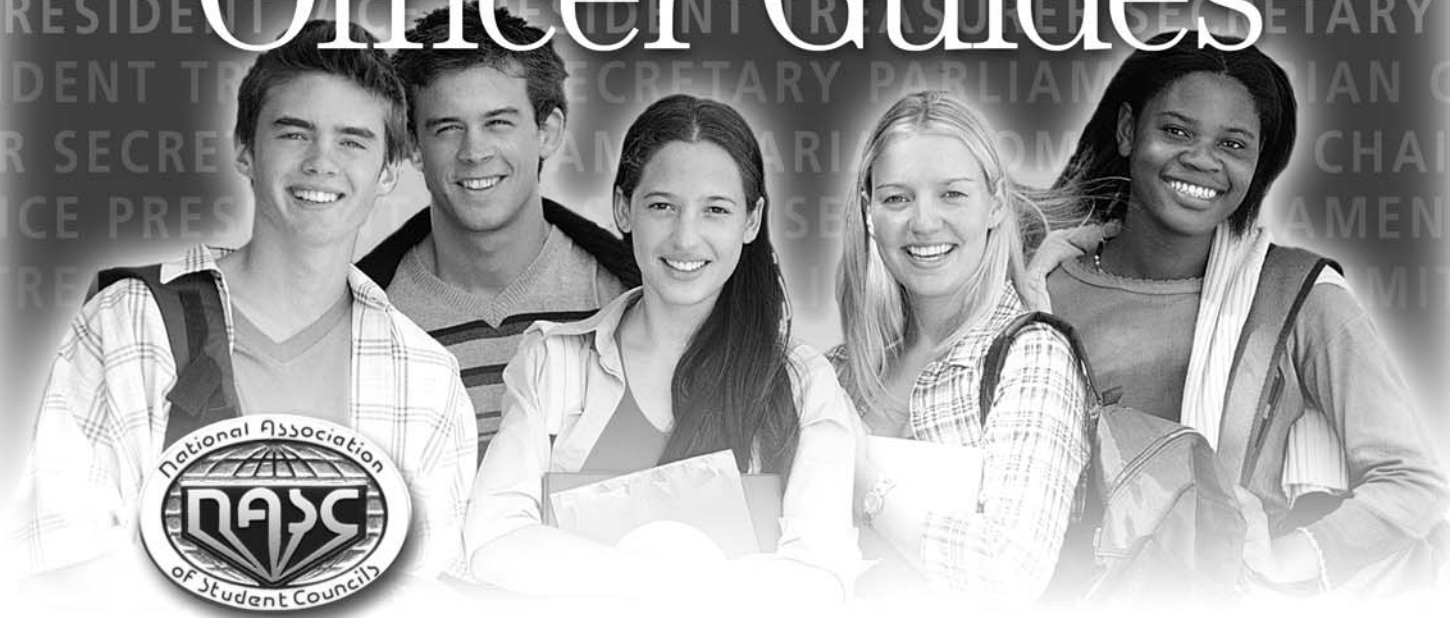


# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT COUNCILS

# Officer Guides



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The National Association of Student Councils (NASC) has created this publication for advisers who have accepted the challenge of managing the student council organization in their schools. This guide provides a comprehensive look at the duties and responsibilities of the major student council offices, along with descriptions and recommendations for the student officers. Brief overviews of each of the offices are available at [www.nasc.us](http://www.nasc.us) in the Adviser Zone.

NASC wishes to thank the many advisers who over the years have loaned their expertise to the association and whose contributions to student council are reflected in these guides. A special salute to Earl Reum, whose passion for student council is unyielding and nearly as old as NASC itself. His early efforts laid the cornerstones for the philosophies and mission of student councils in today's middle level and high schools.

All references in this publication refer to student council as it has been developed by the National Association of Student Councils. Regional terms for student council vary; the term *student council* in this guide applies to any body of elected students serving in secondary schools whether it is called student government, ASB, student congress, or other similar terms.

