At the beginning of the year or when new teams or groups are formed, this tool can help the class establish rules of conduct for working together.

**HOW TO USE THIS TOOL**

1. Share with students the purpose for ground rules and how they will govern team work. The rules guide interactions within the group and establish boundaries for group processes.

2. Using input from all of members of the group, students collect suggestions for rules of conduct for the group during team sessions. Consider having students state the ground rules in a positive way (what to do) instead of a negative way (what not to do). For example, instead of, “No side conversations,” the rule might be phrased as, “Give full attention to the person speaking.”

3. After you have gathered all of the suggestions, establish a consensus (see “Developing Consensus” on page 87) around the rules the class will adopt. Remember that consensus does not necessarily mean total agreement, but members should agree to abide by the rules.

4. Post the rules so that they are visible to all members during meetings. One group member can be appointed to ensure that the rules are followed, although any member can point out infractions at any time. The group leader has the final power to enforce any of the rules.

**TIPS FOR USING THIS TOOL**

- If this is the first time students have been exposed to the concept of ground rules, it may be helpful to provide some suggested rules, such as, “Only one person speaks at a time” and “Actively listen to one another.”
• To help provide an orderly environment for the exchange of ideas in the classroom, you can establish ground rules for the entire class and post them at the front of the room.
• If the same groups meet frequently, consider printing the team’s ground rules on a table tent that is visible to all group members at all times. If the group uses an agenda for their work, the ground rules can also be printed at the top of each meeting agenda.
• If groups are having trouble with members not following their rules, you should intervene by reviewing the rules, reestablishing consensus, and stepping in when necessary to help enforce them.

USING TECHNOLOGY

• Ask students to prepare a 30-second commercial that demonstrates the importance of one of the ground rules.
• Find video clips that demonstrate what happens when members of a team do not follow the rules.
• Have students design an online survey about the ground rules before they are adopted. The survey could include students from across classes and seek input about the level of agreement. In addition, an open-ended question could ask participants to provide examples of how the ground rule might help the group be productive or to suggest ways to improve the rule.

THINKING IT THROUGH

You can address these questions during class discussion, in small groups, in student journals, or in a variety of other ways.

• Every group behaves based on a common code of what is acceptable. Sometimes this code of conduct is not written down, but everyone knows what the rules are. Give an example of an unwritten code of conduct that exists for a group you belong to.
• Why are ground rules important for teams that are trying to work together?
• If a group member is not abiding by the ground rules, what can team members do? What do you think should happen if a team member continues to violate the rules? Who is responsible for enforcing the ground rules?
• Evaluate your own behavior in obeying the ground rules of the team. What was the most difficult rule to follow? Why? How did you change, or could you have changed, your behavior to follow the rule?
• Why is it important for teams to establish a consensus about the ground rules? Did your group do a good job of getting everyone to agree? Why or why not?
Ground Rules for Teams

Once your team has established and adopted its ground rules, it is the responsibility of every team member to follow them.

1. Enter your adopted ground rules in the first column of the chart below.
2. At the end of the group meeting, reflect on how well you abided by the ground rules by ranking your level of compliance.
   1 = Not at all
   5 = Completely
3. Write a brief statement about how you can improve your team skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ground Rules</th>
<th>My Level of Compliance (1–5)</th>
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**IMPROVING MY SKILLS**

Based on your participation in today's group work, how could you improve your team skills?