, on topic, and welcoming to the person who is hearing all of this for the first time? Let's look at five moments you will almost certainly face as a chair and practice saying what to actually say out loud.

Scenario Practice: Five Moments Every Chair Faces (0:20 to 0:38)

The facilitator recruits volunteer readers ahead of time for each scenario. Read the setup, have the volunteer(s) read their lines as written or in their own words, then deliver the chair's response yourself before opening it briefly to the room. Roughly 4 minutes per scenario.

Scenario 1: The Anonymity Break

Ties to: Tradition Twelve (anonymity) and Tradition One (common welfare)

Setup: the group is discussing Step 2. A volunteer reader plays a member who names someone from another meeting and repeats what that person said.

Reader (as Member): "Step 2 is a good topic. Felicity Sharp, who attends the 8 o'clock meeting at the Baptist Church, said yesterday that she would never believe in God because of all the bad things she sees people doing. I think she really should have kept that to herself, and I..."

Chair response:

I need to jump in here for a second. We're bumping into our Tradition of anonymity. We respect each member, including people from other meetings, by not repeating what they've shared personally. Let's stick with Step 2 itself. What does coming to believe mean to you?

Scenario 2: The Religious Detour

Ties to: Tradition Ten (outside issues)

Setup: still on Step 2, a volunteer reader plays a member who steers the discussion toward a specific religious claim.

Reader (as Member): "If we talked about Jesus Christ and read more scripture in meetings, we'd see more healings occur. I am able to do miracles like cast out the devils of addiction, and I've spoken in tongues for years."

Chair response:

Let's get back to the topic of coming to believe. AA doesn't tell us what religious group to follow or insist that we believe in anything other than a power greater than ourselves. I'll call on (insert name) to help us get back on track.

Scenario 3: The Outside Opinion

Ties to: Tradition Ten (outside issues)

Setup: a volunteer reader plays a member who brings a prejudiced opinion into the room, framed as something they read online.

Reader (as Member): "I was reading last week on Facebook about a study showing that people from a certain group are thick-headed and not able to grasp anything spiritual. They constantly cause trouble and make ridiculous statements about God. Also, they are lazy."

Chair response:

We don't have opinions on outside issues here, including opinions or prejudices about groups of people. Everyone is welcome in this room. Let's bring it back to today's topic. Who would like to share next?

Scenario 4: Crosstalk During a Step 9 Share

Ties to: Tradition One (common welfare) and the ban on crosstalk

Setup: 5 or 6 members sit at a table for a meeting on Step 9. The chairperson introduces the topic, and a volunteer reader begins to share her experience. A second reader interrupts, directing pointed feedback straight at the first.

Reader 1 (as Member): "I had a positive experience when making amends to my brother, whom I really harmed with my behavior. After it was all over, I listened as he told me how I'd hurt him but that he was glad to see me doing well now... and that..."

Reader 2 (interrupts, as Member 2): "Well, that is just ridiculous. I don't think you should suggest that we do something like that when you don't know us! You are an idiot because I can never apologize to my spouse, and I resent that you'd even suggest it!"

Chair response:

This is crosstalk happening in real time. The chairperson stops it immediately: We need to be careful to include everyone in the discussion and avoid talking to anyone in particular so that all feel a part of the meeting.

Scenario 5: The Disruptive or Hostile Member

Ties to: Group safety and Tradition One (common welfare)

Setup: this scenario has two threads from the Guidelines, a member who has obviously been drinking and is drawing attention, and, separately, a member who becomes angry, hostile, or verbally threatening. Walk through both in full, since each has its own escalation path.

Thread one: the intoxicated member. Someone who has obviously been drinking comes in. They are drawing a lot of attention and being disruptive, vocal, or rude.

Chair response:

We are glad you came today, but we would ask that you sit and listen until it's your time to share. We try to be fair to everyone here and give others a chance to speak.

If this doesn't work:

Sara and Joy, would you mind taking our guest outside for a moment so that she can talk more freely? Members should calm her down, explain how the meeting works, and then maybe the member can come back in.

If the member won't cooperate at all:

I can see that you have a lot going on today. Would you like to sit and talk after the meeting? I know myself, and (insert name), would like to hear what's on your mind.

Thread two: the angry or hostile member. A member is angry, hostile, or verbally threatening in a meeting, interrupting and being loud.

Chair response:

I see that you are really upset. You probably don't realize that you are getting loud, and others here are nervous and scared by that. Let's get (insert name) and (insert name) to go outside with you so you can explain what's bothering you. If he or she agrees, that is great.

If the member continues to be threatening:

I'm so sorry to see you so upset, but I'll ask you to leave until you are calmer. We don't want trouble, only to stay sober today.

If matters escalate further, the chairperson has a couple of options:

Option A: I'm going to ask (insert name) to call 911 now, but you may leave before the police arrive.

Option B: This is serious, group. Please gather your belongings and get out as quickly as you can.

FAQ Roundtable (0:38 to 0:43)

The facilitator reads each question and answer below, then briefly opens the floor for any questions the room has been holding onto. Use the note cards collected earlier if you used them.

What if the group is really small and it starts to be just chit-chat?

Close the meeting as usual and continue informally afterward.

What if the chairperson needs a hand?

Often, the chairperson is uncomfortable when meetings go off topic, when one or more members are dominating the discussion, or when shares violate AA Traditions. Other group members who recognize what is happening should never hesitate to jump in and offer assistance, either by saying their name and starting to share on the Solution, or by offering to take the errant member outside to talk.

What if someone is drunk in a meeting?

These members are, of course, welcome as long as they adhere to the group's basic rules and pose no ongoing disruption or danger.

What if someone is threatening or hostile and won't calm down after being asked to?

Members should never try to handle violent situations. A 911 call is the answer here.

What if the meeting time is at hand, and not all members have shared?

If the group conscience is to keep the meeting at a certain time, the chairperson simply says: I'm sorry, but we are at the time to close the meeting. We regret that not all got to share and hope that if you need to talk, you will get with one of us after the meeting. Please don't go away with something you need to talk about.

What if the meeting is really large? How do you encourage brief sharing?

These things can often be addressed by reading the meeting format for large groups. For example: This is a large meeting. Please be considerate of others and keep your sharing brief and on topic to allow others the same opportunity. Some groups actually announce a time limit to shares and have a timekeeper. A group conscience may decide to do anything it likes in accordance with the autonomy established in Tradition Four, in its long form: With respect to its own affairs, each A.A. group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans also concern the welfare of neighboring groups, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect A.A. as a whole without conferring with the trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues, our common welfare is paramount.

Closing and Wrap-Up (0:43 to 0:45)

Facilitator returns to the podium.

Thank you all for working through these with us today. None of these moments feels comfortable the first time you face them, and that's normal. What matters is that you now have language ready before you need it.

Every scenario we practiced today comes back to the same idea from Tradition One: common welfare comes first. Protecting the room is not about control. It's about making sure the newcomer and every member find a meeting worth coming back to.

Thank you again to our volunteer readers for being willing to read these parts aloud, and to everyone for being here for both sessions. We have the Part B handout available at the resource table if you'd like to take a look.