Ground Rules

We believe that group decision making is more efficient and achieves better results when group members have a shared understanding of expected behaviors and attitudes. Like playground rules posted on a fence, meeting ground rules encourage that we play safe, have fun, and no one gets left out.

Good group decisions result not only from the steps we take **as a group**, but also from the **attitudes** that each of us bring to the table. Further, to make things better we need to actually do things, take **action** -- not just talk and listen.

The long list of Ground Rules below acts as a menu. For any group we facilitate, we usually settle on ten or fewer Ground Rules we think best suited to the particular group and the particular task at hand.

For Ground Rules to be truly effective, group members need to understand each of them and agree to follow them as best they can. Sometimes, it's best for the group to make up their own Ground Rules starting with blank paper. Other times, it's best for the facilitator to propose a set of ground rules, explain them, and ask for additions and revisions. Either way, below is a menu to spark your appetite.

As a Group (held and managed by the facilitator or group leader)

Creative environment
- Open minded
- No bad ideas
- We support risk taking

All views heard
- Hands to speak
- Listen with respect

Useful record
- Take notes
- Minutes approved by the group
- Reflect the group on the spot
- Write in the moment
- Capture and document decisions

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Group owns the agenda
- Group consent to the agenda and changes
- All honor agenda timing

Neutral facilitation
- Facilitators serve the group
- Facilitator empowered to implement the agenda
- Trust the facilitator on process
- When unclear what to do, facilitator decides

Stay on topic
- Stay on the high ground
- Basket (parking lot) for later

Honor all individuals
- Introduce new people
- Accommodate special needs
- Anyone can call a break at anytime
- Explain unique acronyms and terms

Attitudes (beliefs and perspectives held by individuals)

Understanding before judgment
- Open minded
- Ask questions

Minimize assumptions
- Listen to understand
- Imagine the other person's view
- If unclear, ask

Tolerance
- Assume the best in each
- Give the benefit of the doubt
- Focus on behaviors, not personalities

We are here for the group cause
- Us over me
- Fully present

We know the process is imperfect
- Don't expect too much of each other
- We probably won't achieve all things for all people

Positive outlook
- We might achieve more than we dreamed
- Conflict and tension lead to solutions

Humility
- I don't know what's best for the group
- No one is smarter than all of us

Look for the best in each other
- Each person has gifts to share
- Appreciation and gratitude

We judge behaviors, not people
- Don't carry grudges
- Don't take things personally

Shared responsibility
- For the meeting outcome
- For following the process

Have fun
- Laughter is good
- Jokes welcome, at no one's expense

Actions (things actually done by individuals)

Do what you say
- Walk the talk
- Volunteer with authentic intent
- Follow through on pledges
- Actually do what we say

Seek win-win solutions
- Seek not just a win for me, but for us

Kind and considerate
- No meanness
- Respect for each other
- Better to be kind than be right

Play your part
- Know your lines
- Stay in role

Listen with respect
- Listen to understand

No interrupting
Listen to inner self
Silence is valued

Withhold judgment
Gather info until the last minute
No one decides until we all decide

We speak for ourselves
Speak for yourself
Use “I” messages
We speak directly
Minimize gossip and hearsay
Speak our truths
Tell our feelings

Honor group rules
Know and follow policies
Play our parts, know our lines

Confidentiality
Who we see and what’s said here, stays here

Name issues
Write down issues to be resolved
Confront conflict

Stretch for application
Imagine how to apply what we learn
Use what you learn – practice

Learn new things
Explore new language
Share stories, tips, techniques

If lost, ask for directions

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