



Host and Helper Guidelines

Alpha

Thank you for saying yes to being on the Alpha team as a Host or Helper!

We use the terms “host” and “helper” because on Alpha it’s less about being a leader and more about helping to facilitate a conversation. We want people to feel welcomed and included. The format is not teacher/student, but rather host/guest.

What Do Hosts and Helpers Do?

Simply put, hosts are the ones who facilitate the small group discussion. Helpers are there to assist the host and the guests with anything that might make the group experience even better. Helpers mostly stay quiet. They listen and pray silently as the discussion is unfolding.

As guests come online, be sure to greet them either in the main room or using the chat box. Remember that some guests will be hesitant to speak out in the gallery, so connecting with them through a private chat is a great way to acknowledge them as everyone is jumping in.

For the first few weeks, help guests work through any technical issues if possible. If there are problems beyond your knowledge, connect them to your tech point person. [You can find some quick tips for using Zoom here.](#)

Stay Connected

During your first session, be sure to ask for everyone’s contact information. There is no obligation for them to share it with you, but express that you’d love to be able to connect with them for updates and follow up. You can simply share your email or number in the chat box and ask them to message you. Ask the group for their preferred method of connection (text, Whatsapp, etc.) and go from there! Follow your organization’s safeguarding policy when it comes to personal messaging. Between sessions, connect with everyone. Midweek touchpoints are key for the success of an Online Alpha. Since you aren’t sharing the same physical space, the more you can reach out in between sessions, the better.

Tips for facilitating discussion

Ask Questions

Asking questions was central to Jesus’ life and teachings. Jesus asked 307 questions! He is asked 183 of which he only answered 3. Use the Discussion Questions provided to help you spark key conversations.

Be Open

Be open to questions that guests have on their own. It will take practice to keep the conversation balanced.

Observe

Watch for people who tend to dominate, and engage those who seem disengaged or shy. **When guests ask a question, ask the rest of the group what they think or feel about it.**



Avoid providing your own answers

If you answer all the questions, there will be no discussion and your answer will be viewed as “the final answer.” We want to encourage honest conversation.

Be an active listener

We are not born with a skill set for active listening; it is a discipline that is learned and honed over time. A simple model outlined by the Fuller Youth Institute* to attentively listen to your guests is to **encourage**, **paraphrase**, and then **summarize**.

Encourage:

Affirm the guest that is willing to speak vulnerably. Celebrate vulnerability with affirmation and others will recognize that it's ok to share things of the heart.

Paraphrase:

Using different words to express and reflect the guest's content are active listening tools that meet multiple needs. In reflecting content back to the guest, the listener develops rapport because the guest knows that their words were heard. This also decreases the burden to work harder to ensure their feelings and thoughts matter to the listener. If you've ever wondered why people sometimes repeat themselves, increase volume or emotional intensity, or exaggerate, it may boil down to deeper needs of feeling heard or validated.

Summarize:

Synthesize all of the information that was shared as a means of providing the guest with closure to the experience of sharing vulnerable information. Summarizing is similar to paraphrasing in that it reflects what was shared, but summarizing focuses on the most significant feelings and needs. Thank people for sharing openly. If appropriate, you may also ask if you can pray for the guest, and summarize his or her feelings and needs in your prayer time after the episode on prayer or during the Alpha Weekend/Day Experience.

*This information initially appeared on the blog of the Fuller Youth Institute. It is reposted with permission. Read the full post [here](#).

Guidelines for Guests

To help everyone have the best experience possible, share these guidelines with everyone:

1. Use your actual name for your screen name (first name and last initial are fine). It helps us create and keep a safe environment for all involved.
2. Please be on video, not just audio, so we can see one another and keep the experience more focused. “Gallery view” will let you see all the other participants.
3. If there is a quiet and private space you can join from, that's best.
4. Avoid doing other activities while on the call. You wouldn't work out or play Fortnite during Alpha in person; the same idea applies online!
5. Unmute your mic for more organic, free-flowing conversation during discussion times (unless you have to be in a noisy setting). All mics will be muted while the video is being shared.
6. Please don't change your background during discussion.
7. Group Commitment:
 - You don't have to talk if you don't want to, but we'd love to hear everyone's thoughts.
 - Any question or comment is welcome (just be brief and respectful).
 - Respect each other by listening and allowing different opinions.
 - Keep things confidential when you leave this group.

