

# Rules for Fighting Fair

By Dr. Peter Robbins & Dr. Kevin Downing

*“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”*

– 1 Thessalonians 5:11

*“A man finds joy in giving an apt reply--and how good is a timely word!” - Proverbs 15:23*

*“If you refuse criticism you will end in poverty and disgrace; if you accept criticism you are on the road to fame.” - Proverbs. 13:18*

*“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” - Colossians 3:13*

*“A man who refuses to admit his mistakes can never be successful. But if he confesses and forsakes them, he gets another chance.” - Proverbs. 28:13*

## Rules for Fighting Fair

Fighting = “Discussing” and/or “Talking”

1. Fights should be held in order to **reach a solution**, not to gain a victory.
2. You cannot refuse a fight. If something is important enough to one member, it is worth fighting about.
3. You may state a gripe/complaint about **behavior**, not about **character**.
4. The basic outline of a fight should be:
  - a. State your gripe [put it on an 8 ½ x 11 paper, on the table to keep you focused]
  - b. Other party repeats what was said to confirm understanding.
  - c. Suggest and discuss alternative solutions.
  - d. Select best solution that moves you to a win/win.
5. Fight about **one thing at a time**.

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6. **Don't make speeches.** State your gripe and then let your partner respond.
7. If your partner makes a point, you must respond to it before you can go on to a new one. **Respond to the point.**
8. State your gripe in the form of a **positive request**, not a demand.
9. If the fight is a question of **opinion**, then you must recognize it as such and reach a compromise as your solution.
10. If the fight is a question of **fact**, then it is your duty to get and present the facts.
11. **Don't play archaeologist.** Fight about your present complaint, and don't dig things out of the past.
12. **Don't mind read.** It is impossible to know exactly what someone is thinking, so ask instead. Even if your 70% correct, the other 30% that is incorrect will ruin your relationship.
13. **Don't play psychologist.** Don't try to tell others what they are thinking, feeling or why they do things. **Do not assume anything.**
14. **No name calling.**
15. No emotional blackmail. **No "below the belt" comments.**
16. Go back to rule # 1 and never forget it. Fights should be held in order to **reach a solution, not to gain a victory.** Go for the win/win!

*"My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."*

- James 1:19

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