
NORMS FOR SOCRATIC SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

One of the vital parts of a well-run Socratic Seminar at any grade level is to be sure to present and review the Ground Rules or Guidelines for Socratic Seminar participants. This step can easily be skipped in the daily rush of classroom life. Be sure to not skip it and be sure to ask students to individually and collectively reflect on how well the Ground Rules were practiced in each Socratic Seminars.

Below are Guidelines for Socratic Seminar Participants that attendees at our workshops and training are given that you might find useful regarding Ground Rules. Please use and adapt to your needs and those of your students.

1. Refer to the text when needed during the discussion. A seminar is not a test of memory. You are not learning a subject”; your goal is to understand the ideas, issues, and values reflected in the text.
2. It’s OK to pass when asked to contribute.
3. Do not participate if you are not prepared. A seminar should not be a bull session.
4. Do not stay confused; ask for clarification.
5. Stick to the point currently under discussion; make notes about ideas you want to come back to.
6. Don’t raise hands; take turns speaking.
7. Listen carefully.
8. Speak up so that all can hear you.
9. Talk to each other, not just to the leader or teacher.
10. Discuss ideas rather than each other’s opinions.
11. You are responsible for the seminar, even if you don’t know it or admit it.