

Every person has experiences at meetings and in work settings that create expectations about “the ways things should be done.” In order to create a more successful meeting environment and productive group in general, it’s helpful to create a set of guidelines or ground rules. Ground rules have proven a successful tool in many group settings, including neighborhood association meetings.

It’s important for the entire board, not just the chair who facilitates the meeting, to develop the ground rules. The list of ground rules can be developed at a board retreat or by taking time out of a regularly scheduled monthly meeting. Brainstorm a list of ground rules and when reviewing each rule, make sure everyone in the group understands what is meant by the proposed rule.

Once the list of ground rules is developed and there is full acceptance by the group, write the list up on a large piece of display board paper. Post the ground rules at every neighborhood association meeting and read the list out loud so that everyone in attendance knows that they will be held accountable to the group’s rules.

It’s important to establish ground rules **before** a conflict arises. Be proactive and develop ground rules as tool to ensure that the group functions in a healthy and effective manner.

### Sample Ground Rules

Here’s a list of suggested ground rules to build upon. Rules will have the most impact and buy-in when they are developed out of a group process.

- Treat everyone with courtesy and respect
- Listen actively- respect others when they are talking
- Listen to others with an open mind
- One person speaks at a time- no cross talk
- Be aware of your own and other’s participation- step up and step back!
- Share your own experiences and opinions with “I” statements, rather than generalizing with “We” or “They” comments
- Respectfully challenge an idea, not a person
- Respect the groups’ time and keep comments brief and to the point