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# Leadership



“**L**EAD: direct, escort, guide, head, precede, advance, persuade, contribute, serve.”

We know the definition of leader. We started playing the game of “follow the leader” as children and know that a leader leads a group. Most people see leaders as powerful, outgoing, energetic, popular, influential, and possibly aggressive. They see followers as the worker bees, passive and unable to make independent decisions. That view misses the obvious—leaders do not exist without followers! Both are interdependent partners in the leader-follower relationship. So how do you become a leader others want to follow?

There are the leaders who lead by intimidation and fear. We also know leaders who are followed because they are popular, but that popularity does not always continue. How do you become a leader others listen to, work with, and respect? You may already have some instincts of a good leader. What these few short pages will do is help you along the way to developing those skills.

**Good leaders** are always needed. Being a leader means more than winning an election or receiving a title. A leader is someone who directs others in reaching a common goal. In an effective group, any member can be the leader when he or she influences others to help the group reach its goal. But the way a leader leads is very important. A good leader shows respect for other’s gifts and talents by listening, showing sincere interest in what they are saying, and not “tuning out” others when they disagree with him or her.

## Styles of Leadership

There are basically three styles of leadership. No one style is always right for everyone or every situation. The most effective leaders use part of each style in moderation depending upon the situation.

**Autocratic.** The leader has complete authority and control. The leader tells people what to do, gives orders that others carry out, is conscious of position and authority, believes others cannot be trusted, and is interested in making all the decisions.

**Democratic.** The entire group shares in decision making. The leader develops participation and opinion sharing as much as possible, communicates clearly and well, encourages suggestions, and fosters teamwork.

**Laissez-faire.** The leader exerts little influence or control. The leader sits back and gives control to the group, offers little communication, sometimes lacks confidence in his or her ability, sets no clear goals, makes no decisions, and provides little teamwork.

Because leadership skills can be learned, review these styles and think about how they are used in some of the different situations below.

### A leader who **tells**

- Points out a problem, considers solutions, chooses one, and tells the group what to do
- May or may not consider what the group thinks or feels about the decision, but regardless, does not let them decide
- May use or imply coercion
- Assigns roles to members
- Relies on own judgment.

### A leader who **persuades or sells**

- Makes decisions without consulting the group, but instead of “telling” the decision, tries to persuade the group to accept it
- Describes how the decision fits the interest of the group and individual member

A leader who both tells and persuades is more effective in large groups, passive groups, groups that don’t meet often, or at times when a quick decision or deadline must be met.

### A leader who **consults or participates**

- Gives the group a chance to influence the decision from the beginning
- Presents the problem and background information and asks for ideas on solving it
- May offer a solution for the group’s reaction or input
- Encourages the group to increase alternative solutions to consider
- Selects a solution that he or she sees as most promising.

A leader who consults is most effective in large, motivated groups.

A leader who **joins**

- Participates in group discussion as another member, agreeing in advance to carry out the group decision
- Encourages group decision
- Allows for individual recognition
- Tends to guide, not rule
- Often submerges own self in the group's identity.

A leader who **delegates**

- Defines a problem and boundaries to solve it, then leaves it to the group to work out the solution
- Sets few guidelines
- Often does not announce his or her own ideas.

A leader who both joins and delegates is most effective in small, highly motivated groups who need little direction and are comfortable with wide freedom. This type of group is relatively strong and independent, where members have the necessary knowledge and experience to deal with problems and expect to share in decision making.

## Tips for Leaders

Here are some tips to remember to help you become a successful student council leader.

**Involve as many different people as possible.** It may be easier to always call on the people you know you can count on, but everyone has something to contribute and you should let them.

**Don't dictate—delegate.** Discuss and communicate clearly the goals of the task or project, define boundaries, and then be willing to let the delegate make decisions necessary to complete the task or project.

**Pick the right person for a task/project.** Everyone has specific interests and skills: find them and match them with a project. For instance, an artist would be very effective on a decorations committee. Someone who has a very neat locker and is always organized might be an excellent secretary or committee chair to keep everything on task. It is important not to stereotype a person, as each person has more than one thing they are good at or enjoy.

