



Adolescents benefit from space for creativity and fun, balanced by structure and routine as they are learning, playing and working together. Knowing what to expect, and what will be expected of them, helps them to focus and engage in activities, interact positively with each other, and feel confident and ready to take on challenges such as sharing their ideas or trying new skills. To make adolescents' activity time supportive, safe and helpful, facilitators should plan it with a consistent sequence of steps, so that every session includes opportunities for adolescents to work independently, connect with others in their Circle and share their progress. These session steps should also include processes for facilitators to learn about each adolescent participant in a Circle, and to monitor and assess the entire Adolescent Circle's progress as the adolescents participate in programmes or interventions and pursue their goals together.

What is a session?

A session is the period of time when an Adolescent Circle meets and participates in activities together. A session should follow a set of steps that is used routinely each time a Circle meets. In this guidance, eight steps are recommended. Sessions and steps should be adapted to each Circle's particular needs. The duration and structure of sessions and session steps may change as adolescents work on different activities and phases together.

How long should a session last?

A session should usually last between one to two hours. For adolescents the 'Starting our Circle' or 'Knowing Ourselves' phases – which may include younger adolescents, or adolescents adjusting to a new context or environment – shorter sessions may be more appropriate for their attention span. Adolescents in the 'Connecting' or 'Take Action' phase may prefer longer sessions that give them an opportunity to work together on activities that require more time or discussion. Session times may also be adjusted to accommodate adolescents' daily routines and responsibilities. For example, adolescents with other important responsibilities such as work, domestic chores, or

studies may not have time to participate in long activity sessions. (See Investigate Adolescents Situations for strategies to understand and adjust programmes and interventions so that they are accessible for adolescents, especially those hardest to reach).

Planning a Session: Eight session steps

Facilitators can use the following eight steps to plan a session for adolescents, adapting each step to your specific context and program. Eight steps may sound like a lot to include in one or two hours, but some steps take just a few minutes, while others – especially the Challenge step, which is the main activity of any session – take up most of the session time. Each of the steps serves an important purpose for the Adolescent Circle. As you start to plan sessions, understand how each step might work and how it might be helpful. Prepare to adapt the steps to adolescents' interests and contexts, especially with respect to timing. As noted above, for adolescents in the 'Starting our Circle' and 'Knowing Ourselves' phases, shorter steps may be more appropriate; whereas adolescents in the 'Connecting' and 'Take Action' phases may want more time for the last few steps. Be flexible – follow the routine created by the steps, but do not stick to it rigidly, if doing so makes activities less interesting or more limiting for adolescents. If you will not be including all eight steps, consider how you can achieve the same goals with different processes.