

**EVERYTHING  
YOU NEED TO  
KNOW ABOUT  
SAALT CIRCLES  
EVER.**



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# SAALT Circles 101

South Asians across the US are affected by a variety of different issues and—yet, there are very few spaces available to discuss these issues and work towards a solution. We have the power and the voice to take action, every single one of us, but what stops us? We all have busy days and hectic schedules; there is always something to do with each minute, but what if we could spend some of these minutes together? What if we had a safe space, a space where community members in our area could get together and delve into the issues that unite and divide us?

Would you take advantage of it?

Would you help to make your community stronger and more united?

If you say yes to these questions, then join a SAALT Circle in your community today!

## Understanding SAALT Circles

SAALT is a national non-profit organization and does not have local chapters in different cities and states. Instead, we work to empower local community members to create and attend through initiatives, campaigns, projects, such as SAALT Circles, as opportunities to engage in dialogue and action around issues that affect your community.

A SAALT Circle is a safe space for community members to come together and learn about local and national issues impacting the South Asian community in the US, share their experiences, and explore ways to create change. SAALT Circles are frequented by individuals (friends, family members, coworkers, etc.) who share SAALT's goal – to empower South Asians; to better understand issues affecting us in America as immigrants and people of color, to build the strength of our local communities, and to participate in a healthy dialogue with individuals of all different opinions. Participants come together for 60-90 minutes, once every quarter, to discuss various topics of importance to the South Asian community, and to identify ways to take action on issues that may have come up in the discussion. At minimum, the SAALT Circle raises awareness about various issues and brings people together; ideally, the SAALT Circle will catalyze action among the participants to create change in their communities..



*For more information  
on SAALT Circles  
near you, send an  
email to  
[info@saalt.org](mailto:info@saalt.org) with  
the subject line*

## Starting a SAALT Circle

Starting a SAALT Circle will be beneficial not only for your community, but for you as well. By starting a SAALT Circle, you will have opportunities to:

- Engage with SAALT's local and national civic and political engagement projects
- Hone your organizing, facilitation, and public speaking skills
- Gain experience with creating and sustaining a program over a period of time
- Develop your leadership skills by engaging with content and community members
- Support an environment that will create a critical platform for dialogue and action in your community

- Empower yourself and your fellow community members to work together towards a common goal

**Anyone can start a SAALT Circle!**

**It's as easy as writing an email.**

SAALT Circles are facilitated by individuals across the political and professional spectrum. The Circles have been developed so that anyone, regardless of occupation, education, or age can create and participate in a SAALT Circle. SAALT Circles require an average of only 5-10 volunteer hours over a 3 month period to plan and implement, and you control your schedule.



*Having 2 Coordinators allows for shared roles but also streamlined planning. Coordinators are responsible for working with SAALT to plan their SAALT Circles.*

