WORKSHOPSKILL · FACILITATION KIT

Start · Stop · Continue — Facilitator Run Sheet

Folder: `start-stop-continue` · Category: reviews · one team of 4–8 · 30 min · offline + online · print props · assessment-type

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SETTING

Start · Stop · Continue — Facilitator Run Sheet

The retrospective that fits in one wall: every card is exactly one verb — start something, stop something, keep something. The structure is small; the discipline is real: no card survives without an owner and a date.

Objectives

By the end of the activity, the team will have:

1. Seen its own working patterns <mark>sorted into three honest piles</mark>.
2. Turned the loudest pain into one action with one owner and one date.
3. Practiced the retro discipline: cards are behaviors, never people.

Setup

Space: one wall or whiteboard; online, a shared board with three columns.

Materials:

Item	Source
1 × START card per person	`start-stop-continue-prop-cards.pdf` (card 1)
1 × STOP card per person	`start-stop-continue-prop-cards.pdf` (card 2)
1 × CONTINUE card per person	`start-stop-continue-prop-cards.pdf` (card 3)
1 × timing card	`start-stop-continue-prop-cards.pdf` (card 4) — for you

The card rule — say it out loud: “One behavior per card. Never a person’s name. ’Stop cc-ing the whole team’ — not ’stop cc-ing Dana’.”

Grouping rule: one real team, 4–8 people, including its lead. Larger teams split into working pairs first, then merge boards.

Minute-by-minute script

Time	Phase	Facilitator does	Participants do
0–3	Frame + card rule	State the rule. Deal the three cards per person	Read cards, think
3–11	Silent writing (8 min)	No talking while writing — quality over speed	One behavior per card, all three verbs
11–18	The wall (7 min)	Invite reads; cluster duplicates live	Post cards, hear echoes, merge
18–24	Vote (6 min)	Three dots each: what matters most this cycle	Dot-vote across all piles
24–30	Owner + date (6 min)	“Top card per pile gets an owner and a date. Say them out loud.”	Commit aloud; photograph the wall

The wall photo and the three commitments are the retro's artifacts — see `start-stop-continue-debrief.md` for the 10-minute close.

Known failure modes & rescues

1. **Cards arrive pre-blamed.** "Stop being late to standup" — aimed at one person everyone can name. Rescue: rewrite live, with the room's permission: "the behavior is arriving unprepared — stop that." Behaviors only, every time.
2. **Everything lands in CONTINUE.** Praise is safe; START and STOP stay empty. Rescue: cap CONTINUE at three cards per person before the wall goes up — scarcity moves honesty to the hard piles.
3. **The vote splits into camps.** Dots pile along team lines; the retro becomes a referendum. Rescue: silent dot-voting only, and re-cluster the top five into one shared shortlist before the owner round.

Variations

- **Sprint-length version:** 20 minutes, one verb per person per sprint — rotate verbs weekly.
- **Remote:** shared board, cards as stickies, dot-vote with emoji, photo becomes an exported PNG.
- **Paired version:** for low-trust teams, write cards in pairs first — every card carries two names, which halves the exposure.

Props in this folder

- `start-stop-continue-prop-cards.pdf` — poker print-ready: START / STOP / CONTINUE / timing cards
- `start-stop-continue-guide.md` — this run sheet
- `start-stop-continue-debrief.md` — 8 debrief questions, 3 failure modes
- `start-stop-continue-assessment.json` — pre/post measure preset
- `start-stop-continue-paper-form.pdf` — the A4 answer sheet: the measure as a print-and-fill form
- `start-stop-continue-workbook.pdf` — participant workbook: the idea in plain words, guided items, notes and action pages
- `start-stop-continue-slide-deck.pdf` — the slide deck for teaching or projecting
- `start-stop-continue-slide-deck.html` — the same deck for any browser, speaker notes on N
- `start-stop-continue-license.md` — what you may do with all of this, in plain language
- `start-stop-continue-activity-poster.pdf` — The whole activity on one wall (A3): meta, run of show, debrief questions, watch-outs.
- `start-stop-continue-start-here.md` — one page, thirty seconds, then print and go
- `SKILL.md` — machine-readable manifest for AI agents
- `start-stop-continue-run-sheet.pdf` — the print edition: this run sheet + the debrief sheet, bound as one A4 PDF

Agent version

Every file in this folder has a stable public URL — an AI agent can fetch the props, the debrief and this run sheet with three curl commands (see `SKILL.md`). The retro itself runs on cards, a wall and one discipline: behaviors, never people.

Start · Stop · Continue — Debrief Sheet

> 8 questions, 3 failure modes, one rule: the wall photo is the contract.
>
> Use with `start-stop-continue-guide.md`. Runs 10 min after the owner round.

The 8 questions

1. The pile sizes.

"Look at the wall: which pile is biggest, and what does the shape say about this team right now?"

→ An all-CONTINUE wall is a team at ease or a team afraid. Ask which.

2. The hardest card.

"Which card was hardest to write — the START, the STOP, or the CONTINUE? Why that one?"

→ STOP cards are usually hardest; asking why surfaces the fear behind the behavior.

3. The echo cluster.

"Which cluster gathered the most duplicates? What is it like to know five people wrote the same STOP?"

→ Echoes are the team's quiet consensus finally made visible.

4. The card nobody posted.

"Was there a card you wrote and pocketed? No need to read it."

→ Heads nodding is enough. The pocketed cards tell you the retro's safety ceiling.

5. The vote and the silence.

"Which high-vote card got discussed the least? What's underneath it?"

→ Sometimes the room votes for a card precisely to avoid talking about it.

6. The daily version.

"Between this retro and the next one, where will the wall's three verbs show up without a formal retro?"

→ Transfer question. Expect: 1:1s, channel threads, sprint planning.

7. The three commitments.

"Read the three owner-plus-date cards aloud. Do all three still feel real, right now?"

→ One may wobble under the room's eyes — renegotiate it on the spot, honestly.

8. The photograph.

"Who has the wall photo? When does it get pulled up next — before or after the next retro?"

→ Closing question. The photo is the contract; schedule when it gets audited.

3 known failure modes of the debrief itself

1. **The retro becomes a venting session.** STOP cards get debated one by one, time dies, nothing is owned.
   Rescue: the vote already chose — debate belongs to the top card per pile, nowhere else.
2. **The lead answers everything.** The most senior voice interprets every cluster.
   Rescue: hand the interpretation to the card-writers: “author reads, room listens” as a rule.
3. **Commitments are vague to be safe.** “Improve sync” — owner, date, no verb anyone can audit.
   Rescue: the one-line test: can someone who missed the retro tell if it happened? If not, rewrite.

If you are running the pre/post measure (`start-stop-continue-assessment.json`), note these observables:

Observable	Points to
STOP pile size vs. CONTINUE pile size	Honesty level
Duplicate clusters form without prompting	Shared pain surfacing
All three commitments pass the one-line test	Commitment quality

The report your team receives is a self-comparison across cycles, never a ranking against other teams — keep it that way.