

Examples of Widely Used Ground Rules

Ground rules should be developed and adapted for every unique context. Appropriate ground rules may depend partially on age, region, social class, and other contextual factors. The following list of common ground rules from multicultural education classes and workshops should serve only as a starting point for your process of creating a similar list suitable to your own situation:

1. Listen actively -- respect others when they are talking.
2. Speak from your own experience instead of generalizing ("I" instead of "they," "we," and "you").
3. Practice timely attendance.
4. Do not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks -- focus on ideas.
5. Participate to the fullest of your ability -- community growth depends on the inclusion of every individual voice.
6. Instead of invalidating somebody else's story with your own spin on their experience, share your own story and experience.
7. The goal is not to agree -- it is about hearing and exploring divergent perspectives.
8. Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses -- they can be as disrespectful as words.
9. One person talks at a time; there are no side discussions

It is also important to set a ground rule for how participation will be managed. Do you prefer for participants to raise their hands and be called on, or for people to speak freely? Remember that some people -- especially those who tend to be introverted -- need more time to process thoughts and speak; so the latter option may exclude them from the discussion. Still, the formal process of raising hands to be recognized may detract from the collective atmosphere needed to discuss multicultural issues.



UCSF Meeting Optimization Program by SOM Culture of Leadership Initiative is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

Sample Team Norms or Guidelines

1. Treat each other with dignity and respect.
2. Transparency: avoid hidden agendas.
3. Be genuine with each other about ideas, challenges, and feelings.
4. Trust each other. Have confidence that issues discussed will be kept in confidence.
5. Managers will open up a space in which people have information and are comfortable asking for what they need.
6. Team members will practice a consistent commitment to sharing all the information they have. Share the complete information that you have up front.
7. Listen first to understand, and don't be dismissive of the input received when we listen.
8. Practice being open-minded.
9. Don't be defensive with your colleagues.
10. Rather than searching for the guilty, give your colleagues the benefit of the doubt; have a clean slate process.
11. Support each other - don't throw each other under the bus.
12. Avoid territoriality; think instead of the overall good for the company, our employees, and our customers.
13. The discussion of issues, ideas, and direction will not become a personal attack or return to haunt you in the future.
14. Managers are open, communicative, and authentic with each other and their teams.
15. It's okay to not know the right answer, and to admit it. The team can find the answer.
16. Problems are presented in a way that promotes mutual discussion and resolution.
17. It is safe to be wrong as a manager. Thoughtful decision making is expected.
18. Own the whole implementation of the product, not just your little piece; recognize that you are part of something larger than yourself. Be responsible to own the whole picture.
19. Practice and experience humility - each of us may not have all the answers.
20. If you commit to doing something – do it. Be accountable and responsible to the team.
21. It is okay to be the messenger with bad news. You can expect a problem solving approach, not recrimination.
22. Promise to come prepared to your meetings and projects so that you demonstrate value and respect for the time and convenience of others.
23. Strive to continuously improve and achieve the team's strategic goals. Don't let ineffective relationships and interactions sabotage the team's work.
24. Expend the effort to practice all of these norms and to care enough about the team and its work to confront each other, with care, compassion, and purpose, when a team member fails to practice these norms.



Communication and Decision-Making

- One person talks at a time; there are no side discussions
 - Each person is given a chance to speak their mind while at the same time respecting the group's time and the meeting timetables. We will be brief and focus on facts, not opinions.
 - We emphasize open and honest communication - there are no hidden agendas.
 - We de-personalize discussion of issues - no attacks on people.
 - We will listen, be non-judgmental and keep an open mind on issues until it is time to decide.
 - We emphasize balanced participation of all team members.
 - We will emphasize collaboration and use consensus for important decisions and issues. For less important issues, we will rely on the subject matter expert with input from others.
- Planning and Management
- We will mutually commit to our team's objectives as stated in the team charter or negotiate until we can make this mutual commitment.
 - We accept the responsibility and accountability along with the authority given to us.
 - We will maintain the team work plan and schedule each month.
 - If a team member believes they are being asked to do a task outside the scope of the team's charter, he/she will bring this to the attention of the team leader for resolution.
 - We will maintain awareness of customer-contractor roles while being responsive to customer representative needs. Any suggestions or direction we believe will constitute a scope change will be handled through proper channels. We will avoid a constructive change without proper documentation and authorization.
 - When we pose an issue or a problem, we will also try to present a solution.
 - Team commitments shouldn't be made lightly, but we will keep those that we do.

