

Ground Rules for Respectful Political Conversation

Union of Saints

Making room for healthy political discussion in everyday social settings.

1. Respect different political viewpoints.

People do not have to share the same political beliefs to enjoy a conversation or spend time together.

2. Discuss issues, not personal worth.

Focus on political policies, public figures, decisions, evidence, and ideas rather than attacking someone's character, intelligence, or personal values.

3. Listen before responding.

Allow others to finish speaking. Give people time to explain their reasoning before challenging their conclusions.

4. Be willing to consider another perspective.

You do not have to agree with someone to understand their argument. Be open to examining evidence that may challenge your existing beliefs.

5. Distinguish facts from opinions.

Be clear about what is verified, what is your interpretation, and what is your personal opinion. Be willing to acknowledge uncertainty.

6. Challenge arguments respectfully.

Disagreement, questions, and critical examination are welcome. Logical fallacies, unsupported claims, stereotypes, and cognitive biases may be discussed without insulting the person expressing the argument.

7. Avoid personal attacks and intimidation.

No bullying, threats, name-calling, hostile confrontation, or personal jabs. Swearing at someone or using language to demean or intimidate them is unacceptable.

8. Be mindful of how words affect others.

Avoid demeaning generalizations, racial or other stereotypes, microaggressions, and language intended to humiliate or provoke. Address concerns calmly and allow clarification when intent or meaning is uncertain.

9. Give everyone a fair opportunity to participate.

Do not dominate the conversation, repeatedly interrupt, or pressure others to defend every aspect of their beliefs. Make room for quieter participants to contribute.

10. Do not assume disagreement is hostility.

People can question an argument, criticize a political party, or challenge a public policy without necessarily attacking the person who supports it.

11. Respect personal boundaries.

Nobody is obligated to discuss every subject, disclose personal experiences, or justify their political beliefs. Anyone may decline a topic or step away from the conversation.

12. Know when to move on.

If a conversation becomes repetitive, overly heated, or uncomfortable, agree to pause or change the subject. The purpose is meaningful discussion, not winning an argument.

13. Keep the evening enjoyable.

Political discussion should be one part of socializing, not the entire event. Make room for humor, shared interests, friendships, and other conversations.

14. Be willing to acknowledge a good point.

Recognize valid arguments and credible evidence, even when they come from someone with opposing political views. Changing your mind or refining your position is a sign of thoughtful engagement, not defeat.

The Guiding Principle

Political disagreement is a normal part of a free and diverse society. We can question ideas, challenge policies, examine evidence, identify biases, and discuss difficult subjects without demeaning one another. The objective is not to eliminate disagreement, but to make respectful, informed political conversation a normal and welcome part of everyday life.