

# Guidelines on being a disputant in a role play...

1. Keep your interpretation of the role play very simple. You will find that “simple” translates into “more complicated than you thought” when you go through the role play.
2. Put yourself into the characters shoes and ask yourself the following questions:

**1. What reason do you have to resolve this?** (Create one or more) Every person has a good reason to resolve a conflict, if only to cause him or herself less stress. Usually, there are more important reasons to resolve the conflict, specific to each character. Make up one or two reasons to resolve the conflict, and attempt to resolve it.

**2. What is causing you to dig your heels in and stay in the conflict?** There is a good reason for every “character” to have his or her “side” of the story, even though it may not seem so upon first read. Don’t dig too deeply. Remember, it’s a role play. In real life, individuals DO have good reasons to resolve a conflict well. Select at least two reasons each character is “digging in” to his/her position.

**Write down a few notes about your character** (1 or 2 additional points from the background information). The background information is written very deliberately with specific details and dialogues for you to analyse for clues about your characters. People are complicated. So are these characters. You may fill in any gaps or questions you have about the conflict or each character any way you like.

## PLEASE NOTE:

**Adding Too Much Difficulty:** Remember that role-plays have the potential to be more difficult than real-life problems. Role-plays tend to add countless motivators and side stories. As a role player, do **not** do this! You will only complicate the role-play unnecessarily and potentially lead the group away from the objective.

It is true that people are complicated and so are their positions within conflicts. Having 1-3 complicating factors is more than enough for each character. Even though people are complicated, they often do not exhibit more than three complications within an already existing conflict (the role play conflict *itself* is a complication and usually enough in a real life situation).

**Mental Health Problems:** Role-play characters that are experiencing mental health problems cause the role-play to divert attention to the mental health problem. This really creates a separate role-play. Although in real life individuals often do have these mental health problems (and sometimes exhibit these problems during mediation) to tackle such a set of factors is unfair to the mediator, who is attempting to show his / her basic mediation and conflict resolution skills.