

# SETTING GROUND RULES



*To achieve success in working collaboratively toward a common goal, it is important that groups establish and follow a simple set of ground rules for team communication.*

## BACKGROUND

When people come together for a meeting or team event, there is often a purpose. To achieve this purpose, they must act in a way that fosters collaboration, generation of ideas, adherence to a schedule, and professionalism. One way to accomplish this is to have the group establish rules for how they will act. Then everyone needs to commit to them.

Ground rules are an example of proactive facilitation. By setting ground rules, you are aligning everyone towards the same expectations of behaviors. The group often holds itself accountable to these rules decreasing the need for the facilitator to intervene.

## THE PROCESS OF SETTING GROUND RULES

1. Arrange the room in round-table style
2. Explain why we want to create ground rules and the process we will follow
3. Ask someone to act as a gatekeeper to remind the team if they get off track
4. Lead the group in brainstorming ground rules that will encourage team members to share information most effectively with each other and lead to better outcomes for the group
5. Have the group agree on six to twelve ground rules. To do this, you can use the tool on gaining consensus. Part of the process may involve multi-voting where

- everyone gets a certain number of votes to apply to which ever response they select. You will record the votes for each response, which makes it easier to see where people really like an item vs. where there is little interest in an item.
6. Ask the group to use the ground rules when working on problem identification, idea generation, or other work processes. One particularly effective technique is to phrase the question asking for disagreement. You can say, "Who can not agree with and follow the set of ground rules we created?" If someone objects, dig deeper to the why behind his or her objection.
7. Once everyone agrees to follow the ground rules, you are ready to move on.

## EXAMPLES

Below are a few examples of ground rules that may be selected.

- Respect time
- Keep an open mind
- Listen attentively to others
- Ask questions to understand and clarify
- Turn electronic devices off
- Share your ideas specifically stating what is a fact vs. opinion

