

**ADL EDUCATION RESOURCES**

# Establishing Group Guidelines

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This activity gives students an opportunity to discuss the importance of group guidelines in establishing a safe and respectful learning environment. Students work collaboratively in developing guidelines for class discussion to minimize negative and unproductive conflict and create an atmosphere where differing points of view can be respectfully shared and considered.

**OBJECTIVES**

- Students will establish group guidelines that provide a climate where it feels safe to discuss various topics.
  - Students will examine the value behind each of the identified guidelines.
  - Students will understand how group guidelines can be used to inspire responsible and respectful communication.
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**GRADES**

- Grades 3 & up
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**TIME**

- 20–30 minutes
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**REQUIREMENTS**

- Chart paper, markers and poster board
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**KEY WORDS**

abide  
commitment  
consensus  
contract  
guideline  
respect

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**TECHNIQUES AND SKILLS**

communication skills, cooperative learning, establishing guidelines, reaching consensus, webbing

## PROCEDURES

1. Write GROUP GUIDELINES on the top of a piece of chart paper or on the board.
2. Ask students, “Why are group guidelines essential for creating a safe and respectful environment for class discussions on difficult topics?” (For example, to have safe discussions, to encourage learning, to learn from mistakes, to minimize negative and unproductive conflicts, to hear different perspectives respectfully.)
3. Develop a semantic web of student responses, and ask students to add additional words or ideas that come to mind when thinking about guidelines for respectful discussion.
4. Divide the class into small groups of 4–5 students and provide each group with a piece of chart paper and markers. Have each group select a recorder.
5. Explain to the class that each group is to develop 1–2 guidelines that they think are important for each of the following three areas:
  - What does respectful discussion sound like?
  - What does it look like?
  - What does it feel like?

In addition to developing these guidelines, students should be prepared to explain why they think each guideline is important.

6. On a piece of poster board, write GUIDELINES FOR RESPECT at the top.
7. After all groups have had time to develop two guidelines for each area, have a recorder from each group share the guidelines with the rest of the class. Discuss any guidelines that are unclear, clarify their meanings, and offer examples. Post each guideline on the GUIDELINES FOR RESPECT poster board. If a group shares a guideline that has already been established, put a check mark (✓) by the guideline to acknowledge agreement.
8. Engage students in a class discussion using the following questions as a guide:
  - How can these guidelines be used to help make our classroom a safe, inclusive and respectful place?
  - How can we ensure that all members of the class abide by the guidelines?
  - What happens if someone does not abide by the guidelines?
9. Ask for consensus on abiding by each guideline. Ask students to demonstrate their commitment to upholding the guidelines by signing their name or initials on the GUIDELINES FOR RESPECT poster board. Place the poster board (permanently) in a highly visible area of the classroom.