

Text, Talk, Civility Matters Teacher Resource Guide

About Text, Talk, Civility Matters

The [National Institute for Civil Discourse](#) created Text, Talk, Civility Matters to get people talking about political incivility in the current election season.

Text, Talk, Civility Matters uses text messaging to facilitate a face-to-face conversation on civility in our everyday lives and our politics. Participants gather in small groups (3-4 people) with one cell phone per group. They text CIVILITY to the number 89800 to receive a series of text messages that guides their group through a conversation on civility: why it matters in our lives, how we can create more of it, and how it can be strengthened in our politics. The text messages include videos, polling questions and discussion questions.

About This Guide

This guide is designed to help your students get the most from their Text, Talk, Civility Matters experience. This exercise was created in concert with the Ohio Center for Law-Related Education's [Civility in Elections – Three Lesson Plan Series](#). The lesson plans should be completed prior to engaging students in the text-based platform.

Discussion Guide

1. Opening Activity 5 minutes

Introduction

Introduce Text, Talk, Civility Matters 5 minutes

- The [National Institute for Civil Discourse](#) created Text, Talk, Civility Matters to get people talking about civility in our everyday lives and in our politics.
- Text, Talk, Civility Matters uses text messaging to facilitate a face-to-face conversation on civility in our everyday lives and our politics. Participants gather in small groups (3-4 people) with one cell phone per group. They text CIVILITY to the number 89800 to receive a series of text messages that guides their group through a conversation on civility: why it matters in our lives, how we can create more of it, and how it can be strengthened in our politics. The text messages include videos, polling questions and discussion questions.

2. Text, Talk, Civility Matters 40 minutes

Provide instructions & assistance to students

- Instructions

- **Small Groups Matter.** Invite students to divide into groups of 3-4 people. Each group should have one cell phone to start. Toward the end of the text-based conversation, each person will need to use their own phone to answer individual questions, so they should keep their phones nearby.
 - **Make Sure Everyone Understands the KEYWORDS.** Let students know that they will receive a series of text messages to help them talk about civility. The script advances to the next question when you send a text that begins with the keyword. Keywords are indicated in CAPS at the end of each message. It works most smoothly if participants type the keyword and then any message they want to add all in one text. Most problems people report with the script are actually due to missing or incorrect keywords.
 - **Talk First, then Text.** For questions that ask groups to text in their responses, it works best if participants discuss each question as a group and then one person types a short summary.
 - **Getting Started.** When everyone is ready, invite them to text "CIVILITY" to 89800, just as if 89800 were their friend's number and "CIVILITY" were "what's up?"
- **Timekeeping**
 - You may also want to text "CIVILITY" to 89800 and follow the prompts, letting the group know when it is time to move from one question to the next.

3. Closing Activity minutes

10

Lead a debrief of Text, Talk, Civility Matters

- Once everyone is done with Text, Talk, Civility Matters invite the group to discuss a few closing questions.
 - What was it like to participate in Text, Talk, Civility Matters?
 - Did you hear anything surprising?
 - Did you learn something new?
 - In the coming days, is there anything you would like to do to follow-up on this conversation?
 - Are there any actions you want to take as a group to follow up on this conversation?

Troubleshooting

- Some students may have short codes blocked on their phones. If this is the case, they will receive an error message. For these students, have them text CIVILITY to 778-588-1995.
- The keywords are NOT case sensitive.
- It sometimes takes a few seconds for a text to come through, just as it does when texting a friend.
- If students don't get the next question, have them type the keyword again and be sure it is the first word in your text.
- If students get a message that isn't about civility, they typed the wrong keyword at the beginning of your message. Have them go back to the last text that was on topic, and type the keyword given there again.



- Anytime the keyword is typed, the script will send you the next question. If it advances before the group has typed all they want to say, don't worry. Just have them type the message they want to send and then the keyword again and they'll be back on track.
- Most of Text, Talk, Civility Matters works fine on any phone, but there are few links that only work on smart phones.
- There is no limit to how long a message you can send. A phone may only show 160 characters, but Text, Talk, Civility Matters will see your whole message.
- Standard text rates apply, so groups should use someone's phone who has a high or unlimited text limit.

We'd love to hear your group's experience with Text, Talk, Civility Matters! Please send comments to rgoodrich@email.arizona.edu.