

Example Workshop Ground Rules (Principles: Guidelines for Participation)

Reference Chapter 6 in
Requirements by Collaboration by Ellen Gottesdiener, Addison-Wesley, 2002.

(These are in no particular order. Select those that are appropriate to your group's needs. Limit the number of ground rules to 12. Please see Chapter 6 for more information about culturally aware ground rules and values-based ground rules.)

- Share all relevant information.
- Everyone's input is equally valued.
- Everyone must be on time throughout the workshop.
- Be timely: Start and end the session on time, take brief breaks, and be ready to start when breaks are over.
- Only one conversation will go on at once (unless subgroups are working on a topic).
- Respect each speaker: Don't take part in side conversations; listen and ask clarifying questions.
- Keep jargon to a minimum.
- Cut to the chase.
- The group is responsible for the deliverables.
- Signal when we are going off-track.
- Off-target discussions are limited to five minutes and then recorded as issues.
- Spend time on other issues only if the deliverables are completed and everyone agrees there is value in addressing the issue.
- Every issue identified in the workshop will have follow-up.
- Discussions and criticisms will focus on interests, not people.
- No idea is bad.
- No sidebar conversations are allowed.
- Use our decision rule and decision rule process.
- All members are expected to participate in all phases of the process (if you leave the room, you are responsible for getting filled in and agree to support any group decision).
- Encourage other team members.
- Respect differences.
- Don't discount the ideas of others.
- Be supportive rather than judgmental.
- Share your experiences.
- No phone calls are allowed during the session.
- Use the parking lot for off-track topics.
- Critique or evaluate the session when asked.
- Support everyone's right to be heard.
- Share "air time."
- Keep phones and pagers on silent or vibrate mode during the session.
- Be open to new concepts and ideas.

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- ❑ Job titles are left at the door.
- ❑ No finger-pointing—address the issue, not an individual.
- ❑ Check often for understanding. Summarize or paraphrase one another.
- ❑ Include everyone in the discussion.
- ❑ Do not necessarily accept the first idea.
- ❑ Everyone is responsible for our success.
- ❑ Stick to the agenda, but do not be fanatical about it.
- ❑ Have fun.
- ❑ Communicate, communicate, communicate.
- ❑ Respect one another's ideas.
- ❑ Don't interrupt someone is talking.
- ❑ No killer statements are allowed.
- ❑ Don't shoot down ideas.
- ❑ Address differences or conflicts directly and positively.
- ❑ Share your knowledge.
- ❑ Be honest.
- ❑ Criticize ideas, not people.
- ❑ Keep an open mind.
- ❑ Listen constructively.
- ❑ Ask a question when you have one.
- ❑ Provide examples and illustrations for your points.
- ❑ Be a team player.
- ❑ Relax and be yourself.
- ❑ Make mistakes and learn from them.
- ❑ Listen alertly and take accurate notes.
- ❑ Participate enthusiastically.
- ❑ Confine your discussion to the current topic.
- ❑ Give freely of your experience.
- ❑ Appreciate other points of view.
- ❑ Keep confidences, and assume that others will.
- ❑ Say "Thank you."
- ❑ Stay focused on the task and the person of the moment.
- ❑ Keep up-to-date; there will be no backtracking.
- ❑ Ask for clarification when you need it.
- ❑ If you choose to leave the room, accept any decisions made.
- ❑ Test your assumptions about other people's positions.
- ❑ Focus on interests, not positions.
- ❑ Call each other on ground rule violations.
- ❑ Don't distract the group.
- ❑ Be fully present.
- ❑ Exchange relevant workshop information with non-group members.
- ❑ Look for ways to improve our process.
- ❑ Take turns speaking, and do not interrupt.
- ❑ Call one another by their first names, not "he" or "she."
- ❑ Don't blame, attack, or engage in put-downs, and ask questions only for the purpose of gaining clarity and understanding.

- ❑ Listen respectfully; sincerely try to understand the other person's needs and interests.
- ❑ Recognize that, even if we do not agree with it, each of us is entitled to our own perspective.
- ❑ Don't dwell on things that did not work in the past, but instead focus on the future we would like to create.
- ❑ Request a break when you need to.
- ❑ Listen more, talk less.