

Examples of Guidelines for Class Participation

Any of the following sets of guidelines or 'ground rules' could be distributed to students, or used to start a conversation with students about expectations for participation and interaction that will foster an environment of mutual respect and collaborative inquiry. Many instructors also find it useful to engage students in generating guidelines as a class.

Example 1 (from the CRLT GSI Guidebook.)

Guidelines for Class Participation

1. Respect others' rights to hold opinions and beliefs that differ from your own.
2. When you disagree, challenge or criticize the idea, not the person.
3. Listen carefully to what others are saying even when you disagree with what is being said. Comments that you make (asking for clarification, sharing critiques, expanding on a point, etc.) should reflect that you have paid attention to the speaker's comments.
4. Be courteous. Don't interrupt or engage in private conversations while others are speaking. Be aware of messages you may be communicating with your body language.
5. Support your statements. Use evidence and provide a rationale for your points.
6. Share responsibility for including all voices in the discussion. If you have much to say, try to hold back a bit; if you are hesitant to speak, look for opportunities to contribute to the discussion.
7. If you are offended by something or think someone else might be, speak up and don't leave it for someone else to have to respond to it.
8. Recognize that we are all still learning. Be willing to change your perspective, and make space for others to do the same.

Example 2 (from the U-M Program on Intergroup Relations)

Guidelines for Dialogue / Community Expectations

1. **Confidentiality.** We want to create an atmosphere for open, honest exchange.
2. **Our primary commitment is to learn from each other.** We will listen to each other and not talk at each other. We acknowledge differences amongst us in backgrounds, skills, interests, and values. We realize that it is these very differences that will increase our awareness and understanding through this process.
3. **We will not demean, devalue, or "put down" people** for their experiences, lack of experiences, or difference in interpretation of those experiences.
4. **We will trust that people are always doing the best they can.**
5. **Challenge the idea and not the person.** If we wish to challenge something that has been said, we will challenge the idea or the practice referred to, not the individual sharing this idea or practice.
6. **Speak your discomfort.** If something is bothering you, please share this with the group. Often our emotional reactions to this process offer the most valuable learning opportunities.
7. **Step Up, Step Back.** Be mindful of taking up much more space than others. On the same note, empower yourself to speak up when others are dominating the conversation.

Example 3 (from a U-M Faculty Member)

Ideas for Our Interactions

- Recognize and/or remember that we have different backgrounds.
- Listen and also share. Share briefly from your own experiences when appropriate, rather than simply your positions.
- Build on your classmates' comments. Acknowledge them, even if you disagree with them.
- Be careful not to generalize about people.
- Use "I" statements to state your views. For example, "I notice that when I'm with my friends we pay attention differently" is more constructive than "When you're with friends you pay attention differently."
- Respond to what is said in class, without attributing motivation to the speaker (this can be very challenging).
- Consider the difference between responding to express yourself and responding to get an idea across to people who have different preconceptions than yours.
- Consider who gets left out, who is marginalized, under-represented, or erased by particular claims. So, for example, we could say, "That's an image of an ideal family," or we could say, "That may be an image of an ideal family for many middle-class white heterosexuals."

Example 4

Sample Guidelines for STEM courses

- **Be aware of how much you are contributing to in-class discussions.** Try not to silence yourself out of concern for what others will think about what you say. If you have an idea, don't wait for someone else to say it; say it yourself. If you have a tendency to contribute often, give others the opportunity to speak.
- **Listen respectfully.** Don't interrupt, engage in private conversations, or turn to technology while others are speaking. Use attentive, courteous body language.
- **Understand that there are different approaches to solving problems.** If you are uncertain about someone else's approach, ask a question to explore areas of uncertainty. Listen respectfully to how and why the approach could work.
- **Take pairwork or small group work seriously.** Remember that your peers' learning partly depends upon your engagement.
- **Be careful about how you use humor or irony in class.** Keep in mind that we don't all find the same things funny.
- **Make an effort to get to know other students.** Introduce yourself to students sitting near you. Refer to classmates by name and make eye contact with other students.

Example 5

Guidelines for language courses

1. **Understand that we are bound to make lots of mistakes in this class**, as anyone does when learning a new language. Take risks and support others in their risk-taking.
2. **Be aware of how much you are contributing to discussions**, and share responsibility for including all voices in the discussion. If you have an idea, don't wait for someone else to say it; say it yourself. If you have a tendency to contribute often, give others the opportunity to speak.
3. **Listen respectfully**. Don't interrupt or engage in private conversations while others are speaking. Use attentive, courteous body language. Comments that you make (whether asking for clarification, sharing critiques, or expanding on a point) should reflect that you have paid attention to the previous speakers' comments.
4. **Take pairwork or small group work seriously**. Remember that your peers' learning is partly dependent upon your engagement.
5. **Make an effort to get to know other students**. Introduce yourself to students sitting near you. Refer to classmates by name and make eye contact with other students.
6. **Respect others' right to hold opinions and beliefs that differ from your own**. Be open to hearing their perspectives. Be open to changing your perspectives based on what you learn from others. Be okay with disagreement.

Possible Additions to the Guidelines for Class Participation Listed Above (suggestions by a group of faculty members)

- Try not to silence yourself out of concern for what others will think about what you say.
- If you think something is missing from the conversation, don't wait for someone else to say it; say it yourself.
- Be careful about putting other students on the spot. Do not demand that others speak for a group that you perceive them to represent.
- Be careful about how you use humor or irony in class. Keep in mind that we don't all find the same things funny.
- Ask a question to explore areas of uncertainty or discomfort.
- Share imaginative, expressive and critical thinking in class.
- Encourage disagreement with one another and with the professor.
- Be aware of different communication styles--the ways we communicate differently based on our backgrounds and current contexts--and look for ways to expand your communication tool kits.
- Know that it is okay to be emotional about issues and to name those emotions.

- Be aware of the fact that tone of voice and body language are powerful communicators. Some postures or facial expressions (e.g., crossed arms, eye rolls, loud sighs) can silence, provoke, intimidate, or hurt others. Others (e.g., facing and looking at the speaker, staying quiet, nodding) can show you are listening respectfully.
- Make eye contact with other students and refer to classmates by name.
- Keep confidential any personal information that comes up in class.