FACILITATOR SCRIPT · VERSION 2.3

Retrospective script

Words you can say, step by step, to run a retrospective. Written for a team of ten or fewer, facilitated by one of its own members. The quoted lines are suggestions: say them your way.

HOW LONG

30 to 60 minutes

A retrospective can be anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes, depending on the number of people in the team, the context and nature of their work, and their maturity. If in doubt, book the hour and finish early. The steps below add up to between 38 and 55 minutes.

01 Prepare the room

3 to 5 minutes

1. **Visual set-up.** Arrange the room so everyone can see and reach the wall. A U-shape or a circle of seats promotes inclusiveness.
2. **Retro wall.** Put it on a wall the team can gather around, and think about space and movement.
3. **Materials.** Print and post sheets 1 to 4 from the Retrospective guide (pages 5 to 8), or use a shared online board for a distributed team. You will also need sticky notes, marker pens, dot votes (round stickers) and a timer.

> TIP For larger spaces, keep the sticky notes within reach and visible to all, and use larger notes for high-level themes so the wall has a clear visual flow.

02 Set the stage

3 to 5 minutes

1. **Welcome and icebreaker.** *“Welcome to our retrospective! Let’s start with a one-word check-in on how everyone feels.”* For deeper engagement, ask each person to share one challenge they hope to overcome through this retrospective, and keep it short.
2. **Psychological safety.** Remind participants: *“Vegas rules apply! What’s shared in the room stays here. Let’s support each other to share openly.”*
3. **Duration check.** Set expectations on time. Make clear the retrospective looks at the timebox just gone (the fixed stretch of time we plan and work in; Scrum calls it a sprint), the past four weeks, say, unless the group agrees a different time frame, such as a quarter for a leadership team.

03 Gathering data — 5 minutes

1. **Individual reflection.** *"Now that we are aligned on our time frame, I invite you to spend the next five minutes reflecting on what went well and what did not go so well for us as a team while collaborating to create value together. I want you to focus on how we built it more than what we built: relationships and support, roles and accountabilities, the processes that helped or hindered us, and how the system supported us, or not, in reaching our true potential as a team."*
2. **Recap.** *"Think relationships, processes and system. You have five minutes. Capture your reflections on sticky notes, one thought per note please, and use the marker pens so that it is easier for others to read. Yes, we will be sharing, but more on that later. Our five-minute timebox starts now."*
3. **Silent brainstorming.** Explain the purpose of the silence: *"Silence lets everyone think independently before we share, so nobody is influenced too early by anybody else."*

> TIP Encourage silent reflection and one thought per note, and discourage discussing or posting during this time, so that people do not simply follow each other.

04 Generating insights: celebrating our strengths — 5 to 7 minutes

1. **Prioritise and group.** Invite each person to pick one of their notes for each header, what went well and what did not go well, post them on the wall and group similar ideas together.
2. **Facilitated grouping.** Listen actively, create categories and label the groups with broad themes. Gently invite anyone on the fringes to post a group label or help categorise.
3. **Discussion prompt.** Keep momentum without derailing: *"Folks, let's keep to high-level insights here; detailed discussion will follow."*

05 Generating insights: what is hurting us — 7 to 10 minutes

1. **Clarify pain points.** Ask participants to add detail to their pain points, focusing on waste, friction or impact, without suggesting solutions yet. Use clarifying questions such as *"What do you mean by that?"* or *"How does this relate to our goal?"*
2. **Encourage engagement.** Use round-robin sharing (each person speaks in turn) so that all voices are heard. Consider asking someone to play devil's advocate, to challenge assumptions and broaden perspectives.

06 Convergence: prioritise pain points — 3 to 5 minutes

1. **Dot voting.** Hand each participant one dot vote: *"I am handing each of you a dot vote. Use it on the pain that resonates most with you and that you would like us to work on as a team. One vote each! You can vote for a single pain or for the group it belongs to."*
2. **Draw attention to the result.** Once all the votes are cast, point to the prioritised note or group. If there is a tie, ask the group which one to discuss first, and use a simple grid of impact against feasibility if you need to.
3. **Move on.** *"Thank you, folks. We have a prioritised pain that is hurting our team the most. Let's generate some ideas and options on how it might be addressed."*

07 Decide what to do

10 to 15 minutes

1. **Explore solutions.** Facilitate a brainstorm of possible actions for the prioritised pain, capturing each option under a "How" header. Aim for a short list, and step in to keep the discussion on actions.
2. **Align on one option.** *"Now that we have a number of 'how' options on the wall, let's align on one to refine: an experiment we can run in the coming timebox and whose impact we can measure."* Break it down into a SMART goal: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound.
3. **Agree what done looks like.** *"Now that we have an action, let's explore what done looks like. How would we know it has had the impact we want?"* Keep to two or three measures.

08 Accountability and follow-up

2 to 3 minutes

1. **Ownership.** Encourage a pair to volunteer to lead the action, ideally including the author of the idea. Remind everyone that while the pair leads, the whole team is accountable.
2. **Follow-up.** Agree when progress will be checked before the next retrospective. A buddy system or a brief progress sync works well.

Facilitation rotation

Invite a different team member to facilitate the next retrospective, so that you can take part fully, and offer to coach whoever volunteers.

Close the retrospective

End with a team celebration, such as a high-five circle, to reinforce what the team has achieved together.

When a few voices dominate

Thank them and redirect: *"Thanks, let's hear other perspectives."* For a discussion that runs on: *"Let's take this one outside the room if it concerns only a few of us."* Note the patterns you see and raise them at a later session.

Use this script with the Retrospective guide, which has the printable wall sheets.