



Handout 1

General Discussion Guidelines

General guidelines

- Allow everyone the chance to speak.
- Do not interrupt or engage in private conversations while others are speaking.
- What is shared in the discussion circle, stays in the discussion circle. Keep confidential any personal information that comes up in the conversation.

As you listen to other participants...

- Listen carefully and respectfully, without interrupting.
- Be aware that tone and body language are powerful communicators. Show respectful listening by facing and looking at the speaker, making eye contact, staying quiet, nodding, etc.

When it is your turn to speak...

- Share briefly from your own experiences.
- Use "I" statements to state your views.
- Build on others' comments. Acknowledge them, even if you disagree.
- Be careful not to generalize about people and/or experiences.

Speaking up...

- If you think something is missing from the conversation, do not wait for someone else to say it; say it yourself.
- If you find another's statement to be problematic, do speak up.
- Try not to silence yourself out of concern for what others will think about what you say.

When interacting with other participants...

- Commit to learning, not debating.
- Challenge or criticize ideas, not individuals.
- Avoid blame, speculation, and inflammatory language.
- Be careful about putting other participants on the spot. Do not demand that others speak for a group that you perceive them to represent.

Adapted from

- [Guidelines for Planning and Facilitating Discussions on Controversial Topics](http://bit.ly/21dJW9), Center for Research on Teaching and Learning, University of Michigan. Online at <http://bit.ly/21dJW9>.
- [Establishing Ground Rules](http://bit.ly/1p1Rwt4), Center for Teaching Excellence, Cornell University. Online at <http://bit.ly/1p1Rwt4>.
- [Talking Circles](http://bit.ly/1K18jeA), First Nation Pedagogy. Online at <http://bit.ly/1K18jeA>.