After Action Review (AAR)

What is it?

An **After-Action Review (AAR)** is a straightforward yet powerful technique that helps individuals or teams reflect on their experiences. It captures feedback and lessons learned to **improve future performance**.

Whether you've just completed a task, project, or event—or you're reviewing an ongoing operational process— an AAR promotes a culture of **continuous learning and improvement**.

Benefits at a glance …

- Promotes a culture of continuous improvement
- Opportunity to highlight successes and good work
- Captures insights for improvement that are actionable
- Gives team members a voice and encourages diverse perspectives

When to use it?

Use an AAR when you want to:

- Reflect at the end of a **task, project, or event**
- Promote **'learning as we go'** as part of your team culture
- Review **operational processes** within or across teams
- Identify successes, risks, and opportunities for improvement
- Can also be used in a one-to-one scenario to review progress

How to use it?

- **Invite the Right People**
  Bring together team members or stakeholders whose feedback is valuable - a group of 3 - 10 people is ideal. This can be done in-person or online, using post-it notes and pens or a virtual whiteboard such as Miro.
- **Facilitate the Session**
  If possible, ask someone independent to lead the discussion. This helps ensure neutrality and full participation. You can use post-it notes to give everyone a voice.
- **Ask These Four Key Questions**

1. **What went/is going well?**	3. **What could be better?**
2. **Why did/are these things going well?**	4. **How could these things be better?**

- **Build an Action Plan**
  End the session by co-creating a clear plan. People need to see that their feedback leads to **visible action**.

Tips for facilitating an effective AAR

- Create a **safe, open environment**: Encourage honest feedback without blame
- Ensure **everyone has a voice**, especially quieter team members
- Stick to the time and focus on **constructive input**
- Reinforce what went well—don't just focus on problems
- Use **ground rules**: openness, equality, confidentiality, and improvement mindset

Complementary tools

You may find it helpful to use the *5W1H* (What - Where – When - How - Why – Who) and the *5 Whys* to try to get to the root cause of issues.