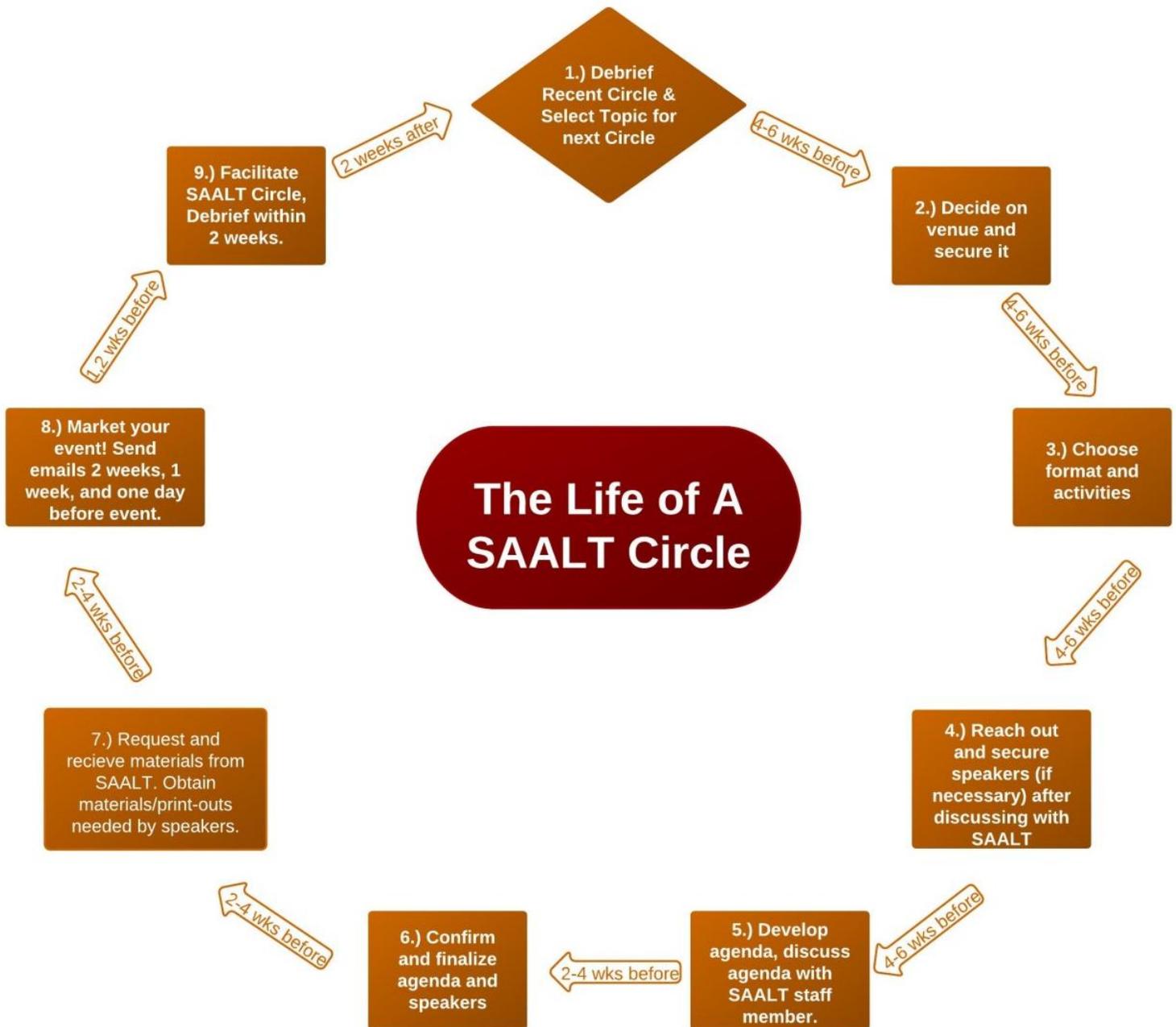
We encourage identifying 1-2 people to serve as ongoing Coordinators for your SAALT Circles, but we are always interested to explore and support other approaches to organization.

*If you are interested in starting a SAALT Circle in your area, send an email to [info@saalt.org](mailto:info@saalt.org) with the subject line "SAALT Circle," or call our office at (301)-270-1855.*

**Coordinating with SAALT for Support**

SAALT is connected to every Circle, and we will provide you with remote assistance and guidance to help ensure the success of your Circle. We'll help you to select SAALT Circle topics, develop a good format and agenda, identify guest speakers and free venues, as well as provide resources around selected topics and issues and assist with outreach in your area. SAALT can also connect you to our partner organizations in your area.

## How A SAALT Circle Works



### Quick Reference Guide

- 1.) Selecting a topic – pg 6 “Choosing a Topic...”
- 2.) Deciding on venue – pg 6 “Finding a Venue...”
- 3.) Choose format and activities – pg 6-7 “Picking a Format and Activities...”
- 4.) Speakers – pg 7 “Securing Guest Speakers and Panelists...”
- 5.) Agenda – pg 9 “Building an Agenda...”
- 6.) Confirm Speakers – Appendix pg 12 “Checklist”
- 7.) Request Materials – Appendix pg 12 “Checklist”
- 8.) Marketing – pg 8 “Marketing”
- 9.) Facilitating – pg 9 “Discussion and Dialogue”

## Developing your SAALT Circle

### Choosing a Topic for Your SAALT Circle

SAALT Circle topics can vary greatly, but each topic should **focus on an issue affecting the South Asian community in your area**. Choose a topic that can be discussed from many angles, and can be explored deeply by your participants, leading to an agreement for action at the end of the session. All topics and speakers should be discussed with SAALT prior to selection to ensure that they are in line with our mission and guidelines.

