

Everything Is Not LEGAL in Fandom An Implementation Guide for the BSFS Code of Conduct

This document does not cover all possible situations.

We are not clairvoyant and cannot predict all possible contingencies. In the event something happens that is not covered, we recommend that you act with consideration, common sense, and prudence. If you are not sure about the appropriateness of an action, we suggest you refrain until you have time to reflect on it.

Welcome to Fandom!

The openness of Fandom to things that are new or different has given some individuals the very wrong idea that the norms do not apply in fandom that they use in dealing with other people where they work, attend school, shop, worship, and carry on other activities in their lives.

The BSFS Code of Conduct is designed to help all understand two things: 1) the boundaries of Fandom are broader than many people experience in their daily lives; and 2) there still are boundaries. As in other parts of life, violation of community boundaries results in sanctions.

The BSFS Code of Conduct is a conversation, of which you are a vital part. The point of the discussion is to set a framework for an environment that is respectful of all, safe from abuse and harassment, and welcoming to all people. Within our shared framework we can enjoy the many worlds, philosophies, customs, and more explored in speculative fiction. One name for this place we collectively create is "Fandom."

BSFS did not make all of the rules that apply during our meetings and events. We do not have the power to change the laws and regulations issued by municipal, state, or federal governments. As an aside, a healthy respect for the laws of physics and chemistry results in fewer biological injuries. There is a reason items in this category are called "laws": breaking them comes with penalties outside of the control of BSFS.

THE CON IS NOT A BABYSITTER!

Children-in-tow must stay with a parent or guardian at all times. But you're not on your own. Ops, Information, and Accessibility may have resources to help you out.

Children with convention memberships are free to attend all panels and presentations except those labeled for older age groups or adults or. Parents are responsible for helping children decide what to attend at Balticon.

We share the following advice on how to attend a con with children who are no longer in-tow:

Parents are responsible for the care and conduct of their children.

- Have a designated meeting place.
- Set times to physically check in.
- Define what is off limits, for example,
 - Not leaving the convention areas.
 - Not leaving the hotel.
 - Never going to a hotel room with anyone, including other kids.

Meeting Different Folks

Cons and BSFS meetings are the first times many of us have extended casual contact people of who are not like from ourselves based on their geographic origins, skin colors, hair types, eye shapes, openly identifying as LGBTQIA+, or holding other religious views, among many kinds of human differences.

Personal responses can range from immediate identification to discomfort bordering on fear. All of these feelings are fine. Figuring out what to do with them can be hard.

Be patient with yourself. It can take a little time for most people to become accustomed to new environments and people.

Many of the suggestions in the section will be helpful in dealing with individuals in other groups.

The key concept is R-E-S-P-E-C-T.

Good first steps to friendships:

- Start a conversation with the person. "Hello, my name is XYZ. This is my first Con or meeting." *Warning: Fans like to talk and give advice.*
- Volunteer to help. Ask someone who is setting out snacks or doing other work how you can assist. At the Con, the Volunteers Desk can put you to work. This way you'll have an easier path to meet all kinds of people.
- Go to Information or Ops and present your question. "How do I? or "I just saw ABC. Why did that happen?"
- If you're feeling overwhelmed, try one of these approaches:
 - Take a break in the Con Suite. There are lots of free snacks and drinks. (Forgetting to eat is a thing that happens at Cons and can add to anxiety.)
 - Chill out in the Quiet Room. Reading, coloring, crafting, a jigsaw puzzle, or a nap might help.
- Not sure how to get into a conversation? Try joining a table in the Gaming Room. Talking as part of play might help with meeting some people.

Gender and Sexuality

Never make assumptions. Remember that you don't know anyone's sexual orientation or gender identity unless they choose to tell you. A person will share this information when the time is right.

If someone is wearing a button or ribbon with preferred pronouns, it is courteous to use them. Do not be offended if someone asks your pronouns, they are trying to be polite. At Balticon, white ribbons are provided to clarify pronoun usage.

Don't be nosy, it's just rude. LGBTQ folks often get bombarded with questions that are overly personal or intimate, *like when they told their parents, how they have sex, or which body parts do they still have or not have.*

Talk with LGBTQ people about things other than sexuality or gender. For many, being LGBTQ is obviously a huge part of their lives, but it's not the only thing. Try asking about movies, books or cosplay.

Racial Dialogue

All people want and are entitled to fair treatment and respect.

We help make BSFS welcoming to everyone through enforcing our Code of Conduct. It is the ground floor of what we do as a community to actualize our aspirations.

Pretending that the past and present do not have instances when groups of people experienced mistreatment because of their race, religion or other group identity interferes with ending the practices and beliefs at the source of discriminatory treatment.

BSFS cannot change the things any of us have been taught since childhood, but we can set expectations for how the members of our community behave during our events and meetings.

We do not allow the use of derogatory terms for any group of people. If we're not sure if a term is OK, don't use it.

No matter how well-intentioned we are, we understand and accept we can make mistakes. When we do, we own our errors and make sincere apologies.

In conversations about race and racism, it is essential that we listen to and *believe* members of minority groups when they share what they have experienced. We need to listen even when it is difficult to hear.

Explaining the realities of racism, homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia by people who experience them is exhausting. They also come to BSFS events to have fun and relax. Do not expect individuals to serve as on the spot educators about the history and experiences of their groups. They make the choices of when they want to discuss these matters.

It is also important that we not take one person's story as the only story. This risks treating minority groups as one homogenous entity. In fact, minority communities have a vast array of identities and experiences that must be recognized.

If what you mean is "I don't discriminate against people based on race," say that. Be aware that the term "color-blind" can be insulting. It can sound like you do not see, and in fact devalue, things individuals like about themselves: their eyes, hair, noses, and skin. Don't erase people and their cultures by saying you don't see them as whole people in a world where race is often a shorthand for the complexity and richness of human society.

Living with Challenges

Disabilities are just some of the many characteristics people have. People with disabilities have the same needs we all do: first and foremost among them is to be treated with dignity and respect.

Don't shy away from people with disabilities - relax and be yourself! Treat everyone as you would like to be treated.

We respect people with disabilities through the language we use. Think of the person first, not their disability. Use people first terms: A person who uses a wheelchair, not "confined to a

wheelchair." Respect is shown by avoiding offensive labels, such as "crippled, retarded, or handicapped."

It is equally important that we demonstrate our respect for people with disabilities through our behaviors.

- Never help someone without first asking the person first. Offer your arm or elbow as a guide if assistance is requested, but never push, pull or grab the individual.
- Do not EVER push or hold or move the person's wheelchair, rollator, scooter, cane, or other mobility assistance devices without permission.
- Service animals are not pets. They are hardworking creatures who need to keep their minds on providing safety to their humans. Do not distract their attention.
- Maintain a normal manner of speech without raising your voice or talking down to the person as if speaking to a small child.
- Interact directly with the person, not with companions, aides, or interpreters as a substitutes.
- Some people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing may be able to hear or lip read. A written note is a good way to ask the preferred means of communication if you do not know ASL.
- Always introduce yourself to someone who is blind or visually impaired. Try to let them know when you are leaving.
- Try to put yourself at the same eye level when talking with someone in a wheelchair.
- Be patient with a person who responds at a slower pace. You can help with communication by speaking in clear, simple sentences.

Allow people with speech impairments as much time as they need to communicate. Be respectful and avoid trying to finish their sentences.