

Ground Rules for Small Group Participants

One Book One Presbytery¹

General Ground Rules for the Groups:

1. What's said in the group stays in the group. Personal stories will not be shared, unless you get explicit permission to do so. If permission is not stated up front, it is best addressed as an individual request outside the group session.. While facilitators will be taking notes in order to lead to concrete action and to evaluate the sessions, ideas and thoughts will not be directly attributed to the speaker.
2. Listen with respect. Good listening requires concentration and attention. Seek first to understand, then to be understood. (Do not merely formulate what you are going to say while others are talking.)
3. Each person gets a chance to talk. Do not speak again until others have had a chance to speak. Some people need more time to formulate their comments than others.
4. Raise your hand using the Zoom feature if you wish to speak. This will ensure your small group leader sees you and will call on you at the appropriate time. If you are unfamiliar with this feature, the small group leader will explain how to use it at the beginning of the session.
5. One person talks at a time. Don't cut people off.
6. Speak for yourself, not as the representative of any group or any other person. Use only "I" statements, no "we, you, or he/she/they" statements.
7. If you are offended or uncomfortable, say so and say why. This can be especially true when talking about race and racism. Unfortunately, we live in a white-dominant culture. It's not surprising, then, that microaggressions abound, and white people can offend unconsciously. In our antiracism training, we often refer to "Ouch/Oops" moments. A white person may say something offensive to a person of color, which creates an "ouch" to the person of color. For us to truly live in a world as God intended, we need to foster a safe space, where people of color feel free to express the ouch, and white people need to listen to the explanation, appreciate it and accept it for an "oops" moment. It is important to acknowledge the "oops," take time to understand how it was hurtful, and avoid making excuses or trying to explain what you meant. If white people come with an open and contrite heart, they will learn, grow, and apologize for their mistakes.
8. It is OK to disagree, but personal attacks are not allowed. No name-calling or stereotyping. Again, remember to avoid "you" statements.
9. Take time to read "Touchstones for Courageous Conversations" [Discipleship Ministries | Touchstones for Courageous Conversations \(umcdiscipleship.org\)](https://umcdiscipleship.org/discipleship-ministries/touchstones-for-courageous-conversations) and embrace them. They will hold you in good stead as you move forward in your desire to be all that Christ calls us to be.
10. We share responsibility for making the discussion constructive. Help the small group leader keep things on track.

¹ These guidelines are adapted from the United Methodist Church, Discipleship Ministries [Discipleship Ministries | Ground Rules for Group Discussion \(umcdiscipleship.org\)](https://umcdiscipleship.org/discipleship-ministries/ground-rules-for-group-discussion) with additional ground rules and instructions based on this particular series.