As a non-partisan organization, by law, none of SAALT's staff, time, or resources can be used for partisan election purposes—that is, to support or oppose any candidate running for public office. This is a strict prohibition and any violations could result in serious repercussions for SAALT. When attending or coordinating a SAALT Circle, it is very important to keep in mind that topics and speakers cannot revolve around partisan election issues. Please refer to page 15 in the appendix for more information.



*Topics can focus on anything ranging from policy issues to Internet memes. Have fun with your topics and feel free to introduce variety in the subjects that you explore. Topics can be selected based on current, local, or national news; cultural points of interest; and/or participant feedback.*

Sample topics follow:

- Bullying in the South Asian Community
- Immigration Reform
- Islamophobia/Xenophobia
- Gender and Sexuality
- Art as social activism
- Interfaith Dialogue
- Election and Civic Engagement Pieces



*If you live in an area that offers public transportation, it's best to select a meeting space that is accessible by your city's bus or subway system.*

### Finding a Venue for Your SAALT Circle

SAALT Circles are relatively informal; you can hold them in any number of different free spaces:

- Your home
- At a supportive business or organization
- In a library
- At a place of worship
- At your local community center
- At a restaurant with a group dining area

Experiment to find a venue that best accommodates the topic and group size, while being accessible to all participants, and could be used consistently.. Identifying a regular meeting space is a great way to reduce your planning time for each SAALT Circle.

### Picking a Format and Activities for Your SAALT Circle

You can coordinate the SAALT Circle in a number of different ways. Coordinators are encouraged to experiment and find what works best for your topic and participants. SAALT Circles are generally 60-90 minutes, which includes time for introductions, guest speakers (if applicable), group discussion, activities, and wrap up/next steps. The closing is important, as every Circle should end with a call to action and next steps which provide an opportunity for participants to share or apply the information learned in the SAALT Circle to create change in their communities.

Some options for SAALT Circle formats include:

- 1.) **Panel Discussion:** Circles can be panel discussions, with 2-4 speakers with diverse backgrounds, expertise, and perspectives, presenting information to the Circle followed by Q&A and discussion.
- 2.) **Guest Speaker:** You can invite one speaker to present information on a specific topic, followed by Q&A or debate/discussion.
- 3.) **Screenings or readings:** Present films, videos, or other multimedia, followed by group discussion. SAALT has information about books, articles, documentaries and more that can get you started.

Some options for SAALT Circle activities include:

- 1.) **Short Reading:** You can also start the SAALT Circle off by asking everyone to read a short newspaper article, journal article, poem, or book excerpt, and use the literature to drive the discussion.
- 2.) **Projects:** SAALT Circles can take the form of group projects or service events; such as voter education drives, where each member takes non-partisan voter education material to their local place of worship or community center. Some other possible projects include *Be The Change*, SAALT's annual national day of service in October.
- 3.) **Break out Activities:** Divide the Circle in smaller groups to discuss different aspects of the issue, and then come back together to discuss their findings.



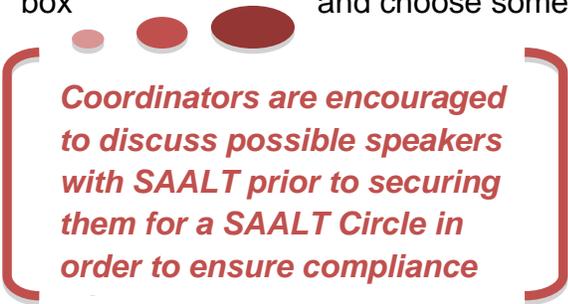
***Every SAALT Circle will have its own personality. Mix and match the format and activities that works best, and feel free try something new. Creativity and new ideas are encouraged!***

