

Have you ever been in a discussion and someone just keeps talking and talking? You are wondering to yourself: "Is this still relevant? Are the others still interested? Do they look bored? But I don't wanna interrupt. What if the others want to hear it?"

Depending on your cultural background it might be considered rude to interrupt. Visual cues to the rescue! They convey the message to the person speaking (and everybody else) without breaking the flow. It allows people to self-adjust. Most people want to stay relevant and welcome these hints.

Visual cues in discussions: Jeff Patton's Cups & Elmo



In a real life meeting you use white paper cups as cues: Write messages such as "tangent" or "sold" on them and place them on the table as hints. Everybody can create additional messages as needed.

In a remote session you can hold up cards with messages. Buy special sets of postcards for this or just create your own on the fly. Additionally, some tools have built-in mechanisms for non-disruptive feedback such as the reactions in Zoom.

Visual cues enable a group of people to keep each other on track – in discussions with or without a dedicated facilitator.



The **E.L.M.O.** technique is similar but uses only one visual cue: An Elmo doll (or drawing). When a topic has run its course but people are still talking, hold up Elmo to signal "Enough, let's move on!"

