

# Sample Ground Rules for D&D Processes

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Facilitators of dialogue and deliberation processes often develop their own standard set of ground rules which they suggest groups adopt or modify to meet their needs. Here are some samples of ground rules from organizations which represent various streams of practice in online and face-to-face D&D. Use this list to get new ideas for ground rules or to show a variety of sets of ground rules to facilitators you are training. (NCDD compilation)

## **The World Café – *Café Etiquette***

- Focus on what matters.
- Contribute your thinking and experience.
- Speak from the heart.
- Listen to understand.
- Link and connect ideas.
- Listen together for deeper themes, insights and questions.
- Play, Doodle, Draw – writing on the tablecloths is encouraged.

## **Talking Circle Rules**

*The University of New Mexico – Education Outreach Online Training*

The three main rules of the Talking Circle are:

- speak honestly and truthfully from the heart
- be brief
- listen attentively

Each Circle develops its own rules during the first meeting, and everyone in the group agrees to abide by them. Some typical rules are:

- One person talks at a time. Everyone listens to the person talking, without interrupting.
- Be supportive of each other and encourage each other.
- If you say you will do something, do it.
- Be willing to try things you have never tried before.

## **Everyday Democracy Ground Rules**

- Listen carefully and with respect.

- Each person gets a chance to talk.
- One person talks at a time. Don't cut people off.
- Speak for yourself, not as the representative of any group. Remember that others are speaking for themselves, too.
- If something someone says hurts or bothers you, say so, and say why.
- It's okay to disagree, but be sure to show respect for one another.
- Help the facilitator keep things on track.
- Some of the things we will say in the study circle will be private (personal). We will not tell these stories to other people, unless we all agree that it is okay.

### **California Education Dialogue (online dialogue) "Rules of the Road"**

- Remember that this is a discussion, not a debate.
- Maintain a collaborative, open-minded approach: consider others' values, experience and views; read and respect their ideas and opinions.
- Be willing to respond to questions about your views and ask others to clarify their views.
- Avoid personal attacks on people inside or outside of the discussion.
- Limit your comments to the topics under discussion.
- Make sure your messages contribute a unique point or perspective – read others' comments before you write new ones.
- Messages that are short and to the point get read by more people. (It may be easier to draft your message offline.)
- If you know of relevant online references, please include them in your postings; be sure to provide the complete Web site address (URL) and explain why the material is valuable.
- Do not use this forum to sell your products and services.

### **Public Conversations Project (PCP) Sample Agreements for Dialogue**

- Speak personally, for yourself as an individual, not as a representative of an organization or position.
- Avoid assigning intentions, beliefs, or motives to others. (Ask others questions instead of stating untested assumptions about them.)
- Honor each person's right to 'pass' if he or she is not ready or willing to speak.
- Allow others to finish before you speak.
- Share 'air time.'
- Respect all confidentiality or anonymity requests that the group has agreed to honor.
- Stay on the topic.
- Call people and groups by the names that they prefer.

## Conversation Café – Agreements/principles to guide the conversations

- Acceptance: Suspend judgment as best you can
- Listening: Respect one another
- Curiosity: Seek to understand rather than persuade
- Diversity: Invite and honor diversity of opinion
- Sincerity: Speak what has heart and meaning
- Brevity: Go for honesty and depth, but don't go on and on

## Bohm Dialogue “Suggestions on the Nature of Dialogue”

*Guidelines written by Mark Lee, drawing on his direct experience with J. Krishnamuti and David Bohm*

- Dialogue starts from a willingness to be tentative about what you know.
- The focus of dialogue is on what is rather than on ideas and opinions.
- You can participate by verbally or silently sharing perceptions.
- Dialogue is letting the issue unfold in affection and mutual respect.
- When a reaction arises, neither suppress nor defend it, but suspend it in the mind and in the group, keeping it constantly available for observation and questioning.
- Dialogue is being together and seeing together in an unfolding relationship.

