

## Team- ground-rules    Date: Jan 2021

We often join a team and assume that all the members agree with our assumptions about what's acceptable and what's not. But they probably don't

Taking the time to talk about our assumptions and what our team's norms should be can save time and accelerate results down the line. Setting ground rules is part of setting expectations for team performance. Meeting these expectations will build trust and improve accountability.

**Ground rules, or rules of engagement, are typically discussed and agreed to early during the formation of a team.** The rules can be reviewed periodically and renegotiated whenever someone new joins the team. They should also be reviewed if the team isn't functioning well.

Our experience from putting teams through *The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team* is that this step of team formation is often skipped. People make assumptions and inevitably other people do not meet them. Healthier groups might tweak a few assumed rules. More dysfunctional teams might surprise you by suggesting rules that seem obvious, such as members will not publicly badmouth other team members.

Consider including organization or team values in your ground rules.

### **Here are sample rules adopted by teams:**

- Meetings will start and end on time.
- If unable to attend, members will send a representative, inform the team, and request agenda items be deferred or submit comments if necessary.
- Meetings will follow an agenda prepared by the leader or approved by members a day before the meeting.
- Video meetings require everyone (or not) to have their cameras turned on.
- Agenda items will address team goals, health and functioning of the team, and progress reports.
- Members will complete tasks they've committed to.



- Members will state their views and ask genuine questions to gain better understanding.
- Members will alert the group to any task or project that will be early, late, better or worse than expected.
- Meetings will begin with stating outcomes/goals/changes each member is excited about and one item the team could improve upon.
- Only one person will speak at a time.
- No one will check their phone during the meeting.
- Members will listen actively and test their assumptions.
- Members will be present physically and mentally or excuse themselves.
- All team members will speak their minds.
- When anyone feels we are off-track, we will refer back to our agreed-upon key performance indicators and our shared purpose.
- Sources of conflict will be mined and addressed.
- Conflict will address ideas rather than personalities.
- Members can ask for discussion items to be moved to the “parking lot” to be addressed later after more information is gathered, a missing member is present, or the timing is better.
- There will be no side conversations or gossip.
- These ground rules will be reviewed at a specific date to be revised as needed.
- Taking a long lunch means working later in the afternoon.
- Members will share the airtime.
- Members will share their unique perspectives.
- Members will share their experience (not others).
- Members will speak honestly.
- Members will listen from the “We” but speak from the “I.”
- Assumptions will be brought forward to be affirmed or challenged.
- Silence of members will be assumed to signal agreement.
- Members will be courageous.
- Members will not shy away from conflict.
- Members will hold each other accountable.
- Milestones will be celebrated.
- Limited cursing is allowable.
- Failure is acceptable.

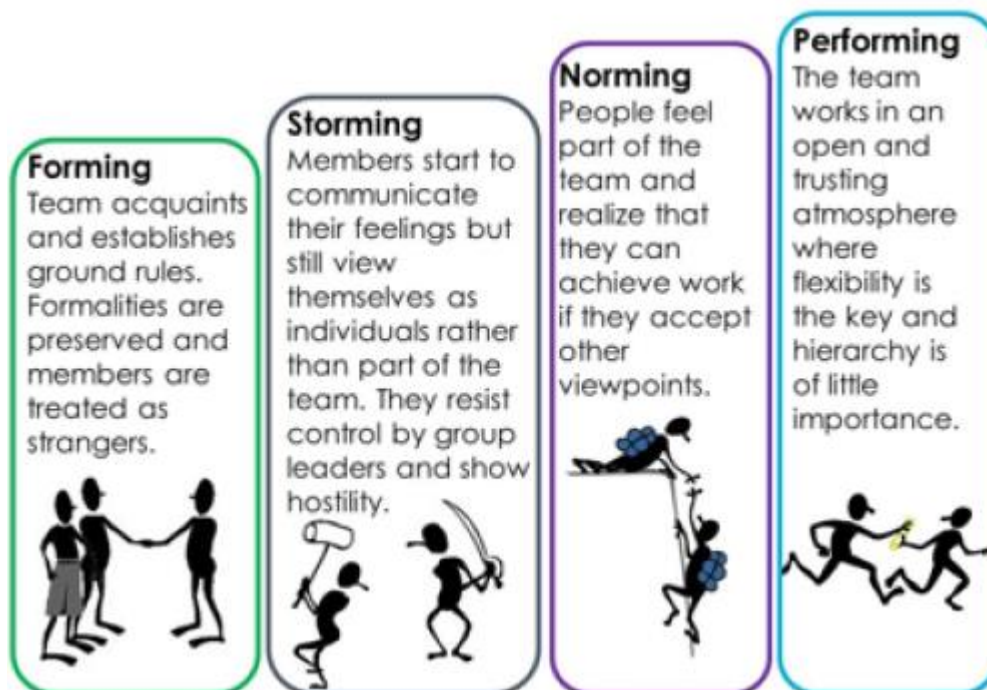


## Extraordinary Team Ground Rules

- The **team** is an entity that is greater than the sum of its parts.
- Active cooperation from every **team** member is vital for **team** success.
- **Team** members must work closely together and make every effort to support one another.
- Seek first to understand then to be understood.
- Ask for ideas from everyone.

## Team Development:

### Exhibit 1 – Tuckman's stages of team development



### Example of a community's ground rules:

1. We will make the community an organization that people want to be a part of.
2. We will commit to getting to know each other on a personal level.



3. We will prioritize our efforts on the execution of our plans.
4. We will be accountable for achieving our goals and doing what we say we will do.
5. We will treat each other with respect and trust.
6. We will support collaborative decisions of the community even if we disagree individually. We will listen more with understanding of each other.
7. We will always engage in honest and open communications.
8. We will not jump to conclusions but rather ask for clarification.
9. We will participate in each other's development. Make our teammates successful.
10. We will celebrate the community and individual successes.
11. We will continuously improve our processes thru reflection and make things better for the community.

**The output from doing and discussing the ground rules should be:  
Better team communication and improved delivery on tasks.**

