

CONDUCT

A Code of Conduct is required to promote safe and healthy spaces for everyone!

A well-balanced and vetted policy:

- Defines social expectations for all participants e.g. attendees, guests, staff, hosts, vendors, sponsors, organizers, and other stakeholders
- Forbids all forms of harassment, abuse, and hate
- Protects minority and vulnerable participants
- Empowers action against unwanted or malicious behavior
- Decreases administration overhead when unwanted behavior occurs
- Reduces risk and liability for staff and organizers
- Proactively prevents harm from occurring

Defining Expectations

Games industry events can and should do better to protect participants and encourage thriving environments. While you can't account for every edge case, being proactive now is the best course of action.

Questions to consider:

- What behavior is allowed or desired? What kind of atmosphere are you trying to promote or create?
- What behavior is unwanted or prohibited? What do harassment, abuse, and hate look like? How will you address risky but not banned behavior?
- How might your curatorial selection, event activities, or chosen venue affect participant behavior? How can you dissuade any undesired actions?
- Will alcohol or legal substances be involved? How are those who partake expected to behave? How will you promote others' safety and comfort? How will illegal substances be dealt with?
- Does your event allow minors? How does that change the expectations of attendees and guardians? Are there local laws you must follow?
- How might you empower minority or vulnerable participants? Who will you consult for impartial feedback on your policies and incident resolution?
- How will these policies be enforced? If unwanted behavior occurs, how will it be escalated? How can a participant report the issue? How will you receive and handle anonymous reports? Which external parties will investigate if the report involves a co-organizer, or even yourself?

Codifying Your Policies

1. Research

It's okay to model your policies after other organizations that have a positive track record. This is a perpetual learning experience for even seasoned event organizers!

2. Draft

Here's what the structure of your document can look like.

- Introduction: State the document's Purpose e.g. to create a safe environment.
- Participants: Explain that these rules apply to everyone, and that ignorance does not mean exemption.
- Expectations: Tophline what is forbidden with definitions and examples. Use phrases like "not limited to" and "including" to broaden interpretation.
- Enforcement: Explain who is authorized to escalate matters and eject non-compliant participants.
- Reporting: Provide directions on reporting an incident and what is expected of the affected parties.
- Conclusion: Wrap with a positive, upbeat message thanking participants for their compliance.

3. Edit

- Value brevity but not at the expense of transparency.
- Swap legal jargon with plain-speak for improved reading comprehension.
- Eliminate any jokes, sarcasm, and marketing language to show you mean business.
- Consult three unbiased external parties for feedback.
- Run this by your lawyer, if you have one.

4. Adopt

- Publish your policy and publicly announce it.
- Designate 1-3 enforcers to investigate incidents, authorize ejections, speak with local authorities, and enact positive change.
- Educate and empower your staff. It's their responsibility to set the tone, discourage unwanted behavior, and escalate incidents to the appropriate channels.
- Update as necessary, and revisit once per year.

Disseminating the Message

- Create a Conduct Page on your website and link it in the footer.
- Mention in every public invitation.
- Display signage at your event reminding folks that they're subject to these policies. Add a QR code that will take them to your Conduct Page.
- Ensure your communications and graphic assets support the values codified in your policy.

Further Education

Creating safe event spaces is a wide-reaching and ever-evolving art. Consult these resources or reach out to other organizers for a deeper perspective.

- https://geekfeminism.wikia.org/wiki/Conference_anti-harassment
- <https://indieweb.org/code-of-conduct-examples>
- https://projectinclude.org/writing_cocs
- <https://gameartsinternational.network/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/GAIACoC.pdf>

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From:

<https://gameartsinternational.network/gameartscuratorskit/> - **Game Arts Curators Kit**

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Last update: **2021/09/05 14:36**

