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Examples of Discussion Guidelines

Guidelines or 'ground rules' for interactions, such as those below, can be shared with students or generated with them. Such guidelines can help clarify expectations and foster an environment of mutual respect and collaborative inquiry in any discipline. It can be helpful to revisit guidelines throughout the term, whether to reflect on group process or to frame potentially challenging conversations. [Further examples are available here](#) [1].

Sample Guidelines for Class Participation

- Respect others' rights to hold opinions and beliefs that differ from your own. When you disagree, challenge or criticize the idea, not the person.
- Listen carefully to what others are saying even when you disagree with what is being said. Comments that you make (asking for clarification, sharing critiques, expanding on a point, etc.) should reflect that you have paid attention to the speaker's comments.
- Be courteous. Don't interrupt or engage in private conversations while others are speaking. Use attentive, courteous body language.
- Support your statements. Use evidence and provide a rationale for your points.
- Share responsibility for including all voices in the discussion. If you have much to say, try to hold back a bit; if you are hesitant to speak, look for opportunities to contribute to the discussion.
- Recognize that we are all still learning. Be willing to change your perspective, and make space for others to do the same.

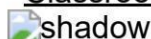
Sample Participation Guidelines for STEM Classrooms

- Be aware of how much you are contributing to in-class discussions. Try not to silence yourself out of concern for what others will think about what you say. If you have a tendency to contribute often, give others the opportunity to speak. If you tend to stay quiet, challenge yourself to share ideas so others can learn from you.
- Listen respectfully. Don't interrupt, engage in private conversations, or turn to technology while others are speaking. Use attentive, courteous body language.
- Understand that there are different approaches to solving problems. If you are uncertain about someone else's approach, ask a question to explore areas of uncertainty. Listen respectfully to how and why the approach could work.
- Take pair-work or small group work seriously. Remember that your peers' learning partly depends upon your engagement.
- Make an effort to get to know other students. Introduce yourself to students sitting near you. Refer to classmates by name and make eye contact with other students.
- Keep in mind that we are all still learning and are bound to make mistakes in this setting, as anyone does when approaching a complex task or exploring new ideas. Be open to changing your mind, and make space for others to do so as well.

Guidelines for Dialogue/Community Expectations (from the U-M Program on Intergroup Relations, IGR)

- Confidentiality. We want to create an atmosphere for open, honest exchange.
- Our primary commitment is to learn from each other. We will listen to each other and not talk at each other. We acknowledge differences amongst us in backgrounds, skills, interests, and values. We realize that it is these very differences that will increase our awareness and understanding through this process.
- We will not demean, devalue, or “put down” people for their experiences, lack of experiences, or difference in interpretation of those experiences.
- We will trust that people are doing the best they can. We will try not to ‘freeze people in time’ but leave space for everyone to learn and change through our interactions with one another.
- Challenge the idea and not the person. If we wish to challenge something that has been said, we will challenge the idea or the practice referred to, not the individual sharing this idea or practice.
- Speak your discomfort. If something is bothering you, please share this with the group. Often our emotional reactions to this process offer the most valuable learning opportunities.
- Step Up, Step Back. Be mindful of taking up much more space than others. On the same note, empower yourself to speak up when others are dominating the conversation.

[Classroom Discussions](#) [2] [Facilitating Discussions](#) [3] [Inclusive Teaching](#) [4]



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Source URL: <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/examples-discussion-guidelines>

Links:

- [1] <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1e7xfcnzsdp4SZUKfx84DFfYHB7LfCgcqdCF8yztMe4Q/edit?usp=sharing>
- [2] <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/category/tags/classroom-discussions>
- [3] <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/category/tags/no-parent/facilitating-discussions>
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