Imagine you have a topic that you want to get a vote on. Let’s use a simple one: you have family or friends visiting and you are trying to decide on where to go to dinner. You talk and talk about options and it seems like everyone is okay with Indian food. You ask for a show of hands and seem to have a majority. So you start to call a local Indian restaurant and someone suddenly says, “I don’t want that.” HUH? I thought we agreed… This happens often in our personal and work lives.

1. State the question: “Is everyone okay with Indian food for dinner?”

2. Count: 1, 2, 3, vote! Everyone votes at the same time and hands must be held high. This may seem trivial but, for more contentious topics (although this could be one), it is important that people do not look to others in the room to see how to vote.

3. Each person votes by holding up 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 fingers.

4. The facilitator (or vote caller) looks around the room and quickly tallies the votes [and articulates to the group the result of the count]. The votes breakdown like this:
   - 0 fingers (a fist): No way, terrible choice, I will not go along with it. A way to block consensus.
   - 1 finger: I have serious reservations with this idea, but I vote to move forward, but I’d prefer to resolve the concerns before supporting it.
   - 2 fingers: I have some concerns, but I’ll go along and try it.
   - 3 fingers: I will support the idea.
   - 4 fingers: I like this idea, sounds good.
   - 5 fingers: Absolutely, best idea ever! I’ll champion it.

---

*Fist of Five Voting Method Steps*
5. Based on the goal of the vote (as noted above), the facilitator takes the next steps…

A. Goal: Check-in — The facilitator uses the results to adjust the session, make changes, start a discussion, or other actions based on how the vote went and how he/she sees the process progressing. Was the vote what you expected? Different? Do you believe changes are required?

B. Goal: Learn and gain consensus — If you have some 0s, 1s, or 2s, ask for reasons. What reservations do they have? You ask for a brief summary or a bottom-line of the reasons. Ask for other bottom-line comment from others. Then call another vote. You may learn new information to restate the question and vote again.

C. Goal: Vote and move forward — If everyone has fingers up, that is a yes. If everyone has a fist up, that is a clear no. If there is a mix, it is a winner take all, number of hands with fists vs. number of hands with fingers up (1 thru 5).

If you decide you want to learn more about people’s reservations to develop a stronger decision, you can use the ideas from the goal ‘Learn and gain consensus.’ If you choose this, it is important to have a clear plan to move on, and for everyone to understand that you are not aiming for consensus, but instead Deep Democracy (you want all voices to be heard). The learning variation can be a challenge, since the facilitator will at some point have to decide when the vote stands. This can be very hard to do if you do not have an alliance developed with the group (certainly if you are not impartial and were just the one to call the vote). Everyone does not have to think this is the best idea ever, but Fist of Five voting provides a way for people to voice a spectrum of opinions. You may have some people that are willing to support the idea, even with some reservations. The process also airs different ideas and provides a clear way to discuss differences.

*Learning with Fist of Five Voting, September 23, 2014 by Jake Calabrese