### **Securing Guest Speakers and Panelists for SAALT Circles**

Guest speakers or panelists are a great way to present informed knowledge and diverse perspectives on a topic. An appropriate guest speaker should have one or more of the following:

- Academic expertise in the topic being discussed
- Experience working within or partnering with the community on the topic
- A profession in the field of the topic

Some great speakers, for example, would be members of a government office or a nonprofit that focuses on your topic of choice. Contact local non-profits, businesses, artists, local government members, and local community members. Think outside of the box and choose someone whose perspective will engage and challenge your group members.



***Coordinators are encouraged to discuss possible speakers with SAALT prior to securing them for a SAALT Circle in order to ensure compliance***

All opinions have a right to be heard, but since SAALT is a non-partisan non-profit organization, no specific agenda should be promoted. Be sure to select speakers that represent a variety of different opinions on a given topic.

## **Outreach**

The best marketing is done through word of mouth – hearing about the Circle from a family or community member carries more weight than anything else. SAALT will distribute word of the event through our listserv, but coordinators should brainstorm to implement a local outreach strategy that works best for your area.

Some ideas for outreach strategy:

- Word of mouth
- Half page or one page flyer with description to pass out to friends and family, as well as put up in appropriate places.
- If you live close to a college campus, get a South Asian student group, professor, or Fraternity/Sorority involved in spreading the word at meeting, through email and social media, or passing out flyers.
- Email and post information via social media to your group of contacts and personal listservs
- After the event, keep a list of everyone who attended, and keep in contact with them for the next Circles



***Send emails out two weeks before the event, one week before the event, and one day before the event as a reminder. After the event, be sure to send a “Thank You” email to the participants.***



***For snacks, seek out “in-kind” donations for the events. SAALT can provide a modest reimbursement for food purchased by coordinators, but there are many places, such as coffee shops and grocery stores, that are willing to provide donations for events like these. A sample letter for “in-kind” donations can be found in the appendix.***

# Facilitating A SAALT Circle

## Building an Agenda for Your SAALT Circle

Each SAALT Circle evolves differently, but some basic tenants of a solid SAALT Circle agenda follow:

### 1.) Introductions

- a. Start by welcoming everyone, and introduce the topic
- b. Spend a couple of minutes talking about SAALT, and what new campaigns/programs community members can participate in.
- c. Choose an interactive ice breaker that serves as a way for everyone to introduce themselves
- d. Set ground rules for the group – SAALT Circles are a safe space for open-minded discussion, regardless of our differences.

*An aide to developing questions can be found in the appendix.*

### 2.) Warm-Up Discussion

- a. Spend a couple minutes talking about the topic, and why you think it is important. If applicable, relay some facts that are relevant and would spark discussion
- b. Have some warm up discussion questions ready – it may take a bit of probing to get the group to begin talking to one another

### 3.) Speaker/Presentation/Panel Discussion/Activity

### 4.) Follow-Up Questions

- a. Develop a list of probing questions that give everyone a chance to dig deep into the issue and give their opinions on it in a constructive way. Start easy so that the participants can become comfortable with the space and with each other, and then move on to the more probing questions, inserted into the discussion when needed to keep the discussion flowing

*Coordinators should be sure to gather materials from speakers ahead of time, in case copies need to be made for the group. Contact SAALT for SAALT materials, such as copies of reports and fact sheets to be*

## Discussion and Dialogue

There are a few basic tenants to leading a successful dialogue: tone, discussion, and action:

### Tone

- The key to a fruitful discussion is in establishing the tone from the first moment the event begins.
- Through the introductions you will be initiating a level of comfort between the participants,
- Using phrases such as “what do you think” or “what is your opinion” you can de-emphasizing your role as facilitator (you will guide the discussion, but bringing out the group’s opinions is the most important part of your role)

*When establishing the tone of the discussion, it is important to set up ground rules or “Safe Space Rules” which are provided in the appendix section.*

- Modulating your tone of voice conveys importance and depth to information or opinions you convey.

