



Ground rules *(from the Inter.Media Manual)*

Anytime people try to get things done together they can come into conflict and they can fail. The usual way to begin work in groups is by laying out ground rules that create agreement about how the group will do its work, deal with each other and address conflict. From the outset, groups should be conscious of their interactions as well as their assigned tasks and change as they receive feedback and learn from those interactions. Thus, how we start a meeting goes directly to the capacity to think transformatively and that determines the quality of the outcome.

The usual facilitation method is to open a meeting with ground rules and to seek common ground. This gives the meetings a brief set of rules from the outset, such as “one person speaks at a time” and finding common ground is considered an achievement. Common ground is a compromise position, hopefully reached by consensus in which interests are reconciled.

Ground rules might cover:

1. the purpose of the process;
2. who should/may participate;
3. how decisions will be made;
4. how meetings will be conducted;
5. safeguards to protect parties;
6. schedule; and
7. facilitation issues (who and how).

It is essential that ground rules are developed by the whole group. This ensures that all will be committed to the rules and that they will be rules that group will adhere to.

Offer advice and suggestions for ground rules if there are none forthcoming.

Ground rules should be revisited periodically, as these may need some changes made with regard to any specific problems encountered in a particular group or as a result of a particular topic, It is also important to **monitor the rules**, to ensure they work towards equal and fair treatment.

This is an example of basic ground rules:

1. Start and end on time.
2. Each member has an equal right to be heard.
3. All ideas are welcomed and respected.
4. Each member accepts personal responsibility to participate in all aspects.
5. Use quality tools and processes.
6. Be courteous, listen, one speaker at a time.
7. Strive for consensus.
8. All members are responsible for communications.
9. Agenda and material provided in advance.
10. Confidentiality – what is said in the meeting stays within the meeting at least otherwise stated.