Spectrum Mapping

Read a statement and have people physically stand on a line from full agreement to full disagreement. Makes hidden disagreement visible in seconds and surfaces the fault lines worth discussing before any decision gets made.

30 minutes
Collaboration
Beginner

H HOW TO RUN

1 Set Up the Line — 3 min

Mark a line on the floor — one end 'strongly agree,' the other 'strongly disagree' (use a digital slider or 1–10 scale for remote). Explain that where you stand is your answer.

2 Run the Statements — 20 min

Read a statement (aim for 4–6). Everyone walks to the spot that matches how strongly they agree. Look at the spread, name what you see, and ask one or two people at different positions what put them there. Capture the live tensions. Good statements are specific and slightly provocative: 'We're aligned on what success looks like.'

3 Spot the Fault Lines — 7 min

Review where the room split the most. Note the top two or three disagreements to carry into framing or deciding.

KEY TIP

Kill the safe middle — people hide in the center to avoid committing, so call it gently, and if everyone clumps there your statement is too vague; sharpen it.

O OBJECTIVES

- Participants will: Make hidden disagreement visible immediately
- Surface the tensions worth discussing before deciding anything
- Let quieter voices register a position without having to argue for it

M MATERIALS

- ☐ Open floor space, or a long wall (digital line/slider for remote)
- ☐ Painter's tape or a printed line to mark the spectrum
- ☐ Two end signs (e.g. 'Strongly agree' / 'Strongly disagree')
- ☐ 4–6 pre-written statements or tensions to test
- ☐ Sticky notes or markers to capture what surfaces

P PARTICIPANTS

5 to 20 people

F FACILITATOR NOTES

REMEMBER

- Don't let it become a debate: the goal is to surface positions, not win arguments, so if two people start litigating, thank them and carry the tension into the decision.
- Watch the outliers — the person standing alone at one end is often seeing something the group is ignoring, so make it safe to be there and ask what they know.
- Sequence your statements: open with a lighter, lower-stakes one to teach the mechanic and warm the room, then save the spicy ones for once people trust that taking a position won't get them punished.
- Works well at kickoffs, before big decisions, and during retrospectives.