# ADVANCEing FieldSafety

**Building Inclusive and Safe Field Teams**

## Debrief Template

*Version 06_2024*.

Briefing and debriefing are powerful communication tools. Briefing well and clearly is important for everyone to know what to expect and what is expected of them. Making time and space to debrief regularly (e.g., at the end of each day as well as at the end of a field campaign) sets the expectation that checking in with each other and giving and receiving feedback is a valued part of group life. Below is a framework for briefing and debriefing to help normalize open communication.

## Instructions

Use the framework below to assist in practicing open communication between all team members. We laid out this framework with a focus on daily check-ins (plus some pre- and post-campaign add-ons), but feel free to add, modify, or delete text / frequency to best suit the needs of your program.

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## Briefing

Setting the stage for open communication early can help make this a core part of group life, and is particularly important for times when things don't go according to plan. Here is a list of important briefing points and some ideas for pre-campaign briefing discussion.

| Pre-campaign Briefing Questions |
|---|
| **Basic briefing:**<br>**1. Team member introductions**<br>**2. Team member roles**<br>**3. Basic logistics and overall plan**<br>**4. Field campaign goals** |
| **Discussion questions**<br>**1. What are you most excited about for this campaign?**<br>**2. What do you think will be most challenging for you?**<br>**3. What do you hope to learn and/or gain from this experience? What is your personal objective?**<br>**4. How do you best communicate?**<br>**5. What is the most important thing about being part of this field crew for you?**<br>**6. What does success look like for you on this field campaign?** |

A very helpful start to any field day is a group briefing. The goal is for everyone to leave the meeting feeling generally prepared for the day ahead.

| Start of Day Briefing |
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| **State the objective of the day and outline the general plan on how to achieve that.** This includes (but is not limited to): important times to be respected throughout the day (e.g., boat leaving, helicopter expected, safety check-ins, etc.), sanitary infrastructure, food & breaks, expected weather/environmental conditions, required equipment etc. |
| **Designate roles and tasks of the day. Make sure people understand where and what they are doing for the day.** |
| **Consider highlighting any specific risk management items (including hazards and mitigation strategies) to ensure it is front of mind. Leave time and space for clarifying questions.** |

## Daily Debriefing

Organize your debrief to achieve debrief goals while giving meaningful space for everyone to contribute. Examples of debrief goals are:

- general group check-in (taking the team's pulse)
- addressing interpersonal or group dynamics
- incident response review and reflection
- deconstructing and reflecting on a decision making process
- daily reflection (for example, highs and lows)
- team maintenance and/or re-visiting of Code of Conduct for relevancy
- technical knowledge transfer (e.g., conveying new protocol, instrumentation repair, etc)
- many others!

Planning your debrief also requires jointly considering:
- timeframe available - consider schedule and time needed to achieve debrief goals, but also personal needs that affect engagement (warmth, hunger, preparing for looming weather, etc.)
- input required - whose input is required to achieve the goals of the debrief?
- group size - larger groups may benefit from specific prompts to keep to reasonable timeframe

The role of the facilitator will vary depending on your debrief goal and format.  For example, in debriefs that are working through team-related processes, it is the facilitator's responsibility to draw out content from the group by bringing in individual perspectives.  In contrast, in a technical debrief with a goal of knowledge transfer, the facilitator crafts (or delivers) the discussion to lead to information delivery.

## Debriefing structure/format

Consider timeframe, input, and group size, together with your debrief goals, to determine the format: open ended vs. structured vs. hyrbid (partially structured + space for organic contributions).

*Open-ended debriefing*
Ask questions that get at the heart of any challenging or celebrated situations that occurred, so that all team members can walk away with a  better understanding of the

project and of each other. Have team members use twinkle fingers (see facilitation guide also available in the toolkit) to signal agreement with a spoken sentiment in order to gauge the group as a whole as thoughts are shared and to avoid redundant contributions.

Any debrief is better than none. If time is limited do your best to hold even a short, shared group space for any concerns to be voiced as this maintains the practice of open communication.

| Example End of Day Open-ended Debriefing Questions |
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| **What went well today?** |
| **What didn't go well today?** |
| **Do you have any questions or concerns about what happened today?** (questions about processes, concerns about safety, specific situations that happened that need to be discussed, etc.) |
| **What was the most exciting thing you learned today?** (ending on a positive note can potentially lead to further discussions and team bonding) |
| **End the debrief with a quick overview of what to expect for tomorrow.** (general plan, what gear/clothes everyone will need to have ready) |

*Structured debriefing*
Some situations and/or personality types benefit from a structured debrief.  This format specifies what is being asked, and often has a progression of prompts that leads to a clear end point.  A common example used for highly structured debriefing is from the military and other government organizations that use an "After Action Review" 4-question format.

- What was planned?
- What actually happened?
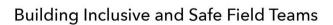- Why did it happen?
- What can we do next time?

This series of questions creates an easy-to-use sequence for either simple and complex scenarios, although more complicated situations will usually take more time to flesh out. The straight-forward nature of the questions often promotes more participation from

those uncomfortable with prompts related to one's personal experience. It is better suited to debriefing technical processes or issues than interpersonal ones, but this format could be used for both.

## End of Campaign Debriefing

While ideally questions and concerns are addressed throughout the entire field campaign, sometimes the best feedback is given at the end of an expedition, once people have had time to reflect on things that happened. Now is a good time to discuss what went well and what improvements can be made for future campaigns. Add in any program-specific questions that will help get to the essentials of your expeditions debrief.

| End of Field Campaign Debrief Questions |
|---|
| **What went well on this campaign?** |
| **What didn't go well?** |
| **Did you ever have any safety concerns during the field campaign?** |
| **What processes should we keep for next time?** |
| **What should we remove or update?** |
| **What was the most exciting element of this field campaign?** |

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