



Our Space, Our Guidelines

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Facilitator's Guide

Lesson Overview (Grades 6-12)

Everywhere we go—whether hanging out at the park, being a lab partner in a science class, or meeting new friends through playing the latest MMORPG (Massively Multi-Player Online Role-Playing Game)—we negotiate the implicit and sometimes explicit norms of social communities. These spaces typically don't have signposts or labels that state every guideline that we must abide in order to be part of the group—but somehow most people learn what's inappropriate to do and what to do to fit in. Through observation, talking to others in the group, and actively engaging in the group discussion or activity presented, you can learn about the expectations for appropriate conduct, and what it means to be a responsible player or citizen of the community.

Talking about often sensitive issues such as identity, privacy, trust, ownership and authorship, and group norms can be difficult; it may take considerable work to establish and maintain a culture that enables all learners to feel safe and comfortable enough to discuss these issues. It is important to discuss the reality that, in many online and offline spaces, different participants may have motives and goals for participating that are at odds with one another. In these cases, norms and expectations may not be clear-cut. Conduct that feels comfortable and appropriate to one person may not feel so to others. This set of activities is designed to help teachers/facilitators and students create a safe space—and a shared set of norms and guidelines—for participating in discussions about the issues raised in this casebook.

It's important to realize that norms and guidelines work together.

- **Norms** are defined through implicit understandings, representing shared assumptions about desirable and appropriate ways of interacting. Norms help to guide, control, or regulate proper and acceptable behavior within any given community.
- **Guidelines** are explicitly defined as an indication or outline of policy or conduct. Those policies may be expressed top-down, as in many of the rules that teachers and students have to follow in



the school context, or emerge bottom-up, as in the kinds of guidelines we hope will emerge through this activity.

The implicit norms of various online communities are highly flexible, reflecting the still-emerging nature of many of these contexts and practices. Yet the lack of clarity and agreement about appropriate conduct can sometimes lead to misunderstandings and misconduct. Some people defend what would be seen as antisocial actions in other contexts by appealing to the lack of rules governing interaction online. For our purposes, as we negotiate between the online world and the classroom, it is important to establish some guidelines that all participants have agreed upon—guidelines that will allow us to talk about controversial and complex issues while respecting the privacy and dignity of all participants. We need to be able to appeal to these shared principles in order to arbitrate conflicts or, ideally, to prevent antisocial conduct.

Ethical thinking skills highlighted in this lesson:

- **Perspective-taking**—striving to understand the motives and goals of multiple stakeholders in online communities
- Reflecting on one’s **roles and responsibilities** within a community
- Considering **community-level consequences (benefits and harms)** of different courses of action

New media literacies highlighted in this lesson:

- **Negotiation**—the ability to travel across diverse communities, discerning and respecting multiple perspectives, and grasping and following alternative norms
- **Collective Intelligence**—the ability to pool knowledge and compare notes with others toward a common goal
- **Play**—the capacity to experiment with one’s surroundings as a form of problem-solving



Learning Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to:

- Identify the norms and guidelines for responsible participation that exist in various communities, both offline and online
- Name distinct features of online communities that may affect the norms and guidelines needed for responsible participation
- Recognize the importance of creating norms and guidelines to facilitate responsible participation in online communities

Materials Used

- Anonymous suggestion box (to keep in the classroom permanently)
- Video: 1969 television series DVD, “Room 222.” On Disc 2, Episode: The Exchange Teacher (air date: 12/17/1969)
- Handouts:
 - Recommended Guidelines
 - WoW Guidelines
 - Case Study: Ning—Community of Readers

Lesson Introduction

Introduce the lesson by considering norms that have been developed for different contexts. Use one of the following activities or a combination of both.

Watch Video and Discuss

The goal of this video clip is to understand that people often enter situations with already established norms. And in doing so, it takes focused effort and group collaboration to break the pre-structured guidelines established and develop a new set of norms and guidelines more appropriate for the participating group.

