

Ground Rules

What: Ground rules are the basic agreements among team members about what kind of team they want to be and how they will work together. Ground rules often cover meeting etiquette, discussions and ways that the team members interact with each other.

Why: All groups work according to a set of rules, spoken or unspoken. Taking time to clarify expectations and make them explicit helps the team create an atmosphere that encourages open, respectful communication and participation and contributes to the group's ability to work effectively together. Working together to establish their rules, gives the group the choice of establishing rules that are relevant and helpful given their work environment and the dynamics and goals of their team.

When: A new team is brought together or a new member(s) join an existing team. Creation of ground rules can also be an effective way to help the group manage conflict among team members.

How: Set up a team meeting and explain the purpose, desired outcome and benefits of setting ground rules.

Post the following sentences on a flipchart or have a handout for each team member:

To make our meetings productive, I will....

I ask others to....

OR

In order for us to work together effectively, I will

I ask others to....

OR

In order for us to create a productive and satisfying work environment, I will....

I ask others to....

Ground Rules

Explain the technique and guidelines of brainstorming (No judgment, go for quantity not quality, build on the ideas of others).

Have the team brainstorm their list of possible ground rules. Record each team members' responses on a flipchart (Option: use sticky notes and have the members put them on the flipchart).

Review responses as a large group.

Clarify what each response means on a day-to-day basis. How would they be acting and what would they be seeing if the team was adhering to the ground rule everyday.

Ask for further additions or changes.

Write ground rules to be as specific as possible, referring to observable behaviours.

Confirm group's commitment to the ground rules.

Optional Discuss:

What might make it hard for us to maintain these?

How can we overcome these challenges?

What will we do if we are struggling?

How will we support each other?

When will we check back and revisit our ground rules?