

# Quick Consensus Decision Making



There are ways of reaching consensus quickly that have been developed for fast moving situations such as actions and protests, where people may only have a few minutes to come to a decision.

In quick consensus we are cutting short the discussion part and paring it down to just one workable proposal with amendments. This is because you are aiming to make the best decision *in the time you have*. This needs lots of practice in advance.

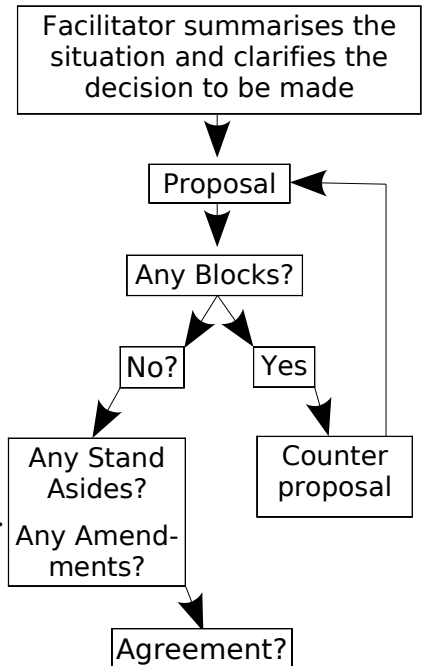
If you want to use this process, you'll need to discuss in advance the situations when you'll use it, and take time to explore the issues involved. That way you'll already know what people's concerns and reactions might be when confronted with the situation. In effect, this is like having the discussion stage of the consensus process in advance, allowing you to jump straight to the proposal stage in urgent situations.

## How it works:

To save time appoint a facilitator in advance. The facilitator briefly states the situation.

Once you've clarified what decision needs to be made, move straight onto making *one* proposal. Don't try to come up with several options. In some cases there may be time for discussion, but in others there won't be. Check whether anyone would block the proposal. If it is blocked, then make a new one straight away, rather than wasting time on the blocked one. If you hit upon a proposal that will work, then go with that.

Check for stand asides and, if you have time, make some friendly amendments. It is really important that people understand the difference between block and stand aside. A stand aside in quick consensus means "I won't do this", a block means "I don't want the group to do this".



- ★ **A block kills a proposal – it's a total veto.** In quick consensus people normally block either because a proposal will split the group (usually because some people have an ethical objection to it, or because it might endanger someone's safety) or the group is failing to make a decision.
- ★ **A stand aside is agreeing to disagree.** It allows the proposal to go ahead, but those that stand aside take no part in that action.
- ★ **A friendly amendment enhances a proposal.** It's not a new idea, but a way of making an existing one more effective.

*Have a few practise runs in your group. Give yourselves a time limit to*

*come to a decision on relevant scenarios such as the one below:*

**Step 1: The facilitator briefly states the situation to make sure everyone is clear:**

"We've been given 2 minutes to move or we'll all be arrested."

**Step 2: The facilitator asks for proposals:**

"Any proposals?"

**Step 3: Someone makes a proposal:**

"Yeah, I propose we sit down and link arms".



**Step 4: Facilitator restates the proposal, for clarity, and then tests for consensus:**

"OK, it's proposed that we sit in the road and link arms. Any blocks?"

"No"

"Any stand asides?"

"Yeah, I'll lose my job, I want to leave."

"OK, anybody willing to go with Joe?"

"Yes, I will."

"OK, we're agreed."

**Step 5: Make sure everyone knows who is doing what – and then get on and do it!**