

# Setting the Stage

## Room setups that work

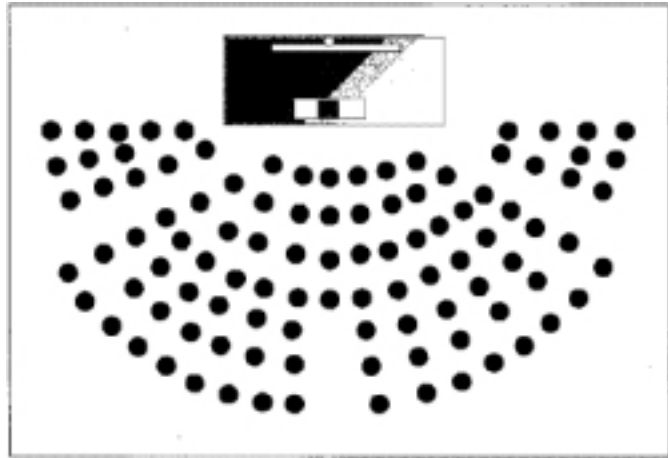
If you are certain of your attendance, then set enough chairs for all. If you are uncertain of attendance, then under seat. Nothing is worse than setting a room with 500 chairs and only 267 show up. The room looks empty, people fill from the rear of the room and spread out too far. It's harder for a speaker to achieve "critical mass" and create high energy. Even if 267 is great attendance, the meeting looks like a failure. So remember, when having the chairs set, it will look better to have too few chairs than too many. You can always add at the last minute which creates comments like, "...it was a great meeting, they had to bring in extra chairs!" To select the most appropriate arrangement, consider your meeting purpose, check with your speaker for their preference and examine the charts that follow. Most speakers will provide you with a room setup diagram for your use. (See samples on next page).

The following charts illustrate various seating arrangements. In addition to the standard arrangements, some new ideas are included. The first seating style, Semi Circle, is suggested by Paul Radde, PhD, Fort Washington, MD. He wrote in Professional Speaker magazine, "In any straight-row setup, you can see only three people clearly: the presenter, who is in the front of the room, and the individuals on either side of you ... Much valuable nonverbal communication, bonding and interpersonal contact are missed in straight-row setups for lack of visual contact with others."

## Setting the Stage - Seating Diagrams

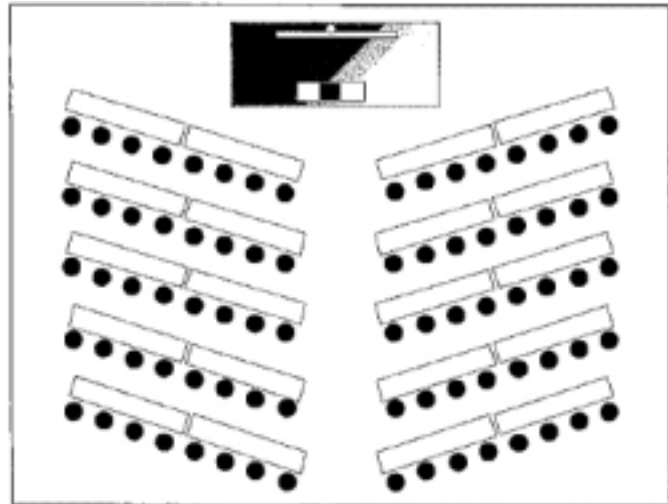
### Semi Circle

The problem with standard seating arrangements is that only the center seats have a straight view. The others must turn their head. It also prevents interpersonal contact in the audience. Semi circle provides all attendees good viewing and audience contact and the presenter has high audience density with great eye contact. Since center aisles are prime seating areas, the aisles are moved to the sides. All chairs face the presenter. The only difficulty is getting the hotel to lay it out this way.



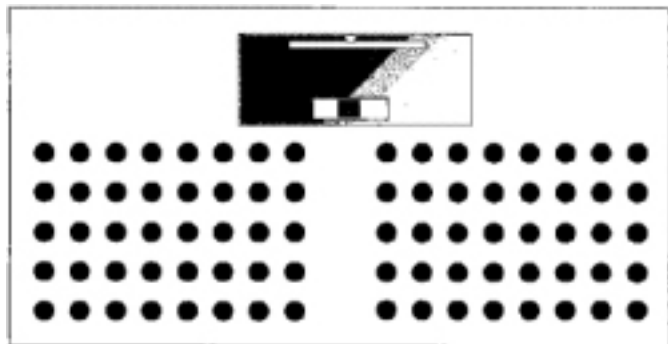
### Herringbone

Theater or classroom seating positioned in angles or curves to face the stage. This setup is both unique and functional. Each member of the audience can look straight forward and have a good view of the stage. It's the next best thing to Semi Circle.



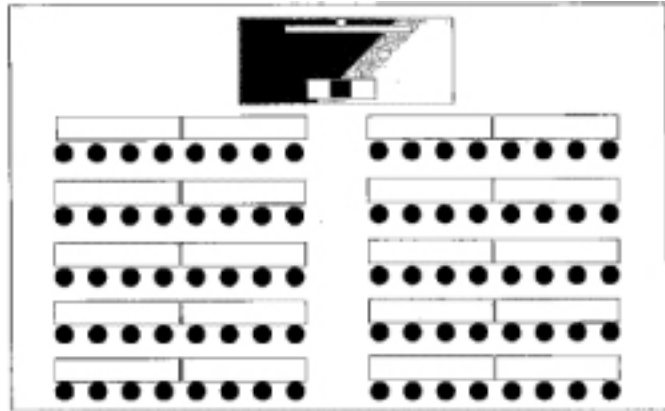
### Theater

Straight rows of chairs facing the stage, without tables. Many speakers prefer this style seating. It allows for the highest audience density and keeps them closest to the front to create increased audience responsiveness.



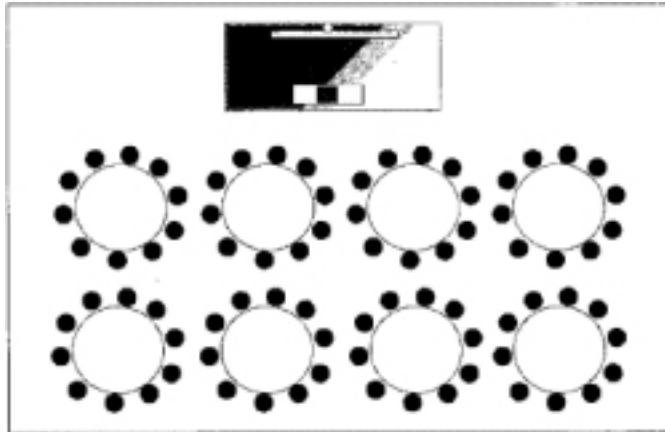
## Classroom

Rows of chairs, as in theater, placed at long, narrow tables. The best tables measure 18" x 6 or 8 feet. You lose some audience density and seating capacity, but gain comfort and writing ability for the attendees. For long seminars this layout works best.



## Banquet, Rounds

A series of round tables set with 8-10 chairs. This is a good setup for meals and/or networking among the people at the table. It has the drawback of severely limiting seating capacity, spreading the audience too far from the stage, and forcing half the audience to crane their neck or rotate their chairs.



## U-shape

Rows of long, narrow tables shaped to form a "U". Best for interaction between attendees as in a meeting, but least effective if you want attention placed on the presenter. The presenter is always looking away from the majority of the attendees and has a space gap between all of them.

