

Respectful Conversation Guidelines

These guidelines are intended to help facilitate respectful discussion in the classroom in which all students can safely share and discuss their thoughts and experiences. These guidelines are embedded as introductory content in several of Queer Newark's lesson plans, but can be a useful exercise to begin any lesson that involves LGBTQ+ content or at the beginning of the year to set the tone for an inclusive learning environment. It can be adapted for any age group.

Let students know that this lesson or class will involve topics that many people have strong feelings about and while they are welcome to share their thoughts, they must do so respectfully. To help clarify what respectful dialogue looks like, establish a set of guidelines together.

The following are suggestions from [the MIT Teaching and Learning Lab](#) that can be adapted with the instructor and students' input:

- Be aware of other speakers. Allow everyone an equal chance to speak and refrain from interrupting.
- Listen actively and try to understand each speaker's views. Keep in mind that there is something to learn from everyone.
- If you disagree with something someone says, focus on their ideas when responding instead of saying something negative about the speaker as a person.
- Stick to the facts. Make sure that you are not guessing, perpetuating stereotypes, or using derogatory language.
- Don't make assumptions about the people in the class. Remember that everyone has different backgrounds and experiences.
- If there are LGBTQ+ people in the class, don't ask them to speak for all LGBTQ+ people or explain their experiences. If they want to share their perspectives, they can offer, but it is not required.
- Remember that we are responsible for our words and their impact. If we say something that hurts a classmate, it's our job to make amends.
- Keep any personal information discussed confidential.

This process can be done through discussion, submission of suggestions on paper or through an electronic system, or a collaborative source like a Google Doc or a large sheet of paper.