

Essential Guidelines for Small, Casual Groups



Many groups spend too much time in discussion. Seeking consensus, time can be wasted and little progress made.

These guidelines offer a simple and effective way to increase the impact of your group's discussions and use everyone's time well. Modify them as needed.

Note that these guidelines apply to groups that are voluntary associations, where each member has equal standing and one vote. They do not apply in the workplace or in accountability hierarchies like the military.

All guidelines adopted by your group must be in harmony with the laws of the state in which your group is organized and your bylaws, if any.

1. The leader runs our meetings, ensures a fair process, keeps things clear, and helps our group observe its guidelines. The leader is not in charge of decision-making. It is our group as a whole that is responsible for making our decisions.
2. Group members have a right to information to help make decisions.



3. Each group member will have an equal chance to contribute to discussions. To ensure this, no one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once.
4. Courtesy and respect for others are always required. Insulting or inflammatory language, personal remarks, attacks or profanity are not allowed.
5. Discussion of other member's motives is not allowed.
6. We do not allow sidebar conversations such as whispering.
7. Members will give their full attention to the meeting. They will not check email, view Internet sites, play video games, text each other or post to social networking sites during the meetings. Any essential use of electronic devices for emergency reasons must not disrupt the meeting. Members who have urgent electronic business will leave the room.
8. Discussion must be relevant to the topic at hand. Criticism of past group decisions is not allowed unless that is the subject of the discussion.
9. Proposals for action that take more than ten words to be expressed will be written down, given to the leader, and read aloud before they are discussed and decided upon.
10. We will try to make decisions by consensus and will vote if we are unable to reach consensus.
11. Members with minority views have the full right to their opinions. Recognizing that diversity of thought is essential for good decision-making, our group will not use psychological pressure for conformity.
12. When voting, a majority vote (more than half of those voting in favor) is necessary for approval. Members may abstain from voting, and abstentions will not be counted. Proxy voting is not allowed.

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