

Guidance Document for Ground Rules for an Inclusive Classroom

It is important to foster positive, open environments that respect diversity in which all students can participate and learn. Consider developing a set of ground rules to use and share with your class to establish an inclusive classroom. The following are examples for you to consider. You can name your list: Ground Rules or Guiding Norms or Group Agreements.

Ground rules examples adapted from:

Iowa State University: [Strategies to Create an Inclusive Course](#)

All classes should have explicit rules for discussion and interactions. Discuss and develop with the class at the beginning of the term. You can begin by sharing a proposed set of rules and obtain input from students. Responses to violations of the ground rules should also be discussed and included in the syllabus once determined.

- Respect the opinions of others in class discussions. When you disagree, make sure that you use arguments to criticize the idea, not the person.
- Be an active listener even if you don't agree with what is being asserted. If you decide to object or make a comment, it should be clear that you were listening.
- Avoid generalizations.
- Don't interrupt.
- This classroom is a safe and brave space for disagreement. The goal of class discussion is not that everyone agrees but that everyone in the class gains new insights and experiences.
- When offering an opinion, or answering a question, support your assertion with evidence, not generalizations.
- Don't attempt to dominate discussion. Be open to the ideas and experiences of others in the class. If you are nervous about speaking in class, remember that your perspective is valid and the class deserves to hear it.
- If a statement is made that offends you or you think might offend others, speak up and challenge it but always show respect for the person who made it. You might first respectfully ask, "What do you mean by that?" to gain clarity and understanding. This allows you to pause before responding.
- Speak from your own experience. Use "I" not "we" or "you."
- Be conscious of body language. Nonverbal responses can also indicate disrespect.
- Students whose behavior is disruptive either to the instructor or to other students may be asked to leave the classroom. See [code of student conduct](#) guidelines.
- Private conversations during class are not appropriate—especially when others are speaking.
- Texting is not allowed during class.
- Laptops can be used for note-taking and class-related activities only.
- Class discussions are private and should not be shared without permission.

Group Agreement examples from:

Brown, Adrienne Maree. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*, AK Press, 2017.
ProQuest Ebook Central

<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/osu/detail.action?docID=4548573>

- Listen from the inside out or listen from the bottom up (a feeling in your gut matters!)
- Engage Tension, Don't Indulge Drama
- W.A.I.T.—Why Am I Talking? Make Space, Take Space— a post-ableist adaptation of step up, step back to help balance the verbose and the reticent
- Confidentiality— take the lessons, leave the details
- Yes/and, both/and. Value the process as much as, if not more than, you value the outcomes
- Assume best intent, attend to impact
- Self-care and community care— pay attention to your bladder, pay attention to your neighbors

Ground Rules examples taken from Brown (reference above) used by our COH TAE-RWJF team:

- Culture of learning: We recognize that we are continually learning. Be open to learning and challenging your assumptions.
- Engage tensions, Don't Indulge in Drama
- Take the lessons, leave the details: Practice confidentiality and respect privacy.
- Value the process as much as, if not more than, the outcomes.
- Adding, not selling: share and contribute to building understanding, not to pitch your “right way of thinking”
- We encourage different perspectives. It's ok to disagree but provide a rationale.
- It's ok to have half-baked ideas.
- It's ok to make mistakes and learn from each other.
- Intention and dedication to the community (self-permission to step out, eat, self-care)