

Guidance for a Constructive Culture of Exchange

To help ensure a welcoming and respectful environment, the department has adopted guidance from [M.I.T.](#) and the AEA report “[Best Practices for Economists: Building a More Diverse, Inclusive, and Productive Profession](#)” for responsible behavior in seminars. The following rules of engagement are to increase the quality of intellectual exchange among the Department of Economics members while helping to promote a supportive and inclusive seminar culture.

1. **Allow presenters time at the beginning to frame their talk without interruption.** A “10 minute rule” has been successfully implemented in seminars at M.I.T., allowing only brief clarifying questions during this initial period. And as that leaves 80 more minutes, please don’t feel you must get all your questions in at minute 11!
2. **Share the floor.** Please remember seminar time is a scarce resource. If you haven’t had a chance to read the paper, please try to determine whether the paper addresses your question before you ask it. If you have already asked several questions, you might consider allowing a bit of time and space to see if others wish to contribute. And please listen carefully to the questions others ask—don’t become the person who obliviously repeats the question asked 10 minutes earlier!
3. **Raise your hand to indicate that you wish to ask a question or contribute to the discussion.** This gives the presenter agency to mediate the discussion by calling on audience members, and avoids interrupting the presenter mid-thought, a courtesy that may be especially appreciated in job talks. If the presenter doesn’t see someone’s hand, the organizer can help by pointing that out. A question or comment often leads naturally to some back and forth exchange with the speaker. But if you continue to be dissatisfied with a response, please don’t hold the talk hostage. Instead, allow the presenter to move on, and follow up offline. Please make every effort not to interrupt or talk over the presenter or another participant.
4. **Avoid sidebar conversations with other participants.** Keep whispers to no more than a short (clarifying) question or response. Anything more should be deferred or asked publicly; please raise your hand and share your question or concern for the benefit of all. Even quiet sidebar conversations between participants rarely are as unobtrusive as intended, and distract the speaker and others in the audience.
5. **Strive for fair and equal treatment.** Many studies suggest that women are likely to be interrupted more often than are men in settings like this. The same may be true for softer-spoken participants regardless of gender. Resist contributing to that disparity!
6. **Organizers:** Please be prepared to intervene in real time if necessary to call attention to someone whose raised hand has been overlooked, to return the floor to the presenter, or to remind participants of our norms of courtesy and respect.

Additional Yale conduct policies can be found on the [Office of the Provost website](#), and the [Yale Graduate School of Arts and Sciences website](#).