Begin this lesson by watching chapter two (roughly five minutes) of 1969 television series DVD, “Room 222,” Disc 2, Episode: The Exchange Teacher (air date: 12/17/1969). This video introduces an exchange teacher from England visiting an American school. Of interest in the video are the reactions of other



teachers to the exchange teacher’s “eccentric” behavior in her interactions with students, in which she casts aside the established guidelines in the school and articulates her own expectations for students.

Questions to discuss with your students after the video could include:

- In the video clip, what were the differences between norms and guidelines?
 - Why does a class need guidelines? Or *does* a class need guidelines?
 - What were the norms of the school before the exchange teacher arrived?
 - How did the exchange teacher change the norms for her classroom?
 - Think of your current situation/location—what might happen if the current guidelines were removed? What are some of the social norms of this space? How might you change them?
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Choose an Offline Community and an Online Community and Brainstorm the norms associated with each group. Put the two lists on the board for you and your students to discuss and compare.

Sample Offline Communities:

- Park
- Mall
- Football game
- Church
- Classroom

Sample Online Communities:

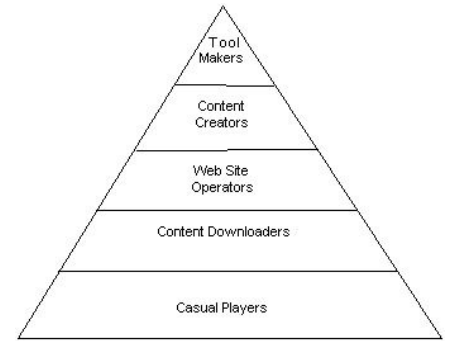
- Multiplayer online games like Runescape or World of Warcraft
- Social networks, like Facebook or MySpace
- Fan communities, like FictionAlley.org

Questions to prompt your students could include:

- What kinds of things help you feel like you are in a safe space?
- What are the different ways of participating in online communities compared to offline communities?
- Not everybody participates in the same ways in online communities. What are some different ways to participate? These can be positive or negative (think active nonparticipation, such as: How does a casual observer participate?).



- Share with students Will Wright’s pyramid of participation when posing this question. Will Wright is a game designer who helped to develop such popular titles as The Sims, SimCity, and Spore. His games rely heavily on the participation of their players. This pyramid illustrates a number of key principles about participatory culture: 1. Participants make different kinds of contributions, with the most labor-intensive activities performed by a much smaller subset of the community than those activities that require more casual commitments; 2. The contributions of participants build upon one another. People who download content, for example, are depending on those who produce or distribute that content, and those who produce the content are hoping to have a receptive audience for the things they make—and are relying on toolmakers to give them the affordances they need to be able to make the content they want. Wright’s pyramid thus allows us to talk about what each member contributes and what each member draws from a participatory culture. *
- When we think about “ethical participation,” we often talk about the “public good”—ways to participate that benefit the community as a whole. What are some types of participation that fit the public-good model of participation? For example: How does tagging a media clip relate to participation? **NOTE:** Consider sharing with students NML’s Learning Library challenge “An Introduction to Tagging,” found at <http://newmedialiteracies.org/library/>.
- In speaking of ethical issues in this casebook, we refer particularly to the responsibilities and obligations that accompany specific roles in society—for example, the roles of worker, citizen, and participant in a real or virtual community. Going beyond neighborhood morality, which involves the ways in which persons deal with those in their immediate vicinity, an ethical stance entails the capacity to think abstractly; and going beyond the assertion of rights, an ethical stance foregrounds those responsibilities that one should assume, even when—indeed, especially when—they go against one's own self interest.
- Are there ways to participate in this community that support others’ participation? What types of participation hinder this goal?
- How would the exchange teacher in “Room 222” fair in the different spaces you’ve brainstormed?
- Now compare the different spaces you’ve listed.
- Can you act the same way in each space? What would happen if you did?





- How do you account for the differences in expectations of participation in these two communities?

Activity #1: Analysis of Guidelines

Introduction: The goal of this activity is to begin considering guidelines for your class by assessing existing guidelines for participation created by other groups. Students will consider examples from both offline and online communities, exploring similarities and differences, and discuss the extent to which guidelines should differ in online versus offline environments.

