

# INTRODUCTION TO THE ART OF DRUM CIRCLE FACILITATION, PART 2

## FACILITATION SIGNALS FOR A DRUM CIRCLE

BY ARTHUR HULL

This is the second article of a continuing series based on the Village Music Circle's video *The Art of Drum Circle Facilitation*, written and produced by Arthur Hull. The one-hour video is based on a four-step protocol of how to successfully facilitate a family-friendly contemporary rhythm-based event. The introductory article appeared in the April 2017 issue of *Rhythm! Scene*. [<http://publications.pas.org/archive/April2017/1704.18-19.pdf>]

The first step in the Village Music Circle drum circle facilitation protocol is called "Dictator." In the beginning of a drum circle event, you are dictating to the players in the circle the basic body language signals that you will be using.

After setting up your physical drum circle and initiating the event using the 7 Elements of Drum Call (showcased in last month's article and video), you're now ready to start teaching the Facilitator's Body Language. These are physical and verbal facilitation signals that you will need to give to your drum circle participants in order to help them connect to each other across the circle as they play. This is done by facilitating very simple interventions with the full group, all at the same time. That way, they learn all the signals at the same time.

Some examples shown in the video are volume down and up, accent notes, tempo up, call-and-response signals, full-group attention calls/stop cuts, and call-to-groove signals. "Call to Groove" is what a facilitator says to the circle of players in order to get a full-group groove started. One example of a call to groove is "One, two, let's all play." You make the call in the tempo and to the pulse of the rhythm that you want the group to start playing. In this segment of the video, you will see me demonstrating many of the basic body-language signals listed above.

Throughout this video you will also see me, and many other Village Music Circle facilitator graduates, demonstrate different facilitation techniques based on these simple body-language signals. But, what you *won't* see is that most of the time, good drum circle facilitators stay out of the center of the circle. This allows the players to connect with each other to explore and express their collaborative rhythm and their musical spirit. We call this action of leaving the center of the circle "GOOW": Get Out Of the Way. And sometimes we say "STOOW": Stay

Out Of the Way. Let the rhythm go until the group needs your help.

There are only three reasons to go into the circle to help facilitate the group's rhythmical interactions:

1. To help the group's groove come to a close. That happens when you hear that they want to end it. You can hear it in their music.

2. To help the group make a transition from one groove to another one. This is when you can hear that the players have fully explored a particular groove, but their energy is still high and connected and they are looking for a new groove



▶ Tap to play Video



*Dictator: Teaching the Facilitator's Body Language Facilitation Signals*

to explore. Now is the time to go into the center of the circle and help them find that new groove. (Hint: The new groove is already emerging in the rhythms they are playing.)

3. To “fix” something. There many interactive elements in the circle that can cause a disconnect in the group rhythm. You can hear that the rhythm is becoming unstable or messy for some reason. That is when you enter the circle and help the players re-connect. Listen deeply to the music as you enter and you can usually find the cause of the disconnect and make the adjustments necessary to re-right the groove. (Hint: We also use a common saying in the Village Music facilitator training: “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”)

In this “Dictator” segment of the Village Music Circle drum circle facilitation video, I am walking you through the first protocol process of educating the players about the body language signals, while at the same time establishing a trusting relationship as the drum circle players move toward group “ensemble playing consciousness.” By educating the players through this facilitation process, you have set up a basic platform from which you can go into the “Director” mode of the protocol and begin to direct the group’s attention to the music that they are making but are not yet aware of. More awareness = more music.

Music in a drum circle? Yep! We will explore the elements of drum circle music in the next article and video segment in this series.

The full one-hour video of *The Art of Drum Circle Facilitation* can be viewed at <https://villagemusiccircles.com/the-art-of-drum-circle-facilitation/>.

**Arthur Hull** travels the world inspiring community-building through the metaphor of music. His pioneering rhythm facilitation work has touched the lives of thousands of people world-wide, instigating the new and growing profession of the community drum circle facilitator. In 1980 Arthur founded Village Music Circles to bring rhythm-based experiences to communities and organizations worldwide. Arthur has inspired a grass-roots movement of people from diverse cultures and backgrounds who have learned to use the impact of rhythm to improve human interaction—from corporate executives to kids at risk. **RIS**