



TOOL FIST-TO-FIVE VOTING

OVERVIEW

Fist-to-five is a simple voting tool used to make a decision that requires a group to come to full agreement. This is known as consensus. It can also be used to arrive at a decision where everyone agrees to try out a course of action. This is known as consent-based decision making.

WHEN TO USE

Consensus Decision

Groups make decision by consensus when they want to ensure that the perspectives of every group member have been included in the final decision. While this can ensure equity, making

The Fist to Five Voting Method

On the count of 1-2-3, everyone simultaneously raises a fist with 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 fingers extended to express how you feel about the decision.



No way. I don't support this decision and I am vetoing.



I have strong reservations but will support the decision and will not veto.



I am uncomfortable with the decision but can live with it.



This decision is okay with me.



I support this decision.



I strongly support this decision.



decisions by consensus can be time-consuming. Additionally, facilitators may be concerned the group will not be able to decide on one single course of action. Using fist-to-five repeatedly allows groups to refine the proposed decision together and quickly assess whether consensus has been reached. **A group reaches consensus when all votes are a three or above.**

Consent-Based Decision

If a decision needs to be made urgently, but still needs buy-in from the whole group, consent-based decision making may be used. Consent-based decisions ask voters to consider whether they consent to *trying* out a course of action. There may be a time frame on the decision and participants consent to try a course of action for a period of months before reviewing the decision. **To achieve consent, all participants must be at a one or above.** If someone has vetoed, the decision needs to be revised before moving forward. Unlike consensus, the group does not continue revising the proposal to move people up the scale of agreement. They either consent or they don't.

HOW TO USE

In-Person Meetings

Begin by discussing the decision a group needs to make. In some cases, the decision may be something the group needs to generate together, like a vision statement. Other times, the group may be deciding on a course of action that has a few options, like how to spend funding.

During discussion, the facilitator can use questions that help participants understand one another's viewpoints. These include:

- What do you like about this solution?
- What concerns do you have about this solution?
- What would someone who's affected by this decision have to say?
- What might someone who's not here today think about this decision?

Once the facilitator begins to hear participants talking about similar solutions or decisions, they can either:

1. Summarize the decision the group is gravitating toward, OR
2. Ask a participant to propose a decision based on the discussion so far

Once the decision has been summarized, the facilitator asks everyone to do a Fist-to-Vote. On the count of three, everyone simultaneously raises a hand with 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 fingers extended to express how they feel about the decision. To achieve consensus, all group members must be at a three or above, meaning that they are at least okay with the decision.



If all group members are not above a three, begin by asking any participants that are below a three to describe why they're below a three. After they've described their concerns, ask them what changes would need to be made to bring them up to a three or above. The facilitator can then ask other group members to incorporate their concerns into the final decision by asking questions like:

- How would you revise our decision to incorporate these concerns?
- What could we do to make sure their concerns are in the final decision?

Allow the group to discuss until it seems as though some amount of agreement has been reached. Repeat the Fist-to-Five vote and discussion process until the group reaches full agreement.

Virtual Meetings

In virtual meetings, it may not be possible for the facilitator to see everyone's hands at once. This happens when people do not have their video on. The facilitator can ask everyone to turn their videos on to vote. This can encourage participants to turn videos on for the discussion as well. Seeing one another's faces helps to reduce tension during disagreement because people see one another as real people. Alternatively, not everyone may feel comfortable turning on their video. If this is the case, create a way for everyone to enter their Fist-to-Five vote through a poll or through the chat function of an online video conferencing platform. Regardless of which method you use, make sure to capture everyone's vote to ensure you reached full consensus.

COMMUNITY LEARNING MODEL

Dialogue

Create a high-quality conversation that clarifies values, surfaces tensions, and taps into creativity; leading to concrete plans that achieve results. Establish conditions of genuine respect for the views and needs of the other.

Fist-to-Five voting is a tool for dialogue in the Community Learning Model. To learn more about tools for dialogue and the other areas of the Community Learning Model, visit

civiccanopy.org/clm.

