

## **Inclusive Astronomy Ground Rules**

The astronomical community vitally needs to challenge racism, sexism, heterosexism, cissexism, and ableism in our field. These conversations are difficult (and often uncomfortable), but are necessary to break down barriers of access and transform astronomy's culture to become actively inclusive. The following are an evolving set of best practices for having these difficult conversations. Any implementation of these practices must take into account the significant power differences that often exist between those who are white, cisgender, straight, able-bodied, neurotypical, senior, and/or male and those who are not. It is especially important for those who are on the empowered end of these axes of identity to actively put these recommendations into practice.

### **Specific recommendations:**

1. Reduce the negative impact of power imbalances in a given situation. Speak up when these dynamics are being misused and amplify the voices of those who are less empowered. Recognize that these power imbalances are amplified for people with intersectional identities. Facilitate balanced conversations. Agree before meetings and gatherings to amplify less pronounced voices, to make it safer for those who may not be actively contributing.
2. Don't dominate conversations. Be aware of when you might be participating disproportionately, and pull back so that others may contribute.
3. Speak to your own experience. Use "I" or "we" statements to help avoid generalizations. Do not assume that you understand oppression(s) better than people that have directly experienced and described it themselves. Acknowledge your privilege(s) and how that might impact your perspective on a given matter.
4. Use "both/and" rather than "either/or" thinking. When confronting complex issues, "either/or" thinking often oversimplifies situations and makes it more difficult to resolve conflicts. "Both/and" thinking often allows us to come up with more options and to recognize the multifaceted nature of our experiences.
5. Use inclusive language. Take the time to learn from potentially impacted communities which commonly used expressions are the source of microaggressions. Replace them with less exclusive alternatives.
6. Recognize that intent does not equal impact. Sometimes in conversations, we can inadvertently say hurtful things despite our good intentions. To foster mutual respect among participants, it is imperative that instead of appealing only to our initial intent, we acknowledge the potentially harmful impact on others.
7. Learn strategies to support survivors of abusive behaviors such as harassment or bullying. Acknowledge the validity of a person's anger, fear, frustration, resentment, or other feelings about being a recipient of any combination of racism, sexism, cissexism, heterosexism, ableism, or other forms of oppression. Allow space for unexpected responses because individuals process their emotions differently. It is not always necessary to respond when someone shares their feelings. Do not tell the survivor what to do, but offer suggestions if they would like them. Do not question the validity of the survivor's claims or excuse the actions of the perpetrator.

8. Lean into discomfort. Discussions about privilege and discrimination often require us to examine issues that we do not want to talk about. However, we often make the most progress by contending with this discomfort so that we are able to take responsibility for our privileges and complicities, and effect positive change. At the same time, we must prioritize the safety of those of us with marginalized identities.

9. Respond constructively when you are “called out.” Calling someone out makes space for those of us who have been harmed by language or behaviors to directly (and publicly) confront the offender. Recognize that calling someone else out is extremely difficult and risky, especially when there are power imbalances. Acknowledge the harm that was caused, state actions you will take to prevent causing similar harm in the future, and thank them for taking the time and effort to call you out.