

MAKE MEETINGS MATTER

Establish Ground Rules

Ground rules are guidelines that members agree to live by during meetings to make the process run smoothly. Many groups have unspoken ground rules for meetings, which are, through trial and error, understood by all participants throughout time. In other groups, ground rules may be unclear, or subject to change randomly. By examining how you “do” meetings, however, and making the ground rules clear, your meetings can run more smoothly and efficiently.

Although the initiator or facilitator (or both) might be chosen to draw up a list of ground rules, every member of the group must agree to live with them and support them.

For groups that meet regularly, the ground rules should be set once, and then reviewed occasionally—every few months or so—or when the need arises. For ad hoc or newly forming groups, one of the first priorities should be to establish the ground rules by which the group will operate.

Here are some ground rules from different groups that you may want to consider adopting for your meetings:

- ⇒ Meetings will start and end on time, unless group agrees to extend. Anyone absent agrees to support group’s decision.
- ⇒ There is only one meeting; no side conversations—only one person may talk at a time.
- ⇒ All viewpoints are valid; no one will be criticized for expressing an opinion.
- ⇒ During brainstorming, ideas will be generated and collected first, evaluated later (see Chapter 7).
- ⇒ The facilitator is in charge of the meeting process; the role of facilitator will be rotated each meeting.
- ⇒ Decisions will be made by modified consensus whenever possible. Voting is a last resort (see Chapter 9). All members will support decisions made by the group.