**Monitor progress even though you have delegated a task/project.** As a leader you are ultimately responsible for its success. Set up times and dates by which various parts of a task or project need to be done. If a task or project is not being completed, reevaluate the task or project and possibly delegate its responsibility to a different group member or provide help for the original person.

**Evaluate the task or project.** Keep a written record of how tasks were accomplished. However, do not feel that things must be done exactly as they have been done in the past. Be creative and constantly challenge yourself and traditions.

**Express appreciation.** Thank everyone who contributed to making the project a success. Everyone needs a feeling of accomplishment, especially if you want those involved to contribute again. Use praise effectively so that it encourages performance. Using praise for the sake of trying to show attention to another person is generally ineffective. Keep your praise appropriate and sincere so that it encourages the individual.

**Use criticism effectively.** To bring about better performance, use constructive criticism with a great deal of tact. You should suggest ways to do a job more easily without putting the person on the defensive. Don't use public criticism: try to criticize in private because you don't want to embarrass the person, you want to help them. Allow the other person to give his or her side of the story and avoid arguments.

**Admit your own mistakes.** Many people actually admire a leader for his or her frankness and ability to recognize an error. Admitting mistakes, particularly when you are in a position of authority, reflects positive leadership and builds better relationships with the group members.

**Balance the group's task needs with the interpersonal needs of the individual.** If too much emphasis is placed on a task, members feel they are being used with little concern for them as individuals. When that happens, groups fall apart or work becomes sporadic. Leaders must work on maintaining a healthy leader-follower relationship.

## Hazards of Leadership

Along with the successes and rewards of leadership there are also some hazards. When all is going well and your group is accomplishing its goals and projects successfully, being a leader is great. But there can be drawbacks to being the leader. You may:

- Come to love the power of being the one in charge, become totally autocratic, and misuse the position.
- Get carried away with how important you are and lose sight of the group and its goals. Egotism can overtake anyone at one time or another.
- Not listen to the advice of others, even those with experience and expertise.
- Fail to organize. If you are not organized, you will spend more time than needed on a project and lessen your potential.
- Become frustrated from disappointment with others in the group. Not all group members will respond to the same motivations or work as hard as others do.

## Skills of Leadership

All of this means it is not enough to know your leadership style or which one you want to develop. An effective leader must have a broad range of skills to be successful. Some of these skills you may already have, others you can learn. Many of them are taught in classes. For those fortunate enough to have leadership classes in their schools, many of the skills will be taught in class. Here is a broad list of skills that are useful whether you are the president, the secretary, the committee chair, or a member:

- Organization and planning
- Communication
- Problem solving
- Meeting management
- Time management
- Motivation and team building
- Poise and manners
- Public speaking.

Try to remember that leaders are like other people. Occasionally, we all need help. The idea of a single all-powerful, all-knowing leader is a myth. When we put those expectations on one person, we are unrealistic. In

organizations with rewarding experiences, the members are actively involved, informed, interested in what is going on, and willing to assume the responsibility of leader or follower. Active followers provide a reserve to draw on when there is a need for leadership. Groups that do not prepare for this do so at their own risk. When the designated leader's term of office expires and a new leader is to be elected, the group turns to those who have best shown their leadership skills as dedicated, supportive followers.

Here are some traits of good followers, committee members, or general members:

- They manage themselves well. It is impossible to monitor followers all the time, so they must think for themselves and make decisions when their leader is absent.
- They focus on what needs to be done and raise the standards for completion. They try to solve problems without the help of the leader.
- They are dedicated to their mission and believe what they are doing is worthwhile. They understand that they are responsible if the project fails, not just their leader.
- Leaders must know they can trust their followers to be truthful about problems and give their opinions.

