



# Consensus Decision-Making Process & Security Culture Guidelines

## Consensus Process

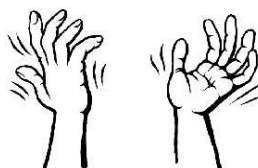
Consensus is a decision-making process that is intended to include all persons making the decision. Instead of voting for an item and having the majority of the group getting their way, the group is committed to finding solutions that everyone can live with. This way, everyone's opinions, ideas and reservations are considered. In facilitated meetings, the facilitator(s) should help the conversations along by following this process:

1. As a group, define the problem or decision needing to be made. This should be done in a way that separates the problems and questions from personalities.
2. Brainstorm possible solutions through a conversation directed by the facilitation process. This conversation should allow for questions and clarification of the situation. Make sure everybody has a chance to contribute.
3. Once a solution has been articulated, state a proposal so everybody is clear on the decision to be evaluated.
4. Ask if anyone has any clarifying questions or concerns. Facilitate the conversation so that their questions are answered and their concerns discussed. If necessary, modify the proposal and restate it.
5. Ask if there are any blocks. A block means that someone feels strongly that the group would be making a grave error by consensing on the proposal. If someone blocks the proposal, they should speak to their concerns. The facilitator(s) should then check with the group to see if the decision-making process should be tabled or started over.
6. Ask if there are any stand asides. A stand aside means that someone is not entirely comfortable with the decision or is ambivalent about it, but does not want to stop the decision from being made. If someone stands aside, they can speak to their reasons for doing so. The facilitator(s) should check with the group to see if friendly amendments should be made or if they should check for consensus.
7. Ask if there is consensus on the proposal. It's important that the consensus be strong (i.e., not an inordinate number of stand asides).

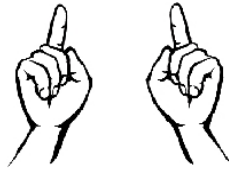
## Consensus Process Hand Signals

**Stacking:** Raise your hand if you want to speak, and the facilitator will point to you and put you on the "stack" of speakers in order behind anyone else who raised their hand before you.

**Showing agreement:** To show agreement with a statement without interrupting the speaker with a verbal agreement, you can twinkle (sometimes called using metal fingers) by wiggling your fingers.



**Direct response:** When someone asks a question that you know the answer to, you can move your hands back and forth with your index fingers pointed out. Directly responding jumps stack, so it should only be used to answer questions people ask. If you simply disagree with a statement, raise your hand to get on stack.



**Technical point:** Put your hands in a “T” shape to correct a statement or fact (such as a specific date).



**Point of process:** Put your fingers in a triangle gesture to bring attention to a procedural issue that needs to be addressed (e.g., the conversation has gone off topic, vibe check, time check).



While checking for consensus, use the following hand signals:

- Thumb up/Twinkling: Agree
- Thumb down: Disagree/block
- Thumb to the side: Stand aside

## Security Culture Guidelines

As certain movements become more effective, government surveillance and harassment will increase; for example, the RNC Welcoming Committee had been infiltrated and monitored by several government agencies for more than a year before the RNC began. The US government has a history of targeting militant and pacifist groups alike. Security Culture is a set of practices that allows groups of people to know and assert their rights.

### What not to say:

- ➔ Your or someone else's PAST or PRESENT involvement in an underground group or illegal actions (this could include certain types of civil disobedience).
- ➔ Your FUTURE desire/plans to participate in such groups and illegal activities, or advocacy of such actions.
- ➔ Rumors or speculation about SPECIFIC INDIVIDUALS' involvement in certain illegal actions or groups.

It is perfectly fine to speak about direct action in *general terms*; it is legal and secure to speak out in support of all forms of resistance. *The danger lies in linking individual activists with specific actions or groups.*

Since our specific movement has been under intense surveillance, we should never allow a breach of security to occur without acting to correct it. If an acquaintance of yours is spreading security-compromising gossip, it is your responsibility to explain to them why that sort of speech jeopardizes the security of particular individuals, and the group as a whole, and is thus inappropriate within our movement.

You should strive to educate this person in a way that does not affect their pride or come off as “holier-than-thou.” If possible, this should be done in private, so that the person doesn't feel humiliated by a public reprimand. Ideally, it should occur soon after the mistake, to increase its effectiveness.