

## Schwarz's Ground Rules

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### 1. Test assumptions and inferences

When you assume, you take for granted it is true without verifying it; when you infer, you draw a conclusion about what you do not know on the basis of things you do not know.

### 2. Share all relevant information that affects how the group solves a problem or makes a decision, so that members can make an informed choice and generate commitment.

- Disagree openly with any member of the group
- All members are expected to participate in all phases of the process
- Exchange relevant information with non-group members
- Do self-critiques

### 3. Use specific examples and agree on what important words mean

Specific examples use directly observable data in such a way that other members can determine whether the example is valid.

### 4. Explain your reasoning and intent

Explain to others what leads you to make a comment or ask a question or take an action. Otherwise they will often generate their own explanation of your reasoning which may differ greatly from your own.

- Do not take cheap shots or otherwise distract the group. Cheap shots are a specific way in which people make comments without explaining reasoning or intent

### 5. Focus on interests, not positions

'Interests' are a person's needs and desires. 'Positions' are how these needs are met. People tend to offer their position after they have attended to their own interests (or needs), and **before** they have included the other members' interests. People's positions are often in conflict even when their interests are compatible.

### 6. Combine advocacy and inquiry

Make statements, then invite questions and comments. Without an explicit invitation to inquire or comment on the previous person's remarks, the meeting switches focus with each person who speaks. Focusing and inquiring around differences promotes mutual learning.

### 7. Jointly design next steps and ways to test disagreements and solutions

Decide with others what topics to discuss, when to discuss them, how to discuss them and when to switch topics. Keeping the discussion focused is one example of jointly designing the next steps.

### 8. Discuss undiscussable issues

Undiscussable issues are those that are relevant to the group's task but that group members believe they cannot discuss openly in the group without some negative consequences. Share relevant but difficult information so people can make a free and informed choice about whether to change their behaviour. By trying to act with integrity, you demonstrate your compassion for others and yourself.

### 9. Use a decision-making rule that generates the level of commitment needed

Make decisions by consensus. Consensus is typically required for decisions that need internal commitment from the group, but not all decisions require internal commitment. The more people are able to make an informed free choice to support a decision, the more they are likely to be internally committed to the decision.