

Conversation Guide: The Golden Rule in Politics

Living Room Conversations offers a simple, sociable and structured way to practice communicating across differences while building understanding and relationships. Typically, 4-6 people meet in person or by video call for about 90 minutes to listen to and be heard by others on one of our nearly 100 [topics](#). Rather than debating or convincing others, we take turns talking to share, learn, and be curious. No preparation is required, though background links with balanced views are available on some topic pages online. Anyone can host using these italicized instructions. [Hosts also participate](#).

I. Introductions: Why We're Here (~10 minutes)

Each participant has 1 minute to introduce themselves.

- Share your name, where you live, what drew you here, and how the conversations so far have impacted you.

II. Conversation Agreements: How We'll Engage (~5 minutes)

These will set the tone of our conversation; participants may volunteer to take turns reading them aloud.

- **Be curious and listen to understand.** Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking. You might enjoy exploring how others' experiences have shaped their values and perspectives.
- **Show respect and suspend judgment.** People tend to judge one another. Setting judgement aside opens you up to learning from others and makes them feel respected and appreciated. Try to truly listen, without interruption or crosstalk.
- **Note any common ground as well as any differences.** Look for areas of agreement or shared values that may arise and take an interest in the differing beliefs and opinions of others.
- **Be authentic and welcome that from others.** Share what's important to you. Speak from your experience. Be considerate of others who are doing the same.
- **Be purposeful and to the point.** Do your best to keep your comments concise and relevant to the question you are answering. Be conscious of sharing airtime with other participants.
- **Own and guide the conversation.** Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and the conversation as a whole. Be proactive in getting yourself and others back on track if needed. Use an agreed upon signal like the "time out" sign if you feel the agreements are not being honored.

III. Question Rounds: Let's Talk!

Time will be tracked and we'll gently let people know when their time has elapsed.

Round One: Getting to Know Each Other (~10 min)

Each participant can take 1-2 minutes to answer the following question:

- What sense of purpose / mission / duty guides you in your life?

Round Two: Exploring the Topic -- The Golden Rule in Politics (~40 min)

One participant can volunteer to read this paragraph.

People with a variety of theological and political views are coming together to express concern about the polarization and hostility that is tearing our country apart. We are deeply troubled by the prospect of an angry and hateful political campaign season in 2024 that would further divide us as a nation.

There is a belief that our country can find guidance through this dilemma in the spiritual teachings and practice of the Golden Rule - to “do unto others as you would have them do unto you” – especially as we engage in political activity. We believe that if enough people follow this Golden Rule principle, it will help generate the respect and kindness we so desperately need in our country.

Each participant will take two minutes to share without any interruption or cross talk. After everyone has had an opportunity to share, the moderator will initiate further group discussion.

What does the Golden Rule mean to you? Do you personally apply the Golden Rule in your interactions with others? If not, what holds you back?

- Do you assume good intent in those with whom you disagree or do you find yourself skeptical? What experience brings you to this assumption?
- How do the political divisions in our country impact your life at this time? What do you think people can do to help bridge those divides?
- What comes to mind when you consider applying the Golden Rule to your interactions over politics? What would be the best first step for you?

Round Three: Reflecting on the Conversation (~15 min)

Each participant will have two minutes to share their observations. After everyone has had an opportunity to contribute, the moderator will initiate further group discussion.

- What was most meaningful / valuable to you in this Living Room Conversation?
- What learning, new understanding or common ground was found on the topic?

Closing (~5 min)

- Give us feedback! [Feedback to Form to Mail](#) or [Feedback Fillable Form to Email](#)
- Donate! Visit our website at <https://wvuv.org/get-involved>

Thank you!