



# The Boundaries Game

## Introduction

Quakers have many unwritten and often unspoken 'rules'. When, for example, do we explain to people that speaking more than once in meeting is not normally acceptable? Unwritten rules can be powerful.

These boundaries of expected behaviour help worshippers to feel secure in the Quaker community, and are important in maintaining the identity of our meetings. Those with responsibility for eldership in particular and also for oversight, clerkship and premises, are expected to support or to enforce these rules. However, in discussions concerning eldership and oversight anxiety is often expressed about the process of 'eldering'.

The *Boundaries* game was originally developed to encourage Friends and others committed to Quakerism to discuss and explore our unwritten and unspoken rules, to make these explicit – and perhaps to change them. It was designed to give support to Friends appointed to take responsibility for eldership and oversight. It enables a group to consider some of the issues which may need addressing, issues where traditionally 'eldering' may have been seen as appropriate.

Those with responsibility for eldership and oversight could share their perceptions of where the boundaries they are expected to maintain actually lie, and where they should be shifted. Everyone in the meeting could be drawn into a process through which these limits are acknowledged and considered by the whole community.

The game was originally sold. It has now been made available to download free of charge. Quaker Life offers this game for your enlightenment, information and pleasure.

Have fun together!

## Preparation

One copy of the game contains enough material for one group of up to 6 individuals or 4 pairs to take part. As well as this information on how to play, there are statement cards in a PDF document available at [www.quaker.org.uk/boundaries](http://www.quaker.org.uk/boundaries) – these are best printed onto card. For extra strength you could print the sheets onto white paper and then glue them to thick card. You may want to laminate them to make them re-usable and so you can write on them with dry-wipe pens. There are 16 cards per sheet, which will need to be cut out once printed onto card.

### For each group to play you will need:

- 1 table or other space large enough for A1 sheet of paper (e.g. flipchart paper)
- 1 set of cards (including a few blank cards)
- A large sheet of paper (A1 approximately) with a large oval drawn on it. Write 'acceptable' within the oval, and 'unacceptable' outside the oval. Alternatively, make a large loop of cord, and place the two cards: 'acceptable' inside the boundary, and 'unacceptable' outside.
- Flipchart or permanent pens, broad tip

- Whiteboard or dry-wipe pens (not permanent), narrow tip
- 1 instruction sheet.

## Playing time

You will need half an hour as a group. Additional time may be needed:

- to organise players into groups
- to compare decisions from several groups
- for reflection on what has been learnt, and what comes next
- for reflection on how eldership and oversight might be supported in your meeting

## Adaptations

### Visual impairment, reading difficulties

The game as presented involves reading short statements. Participants in pairs can read the cards out loud to the other, both working together at each stage. The cards can be enlarged if required. Particular coloured backgrounds help with some reading difficulties, the participant can guide you. Different levels of lighting may be needed. On flipcharts, use new, thick pens, write clearly with large, lower-case letters (check which colour is most visible), and read out loud what you write.

### Hearing difficulties

The game is fun and can get noisy! A quiet room or area could be offered. Paper and felt-tip pens should be available for those who write their responses. In plenary sessions, facilitators should stand in good light facing the group, and repeat clearly any contributions from the floor. Ask for and use any assistive technology (loop or infra-red systems, microphones) at your venue.

### Explore your own concerns

The pack contains a sheet which you can use to print and cut out your own cards. A few blank cards should be available each time the game is used to enable participants to add their own concerns. If you have laminated your cards, you can also use dry-wipe or whiteboard pens, so you can re-use the blank cards. The blank cards could also be used (by the organisers) to develop a set of statements so that an issue of particular concern to their meeting could be addressed.

If you have any feedback on your use of the game or wish to comment upon it, please contact the Quaker Life Support for Meetings officer, Michael S Booth in Quaker Life at [michaelsb@quaker.org.uk](mailto:michaelsb@quaker.org.uk) or by phone on 020 7663 1023 or write to Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ.



# How to play Boundaries

## Please read before starting

1. Each group needs a set of paper cards and a large piece of paper with a central area marked 'acceptable' and an outer area marked 'unacceptable'. Alternatively, place the card marked 'acceptable' inside a large loop of cord, and a card marked 'unacceptable' outside this boundary.
2. The group sits around their large piece of paper and divides the cards evenly (without reading them) between all the group members.
3. Working independently and in silence, members of the group read the statements on their own cards and place them, face up, on the large piece of paper to indicate the statement as 'acceptable' or 'unacceptable' in meeting.

NOTE: Blank cards are included in this pack, so that participants may add their own issues at any stage of the game

4. When all the statements have been placed, all members of the group look at them without comment, and still in silence, turn over any statements which they would have placed differently.
5. As a group they now discuss those statements which have been turned over (the cards on which all are agreed can be tidied away). Agreement may or may not be reached as to where each should be placed!
6. Consider how the experience you have just shared could support eldership and oversight in your meeting. Are the boundaries to be maintained clearer? Are you all aware of difficult areas and areas where opinions differ? What might change in your meeting?