20 common mistakes in moderating research groups

1. Rushing the introduction because 'it's not important'

2. Answering respondent questions about the moderator's opinion

3. Setting or allowing response patterns in the group to form

4. Remaining the focal point of the discussion and not encouraging respondents to talk to each other.

5. Leaving it too late to control more dominant respondents and encourage quiet ones to talk

6. Not summarising what respondents have said

7. Confusing the questions 'what do you think about that?' with 'what do you feel about that?'

8. Using a series of closed questions

9. Using phrases like 'would you say that…..' (except when checking the meaning of what a respondent has said)

10. Putting several questions into one

11. Following the one question - one answer principle – not looking around the room to see who else agrees, disagrees or wants to comment

12. Using marketing or research language and not listening to respondents' language

13. Not allowing enough time for respondents to think before they answer

14. Saying you will come back to a respondents' point later and not doing it

15. Spending too much time on the warm up and too little on unravelling the key issues

16. Asking people to answer questions or do tasks that go beyond the limits of their memory/ their competence

17. Not stopping long enough to probe key issues or 'fat' words in enough detail

18. Avoiding conflict; not managing difficult behaviour in the group

19. Not noticing respondents' levels of physical and psychological comfort or discomfort / dissonance between what they say and their facial expression/body language

20. Having so many questions that there is not time to explore or consider the significance of new learnings