



Listen. Learn. Discuss.

SKILLS FOR CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Civil discourse is a conversation in which there is a mutual airing of views without rancor. It's an unspoken understanding that everyone is entitled to their own opinions — and to be treated with dignity and respect. It affirms our commitment to free expression with an understanding of the impact our words can have on others, *both positively and negatively*.

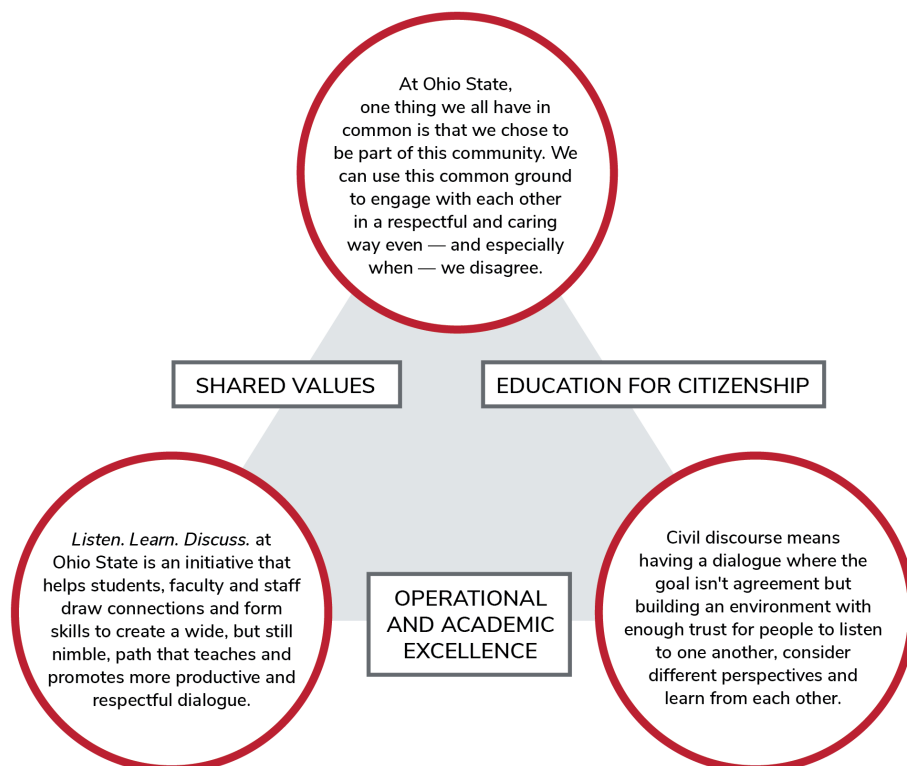
Programming, both inside and outside of the classroom, and opportunities for faculty and staff to learn skills and engage in civil discourse are woven throughout our Buckeye community. It is part of our Shared Values, fulfilling our motto of “Education for Citizenship” and our responsibility to model as a land-grant university.

Listen. Learn. Discuss. is a set of skill-based resources focused on helping members of our community respectfully listen and discuss different points of view, build trust with one another, learn how to clearly articulate their points of view and successfully navigate complex conversations — on and beyond Ohio State campuses.

Included in this toolkit are templates to help you *Listen. Learn. Discuss.* within your units, colleges, groups or classrooms. Please make these your own; tailor the messages to reach your key audiences, highlight unique resources available to your stakeholders, and highlight leaders within your community who model civil discourse skills.

LISTEN. LEARN. DISCUSS. MESSAGE TRIANGLE

The message triangle is designed to help communicate basic and essential information about the initiative and provide links back to the university's foundational principles.



