

Activity 6: Compass Points

Purpose:	The Compass Points Activity enables teams to explore various preferences that individual members use to approach learning, focuses team understanding on the strengths and limitations of each preference and suggests ways to utilize these differences in a team's work.
Length of Time:	55-70 minutes
Materials:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chart paper • Markers • Notebook or sheets • Compass Points worksheets
Essential Questions:	What do we know about our own understandings about group work and collaboration and those of the people with whom we work? How can we utilize that knowledge to enhance the ways we work together?

Overview:

The activity includes opportunities to:

- Identify one's understanding of working *within a group*.
- Work with others with a similar understanding to identify the strengths and limitations of a particular approach to understanding.
- Share strengths and limitations of each.
- Develop a common group value while validating everyone's contributions and recognizing limitations.

Participants:

Compass Points works best within a group of between 15 and 40 members. If the group is smaller, some parts of the activity need to be adjusted (group discussion and debriefing). If the group is larger, more time should be allotted to the discussions and debriefing.

Activity Steps:

- 1 Individual Reflection (5 minutes):** Distribute the Compass Points worksheet (Chart 1). Have members circle the compass direction that most accurately describes the way they approach learning *within a group*. (It is important to make this distinction as we often approach learning differently within a group than we do on our own.)
- 2 Group Selection and Discussion (15-30 minutes):** After individuals have identified themselves independently, separate into groups for each compass point. (If you have a large number of people involved in this activity, you may need to have more than one group for each compass point.)
 - Have groups discuss and record answers to the questions on the back of the Compass Points worksheet (Chart 2). **Groups will chart their responses and should be prepared to report back to the full group.**
 - Give groups a 15-30 minute time limit. Be firm about the time limits; the way that groups deal with time limits is also very telling.
 - Do not give groups any direction or requirements about the way their answers should be recorded or about the way they should report back to the full group. How groups represent their thinking is telling.

Note: It is often valuable for a leader to sit in on a group that does NOT match his/her views, but leaders should refrain from commenting on the group's processes.
- 3 Whole Group Share (20 minutes):** When the time limit is up:
 - Reconvene as a large group and have each group post their chart paper and share their representation with the full group. A few clarifying questions can be asked and observers are welcome to note a low inference observation as well.
- 4 Group Debrief (15 minutes):** When finished, the facilitator can lead the group in debriefing the activity. Sample discussion questions below:
 - Were you in the correct direction group? How did you know?
 - What ratio of the different compass points would make an effective and productive team?
 - What would happen if a team was missing one of the directions and what would happen if a team was made up of only one direction?
 - How can knowing this information be useful in your work as a team?
 - How can a team balance having fun, getting work done, and allowing for individuality?

Adapted from The Compass Points: www.turningpts.org/pdf/CompassPoints.doc

Chart 1

PERSONAL STYLES

“Compass Points”

NORTH: Acting “Let’s do it!”

I like to act, try things, plunge in.

EAST: Speculating “If you can dream it, you can do it!”

I like to look at the big picture, the possibilities, before acting.

SOUTH: Caring “Reach out and touch someone!”

I like to know that everyone’s feelings have been taken into consideration, that their voices have been heard, before acting.

WEST: Paying attention to detail “Quality is job #1!”

I like to know the who, what, when, where, why, before acting.