### Discussion

- Opinions should be given on a voluntary basis. Use leading questions to help everyone become comfortable with the space before asking questions that require a personal or opinionated response.
- Be flexible! If something you planned is not working, have a backup plan in your pocket. For example, if a large group discussion isn't working, break everyone into pairs or groups of three to discuss, and have them report back to the large group.
- Your role as a facilitator in this discussion is to maintain the flow of the discussion. Have a hearty list of questions ready to keep the discussion going. Don't be afraid to share your opinion from time to time, but use it as a tool to keep discussion flowing.
- You will also need to make sure the atmosphere stays respectful and pleasant. Again, refer to the "Safe Space Rules" which are provided in the appendix section for more information.

### Action

- At the conclusion of the discussion, have the group or one of the coordinators summarize the main points of the discussion; bring it back to the focal point of the Circle.
- Since SAALT Circles are intended to be ongoing events, they end with action items/next steps based on the information provided. These are usually reached in the heart of the discussion – a question such as "What can we do to solve \_\_\_\_\_?" will yield basic action steps for the group to work on.
- Ask how the discussion went, and what the participants would like to see in the future. This serves to give participants ownership of the space, as well as ideas for your future sessions.

### Debriefing

2-3 weeks after the SAALT Circle has been completed, SAALT will schedule a debrief call with the coordinator(s). There are two parts to the call, and should last no more than 30 minutes. Debriefs are a chance to assess the event, and provide a space to talk with SAALT about ideas for the coming Circle. Debriefs are guided by four simple questions:

1. How did the event progress?
2. What went well?
3. What can be improved for the next Circle? Can SAALT help with that?
4. What ideas can we come up with for the next SAALT Circle?

It is essential to have this call for every Circle, but the break in timing between the event and the debrief will allow you time to gather your thoughts and objectively assess the successes and challenges of the SAALT Circle. This is also a perfect chance to

convene with SAALT about ideas for future Circles, and ways in which SAALT can assist you in the future.

### **Representing SAALT**

As a SAALT Circle coordinator, you are an extension of the SAALT staff, and are representing the organization in every aspect of your efforts. While it has been stated before, the importance of this position bears repeating. As a representative of SAALT, it is very important to adhere to the non-partisan aspect of the organization. This means:

- The speakers you choose cannot be speaking about or endorsing a specific candidate within the SAALT Circle.
- The topics you present at the SAALT Circle cannot be focused on a specific candidate. You may discuss what issues are being debated on a national political level, but the focus cannot be on a specific agenda.
  - Please discuss topics with SAALT prior to reaching out to speakers so we can work together on making sure that the topics fit SAALT’s guidelines.
- As a SAALT Circle coordinator, you cannot use the space to pass out fliers or campaign for a particular candidate.

A more comprehensive list can be found in the appendix on page 15.

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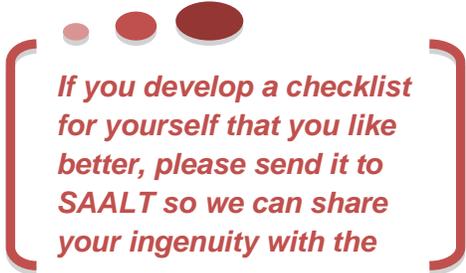
## Preparing for the Day of the Event

SAALT Circles have quite a few components; use this checklist to help you craft the SAALT Circle in a timely manner.

### SAALT Circle Checklist

#### Preceding Event

- First Step (4-6 weeks before the event)
  - Topic Suggestions
  - Speaker Suggestions (based on topics)
  - Activity Suggestions (based on topics)
  - Venue Suggestions (based on topics)
  - Timeline
  - Next Steps
  
- Second Step (3-5 weeks before the event)
  - Finalized Topic
  - Finalized Speakers
  - Finalized Venue
  - Sketch of Agenda
  - Sketch of Marketing Timeline
  - Division of Tasks
  
- Third Step (2-3 weeks before the event)
  - Finalized Agenda
  - Confirm Speakers
  - Confirm Venue
  - Request printed material from SAALT
  - Ask speakers if they need any printed or special material for the event
  - Finalized Marketing Timeline



