Splitting into small groups

Why?

It can be more difficult to help large groups be effective, there are a variety of process reasons for wanting participants to work in smaller groups, sometimes called sub-groups or 'break-out' groups. These include:

- participants can work in more detail than the full group allows
- to equalize participation - allow more participants to 'have their say'
- to enable several subjects to be discussed at the same time
- to explore the range of different opinions in the large group
- to gain the joint informed opinion of a number of specialists
- to cool down "hot" topics

Size

We are recommending groups of 3-4 for most of the suggested activities Research has shown that groups of up to seven can be creatively effective, but that this drops off sharply over that number.

Management

Small can be generally left to organise themselves. Larger groups will benefit from the services of a facilitator. In both cases they should be given the instruction to first choose someone report back to the others at the end and then get on with the work.

Composition

To what extent should the membership of the sub-group be a mixture of like or unlike people (views, professions, organisations, interests, cultures, genders, etc.).

In general, mixed groups are appropriate for producing more creative outputs

Similar groups may work on a common problem and may (but not necessarily) feel safer

Breaking into sub groups

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\gↄj eh∕

Technique	Group size	Materials
Numbering off: count round the group. If you want 4 small groups, count 1,2,3,4...1,2,3,4 and so on. Asking participants to say their own number will help them remember which group they're in.	Any	None
Strangers: find an appropriate number of people who you don't know so well.	2-4	None
Jigsaw: give each participant a piece of jigsaw and tell them to find the people with the pieces to complete their puzzle.	Any, if jigsaws have right no. of pieces	Several jigsaws. You can use cut up postcards or playing cards
Energiser: participants are asked to form groups of various sizes at speed, several times over, finishing in groups of an appropriate size for the next activity. For example, with a group of 17 that you want to work in small groups of 2-3 people you might ask them to form: &# one group of 10, one of 7, then ' # eight groups of 2, one of 1, then (# two groups of 5, one of 7, then) # three groups of 4, one of 3, one of 2, then finally *# five groups of 3, one of 2.	Any	None
Pack of cards: a combination of jigsaw and energiser techniques: deal everyone a playing card from a deck of an appropriate size (e.g. just the picture cards). For example, you could ask them to: 1. form a group with others of the same number (e.g. all the Jacks) 2. form a group with others that make a run in the same suit (J, Q, K, Ace of spades) 3. form a group with others that make a run in the same colour but any suit (J, Q, K, Ace).	Groups of 4 or 5	Playing cards (or could use 'happy families' cards to same effect)
Opposites: ask people to form pairs based on an opposite (colour of hair, colour of eye, not wearing the same colour as you, glasses/ not wearing glasses).	Pairs	None
7nˇXdb b dcˇX] VgↄXi Zgↄhi ˊXↄ ask people to go idˇVˊeVgↄ of the room according to the criteria you choose. ˇ⊰ˇXdj aˋˇWⅡˊ_dWˇgdaZˇineZˇdgˇ hdb Zi] ˋc\ˇ ↄVcYdb ! For example: *"this corner if you were born in January to March* *this corner if your birthday's April to June* *this corner if it's July to September* *the final corner if you were born in October, November, or December."*	6cn	
Mode of transport: divide by the mode of transport in which you reached the meeting or workshop.	Unequal	None