

# CHART



## Handling Challenges in Group Discussions

Before beginning a group session or presentation, let your audience know what to expect, including topics and the length of the session. You may want to develop a set of basic ground rules with the group, and then display them at your session. Ground rules can include maintaining confidentiality, sharing the airspace and showing respect for others' questions and feedback. In addition, the following chart offers topics and suggested responses that you can use to get back on track when faced with challenges during group discussions.

Topic	Situation/Example	How to Address
Side Conversations	A person is having a side conversation with another participant.	<p>"Just a friendly reminder, we agreed to one conversation at a time in our ground rules for today."</p> <p>Make eye contact and restate, "One conversation at a time, please."</p> <p>"Susan, do you have a question?"</p> <p>"Susan, I can see that you have something to contribute. When Anne has finished, we'll hear from you."</p> <p>Remember: Always treat participants with respect and consideration; and watch your body language.</p>
	If there are many people interrupting or having side conversations.	<p>"Susan, please hold your comments until Anne has finished."</p> <p>Pause without looking directly at those talking. If the conversation continues, ask if they have a question or issue to share with the group.</p>

Topic	Situation/Example	How to Address
Staying on Time	The group veers off into other topics.	Stop the process and ask the group, "Do we need to take a break? Let's take a five minute break."
	The discussion has continued for some time and you are running out of time for the next item.	<p>"Let's keep focused; we have a lot to cover." Or, "Let's keep focused, we are almost done."</p> <p>"We need to re-focus. There appears to be more discussion required. Is this true?"</p> <p>Create a "parking lot" on a board or sheet of paper. Include topics to discuss later if time allows.</p>
Personal Attacks	A person is insulting another participant.	<p>"Our ground rules clearly say that we welcome all ideas."</p> <p>"Our ground rules clearly say that we show respect to one another."</p> <p>"Our ground rules clearly say that everyone has a right to an opinion."</p>
	If the behavior continues after reminding them about the ground rules.	<p>"There appears to be a difference of opinion here. That's okay — we all have different views and values. Let's move on to the next topic so we can get through the presentation."</p> <p>"Please take a minute in the hall to gather your thoughts and return to the classroom." If the person decides to leave, continue without him or her.</p>

Topic	Situation/Example	How to Address
Never-Ending Discussion	The group discussion has continued for some time and you are running out of time for the next item.	<p>“Please let’s re-focus. We need to go over more information today.”</p> <p>Briefly restate the main points the person has said. If appropriate, state that these points will need further discussion and can’t be resolved here. There is no need to finish the discussion. If the atmosphere has become tense, call for a short break.</p>
	A person has been talking for a long time and other people are getting tired.	<p>“Susan, I am sorry to interrupt you, but I would like to hear from others.”</p> <p>Redirect the question by calling on another person by name. Say,</p> <p>“Sarah, what do you think about this issue?” or “Sarah, what has been your experience?”</p> <p>“Susan, remember the ground rule — everyone will get a chance to speak.”</p> <p>You can reframe their comments and redirect to someone else.</p> <p>For example, say, “So Susan’s point is _____. Does anyone else have anything to add?”</p>