*If you develop a checklist for yourself that you like better, please send it to SAALT so we can share your ingenuity with the*

#### Day of Event

- SAALT Printed Material
- Speaker/Activity Printed Material
- Any electronics needed for the venue (speakers, laptop, LCD projector etc)
- Small snack (optional)

#### After Event (Within 2-3 weeks following the event)

- Follow up on any action items from event
- Send thank you to all participants
- Enter sign-in sheet into Google document and share with [info@saalt.org](mailto:info@saalt.org)
- Schedule debrief with SAALT and team members (if applicable)

# Sample SAALT Circle Agenda

<b>Set-Up Logistics</b>	<b>6:00-6:50PM</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discuss location policy &amp; logistics with library</li><li>• Food pick-up and set-up</li></ul>	
<b>SAALT Circle Discussion</b>	<b>7:00-8:30PM</b>
<b>Welcome, SAALT Intro</b>	<b>4 Minutes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thank everyone for coming, introduce goals for the SAALT circle</li><li>• Speak about SAALT</li></ul>	<i>1 Minute</i> <i>3 Minutes</i>
<b>Ice-Breaker: Introductions (Group) &amp; Ground Rules</b>	<b>11 Minutes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish rules &amp; encourage discussion</li><li>• Name, where you live, what brings you here today</li></ul>	<i>1 Minute</i> <i>10 Minutes</i>
<b>Factoids and Warm-Up Discussion Questions</b>	<b>20 Minutes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Present Factoids</li><li>• Ask warm-up discussion questions<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ How do you define bullying?</li><li>○ Have you personally witnessed bullying? If so, how did you approach the situation?</li><li>○ What's the impact of bullying on your community?</li></ul></li></ul>	<i>5 minutes</i> <i>15 minutes</i>
<b>Panelist Floor</b>	<b>15-20 Minutes (5-7 Minutes/ Panelist)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Descriptions of their organization and their specific roles, narratives/observations about current rise in bullying, current anti-bullying initiatives</li></ul>	
<b>Question &amp; Answer and Discussion</b>	<b>40 Minutes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Panel Questions<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ How does bullying impact communities, school systems and individuals?</li><li>○ How is anti-bullying legislation developed and enforced? How effective is legislation in addressing bullying?</li><li>○ How can different communities collaborate to combat bullying and advocate for legislation?</li><li>○ How can adults benefit from anti-bullying policy?</li></ul></li><li>• Discussion Questions<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Do you think bullying is a new issue, or just a more visible issue? How does social media impact bullying (positively or negatively)?</li><li>○ How do you see anti-bullying initiatives affecting your community? Will these initiatives benefit or hurt your community?</li><li>○ Given the rise of bullying, do you think the increased emphasis and visibility of this issue will change the trend?</li></ul></li></ul>	
<b>Closing/Next Steps (SAALT)</b>	<b>3 Minutes</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>1 Minute</b>
	<b>100 Minutes</b>

To Whom It May Concern:

My Name is [INSERT NAME] and I am coordinating a SAALT Circle in the area. SAALT Circles are safe spaces where community members can come together to learn about local and national issues impacting the South Asian community in the United States. This event is open to the public, and is in partnership with South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT). SAALT is a non-partisan non-profit that seeks to elevate the voices of South Asians in America.

On [INSERT DATE] we will be hosting a SAALT Circle at [INSERT PLACE]. Any type of in-kind donation that [INSERT COMPANY NAME] would be able to provide would be greatly appreciated

If you would like more information about the organization, the event, or what donations are necessary to make the event a success, please contact me at: [INSERT CONTACT INFORMATION]

Sincerely

[INSERT NAME]

**Guidance for SAALT Circle Volunteers  
Regarding Election-Related Activities**

*May 2012*

South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT) is a 501(c)(3) organization. By law, none of its staff time or resources can be used for partisan election purposes—that is, to support or oppose any candidate running for public office. This is a strict prohibition and any violations could result in a costly investigation by the public, media, and/or IRS and the loss of our tax-exempt status.

