

Ideal Wall Conditions

The following describes the **ideal wall conditions** for graphic facilitation. That being said, less than ideal circumstances can also work. Please consider these ideas as a guide.

Graphic facilitation is done on large format paper, usually 4' tall by 6-8 foot lengths. These sheets of paper need to be mounted on a smooth wall, free of obstructions.

The optimum **working wall space** for a large group situation is 12-18 feet of flat wall surface, unobstructed by molding, chair rails, switch plates, windows, framed pictures, doorways, etc. In addition to the working wall space we will also need **hanging space** for finished charts. Finished charts can be hung over obstructions or over windows so the requirements are not so stringent, however, *please confirm ahead of time with the facilities management team that we can post on the walls.* The facility will want to know that we use a special artist's white tape that does not harm paint or wallpaper, wood-paneled or stucco'd surfaces. **Ballroom dividers in commercial hotels are ideal pre-existing wall spaces.**

Less than optimable but still workable. We can work on a variety of surfaces, though smooth is best. The types of wall surfaces we can work on include walls that are wallpapered, fabric covered or stucco'd, although not too heavily textured.

When the above is not available, I use the following alternatives in order of preference:

1. Lightweight room dividers: these are the "old-fashioned" kind that offices first used when they began to form cubicles. The dividers are simple 5' X 6' "walls" standing on two flat feet. Rental companies that outfit conventions and meetings usually have these available.
2. Portable Whiteboards (or chalkboards): these are the kind that roll around and the dimension of the actual board space is usually 4' X 6'.
3. Foam Core Boards: Lightweight foam core boards (4' X 8') can be used in a variety of ways. For example, we can tape them up on walls that are too rough, or we can rest them on several sets of flipchart easels.
4. Special Note about Moldings and/or Chair Rails:

Frequently, hotels have a strip of molding (also know as a chair rail) that runs along the wall at about 3 feet above the floor. Unfortunately, this decorative item is right in the middle of the working surface for a graphic facilitator. If the wall space is suitable, other than this molding, we usually have the hotel bring in a set of risers. The riser is usually about 12-18 inches off the ground, lifting the graphic facilitator up just enough above the molding to be able to work. As an added benefit, in large group situations, using risers also helps the audience see the output of the graphic process much more easily.

Sample Meeting Set-ups

The best room set-up is one that encourages conversation versus presentation. There are explicit and implicit ways to do this and I recommend that you strive to do both.

Explicit Invitations to Conversation include:

- Setting up conversation “pods” by creating one large circle of chairs or several small tables with chairs arranged around in an open horseshoe style (as pictured).
- Use a graphic facilitator to invite participants to engage.
- Avoid PowerPoint presentations!



Implicit Invitations to Conversation include:

- Setting up your meeting room to encourage informal, comfortable interactions between people:
 - Create natural gathering spaces with furniture, food and light.
 - Use a room that gets plenty of natural light
 - Bring live plants or cut flowers into the room
 - Provide simple food and beverage that is readily accessible
 - Provide comfortable seating that encourages relaxed conversation while providing enough support to be comfortable for a long day of working.