## Teaching Democracy – Online Deliberation Guidelines

*These deliberation guidelines were used in Democracy Lab online forums for students enrolled in participating courses. Topic announcements posted twice a week set the agenda for self-moderated groups of 15-20 students.*

- Deliberative dialogue, not debate. Although you will often disagree, your dialogue should not be a debate. Debates tend to be about winning and losing, about knocking down your opponent's arguments. That is not the object here. We are not opponents but colleagues pursuing our disagreements in order to understand why we see things so differently. This means asking each other questions and replying to these questions openly. It even means expressing your second thoughts about opinions you hold.
- Exploring agreements and disagreements, not searching for consensus. In some dialogues there is a tendency to push disagreements into the background in order to reach some sort of consensus. That should not happen here. Sure, areas of agreement need to be explored, but it will be the differences in perspective that help everyone learn – if the group works hard at finding the underlying reasons for those disagreements.
- Exploration, not knowing all the answers. No one has all the answers. All opinions are subject to change when faced with new evidence or with new ways of looking at things. Most participants entering this dialogue will feel very unsure about many aspects of the issue. Don't be defensive about feeling unsure. Instead, turn to the group for help by explaining why you are unsure, perhaps explaining how you feel pulled in different directions.
- Open, honest dialogue. You must be frank about your concerns and opinions. When you disagree with a

colleague, do so openly and honestly, but with respect. Be considerate of each other even when faced with opinions that shock or anger you. When you are shocked or angered, say so. Then try to figure out how two people can come to such drastically different points of view.

- Participate actively and regularly. Try to be online at least 3-4 days per week — to catch up on messages, to post some questions and comments and to respond to any questions others have asked you. Once you get involved, you will probably find yourself checking in almost every day. Don't just lurk; participate!

## **Principles to emphasize before a formal conversation process begins**

*From the Four Directions (Meg Wheatley's Program)*

- We acknowledge one another as equals.
- We try to stay curious about each other.
- We recognize that we need each other's help to become better listeners.
- We slow down so we have time to think and reflect.
- We remember that conversation is the natural way humans think together.
- We expect it to be messy at times.

## **University of Michigan Intergroup Dialogue Program – Multicultural Ground Rules**

- Our primary commitment is to learn from each other, from course materials and from our work. We acknowledge differences amongst us in backgrounds, skills, interests, values, scholarly orientations and experience.
- We acknowledge that sexism, classism, racism, heterosexism and other forms of discrimination (religion, age, ability, language, education, size, geographic location, etc.) exist and may surface from time to time.
- We acknowledge that one of the realities of sexism, classism, racism is that we have been systematically taught misinformation about our own group and members of devalued groups (this is true for both dominant and dominated group members). The same is true about elitism and other forms of prejudice or bias – we are taught misinformation about others and ourselves.
- We will try not to blame people for the misinformation we have learned, but we hold each other responsible for repeating misinformation or offensive behavior after we have learned otherwise.
- Victims should not be blamed for their oppression.
- We will assume that people are always doing the best they can, both to learn the material and to behave in non- biased and multiculturally productive ways.
- We will share information about our groups with other members of the class, and will not demean, devalue or put down people for their experiences or lack of experiences.
- We will actively pursue opportunities to learn about our own groups and those of other groups, yet not enter or invade others' privacy when unwanted.
- We have an obligation to actively combat the myths & stereotypes about our own groups & other groups so that we can break down the walls which prohibit individual development, group progress, cooperation & group

gain.

- We want to create a safe atmosphere for open discussion. Members of the class may wish to make a comment verbally or in an assignment that they do not want repeated outside the classroom. Therefore, the instructor and participants will agree not to repeat the remarks outside the session that link a person with his/her identity.
- We will challenge the idea or the practice, but not the person. We will speak our discomfort.
- Are there other ground rules that the class would like to add?

### **National Issues Forums Ground Rules**

- Everyone is encouraged to participate.
- No one or two individuals dominate.
- The discussion will focus on the choices.
- All the major choices or positions on the issue are considered.
- An atmosphere for discussion and analysis of the alternatives is maintained.
- We listen to each other.

*NCDD compiled these ground rules. Add a comments below if you know of a set we should update, or if you have another set we should add!*