



Conversation Guide: Civic Renewal

Living Room Conversations offers a simple, sociable and structured way to practice communicating across differences while building understanding and relationships. Typically, 4-7 people meet in person or by video call for about 90 minutes to listen to and be heard by others on one of our nearly 100 [topics](#). Rather than debating or convincing others, we take turns talking to share and learn, and be curious. No preparation is required, though background links with balanced views are available on some topic pages online. *Anyone can host using these italicized instructions. Hosts also participate.*

Introductions: Why We're Here (~10 minutes)

Each participant has 1 minute to introduce themselves.

- Share your name, where you live, what drew you here, and if this is your first conversation.

Conversation Agreements: How We'll Engage (~5 minutes)

These will set the tone of our conversation; participants may volunteer to take turns reading them aloud.

- **Be curious and listen to understand.** Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking. You might enjoy exploring how others' experiences have shaped their values and perspectives.
- **Show respect and suspend judgment.** People tend to judge one another. Setting judgement aside opens you up to learning from others and makes them feel respected and appreciated. Try to truly listen, without interruption or crosstalk.
- **Note any common ground as well as any differences.** Look for areas of agreement or shared values that may arise and take an interest in the differing beliefs and opinions of others.
- **Be authentic and welcome that from others.** Share what's important to you. Speak from your experience. Be considerate of others who are doing the same.
- **Be purposeful and to the point.** Do your best to keep your comments concise and relevant to the question you are answering. Be conscious of sharing airtime with other participants.
- **Own and guide the conversation.** Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and the conversation as a whole. Be proactive in getting yourself and others back on track if needed. Use an agreed upon signal like the "time out" sign if you feel the agreements are not being honored.

Question Rounds: What We'll Talk About

Optional: a participant can keep track of time and gently let people know when their time has elapsed.

Round One: Getting to Know Each Other (~10 min)

Each participant can take 1-2 minutes to answer one of these questions:

- What are your hopes and concerns for your family, community and/or the country?
- What would your best friend say about who you are?
- What sense of purpose / mission / duty guides you in your life?



Round Two: Exploring the Topic -- Civic Renewal (~40 min)

One participant can volunteer to read this paragraph.

Civic life encompasses the infinite ways that people may connect and contribute to their community and society: from voting in an election or organizing a neighborhood block-party, to standing up for a just cause or supporting arts in our parks. For some time, however, many facets of civic life have been in decline. This conversation is an opportunity to reimagine our civic life. We have a chance now to embrace our interdependence and to create just and productive communities. Success depends on our ability to create spaces that foster relationships of belonging, ensuring everyone has the opportunity and motivation to contribute to a thriving civic life.

Take ~2 minutes each to answer a question below without interruption or crosstalk. After everyone has answered, the group may take a few minutes for clarifying or follow up questions/responses. Continue exploring additional questions as time allows.

- When is a time that you felt especially engaged in civic life in your community? What did that look like for you?
- Describe a time that you felt excluded from your community's civic life. How has that impacted you?
- How do we create a civic life where everyone has the opportunity to contribute and experience a sense of belonging?

Round Three: Reflecting on the Conversation (~15 min)

Take 2 minutes to answer one of the following questions:

- Where could your community start in order to bridge what divides it?
- What was most meaningful / valuable to you in this Living Room Conversation?
- What learning, new understanding or common ground was found on the topic?
- How has this conversation changed your perception of anyone in this group, including yourself?

Closing (~5 min)

- *Give us feedback!* Use livingroomconversations.org/feedback-form/ or QR code
- *Donate!* Make more of these possible; give at livingroomconversations.org/donate/
- *Join or host more conversations!* With a) this group by exchanging your emails; b) others in person and/or by video call online. Get more involved or learn how to host at livingroomconversations.org/get-involved/
- Check out ideas, tools, and stories about ways to enhance civic life on Thriving.US or sign up [here](#).



Thank you!