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Tactic #18 - Clarifying the
Ground Rules

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Tactic #18 - Clarifying the Ground Rules

Summary: Creating rules to help enable a win-win negotiation.

Although creating ground rules for conducting a negotiation is not necessary with the majority of counterparts, it may sometimes be in your best interest to do so.

Example

At a negotiation between the union and management team of a Fortune 100 company, the union president and 25 of his closest friends showed up to negotiate. Parts of the negotiation resembled the scene in the famous movie Animal House, when the student body held a trial to formally put the naughty fraternity on probation. There were so many sidebar conversations and comments made by people not leading the negotiation, it was difficult to tell who was really in charge of the union's team. Just as management started to make progress, someone on the union team would disagree. In this case, the first issue that should have been negotiated was how many players each team could have in the room at one time and who would be allowed to speak on behalf of each team.

Counter

Keep in mind, ground rules are negotiable. In a negotiation, both sides have to go in with high aspirations in order to create a win-win outcome. In the case above, the union would not have to agree to the number of people the management team proposed. Ground rules, when set properly, should help both counterparts ensure success.

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This tactic is one of 101 strategies and tactics featured in [The Only Negotiating Guide You'll Ever Need](#), by Peter Stark and Jane Flaherty.



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