

# Agreeing a set of rules for how people behave at the peer meeting

## Introduction

It's quite likely that if you just start your group, and head off discussing your key topics or working to solve problems, then you will often end up having problems in the group such as ill-feelings, people feeling offended, good contributors leaving, and worse.

Spending some time together as a group, getting to know each other and setting down what you all agree is important in running the group, will set you off on a strong footing and save time and effort in the long run. Having some agreed values and group "rules" or "understandings" can help the group to keep thriving and keep on the tasks and topics at hand, not having to fight fires and solve inter-personal issues.

Setting the ground rules or group understandings together will create ownership of them by all members – don't just use a prescribed list.

## Let's make it happen

### How do you set your group understandings?

- The group leader needs to welcome everyone and talk about the benefits of having some understandings about how you want to move forward.
- The leader can explain that 'group rules or norms' will help your group run well, and have everyone feeling included, valued and respected.
- You can then brainstorm what you all think is important in running successful group meeting.
- Alternatively you can give each person some paper or sticky notes to write them down in private. (Hopefully the group leader will be able to gauge which method suits your members best.)
- Then collect everyone's thoughts into a list; and make them into a list of 6-10 "ways of being" when you attend meetings.
- You might call your list "Group Values" "group understandings" "How we work".
- The last part of the session is a combined group effort to get your rules or understandings into a clear, succinct list, that everyone agrees will help the group work well.

### Here are some examples of group rules:

- Everyone is welcome to have a say
- We listen to each other, and show respect for each other
- We have one person speaking at a time in groups
- We work to a consensus when decisions are to be made

## QuickGuide

- Even if we disagree, we don't judge others
- We always treat each other with respect
- We work towards the positive
- Personal Information we share in meetings is kept confidential
- We aim to share, support, learn and build each other up
- We are honest and we have fun

### Where you can find more information

Setting community goals and values in a vision statement

[www.ic.org/wiki/setting-community-goals-and-values-in-a-vision-statement/](http://www.ic.org/wiki/setting-community-goals-and-values-in-a-vision-statement/)

Guide for Setting Ground Rules - EdChange

[www.edchange.org/multicultural/activities/groundrules.html](http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/activities/groundrules.html)

Establishing Ground Rules for Groups

[http://pages.jh.edu/~virtlab/misc/Group\\_Rules.htm](http://pages.jh.edu/~virtlab/misc/Group_Rules.htm)

Establishing Classroom Ground Rules | The Teaching Center

<https://teachingcenter.wustl.edu/resources/inclusive.../establishing-ground-rules/>

Setting Team Ground Rules

<http://waifs.wa.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Setting-Team-Ground-Rules.pdf>

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