



# Talking To Non-Socialists About Palestine

## Sample Lesson Plan

Note: This is a recommended lesson plan for a two-hour-long chapter-level training on how to talk to non-socialists about Palestine. The training is intended to help DSA members have productive, meaningful conversations about Palestine – particularly toward the urgent goals of calling for a ceasefire and an end to US military and financial support for Israel’s actions in Gaza – with friends, family members, coworkers, etc. who are convincible, but may not yet be taking action. This lesson plan is meant to be adjusted toward the particular needs and interests of your own chapter or working group.

### **Part 0: WELCOME! (10 min)**

- 1: Introductions in the chat (if training is over Zoom): name, pronouns, what is the #1 thing you’re hoping to get out of this training?
- What are our goals/why are we here?
  - We want to be prepared to have fruitful conversations with people who are convincible but not yet convinced
  - Urgent goal right now is to build momentum toward a ceasefire – longer-term vision is important, but not the main focus of this training
  - [DSA's platform](#) states that we “stand in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle against apartheid, colonialism, and military occupation, and for equality, human rights, and self-determination, including the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement.”
- Outline of session:
  - Best practices for talking to non-socialists
  - Breakout discussions: goal is to reflect on our own political development and discuss how our own experiences might inform our conversations about Palestine.
  - Information/how to respond to common anti-Palestine talking points: historical and current background to contextualize your conversations and be able to address common misconceptions.

- Terms of engagement:
  - Respect the Discussion and the Facilitators. Listen actively to your comrades when they speak. Listen to the facilitators, especially when they lay out the guidelines for discussion.
  - Share the air and encourage others. This is like the “step up/step back” rule: step up to encourage those who have not participated, step back to make sure you are not dominating the conversation.
  - Practice good faith. We cannot know the reasons that a person expresses an idea, assume the best of your comrades’ intentions in case of disagreement.
  - Consider your position. Think consciously of our social positions, allowing us to work across our race, gender, sexuality and social differences in ways that are supportive.
  - Make “I” statements. We all make mistakes, and however upset another comrade’s mistake makes you, you have a responsibility to deal with it in as empathetic a way as you can.
  - Stack etiquette
  - Define your terms, especially: Zionism, apartheid, genocide, ethnic cleansing, colonialism/settler colonialism, Israel/Palestine/Gaza/West Bank – everyone in the room will be coming from different levels of knowledge, so we should make sure we are clearly understood and open to further explanation when needed

**Part 1: Presentation on best practices for talking to non-socialists (about Palestine or otherwise) (10 mins)**

- 1: Leading with listening and open-ended questions; don’t force it.
  - You have to care about the person you’re talking with. Genuine investment in them as a person – get to know where they’re coming from through questions.
  - Hear what someone actually believes or doesn’t believe – don’t create a straw man out of them. Learn about their experience.
  - Meet them where they are! What’re they thinking about and struggling with?
  - No “gotcha” questions; it’s easy for people to get defensive and shut down, which is counterproductive if the goal is to educate and change their perspective.
  - If you find yourself in a conversation with someone who you’re never going to convince, it’s okay to end the conversation and move on – the goal is to grow the liberation movement and get people mobilized, not to dunk on hard-liners.
  
- 2: Sharing what you know, what you’ve learned, and how to learn more.
  - This is what we’ll be doing in just a moment: reflecting on our own learning journeys and thinking through how our own paths can help us approach conversations with non-socialists with empathy and with the intention to support their learning journey.
  - What have you learned over the past days, weeks, or years?
  - Make it personal – what moves you to call for a ceasefire, show up to marches/rallies/teach-ins, demand that your tax dollars not support mass killing

of Palestinians? How might your personal motivations connect with those of your interlocutor?

- If a particular book, podcast, speaker, article, poem, story, idea, etc. has been meaningful to you, share it!

3: Having answers to common questions/misconceptions – that’s the last part of this training

4: Acknowledging people’s concerns while staying focused on the urgency of the moment & what you’re hoping to accomplish with the conversation.

- Whoever you’re talking to has likely been steeped in decades of anti-socialist and anti-Palestine propaganda—it’s baked into the culture we’re living in. You won’t undo all of that in one conversation, but you also don’t have to buy into the mainstream framing.
- The person you’re talking to may be bringing personal baggage into the conversation. We know that none of us are free until we’re all free, and that anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and Israel’s settler colonist, apartheid project all stem from the same root and must be fought in tandem. You can acknowledge and dig deeper into your interlocutor’s concerns without buying into any false premises.

## **Part 2: Breakout discussions & reflection (45 minutes)**

Note: Depending on your group’s preferences, you can either spend the full time in breakout groups, or spend about half an hour in breakout groups and then bring everyone back to the big group and spend 15 minutes doing report-backs. This section assumes 45-minute breakout conversations with no report-backs, but as usual, feel free to modify as you see fit.

### **Breakout group conversations**

We’ll spend 45 minutes in breakout groups; facilitators can divide their time accordingly among these three categories of conversation topics. Try to cover each topic of conversation: our own learning journeys; why others aren’t already on board; and what conversations we’ve already been having about Palestine/what strategies do or don’t work well in those conversations.

#### **1: Compassion for the learning journey**

- What learnings and experiences have shaped your path to where you are now?
- What were some of your a-ha moments?
- Who was vital in your journey to organizing toward Palestinian liberation?

#### **2: So why isn’t everyone already on board?**

- What are some common talking points you hear in the media or in non-leftist discourse about Palestine? What are some misconceptions you’ve seen?
  - What misconceptions, if any, did you used to have?

- What are some things that put people off talking about Palestine? What are some common things that keep people from speaking up, protesting, calling for a ceasefire, etc.?
- Why a *socialist* response to Palestine? What does this mean? What do socialists believe in that's relevant to the situation in Gaza (and Palestine in general)?

### **3: What conversations have you already been having about Palestine? Who have you been talking with? What works? What doesn't work?**

#### **Part 3: Teach-in (50 minutes)**

There is some flexibility in what this part of the training looks like. If you have a member of your chapter or someone from another local organization supporting a ceasefire who can speak to the facts/historical context/political context/responses to common anti-Palestine myths and talking points, that's great – give them the floor! Inviting other organizations to participate in or otherwise support your training session is a great way to build ties in the movement.

You can also refer to NPEC's [Palestine Political Education Folder](#) for slides and lesson plans for this part of the training. On the other hand, if no one in your chapter feels comfortable leading the teach-in portion of the training, there are lots of other resources you can use to give people background information during this part of the training. One option is a group-listen to NPEC's *Class* podcast episode on [Palestine and Socialism](#). The Dig podcast also has several episodes on Palestine, including a general [teach-in](#) and specific episodes on  [Hamas](#), the [apartheid system](#), [Zionism and anti-Zionism](#), and the [history of colonialism](#) in Palestine.

#### **Part 5: Conclusion (5 minutes)**

- Thank you for coming and sharing this space with us!
- Remind attendees how they can get directly engaged in the movement, such as calling their representatives, joining a phonebank, participating in direct action
- We are hoping that you will share what you've learned with others; share resources & other upcoming political education events around Palestine (drop some links!)