

# Ground rules

**Aims:** To set ground rules with the young people at the club

**Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of the session the participants will:

- Have decided what sort of behaviour they want in their club
- Have decided what types of behaviour is not acceptable
- Decided on sanctions for bad behaviour

**Group size:** whole club (or, if loud, groups of 12)

**Time:** 1 hour

**Venue:** Youth club

**Materials:**

- Flipchart paper and pens
- Behaviour handout (for your information only)

Time	What	With
Before	Read the Behaviour handout before you start the session – it will give you good ideas!	Behaviour handout
5 mins	Get the young people sat down and explain what you're going to do. Tell them that it's important to have good ground rules so make sure that everyone enjoys (and feels safe) in their club.	
10 mins	Ask the group to shout out what they don't want to happen at their youth club – answers could include being bullied, people breaking things, being shouted at, being spat on, swearing etc.  Remember – you have to abide by these too and it's OK to add some of your own if the young people don't come up with them.	Flipchart paper and pens
5 mins	Next, ask the group how they want things to be at their club, answers could include 'being nice to each other', 'having a nice club', 'having good things to do', 'having a laugh' etc.  Remember – it's OK to add some of your own if the young people don't come up with them.	Flipchart paper and pens
10 mins	Using the two lists, build your ground rules with the group making suggestions. Try to have positive rules as these are easier to enforce – see below for a sample set of ground rules and consequences that you might like to use. There will be some that you have to insist on (for example, no smoking in the building) and it's fine for you to do this – try to get the young people to do most of them though.	Flipchart paper and pens

Time	What	With
After	<p>When you've agreed your groundrules, get young people to sign them as this encourages them keeping to them. Make sure a few posters with them on are clearly displayed around the building.</p> <p>Otherwise, get them typed (a young person could do this?) and give each young person two copies – one to keep and one to sign and return to you. This way, you know who you've done this with – again, good if people don't keep to the rules.</p> <p>Repeat this exercise once a year – September is good as this is when more young people usually join.</p>	Flipchart paper and pens



# Somerset Youth and Community Service

## Sample Groundrules

### Sample ground rules and consequences:

- ➔ Respect the building
- ➔ Respect each other
- ➔ Respect the staff and do as they ask you to
- ➔ Respect the equipment
- ➔ If you're not happy with anything that is happening, talk to staff – unless staff know, they can't help!
- ➔ Make new members welcome
- ➔ Let staff know what activities you'd like to do at youth club
- ➔ Be a good role model to other young people
- ➔ Consider our neighbours and behave politely to them
- ➔ Smoke out the back of the building
- ➔ Illegal drugs and alcohol are not allowed
- ➔ If someone is being bullied or upset, let staff know

### If you don't keep to the ground rules, there are consequences! These are:

- If you break a ground rule, you will usually get a warning, but if your behaviour is very bad, you could be sent home immediately and your parents will be told.
- You only get two warnings per evening, then you'll be sent home and your parents will be told.
- If your behaviour is very bad, you can be banned from the youth club.

### Sample banning and re-admittance procedure:

- ➔ A young person is asked to leave and escorted out, being told why they are being banned.
- ➔ They are also told that they need to come to youth club 15 minutes early next week to talk to the worker-in-charge who will decide if they can be re-admitted.
- ➔ Parents are telephoned or written to as soon as possible, explaining the ban asking them to support the youth worker by discussing the behaviour with their son / daughter
- ➔ During this conversation with the Worker-in-Charge (with another member of staff present or near by), the worker to ensures they understand why they were banned and they must make a commitment to behaving differently.
- ➔ *If the worker is not convinced of the young person's sincerity, do not let them back in.*
- ➔ If they are readmitted, it is usual to have a one (or no) warning rule before a further ban, for the first couple of weeks.



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## Setting Groundrules info sheet

### Preparation – Young People

#### → Set clear ground rules

- Ground rules should be few and easily understood
- Ground rules should preferably describe what a young person should do, not what they shouldn't
- Ground rules should be clearly displayed
- Ground rules should be negotiated with the young people if possible

#### → Set clear consequences for breaking ground rules

- Consequences should be simple to understand and logical
- Consequences should be deliverable
- Consequences should also be negotiated with the young people if possible

#### → Ensure consequences are staggered and appropriate

- Consider using a traffic light system (two warnings then being sent home is usual)
- What is the banning procedure? Are young people escorted from the building? By how many members of staff? Who will ring the parents to explain the ban and procedure? Is a ban followed by a letter to parents?
- What happens before young people are readmitted to the unit?

#### → Make sure all young people understand the ground rules and consequences

- Make sure they are clearly displayed on posters around the building
- Go through them with each young person and get them to sign a copy (for you to keep) and have a copy for themselves

### Preparation - Staff

#### → Make sure that all staff understand the ground rules and consequences

- This needs discussion and agreement as assumptions lead to frustration and confusion
- Staff consistency is essential as inconsistency leads to resentment and boundary pushing from young people
- Ensure that processes are understood, as well as outcomes



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## Setting Groundrules info sheet

### Implementation

#### → Is zero-tolerance appropriate?

- It's a good way to implement new rules and change cultures
- Is it more appropriate to use distraction techniques (interesting programme, vigilance for trouble spots) or both?

#### → Staff co-ordination

- A system (usually a log behind the coffee bar) needs to be in place so that staff know who has been warned for what
- For situations that could turn aggressive, a minimum of two staff should speak to young people. Remember the audience factor – a staff member needs to remove a potential 'audience' of young people as soon as possible, or young people need to be taken to a private part of the building.
- If things get out of hand, ringing the police / parents is always an option. Build a relationship with the local police / PCSO and encourage them to drop in for a coffee regularly.

#### → Repeat unacceptable behaviour

- Is it acceptable to ban a young person for unacceptable behaviour
- Other users' needs must be considered and if a young person's behaviour makes the unit unsafe for others, an immediate ban is appropriate
- If a young person repeatedly behaves badly the bans need to be for longer periods. It is not acceptable to ban a young person for ever (unless in exceptional circumstances) but bans of a term are useful to get the point across.

