One of the hallmarks of a democracy is its citizens’ willingness to express, defend, and perhaps reexamine their own opinions, while being respectful of the views of others. If you plan on leading a Dialogue in a high school classroom, here are some ground rules for ensuring a civil conversation:

• Show respect for the views expressed by others, even if you strongly disagree.
• Be brief in your comments so that all who wish to speak have a chance to express their views.
• Direct your comments to the group as a whole, rather than to any one individual.
• Don’t let disagreements or conflicting views become personal.
• Name-calling and shouting are not acceptable ways of conversing with others.
• Let others express their views without interruption. Your Dialogue leader will try to give everyone a chance to speak or respond to someone else’s comments.
• Remember that a frank exchange of views can be fruitful as long as you observe the rules of civil conversation.

Note to Dialogue Leaders: Before beginning your Dialogue, distribute these ground rules and review them with the students.