Examples of activities to avoid in your official SAALT capacity include:

- × Wearing political buttons or t-shirts while representing SAALT at any event or meeting.
- × Putting political signs, bumper stickers or political buttons on materials or on your person while in your capacity as a SAALT representative.
- × Forwarding an email from a political campaign or party to the SAALT listserv or to SAALT Circle attendees.
- × Making statements that favor or oppose candidates or political parties at any SAALT event or meeting or in any SAALT official publication.
- × Making statements or handing out literature in support of or against a candidate at a SAALT event.
- × Posting comments that favor or oppose candidates or political parties on any SAALT social media, including our blogs, Facebook pages, Twitter accounts (including staff accounts that are associated with SAALT)
- × Allowing a candidate, political party, PAC or any group working in a partisan political way to use SAALT Circles as a platform for speaking about their candidacy or political agenda.
- × Giving a candidate, political party, PAC or any group working in a partisan political way any SAALT mailing or membership lists.

**Note:** These organizational prohibitions do not inhibit your personal and individual participation in election activities provided you do not act or represent that you are acting as a volunteer of SAALT. Examples of election activities you may participate in your own personal and individual capacity include voting, making financial contributions to candidates, volunteering for a candidate on your own time or running for office.

If you have any questions please contact SAALT at [info@saalt.org](mailto:info@saalt.org)

# Blooms Taxonomy Reference Sheet

## Using Blooms Taxonomy:

Use these stems to help in developing questions that lead the discussion in the right direction. Start with the more basic questions the bottom of the pyramid and work your way up to promote deep and engaging discussion amongst your participants

### Knowledge

- What happened after . . . ?
- How many . . . ?
- Who was it that . . . ?
- Can you name the . . . ?
- Described what happened at . . . ?
- Who spoke to . . . ?
- Can you tell why . . . ?
- Find the meaning of . . . ?
- What is . . . ?
- Which is true or false . . . ?

### Comprehension

- Can you write in your own words . . . ?
- Can you write a brief outline . . . ?
- What do you think might happen next . . . ?
- Who do you think . . . ?
- What was the main idea . . . ?
- Who was the key character . . . ?
- Can you distinguish between . . . ?
- What differences exist between . . . ?
- Can you provide an example of what you mean . . . ?
- Can you provide a definition for . . . ?

### Application

- Do you know another instance where...?
- Could this have happened in . . . ?
- Can you group by characteristics such as . . . ?
- What factors would you change if . . . ?
- Can you apply the method used to some experience of your own...?
- What questions would you ask of . . . ?
- From the info given, can you develop a set of instructions about...?
- Would this information be useful if you had a . . . ?

### Analysis

- Which events could have happened . . . ?
- If . . . happened, what might the ending have been?
- How was this similar to . . . ?
- What was the underlying theme of . . . ?
- What do you see as other possible outcomes?
- Why did . . . changes occur?

- Can you compare your . . . with that presented in . . . ?
- Can you explain what must have happened when . . . ?
- How is . . . similar to . . . ?
- What are some of the problems of . . . ?
- Can you distinguish between . . . ?
- What were some of the motives behind . . . ?
- What was the turning point in the game . . . ?
- What was the problem with . . . ?

### Synthesis

- Can you design a . . . to . . . ?
- Why not compose a song about . . . ?
- Can you see a possible solution to . . . ?
- If you had access to all resources how would you deal with . . . ?
- Why don't you devise your own way to deal with . . . ?
- What would happen if . . . ?
- How many ways can you . . . ?
- Can you create new and unusual uses for . . . ?
- Can you write a new recipe for a tasty dish?
- Can you develop a proposal which would . . . ?

### Evaluation

- Is there a better solution to . . . ?
- Judge the value of . . . ?
- 



defend your position about . . . ?

Can  
you

- Do you think . . . is a good or a bad thing?
- How would you have handled . . . ?
- What changes to . . . would you recommend?
- Are you a . . . person?
- How would you feel if . . . ?
- How effective are . . . ?
- What do you think about . . . ?