Assessing guidelines created and used by other groups is a good start, but every social group is different and therefore it is best to establish your own set of guidelines that work for your group's values and goals.

For further reasoning on this, read the attached Case Study: *Ning—Community of Readers* with your students. Ning is an innovative and easy-to-use technology platform for people to join and create new social networks for their interests and passions and meet new people around the things they care about most in their life. *Ning—Community of Readers* is a Ning social network established by Project New Media Literacies to pilot test the Teachers' Strategy Guide: Reading in a Participatory Culture.

Share the attached guidelines and analyze the similarities and differences between the guidelines used by an after-school program and guidelines created for an online community.

Questions to prompt your students could include:

- Comparing the two sets of guidelines, are there things you don't like? And if so, how might you want your guidelines to be different?
- Why can't offline guidelines be used for online spaces?
- What differences do you see between the offline guidelines and the online guidelines? What sorts of things appear in the online guidelines that aren't a part of offline guidelines?
- Are there characteristics of online spaces that require developing new norms and guidelines? What sorts of things happen in online communities that require creating new guidelines and norms?
- Besides the two sets of guidelines provided, can you think of other guidelines (whether offline or online) that might be good to add to this list?



Activity #2: Ombudsman, Take it Away!

Introduction: The goal of this activity is to choose one of your students to be an ombudsman and, using the new media literacy, collective intelligence, to establish a set of norms and guidelines for your group's learning environment.

By choosing an ombudsman—someone who will act as mediator, help to resolve any conflicts and ensure that all voices in the group are heard—your group will develop its own set of guidelines for creating a safe learning environment for discussing sensitive issues raised by participation in online learning and play spaces. We each have different backgrounds, experiences and expertises to bring to the conversation. We each deserve to be heard. And we need a set of guidelines, which ensures that everyone will be able to say what's on their mind and not feel at risk from other students' responses.

This space does not have to have the “look and feel” of our normal class. It's a space for us to come together equally in order to discuss issues that are still being worked out by society and to try out some activities. We are going to use the new media literacy, collective intelligence, to pool our knowledge and choose and create new rituals and guidelines for how we will act when we are doing activities on ethics.

Instructions:

- Choose one of your students to be the first ombudsman—this person will facilitate today's class and ensure that everyone's voice is heard.
- Have the students collaboratively work to jot down norms that they would want in establishing this safe space.
- To ensure that everyone has a voice, encourage students to write their ideas on paper anonymously and put them into a suggestion box. There is no limit on how many suggestions you can put into the box.
- After all suggestions are in, have the ombudsman make a list of norms by reading through all suggestions in the box. By designating a student as the ombudsman, the teacher/facilitator becomes a participant in the activity and helps to set in motion a new set of norms for how the teacher/facilitator and students will interact during the ethics exercises.
- Have the ombudsman moderate a discussion on defining a list of guidelines to support establishing the norms requested by the group.
- Through a voting session, have the ombudsman narrow down the list of guidelines to no fewer than three and no more than five. Conduct the voting with a show of hands. Students can raise their hands five times. The ombudsman needs to add up the total on each vote and determine which on the list rise to the top as the most important.



- The ombudsman should write the final list on the board to get initial reactions/feedback from the group.

NOTE: In the dynamic we hope to see played out in these lessons, the expertise of both teachers/facilitators and students are “co-configured,” meaning you and your students have different expertise to share when reflecting on digital media practices. We hope you work to hear one another’s voices and opinions without bias. Encourage your group to return to this opening activity anytime they feel that new classroom norms have developed or that old norms have changed so that your classroom’s list of Guidelines can be updated accordingly.

Concluding Takeaways

This lesson is designed to introduce ways of thinking about the need for establishing norms and guidelines that will facilitate a safe space where everyone feels comfortable discussing the sensitive issues that arise when adding digital realms to the everyday world. Because the focus of this casebook is digital media and ethics, it is possible that students will have had experiences that teachers have not themselves encountered. Allowing facilitation by students designated as ombudsman provides a space in which teachers and students bring their different perspectives and expertise to the table. The guidelines help to establish norms that support all players in the classroom to dynamically learn from one another.



