

Tool 12. Do a Five-Finger Share

What: *Five-Finger Share* lets each team member show how he or she feels about a proposal by holding up one to five fingers.

When: Use *Five-Finger Share* to see if the team is at or near consensus, which represents all members voting 3, 4, or 5 on the proposal.

Why: A *Five-Finger Share* allows the team to quickly sense the level of support for a proposal.

What each number represents:

Five fingers: Love – I support the idea and will work actively to help it become a reality.

Four fingers: Really like – I support the idea; while I may not be a major player, I will do what is appropriate.

Three fingers: Neutral – I'm not opposed to the idea; I don't care if others want to do it; I won't undermine their efforts.

Two fingers: Really dislike – I prefer other options. While I dislike the proposal, I will abide by the decision of the group for at least a trial period of time and I will not "sabotage" the decision.

One finger: Hate – I am opposed to the idea.

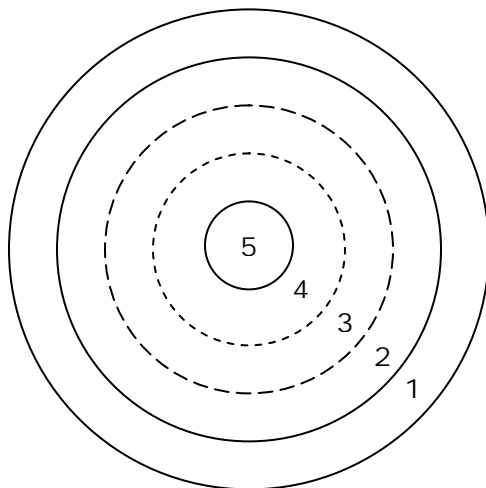
The Five-Finger Share process:

1. Figure 3 on page 49 is a more detailed version of figure 1 from **Tool 4**, *Clarify Consensus*. It represents an agreement target, which is similar in design to a dart board. The outermost circle (1) represents one finger; the next circle in (2) represents two fingers; and the next three circles in all represent consensus, that is, sufficient team agreement to move the proposal forward, with the third circle in (3) representing three fingers, the fourth

circle in representing four fingers, and the fifth circle in representing five fingers. Note that three fingers corresponds to the line representing consensus in figure 1, while five fingers corresponds to the point representing perfect agreement in figure 1. Reproduce the target on the board or a chart pad before stating the proposal to be considered, and make a mark on the target for each team member's position.

2. Each team member raises one to five fingers to indicate how he or she feels about the proposal.
3. If everyone in the group raises three, four, or five fingers, consensus has been reached.
4. If any team members raise just one or two fingers, each of them states what they would need before they could raise three, four, or five fingers.
5. If some team members raise one or two fingers, try **Tool 10**, *Listen for a Breakthrough*, to help the team reach consensus.
6. Sometimes a team cannot reach consensus after trying multiple proposals. In that case, use **Tool 13**, *Take a Backup Vote*, or **Tool 14**, *Test for Critical Mass*, to determine whether there is sufficient agreement to move forward.
7. If consensus still is not reached, the leader can ask members who still are at one or two fingers if they are willing to stand aside, which they can indicate by holding one finger sideways rather than pointed up. By standing aside, a member declares willingness not to block the proposal from being accepted in order to allow the team to move forward.

Figure 3
Agreement Target



Assessing Each Member's Level of Agreement

Last year Courtland College began offering an introductory genetics course on the World Wide Web. Some 250 students worldwide took the course, participating in on-line discussions with other students and the five course consultants at Courtland.

Now the consultants want to evaluate the course design, with an eye to expanding it to other courses. Tori, one of the course consultants, has proposed that they post the evaluation on the Web and ask students about any minuses they see to taking courses in electronic form. She also volunteered to draft a questionnaire if the consultant team accepts her proposal.

The head consultant felt that the group could reach consensus quickly, but wanted to give everyone a chance to express their position in the shortest time possible. So he drew an agreement target on the board and asked for a five-finger share. All five consultants raised either three, four, or five fingers, so Tori promised to have a draft of the questionnaire ready in one week.

Determining the Extent of Agreement

At a recent meeting of the board for the family resource center housed at Wilson Elementary School, board members were asked to express agreement or disagreement with a grant proposal to be submitted to a foundation.

One team member, Susan, thought that the purpose to which funds were to be put was not consistent with the foundation's guidelines, so she objected to the proposal. After some discussion the team leader called for a five-finger share. Each team member, including Susan, raised three, four, or five fingers, so the team leader declared that consensus had now been reached.