

Suggested Ground Rules for Inclusive Dialogue:

Enter the dialogue with the sincere objective to understand another perspective (even if you aren't persuaded by it). Maintain this mindset: we are all learning.

Assume best intentions.

Meet others where they are.

Embrace imperfection and recognize nuance.

Stay in a place of asking questions—to understand, to clarify, to introduce alternative perspectives.

Use “I Statements” to speak from your response and experiences, rather than commenting on others’.

While judgement is an important faculty and part of who we are, make sure you are using it to help others, not to further your own motives.

Offer concrete examples that connect to others’ experiences.

Refer people to historical information and context, perhaps materials you’ve learned from.

Let others decide whether they want their identity to be part of the conversation. Not everyone feels comfortable representing their particular race, class, etc.

Frame interactions with the acknowledgement of social hierarchies (including age, race, gender, sexuality, ability, etc.).

Do not interrupt. Allow others to finish articulating their thoughts before sharing yours—and listen conscientiously when they speak (don't just wait your turn).

Be aware of the time your voice takes up; try to keep your remarks succinct and pertinent.

Stay calm. Give yourself a break to breathe, reconnect to the goal of your conversation, and come back. If it feels like the best option for you, walk away from the encounter.

Point out and explain things that aren't helpful to the conversation. Speak up when you're hurt or offended.

Be conscientious about your own defensiveness.

Be honest if you're having trouble, and respond openly when others point out your own missteps:

“I never thought about that before. I'll take some time to consider that perspective.”

“I'm sorry I made that assumption. What would be more appropriate for me to say?”

“I'm sorry my instinct doesn't yet align with what I've learned.”

“I'm trying to figure this out... can you work through this with me?”