Assessment

Through participation in class activities and discussions and/or answers to optional assessment questions, students should demonstrate they can:

- Identify the norms and guidelines for responsible participation that exist in various communities, both offline and online
- Name distinct features of online communities that may affect the norms and guidelines needed for responsible participation
- Recognize the importance of creating norms and guidelines to facilitate responsible participation in online communities

Assessment Questions (Optional)

- Think of a group—either online or offline—you belong to (or used to belong to) that is either particularly good or particularly bad at encouraging responsible participation. Explain the norms and guidelines of the group (if they exist) and how they affect the way people participate in the group.
- Think of an online community/context in which you participate. What are the norms and guidelines for participation? How are they similar to and different from the offline communities/contexts in which you participate?



Recommended Guidelines

- **Respect**—Give undivided attention to the person who has the floor (permission to speak).
- **Confidentiality**—What we share in this group will remain in this group.
- **Openness**—We will be as open and honest as possible without disclosing others' (families', neighbors', or friends') personal or private issues. It is okay to discuss situations, but we won't use names or other identifiers. For example, we won't say, "My older brother ..." Instead, we will say, "I know someone who ..."
- **Right to pass**—It is always okay to pass (meaning "I'd rather not" or "I don't want to answer").
- **Nonjudgmental approach**—We can disagree with another person's point of view without putting that person down.
- **Taking care to claim our opinions**—We will speak our opinions using the first person and avoid using "you." For example, "I think that kindness is important." Not, "You are just mean."
- **Sensitivity to diversity**—We will remember that people in the group may differ in cultural background, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity or gender expression, and will be careful about making insensitive or careless remarks.
- **Anonymity**—It is okay to ask any question by using the suggestion box.
- **Acceptance**—It is okay to feel uncomfortable; adults feel uncomfortable, too, when they talk about sensitive and personal topics, such as sexuality.
- **Have a good time**—It is okay to have a good time. Creating a safe space is about coming together as a community, being mutually supportive, and enjoying each other's qualities.

Adapted from Guide to Implementing TAP: A Peer Education Program to Prevent HIV and STI (2nd edition), © 2002, Advocates for Youth, Washington, DC.



World of Warcraft (WoW) Guidelines

This is an excerpt taken from the WoW Guidelines to illustrate guidelines for an online community.

For the full set of guidelines: <http://forums.worldofwarcraft.com/forum-coc.html>

Welcome to the World of Warcraft discussion forums! These forums are here to provide you with a friendly environment where you can discuss ideas, give game play advice, role-play, and converse about any other aspects of World of Warcraft with other players. Community forums are at their best when participants treat their fellow posters with respect and courtesy. Therefore, we ask that you conduct yourself in a civilized manner when participating in these forums.

The guidelines listed below explain what behavior is expected of you and what behavior you can expect from other community members. Note that the following guidelines are not exhaustive, and may not address all manner of offensive behavior. Your access to these forums is a “privilege,” and not a “right.”

Racial/Ethnic

This category includes both clear and masked language and/or links to websites containing such language or images that

- Promote racial/ethnic hatred
- Are recognized as a racial/ethnic slur
- Allude to a symbol of racial/ethnic hatred

If a player is found to have participated in such actions, he/she will:

- Be temporarily banned from the World of Warcraft forums
- Be given a final warning; any further Code of Conduct violations may result in permanent ban from the forums

Real-Life Threats

This category includes both clear and masked language and/or links to websites containing such language or images that:

- Refer to violence in any capacity that is not directly related to the game world

If a player is found to have participated in such actions, he/she will:

- Be temporarily banned from the World of Warcraft forums



- Be given a final warning; any further Code of Conduct violations may result in a permanent ban from the forums

Distribution of Real-Life Personal Information

This category includes:

