

# Are you coming to Theatre Forum Open Space? Here's what you need to know..

We're really glad you want to come along.

If you have not been to an Open Space event, you might have some questions about how it happens and what goes on.

We'll explain everything in person at the start of the event, so don't worry, it will all become clear in the moment, and there will be lots of people to help you. This document is to give you an idea of how Open Space works, and what to expect when you're with us.

## What is Open Space Technology?

Open Space Technology was developed to support groups to self-organise and collaborate around any question of shared concern.

It gives all participants the chance to propose starting points for discussion, take part in any of the conversations or move between them. It is particularly effective in dealing with complex issues where diverse and conflicting views are present.

Over the last 25 years, Open Space Technology has been used across the world in an incredible range of contexts. People have used it to design aeroplane doors, resolve land disputes, and address issues of every kind. Very large and very small groups have used it with equal success.

## How does it work?

Open Space Technology is a bit of a long title, so for the rest of this document, we'll call it OS. There are five principles that describe what happens in OS:

- Whoever comes are the right people.
- Wherever it happens is the right place.
- Whatever happens is the only thing that could have.
- Whenever it starts is the right time.
- When it is over, it is over.

The one law of OS is The Law of Two Feet. This is also known as The Law of Mobility. It states that if at any time you find yourself

in any situation where you are bored, and neither learning nor contributing, use your mobility to take yourself where your time will be better spent. Only you know where this is. The law of mobility means you can leave the event whenever you want. You can come and go as you please. If you feel worried about committing to the full event, remember you don't have to stay for all of it.

## So, what actually happens?

This is really up to you, because OS is self-organising and runs without any rules except the Law of Two Feet. There is a very loose structure to the day, just to help people find their way around. The rest depends on the issues people need to work on, and finding the best way to do that work. This next section describes what might happen on the day.

10:00 - 10:30 Participants arrive.

Participants come to the registration table to tell us they are here. When you've registered and entered the main hall, you can get something to drink if you want. Tea, coffee, fruit juice and water are freely available all day, and you can have as much as you like.

10:30 - 12:00 Opening Circle

Everyone gathers in a big circle of chairs. There is an explanation of the OS process. Then there is time for anyone to tell the group what topics they want to work on, and timetable that work. This part of the process is known as 'calling sessions'.

The timetable is also called the Space/Time Matrix. This sounds a bit complicated but really it's very simple, and there are people ready to help you find the best time for your sessions, if you've called any. You can call as many sessions as you like, and you don't have to call any if you don't want to. Nothing is off the agenda, nothing is censored.

This picture shows what Opening Circle looks like. The people in the middle are writing their session titles to call them and put them on the timetable.



12:00 - 17:00 Break-out sessions.

Once all the issues of concern have been called and timetabled, the circle breaks up into smaller break-out groups. These groups are flexible. They can move where they like and do their work in the best way possible for them. You can move the chairs. You can leave or join groups whenever you like. Lunch is timetabled too, and it's always a nice long break because lots of useful conversations happen. When the break-out sessions are happening, it looks a bit like this:



16:30 – 17:30 Evening News or Closing Circle.

Everyone gets back together in the circle of chairs at the end of the day. A microphone is passed around everyone in the circle, so if you have something you want to say to the group, you can say it. You don't have to say anything if you don't want to. You can just pass the microphone on to the next person.

### **How does it make a difference?**

OS sessions can be anything. They don't have to be only a conversation. You can work on action, movement, singing, dreaming, writing, fighting, planning or whatever you would like to work on. You can do whatever you need or want. So you might do some talking, but if you have the passion and responsibility to make something else happen, then it can. Participants sometimes draw or make something. They might also go to a pub, or a cafe, or into a park instead. Or they might go to find the expert they need to get the right information, or start a protest, or rehearse a play. It is up to YOU, and that's why we're so excited you're coming, because without your unique perspective and ideas, nothing happens at all.

### **What happens afterwards?**

This is up to you, because each session will result in different decisions, ideas or courses of action. There are some systems in place to help you though.

During the event, you can type reports on sessions you've started or attended, if you want to do that. Reports don't have to be written. You can photograph notes. You can draw a picture. You could film or audio-record it. We once had a danced report! It is up to you to decide if you want to make a report, and how to make it. You can ask us to assist you, but the final decision is yours. If you want to make a report, but don't have time during the event, you can upload one from home. We can explain how to do this during the event, or you can phone or email us for help when you're ready to make your report from home.

All the reports get uploaded onto our website, and Tweeted out publicly. Our website reports are universally, freely available for others to read and comment on.

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