KEY MESSAGE POINTS

- At Ohio State, we share one important thing with each other: We have all chosen to be Buckeyes.
- We can use this common ground to engage with one another in a way that is respectful and caring, even — and especially — when we disagree.
- Civil discourse means having a dialogue where the goal isn't agreement but building an environment with enough trust for people to listen to one another, consider different perspectives and learn from each other.
- *Listen. Learn. Discuss.* at Ohio State is an initiative that helps students, faculty and staff draw connections and form skills to create a wide, but still nimble, path that teaches and promotes more productive and respectful dialogue.
- We expect members of our communities to create an environment where trust and respectful dialogue are the expectation — not the exception. This is one of the ways we live our Shared Values.
- *Listen. Learn. Discuss.* includes a centralized online resource for courses, workshops, and events that give the university community opportunities to navigate difficult conversations, whenever and wherever they take place — in the classroom, on the Oval or in the workplace.

DETAILED MESSAGE POINTS

- At Ohio State, we share one important thing with each other: We have all chosen to be Buckeyes. Being part of the university community means that we respect the differences between us, welcome opportunities to disagree in the spirit of collaboration, and maintain an open mind and compassion for one another. Doing so is fundamental to our mission to educate for citizenship.
- We can leverage this common ground to engage with one another in a way that is respectful and caring, even — and especially when — we disagree.
- Navigating conversations on difficult topics is hard. They often involve emotionally and personally charged subjects, and it can be challenging to separate dissenting opinions from personal attacks. Practicing civil discourse helps us keep conversations productive, even if we still don't agree in the end. It reminds us of the impact our words have on others, both positively and negatively.
- *Listen. Learn. Discuss.* at Ohio State is an initiative that helps students, faculty and staff draw connections and form skills to create a wide, but still nimble, path that teaches and promotes more productive and respectful dialogue.
- Civil discourse requires learning and practice. We will not always get it right. It is something we will need to exercise every day. Ohio State provides the opportunity to learn the necessary skills to respectfully navigate difficult conversations, practice those skills in productive and facilitated environments and gain new perspectives that enable all of us to be more effective thinkers, influential communicators and engaged citizens.

- Ohio State is unique in that educating students in these areas is embedded in general education classes and in coursework in disciplines across the university.
- As a land-grant institution, we have a responsibility to prepare our students for their lives and careers after graduation. Along with the subject matter of their major, this also includes being an active listener, a collaborative problem solver, a productive member of a team and a successful leader. Mastering civil discourse will help graduates build a strong foundation in skills like communications, negotiation, self-management, conflict resolution, persuasion and more. These are the qualities that employers are looking for and will give our graduates a competitive advantage.

MESSAGES FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

At Ohio State, we share one important thing with each other: We have all chosen to be Buckeyes. Being part of the university community means that we respect the differences between us, respectfully disagree in the spirit of trust and learning and maintain an open mind and compassion for one another.

Navigating conversations on difficult topics is hard. These conversations often involve emotionally and personally charged subjects, and it can be challenging to separate dissenting opinions from personal attacks.

Civil discourse means having a dialogue where the goal isn't agreement but building an environment with enough trust for people to listen to one another, consider different perspectives and learn from each other. It could require learning how to productively use our emotions in a discussion and **owning the impact of our words.**

Listen.Learn.Discuss. is specifically designed to help you more easily draw connections and form skills for more productive dialogue.

Listen. Learn. Discuss. is a centralized source for courses, workshops and events that give you **opportunities to learn and practice the necessary skills to navigate difficult conversations.** Whether part of your general education classes, in your coursework or outside the classroom, you can learn and practice civil discourse in safe, respectful and facilitated environments.

As a Buckeye, you'll gain new perspectives that enable you to be a more effective thinker, communicator and influencer. Civil discourse requires learning and practice. We will not always get it right. It is something we will need to exercise every day.

Civil discourse skills will prepare you for navigating challenging conversations and situations — as students and in your careers after graduation. These important skills are what employers are looking for: communications, negotiating, self-management and conflict resolution, persuasion, ethics and more.

2024 CAMPAIGN

Listen. Learn. Discuss. is intended to be a resource for all of Ohio State’s diverse communities — from our first-year undergraduates to our most tenured faculty members. For the 2024-2025 academic year, there will be an intentional focus on the undergraduate community to encourage this community to leverage the resources on campus to learn and practice civil discourse-related skills and to connect this lifelong skill to Ohio State’s general education curriculum.