- Releasing any real-life information about other players or Blizzard Entertainment employees

If a player is found to have participated in such actions, he/she will:

- Be permanently banned from the World of Warcraft forums

Posting Cheats, Hacks, Trojan Horses, or Malicious Programs

This category includes:

- Posting links to cheats, hacks, or malicious viruses / programs

If a player is found to have participated in such actions, he/she will:

- Be permanently banned from the World of Warcraft forums

Inappropriate language

This category includes both clear and masked language and/or links to websites containing such language or images that:

- Are a mildly inappropriate reference to human anatomy or bodily functions
- Are otherwise considered objectionable
- Bypass the Mature Language filter

If a player is found to have participated in such actions, he/she will:

- Be given a temporary ban from the World of Warcraft forums, depending upon severity

Harassing or Defamatory

This category includes both clear and masked language and/or links to websites containing such language or images that:

- Insultingly refer to other characters, players, Blizzard employees, or groups of people
- Result in ongoing harassment to other characters, players, Blizzard employees, or groups of people

**If a player is found to have participated in such actions, he/she will:**

- Be given a temporary ban from the World of Warcraft forums, depending upon severity

Harassment takes many forms, and is not necessarily limited to the type of language used, but the intent. Repeatedly targeting a specific player with harassment can lead to more severe action. The idea behind this is to prevent any one player from consistently being uncomfortable in the World of Warcraft forums.

Major Religions or Religious Figures

This category includes both clear and masked language and/or links to websites containing such language or images that:

- Negatively portray major religions or religious figures

If a player is found to have participated in such actions, he/she will:

- Be given a temporary ban from the World of Warcraft forums, depending upon severity

Spamming and Trolling

This category includes:

- Excessively communicating the same phrase, similar phrases, or pure gibberish
- Creating threads for the sole purpose of causing unrest on the forums
- Causing disturbances in forum threads, such as picking fights, making off-topic posts that ruin the thread, insulting other posters
- Making non-constructive posts
- Abusing the Reported Post feature by sending false alarms or nonsensical messages

If a player is found to have been spamming or trolling, he/she will:

- Be given a temporary or permanent ban from the World of Warcraft forums, depending upon severity

The bottom line is that we want World of Warcraft to be a fun and safe environment for all players. World of Warcraft is a Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game, and the key words are “Massively Multiplayer.” In playing this game and posting on its forums, you will encounter thousands of other players who share different experiences and come from vastly different backgrounds. While certain language and images may not be offensive to you, consider the fact that that same language and



images may have a completely different effect on someone else. We've done everything we can to make this a great game, but now it's up to you, the players, to breathe life into the world.



Ning Community of Readers: Example Case

A conversation with Aurora High School teacher, Rebecca Rupert, discussing her and her students' process for developing community guidelines.

Rebecca Rupert writes:

We started with the following guidelines that were written by teacher Ann Smith from Arapahoe, Colorado.

In your discussion, be sure:

- 1. Your posts (or comments) are well written.** This includes not only good content, but—because these are school-related—also follows writing conventions including spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- 2. Your posts (or comments) are responsive.** They respond to other people's ideas—whether it is a post by a teacher, a comment by a student, or an idea elsewhere on the Internet. The power of online communication tools is in their connectedness—they are connected to a larger community of ideas. Participate in that community.
- 3. Your posts (or comments) include textual references to support your opinions.** Adding quotes or links to other works strengthens your response.
- 4. You participate frequently.** To be part of the dialogue, you have to participate fully and consistently.
- 5. You are respectful of others.** It's okay to disagree; it's not okay to be disagreeable. Be respectful of others and their opinions, and be civil when you disagree.

She used the guidelines for students as they participated in a Socratic seminar blogging session. She notes, “I first used the guidelines for an online chat with my students, and it became immediately clear that students were not following any of them (it was a disaster), so we spent time looking closely at each guideline, re-writing them, and adding them to the list. We came up with our own set of guidelines, and they were posted in the room for a time. As I remember, my students' guidelines were very similar, just written in different language.”