# The Adviser

Student council advisers are usually selected for one of the following reasons:

- You were a member of student council in high school so of course you would make a good adviser
- The teacher you replaced was the student council adviser
- You are new on the faculty and now have the opportunity to be an adviser
- The principal has determined that you would be an excellent adviser
- No one else on the faculty would serve as adviser and you didn't want the students to be deprived of the activity so you agreed to do it
- Students selected you to be their adviser
- You volunteered.

No matter how the principal made the selection, you have the job. In all likelihood you feel ill-prepared for the position; very few teachers have had formal training in how to be an activity adviser. Although there may be many things you don't know about being a student council adviser, if you commit yourself to learn and to help students, you will meet the challenge.

The role of an adviser is complex. The word advise means to give advice, to recommend, to counsel, to inform. There can be a fine line between giving advice and telling students what to do. As adults we already know how to do many things. It is the job of the adviser to let the students figure out how to do things themselves, with some guidance.

As an adviser you will have an opportunity to assist student growth through a variety of experiences. You will be able to assist student development in ways that many classroom teachers are not able to do. But you will always be a teacher who shows students their duties and responsibilities toward themselves and others. As the adviser you supervise, advise, and counsel the students in all their activities, projects, programs, meetings, budget planning, scheduling, and elections.

The adviser's challenge is a delicate balance of leading and encouraging officers, members, and interested students to take on leadership responsibilities. There is also the practical side of being an adviser that requires energy, careful management of time, and a good working relationship with the council and student body. Advisers



must develop both the art and science of advising by trying many ways of approaching problems and analyzing them for solutions.

As in other educational positions, a student council adviser needs basic leadership skills. To be successful as a student council adviser, you need to know how to handle many types of situations. You must be mature and organized, have sound judgment, and have the ability to work with many different kinds of people and personalities. An adviser who lacks these leadership abilities may have a frustrating or disappointing experience working with student council.

## Responsibilities

Formal adviser responsibilities in most schools include:

- Guide and offer suggestions to students
- Encourage students to be thorough and accurate in fulfilling their responsibilities
- Check that members and committees are meeting their goals and deadlines
- Maintain accurate records to help operations
- Assist students involved in budget/financial planning
- Oversee correspondence from the council
- Help in general council management
- Supervise student use of equipment
- Balance having fun and fulfilling goals
- Accompany student council members to various meetings held outside school
- Report to the administration and faculty on the council activities.

## Getting Started

To many new advisers, the job can seem overwhelming. You might be wondering, "How do I get started?" There is no one correct answer to that question. The school circumstances will vary for each adviser. The following suggestions will help guide you as you begin your own personal journey of leadership and work to develop the **leadership of your students.**

**Look at the big picture first—the entire school environment.** Student activities are considered extracurricular in many schools, but in reality they are very much cocurricular. Research has proven that students learning through actual experience is as beneficial—if not more so—than classroom learning. And student council requires skills developed in all of the academic areas. Your role as student council adviser should be viewed as one more opportunity to support the school's mission of educating students.

**Get an overview of student council.** Find out how it relates to the school administration and rules. Read your local student council constitution and check existing rules and parameters set by administrators, the school board, or state laws. Read through the student officer profiles on the NASC Web site ([www.nasc.us](http://www.nasc.us)) in the Adviser Zone and also the more detailed position guides on this disc. These will give you an excellent picture of student council structure. Check to see if the former adviser left a copy of the *NASC Student Council Handbook* or copies of *Leadership for Student Activities* magazine. Both of these are excellent tools for any adviser, new or seasoned. NASC information can also be found on the Web site.

General recommendations for student councils include:

- Council size should be large enough and have enough diversity to represent every student, yet small enough to function properly
- Qualifications for membership should be as open as possible; avoid exclusive restrictions
- Student council, administration, and faculty should respect and understand each other and work together to improve the school
- Clear and constant communication with everyone is key to success
- Councils should meet regularly for a period sufficient to do business and plan events
- Councils should have an assigned area to use as an office for the adviser and officers
- A Constitution outlining council authority and procedures is necessary
- Councils may be involved in coordination with other campus student groups/clubs/organizations
- Council funding can be from various sources: school activity funds, sales, contests, and events
- Projects and events should be well-planned and be models of effective leadership
- Council elections should use democratic principles and practices to be fair and consistent
- Councils should be developed to meet the needs of the school and students

- Councils should evaluate each project and event

**Get to know your officer team as soon as possible.**

Read the past year's student council minutes to see what has been done in the past. Sit down with the student officers who served last year and talk about what procedures were followed and what projects were done. Start to establish a good rapport with your student leaders.