Focus groups conducted with undergraduate students in spring semester 2024 found that they appreciate civil discourse, recognize its importance in their personal and professional lives and value the opportunities Ohio State provides to learn and practice these skills. They recognize that civil discourse is a balance of skills and emotions that require mutual respect, active listening, and direct and honest conversation. They understand that, at its core, civil discourse is an opportunity to gain new perspectives and learn from others. Some of their reported concerns were unclear expectations and boundaries when engaging others — for example, “Are we both here to learn from each other or do we they want a debate?” — and how we keep our emotions in check when tensions rise and topics become personal. These students are seeing support and resources in the form of facilitated and structured conversations that keep discussions productive and inspiring curiosity.

Listen. Learn. Discuss. was developed with undergraduate feedback on the name and goals. The students wanted a centralized “home” for resources, a name that was simple but reflected action, and more visibility into on-campus programs and conversations they can join.

SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS

Website

- When referring to *Listen. Learn. Discuss.* on your unit or program webpages, please refer to the Quick Guide for how to use the *Listen. Learn. Discuss.* name.
- When linking to the *Listen. Learn. Discuss.* website, use a clear call-to-action with the following URL:
EXAMPLE: For more civil discourse resources, visit: listen-learn-discuss.osu.edu

Social Media

Copy for social media posts can be used verbatim or as inspiration for college, unit or program appropriate social media posts.

Raising awareness:

1. Civil discourse skills will prepare you for navigating challenging conversations and situations — as students and in your careers after graduation. **Find resources now.** (listen-learn-discuss.osu.edu)
2. We don’t always agree. But, as Buckeyes, we can disagree better. **Find resources and opportunities to get involved on campus.** (listen-learn-discuss.osu.edu)

3. Civil discourse is productively using our emotions in a discussion, listening — not just waiting for our turn to talk — and owning the impact of our words. **Learn more.** (listen-learn-discuss.osu.edu)
4. **Listen. Learn. Discuss.** is an initiative that helps centralize information about courses, workshops and events that give you opportunities to learn and practice the necessary skills to navigate difficult conversations. **Learn more.** (listen-learn-discuss.osu.edu)

Promoting a specific event:

5. At Ohio State, we share one important thing with each other: We have all chosen to be Buckeyes. As Buckeyes, we may not always agree, but we can find common ground to help us learn from each other. **Get involved.** (listen-learn-discuss.osu.edu)
6. As a Buckeye, you'll gain new perspectives that enable you to be a more effective thinker, communicator and influencer. **Get started today.** (listen-learn-discuss.osu.edu)
7. **Listen. Learn. Discuss.** is specifically designed to help you more easily draw connections and form skills for more productive dialogue. **Learn more today.** (listen-learn-discuss.osu.edu)

Newsletter and Email updates

At Ohio State, we share one important thing with each other: We have all chosen to be Buckeyes. Being part of the university community means that we respect the differences between us, respectfully disagree in the spirit of trust and learning and maintain an open mind and compassion for one another. How we do that is called civil discourse, and providing opportunities to learn and practice the skills necessary to participate in civil discourse is foundational to our land-grant mission, “Education for Citizenship.”

Over the last several years, Ohio State created in-person and online courses, educational modules, guides, events and programs to help our community learn and practice their civil discourse skills. This year, we are launching *Listen. Learn. Discuss.*, an initiative that centralizes information about courses, workshops and events that give you opportunities to learn and practice the necessary skills to navigate difficult conversations.

Listen. Learn. Discuss. is specifically designed to help you more easily draw connections and form skills for more productive dialogue. Learn more today at listen-learn-discuss.osu.edu.

Suggested Imagery

Suggested imagery for *Listen. Learn. Discuss.* includes a visible connection to the Ohio State community (i.e., signage, a logo, a landmark, etc.) and reinforces modeling active dialogue in casual, classroom and professional settings.

Examples of suggested images from the university's digital asset management (DAM) include:



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