

CONVENE. EDUCATE. ENGAGE.

American Public Square at Jewell encourages individuals and communities to engage in conversations about the complex topics we all face as members of a rapidly changing global society. Healthcare, education, national security, technology, race and identity—these topics and many others can be deeply complex and drive countless perspectives based on an individual's lived experience.

This document offers a guide for groups interested in engaging in fact-based, civil discourse—even where considerable disagreement or widely varying perspectives may exist.

PREPARE

IF YOU ARE HOSTING

Commit to hosting a conversation with friends, family, neighbors, colleagues, and others. There are no rules about who can participate, there are only rules about HOW to participate.

Extend your network and challenge yourself to invite someone who likely brings a different or unique perspective to the conversation.

IF YOU ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE

Explore APS' Civility Tools to understand the recommended approach to conversations that tackle tricky subjects.

If you know the topics being discussed, do some research ahead of time. Use a variety of resources, local to national—including ones you wouldn't normally consider reading. Be sure to seek out opposing perspectives.

ENGAGE

AS A GROUP, FIRST:

1. Review APS' Civility Tools.
2. Identify someone in the group to be a fact checker.
3. Ensure a civility bell is on hand (any chime or alarm can work!)

NEXT

Work together to decide your discussion topics. Get creative! Vote. Draw from a hat. Let each person pick one question. A list of sample questions, along with a link to more ideas is provided below.

SAMPLE DISCUSSION PROMPTS:

- How do you feel about cancel culture?
- Where should we draw the line between community health and safety, and individual liberty and privacy?
- Do Smart devices worry you?
- Is your generation doing its part to strengthen our Democracy?
- Is it ethical to create genetically edited humans?

For more tricky question ideas, visit NY Times' ["300 Questions and Images to Inspire Argument Writing"](#)

When you're ready, start talking! The conversation can be as formal or as casual as you want. The host, or a designee, should facilitate to ensure everyone in the group is offered a chance to share their perspectives.

If heightened emotions occur, use your Civility Tools. Also challenge each other to consider whether participants are debating or deliberating.

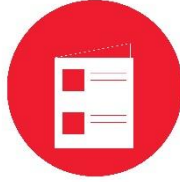
When the conversation is ending, offer each person an opportunity to answer, "So what? Now what?" (see Civility Tools for additional detail).

APS CIVILITY TOOLS



MODERATED DISCUSSIONS

APS discussions are moderated by an objective facilitator who ensures each participant is given due time to represent their position. Questions are tough, but fair, and allow free flow of conversation.



FACT SHEETS

APS compiles a fact sheet in advance of each discussion. This is reviewed beforehand by the participants and distributed to the audience, which ensures the discussion begins from a “common well” of information.



CIVILITY BELLS

These are made available for the audience to ring when the conversation wades into false, overly dramatic, or hyper-emotional territory. When a bell rings, the speaker must stop talking.



FACT-CHECKERS

APS events are moderated by an objective facilitator who ensures each panelist is given due time to represent their position. Questions are tough, but fair, and allow free flow of conversation.



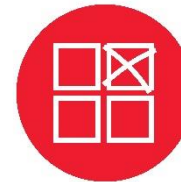
ROVING REPORTERS

A Roving Reporter is engaged during the conversation to gather and curate questions. This role can be optional for smaller group discussions.



NO APPLAUSE

APS has a rule that no applause is allowed during a discussion to ensure perspectives are not swayed one way or another in the midst of a discussion.



SO WHAT, NOW WHAT?

At the end of each discussion, participants are given the opportunity to make closing statements in the form of answers to these questions. This allows everyone to restate their positions in a way that is actionable.

REFLECT

At the end of your discussion, take time to reflect on what you heard and what you learned. Did your perspective change? Was any common ground discovered? What might you do differently going forward?

Taking action is an important part of this exercise and it can take many different forms.

- Perhaps you commit to having more of these conversations in the future.
- Consider hosting one of your own APS-style discussions.
- Challenge yourself to set aside think-time where you focus on reading and learning more about a given topic or the diverse perspectives of a given topic.
- Think about friends or family who you usually disagree with and consider how you might engage with them differently going forward.
- Check your newsfeed! Have you inadvertently curated content that supports your existing views? Are there changes you could make to ensure you’re getting exposed to more fact-based, comprehensive content?
- Engage in the political process—contact your representatives to share your views, volunteer to be a poll worker on Election Day, research your ballots and vote in every election.