

## Group Guidelines



### TIME ESTIMATE

Three options:  
(1) 20-30 min, (2) 10 min, (3) 5 min



### MATERIALS

Whiteboard and whiteboard pen, flipchart and pen, or other means of writing down the agreement

### PURPOSE

To foster a safe, respectful, and effective learning environment for participants.

### DESCRIPTION

Participants will co-create group guidelines through discussion.

### FACILITATOR NOTE

As [Anti-Oppression Resource and Training Alliance](#) (AORTA) states in their example of community guidelines, “Community agreements help define your role as facilitator and clarify the group’s expectations of you. One of your big responsibilities to the group is to make sure these agreements are upheld. This isn’t about creating rules—it’s about creating and clarifying agreements and expectations that allow everyone in the group to participate. In order for these to be meaningful, they need to come from the group itself. Once a group creates its agreements, they can be used over and over. As a facilitator, you get to contribute to this list, too.”

If you only have a limited amount of time with the group, see Option 2 (10 min) or Option 3 (5 min). If the group is going to be meeting regularly, it is recommended to choose Option 1 (20-30 min) to co-create the guidelines together.

### Option 1 (Time estimate: 20-30 min; Adapted from [Seeds for Change](#))

## STEPS

1

Have participants brainstorm in groups or individually what they consider to be a brave, respectful, and effective learning environment.

Prompts:

- What attitudes and behaviours would make this class a good space for learning?
- How can we show each other respect (within the classroom, during group projects, during disagreements, etc.)?
- What makes this a safe space for learning?

2

Co-create guidelines for the group participants, considering the subject matter of the course and potential moments of vulnerability or discomfort.

Responses can be collected in a variety of ways:

- Participants reflect individually and share their responses verbally to be written on the board or flipchart.
- Participants respond individually on pieces of paper and group them together on the wall.
- Participants discuss the question in small groups to later be discussed with the entire group.

3

Go through the guidelines and check for clarification. Discuss how the guidelines can be implemented in the classroom in practice.

## MODULES 1-7: PRE-ACTIVITY

- 4 Check for agreement with all participants. Note that it is alright to disagree and discuss the guidelines by challenging what a person says, not attacking the person themselves.
- 5 Once all participants agree on the guidelines, ensure they are on display for all to see (either in the classroom as a physical document or online in a file that everyone has the ability to access and edit if needed). Keep the agreement for future use to remind participants of the guidelines and hold them accountable. Mention that the agreement may be amended if all participants agree that changes are necessary.

**Option 2** (Time estimate: 10 min)

- 1 Introduce the concept of Group Guidelines using the sample definitions below or displaying it for learners:
  - Group guidelines allow for a group to agree on how it will work together and maintain respect and cooperation.
  - Group guidelines can help foster a brave space, where participants can unpack their own thoughts and behaviours.
- 2 Provide a starting list of guidelines that are non-negotiable (examples are provided on page 3).
- 3 Ask if there are any other additional guidelines learners need in order to allow them to participate fully and engage respectfully.
  - Once an additional guideline is proposed, ask the wider group to make sure they agree and accept the guideline, noting that it is alright to disagree and discuss the guidelines by challenging what a person says, not attacking the person themselves.
  - Refine the suggestion as needed in order to reach clarity amongst the group.
  - Check for agreement with all participants on the final list.
- 4 Once all participants agree on the guidelines, ensure they are on display for all to see (either in the classroom as a physical document or online in a file that everyone has the ability to access and edit if needed). Keep the agreement for future use to remind participants of the guidelines and hold them accountable. Mention that the agreement may be amended if all participants agree that changes are necessary.

**Option 3** (Time estimate: 5 min)

- 1 Introduce the concept of Group Guidelines using the sample definitions below or displaying it for learners:
  - Group guidelines allow for a group to agree on how it will work together and maintain respect and cooperation.
  - Group guidelines can help foster a brave space, where participants can unpack their own thoughts and behaviours.
- 2 Provide a starting list of guidelines that are non-negotiable (examples are provided on page 3). Choose approximately 3-4 guidelines that you think are necessary for the group to create a respectful and engaging environment.
- 3 Outline to the group that ideally there would be time to cocreate these guidelines, however due to time constraints it is not feasible. By being in this workshop/class/etc, participants are agreeing to follow these guidelines.

## **SAMPLE COMMUNITY GUIDELINES**

These guidelines were adapted with permission from [hua foundation](#) (1-7) and [Jackie Wong](#) (8-15).

1. Share airtime: Step up, step back and make room for quieter voices.
2. Listen skillfully: Seek first to understand, then to be understood.
3. Stay open: strive for dialogue and curiosity vs. debate.
4. Take risks and support bravery Understand and discern between comfort and safety.
5. Respect confidentiality: both in and out of the workshop time and space.
6. Expect and accept a lack of closure: you will leave with more questions than answers and no 'right way'.
7. Practice self-care: take care of yourself during and after the workshops.
8. We begin on time and we end on time.
9. Make space, take space.
10. Take breaks to support your wellness.
11. What we say here stays here. What we learn here leaves here.
12. We listen to learn rather than to respond or react.
13. We respect that learning and personal process takes time.
14. We gather in a spirit of mutual support and respect.
15. We have the freedom to change our minds.

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## **NOTES:**