

Safer Space Toolkit For Local Slams

Compiled by

SPOCAN and the Anti-Oppression Committee

With thanks to Poetry Slam Inc.

Included

Code of Conduct

Guide For Managing Complaints of Assault

Slam Host Script

For Those About To Hit The Mic

(Local) Slam Code of Honour

Borrowed with permission from Poetry Slam Inc.

As a participant in the (Local) Poetry Slam, I agree:

1. To revel in an environment in which freedom of speech, self-determination, and pursuit of creative excellence are inalienable rights.
2. To participate in all Slam events in a way that encourages, illuminates and supports established standards of good sportsmanship. To refuse to allow the competitive challenge of the game to lead me to violence, interference, or direct threats. To allow all participants to pursue their craft peacefully and without censure, regardless of present associations or past personal history.
3. To comply with local, provincial and federal laws pertaining to individual civil rights and physical or sexual harassment.
4. To abide by competition rules as defined by SPOCAN and the (Local) Poetry Slam, knowing that the consequences for breaking the rules exist and are upheld. Penalties will be determined by the severity of the infraction, and the ruling of the presiding organizers and, where applicable, the presiding protest committee.
5. To be a fair poet--one who in competition is fair and generous, one who in any connection has recourse to nothing illegitimate; a poet who in defeat demonstrates grace and in victory, magnanimity

Guide for Managing Complaints of Assault

As community organizers we recognize that we are not necessarily counsellors or police. All we have power over is who gets into the door at our events. This algorithm is a tool for any local slam to use. If a ban has been made locally, SPOCAN will reflect it and not allow that person to be a part of SPOCAN events until the local ban has been lifted.

More than anything we would stress that people who come forward are checked in with multiple times throughout this process. This tool may not be appropriate for every situation. These are not rules, simply a guide to aid in processing complaints.

If an assault happens to a minor, you must report it to police. If they are no longer a minor, it is up to them to make that decision.

If the person harmed chooses to report to Police

1. Slam receives complaint of assault.
2. Person who was harmed is offered support. We ask what they need, we listen. When reporting we make sure they have support and someone to go with if they would like that.
3. We support the person who was harmed by not allowing the person who harmed them access to our events until a resolution has been made that allows the person who was harmed to feel safer in the presence of the person who harmed them.
4. Follow up with the victim after complaint has been managed.

If they chose not to report

1. Slam receives complaint of assault.
2. Person who was harmed is offered support. We ask what they need, what they would like done, we listen.
3. Slam organizer(s) will speak to both parties. The person who harmed will be asked to not attend any slam functions for at least a year.
4. Both parties are given information around resources and support.
5. Follow up with the victim after complaint has been managed.
6. Review grievance after one year (or the time that was agreed on). Discuss the possibility of a resolution that allows the person who was harmed to feel safer in the presence of the person who harmed them.

If it's more than one complaint of assault

1. Slam receives multiple complaints of assaults.
2. Victims are offered support. We ask what they need, what they would like done, we listen.
3. All parties are given information around resources and support.
4. Person who harmed will be officially banned from Slam events. The name will be shared with SPOCAN and that person will not be allowed at SPOCAN events.

5. The name of the person will be shared with neighbouring slams so that they can be made aware of the person in their community through a SPOCAN email to slam masters.

* Restorative Justice Element. If local slams feel they would like to initiate this process we would advise that they involve a local resource that has the tools and training to make this a possible outcome. It would have to be initiated by the person who harmed, and the people who were harmed would have to feel they could return to a safe space and give clear consent to this.

If the person who harmed has done work and believes they are a safer person, be willing to hear them. Once the ban period is up, ask them to write a letter outlining the work they have done. In order to bring them back into the community, you may request that a paralegal or an ADR look at the situation and request a fee from the person who harmed to cover the cost of this service.

Slam Host Script

Territory acknowledgement

Welcome to Open Mic and Slam, I am your host, _____
Tonight we have an open mic, a two round poetry slam and a feature set by

Thank our venue/funders etc

Tweet at us: @yourtwitter

Culture of Consent Statement

(adapted from the slam in Portland, Oregon, with permission. they just asked for feedback on how it goes over in other scenes)

[Event name] is dedicated to building a culture of consent. We know this can be a highly emotional space, and we always want conversation and affection to happen, and we want to take care of each other.

If you want to engage someone about something they said in their poem, that is awesome; please just ask them first if they are up for that kind of conversation. If you want to engage anyone PHYSICALLY in ANY way, just ASK them first: say “can I hug you?” and wait for a response. It’s very easy if you practice just a little.

Once you’ve tried this, it actually makes interactions more fun and less awkward, and while we expect it at the Slam, it is also a great way to live your life every day from now until forever.

If you are okay with that, let me hear a [scene-specific shout-out]!

Housekeeping:

- Washrooms. Be trans friendly.
- Keep aisles clear
- Feel free to get up and go out for air and come back in at any time

Logistics:

- How to use the mic. (Adjusting the mic, this is what the mic sounds like up close, from afar)
- You have freedom of speech, but you are also accountable to audience and community
- Anything goes, but no hate

-(Optional) Please give Trigger warnings for graphically violent material. Poets, let's take care of our community and give people the space to take care of themselves. Put your

hand up in the stop motion, say “trigger warning for “this kind of violence”” take a step back, then start your piece. The trigger warning does not count in your time in the slam. Do not abuse or make fun of the trigger warning.

-Support poets: snap, cheer, stomp, hiss

-overview of format for the event

-overview of slam rules

Important Note for our Audience and Those About To Hit The Mic

Content Warning. Slam poetry can be a wonderful tool. It is one where people can feel free to honestly speak about experiences both positive and negative. We expect audiences to react, and sometimes the content will be triggering. We support and encourage you to step out if need be and take care of yourselves in this environment.

Freedom of Speech: We're artists; of course we support freedom of speech, but if you bring hate speech to our stage you will get called out. This isn't a frat party, realize that if you bring work that is oppressive and hateful towards others, you will get called out for it. It may be a room full of "boos" or a gentle conversation because we realize that sometimes this can be a teachable moment.

Respect. While we are an *open* mic, we do not tolerate hate speech or intimidation on or off stage. Please act respectfully. It's a small room so if you're talking while someone is performing, we can all hear you. Also we ask that in the interest of consent culture, you ask permission before you hug someone or give them feedback.