**Find ways to interact and share information with other advisers.** Go first within your own school, then move to district, state, and national levels. Other advisers, whether council advisers or a school club adviser, are a wealth of information.

## Master Plan

Once you have an understanding of the role you have taken on, there are several areas that will need your attention. Develop a master schedule for your activities. There are a multitude of activities on most campuses today and it is imperative that you develop a year-long calendar of student council activities. Check to see if there was a student council master calendar for the previous year. If the principal does not have one, possibly one of the officers who served last year would have a copy. A calendar will be your road map of what to expect for the year.

Use the calendar to start at an event and then work backwards to the start-up time for planning to begin. Avoid conflicts with other activities as much as possible by checking the school's master calendar and ensuring that your dates are listed. Include fundraisers, meetings conferences, and program activities.

## Communication

To have a successful program the students must be a strong and unified group. Communication is a major key to that success. Communication is essential between students and the adviser; the council and the principal; the council and faculty; the council and the community; the council and other student groups. Your council's success requires the constant sharing of information. It can be done using several methods, including publications, the school newspaper, daily announcements, Web sites, e-mail, and in-person communication.

Use the acronym spelled out below to help remember the importance of communicating in student council:

**C**ontinuous information, published at least monthly, better weekly, and possibly daily.

**O**rganize efforts to communicate that an event is worthwhile.

**M**aintain a positive approach when communicating projects or ideas.

Mention the specifics of a project or idea to inform completely.

Understand specific details yourself before communicating them to others.

News must be accurate in all communications.

Involvement is key. Involve as many students within the school as possible, not just council members. Involvement will help build a better school atmosphere.

Capture the interest, make it inviting.

Adaptability and flexibility are essential. Last-minute changes will always arise. Don't panic—adapt!

Teamwork is essential. The whole group should work together toward success.

Eliminate no group or individual from your efforts to involve and inform.

## Projects

For any school organization to be successful, it must be engaged in purposeful activities that reflect the vision and goals of the council and school. Projects will have little impact or influence unless they are seen as meaningful to the council and others. The council should not be simply "busy"; it must accomplish worthwhile goals and contribute to the total development of students or the school. Guiding the students as they work on projects to meet these general and specific goals is an important function of the adviser.

As you have looked over the past year's projects you can get an idea of the type of projects typically done. But do not limit yourself or your students to only those that have been done before. There are as many types of projects as your group's imagination and resources can allow. Let each year's group of students be able to personalize their year of projects.

Below is a list of criteria that should be considered when selecting projects or activities. A project should:

- Grow out of the specific goals and needs of the council, school, or community and from genuine student interests, needs, or concerns
- Be of benefit to the majority, if not all, of the students in the school
- Be practical in purpose and outcome from the students' perspective
- Be beneficial to those who organize the project by helping them grow educationally, emotionally, and socially
- Develop better understanding and cooperation among the students, faculty, staff, administration, and the community

- Be within the ability of the group to achieve
- Be in accordance with school rules and within the law
- Take place within a short enough time span to be achievable.

Forms such as the **Project Planning Guide** and the **Project Task Assignment List** can be invaluable in helping organize projects.

## Project Examples

Student council projects typically fall in one of the following areas:

**Athletics.** Promotes or recognizes intramural or inter-school physical education programs. Projects include such things as a recognition event for teams, faculty versus seniors match, booster buttons, powder puff games, homecoming, field day, and working at the concession stand.

**Citizenship.** Design or work on a program that develops good citizens in a democracy. