

# Working Agreements:

## A Foundational Tool for Managers

Working agreements have quickly become an essential part of modern, successful teams. You may have heard the term thrown around, especially as new teams form, but is it worth discussing with your own employees?

Let's start with the definition: Working agreements are norms or guidelines created by a team to enhance their interactions for better performance and create a common language. Practically, these agreements set group expectations, define ways to collaborate, and establish the kind of atmosphere required for empathetic, psychologically safe work.

Working agreements are often used in the context of Agile but can be used by any team. As a manager, using the working agreement process can help your team become equipped with a heightened awareness of interaction between individuals.

## Why use working agreements?

It's easy to jump into projects with new teams, but working agreements create the kind of solid foundation required for excellent collaboration, especially between individuals from different backgrounds, assumptions, and experiences.

Working agreements can be helpful for managers to use with their teams because they:

- Empower shared responsibility across all team members
- Enable proactive planning for team success
- Encourage techniques and guidelines for impactful collaboration
- Promote desired behaviors and kindly correct undesired behaviors
- Increase awareness of individual behaviors and communication styles within a team

# How do I get started?

To begin, set the context of working agreements with your team. As a group, you can use (physical or digital) whiteboards, sticky notes, worksheets, or flipcharts.

There are a few major questions that you'll want to cover together:

- Why does this team exist? Discuss the value you provide as a team and your goals.
- What's in it for each team member? Consider individual motivations from every team member.
- What working agreements should we set? To be successful, what behaviors should the team encourage or discourage, what practices will maintain accountability, and when should agreements be revisited? What tools can the team use to stick to the agreements?

In order to help your team get started even quicker, try our template on the last page!

## Getting Started

### Tips and resources

As with any framework, it's important to adapt it to your own needs and culture. As you introduce working agreements to your team, consider the most appropriate approach.

At the onset, encourage discussion within the team, and empower anyone to propose, agree, and reject any agreement. Note that you can't make people change their feelings, but you can focus on (enforceable) behaviors.

To keep discussion on track, use facilitation techniques like fist of five to reach consensus on all working agreements.

# Aim for simplicity and clarity

Check in often, and remember that agreements can always be renegotiated, especially when new members join or situations change. Every new team has a distinct dynamic, with individuals that prefer a certain mixture of behaviors and practices. Respect your uniqueness!

Finally, reflect and iterate on the effectiveness of your working agreements to compound your team's learnings.

For further reading and examples of working agreements, we recommend:

- [Agile Scrum Working Agreements](#)
- [How Working Agreements Help Scrum Teams](#)
- [4 Straight-Forward Team Building Principles You Can Put Into Action Now](#)

**Now onto the template!**

# Working Agreement for

Why does this team exist?

What's in it for each team member?

# What working agreements should we set?

Behaviors	Practices
<p>Encouraged:</p>          <p>Discouraged:</p>	<p>Tools:</p>          <p>Processes:</p>          <p>Team Roles:</p>

## Other team notes