USC Center for Excellence in Teaching

# A menu of community agreements

## WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

A list of statements that can be included in a course’s set of community agreements, rules, or expectations. This is not a list of best practices, but a collection of community agreement statements that are commonly used in various disciplines.

## HOW DO I USE IT?

It is best practice to establish a community agreement prior to the first academic discussion in a course. Often the community agreement is listed in the syllabus or established through a class activity. This menu lists items that can be included in a community agreement or used to stimulate ideas for community agreement statements. Note that community agreements may vary widely by course content, discipline, and classroom culture; not all of the listed statements will be appropriate for any given course. For assistance, please [contact CET](https://cet.usc.edu/contact-us/).

### General Statements

* The primary commitment is to learn from each other. We acknowledge differences among us in disciplines, experiences, interests, and values.
* Build on one another’s comments; work toward shared understanding.
* If you wish to challenge something that has been said, challenge the idea or the practice referred to, not the individual sharing this idea or practice.
* Keep the tone and words respectful and productive.
* Allow others a chance to participate; empower yourself to participate.
* Maintain one another's confidence. We want to create an atmosphere for open, honest exchange.
* Do not write or say anything that would be compromising if it were made public.

### Creating Agreements

Community agreements maybe established by faculty and presented to students in the course syllabus, LMS, or during the first course session. Alternatively, agreements may be created collaboratively with student input, creating buy-in and consensus among the community. Collaborative agreements may be created in several ways including:

* Have all students add agreement statements on a shared document,
* Place students in small groups for a brief discussion to collect statements and then share out to the larger group.
* Ask students to reflect, pair, and share agreement statements with a partner.
* Use an online discussion board to collect and share agreement statements.

### Other Considerations

Community agreements may extend beyond conversations and communications. Consider using community agreements as a place for topics that do not necessarily fit into syllabi or course policies. These topics may include:

* Timeliness,
* Email, text, or group chat guidelines,
* Discussion room standards,
* Challenging discussions or current events,
* Collaborative work expectations,
* Clinical, experiential, or active learning environments.