

# Speed Coaching

Speed coaching is a highly participatory and fun icebreaker that helps people share knowledge, build relationships, and solve problems quickly.

## Purpose

To help people share knowledge, build relationships, and solve problems quickly.

## Time Needed

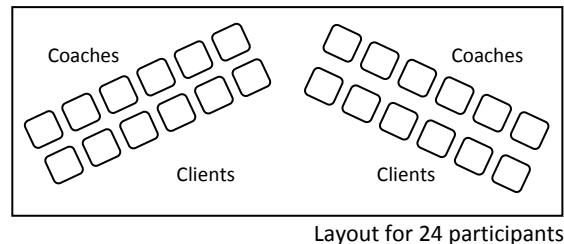
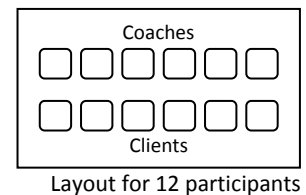
15 – 40 minutes.

## Group Size

Minimum of 6 people. Maximum has not yet been reached.

## Room Set Up

Set up chairs in two rows facing each other. There should be at least 3 chairs in each row and no more than 6 chairs in each row. If you have more than 12 people in the group, create two sets of facing rows. For example, with 24 people, you may have two sets of rows with 6 chairs in each (6 chairs X 2 rows X 2 sets = 24 people). There is no limit to the number of sets you can create.



## Materials

Timer. A free online timer is available at [www.online-stopwatch.com](http://www.online-stopwatch.com).

## Process

1. Orient participants to the exercise:

*You may have heard of speed dating. It's a practice in which people looking for dates meet a lot of people quickly and without commitment. We're doing to do something similar—but something that won't get you in trouble with your spouse. This activity is called Speed Coaching and it will give you a lot of feedback in a short amount of time about a current on-the-job challenge.*

2. Ask participants to think of one challenge they are currently facing in their work. It should be a challenge that they can explain quickly and about which they would like to receive advice from their peers.
3. Explain how the exercise will work:

*You'll notice that we have two rows of chairs set up. One row, the row facing me, will be the coaches. The other row, the one facing away from me, will be the clients. In a moment, I'll ask you to choose a chair. The clients will have three minutes to explain their challenge and receive coaching on it. Then, when three minutes is up, I'll call SWITCH. At that point, you'll move one chair clockwise. If you move from one row to the other, you'll also switch roles. If you now face me, you'll be a coach. If you now face away from me, you'll be the client.*

4. Ask participants to brainstorm a list of behaviors that are helpful when receiving coaching. Items may include things like:
  - Listening
  - Asking questions
  - Letting the client do most of the talking
  - Saying "tell me more"
  - Helping identify the range of options available to you
  - Helping you come up with your own solutions
  - Sharing your own experience if you've been in the exact same situation
5. Ask participants to choose a chair. Make a note of the location of one person. You will track this one person to help you recognize when the group has completed an entire rotation.
6. Reiterate which participants will be the coaches and which will be the clients. Tell participants that they have 3 minutes to work with their coaches. *Variation:* Use 2 minute rounds. Best for very fast paced industries and companies.
7. Begin the round.
8. After 3 minutes, call SWITCH. Ask participants to move one chair clockwise. If, when moving, they transition from one row to the other, they also switch roles. During the first round, it may be necessary to make sure people change roles as needed.
9. Continue the process until the focal person identified in Step #4 moves to the chair in which they began the process. *Variation:* Finish the exercise after each person has had a chance to receive coaching from 2+ peers and to coach 2+ peers.
10. Ask people to jot down any notes about their next steps based on their coaching experience. They may also wish to write down the names of people who gave them particularly helpful coaching in order to seek out their advice in the future.

## Applications

People have successfully used Speed Coaching in the following ways:

- Break the ice during community of practice meetings.
- Solve small problems at the beginning of project team meetings.
- Help people clear their heads and focus before beginning team meetings.
- Build relationships among acquaintances and strangers in training classes.

However, many other applications are available. Please let us know how you're using Speed Coaching!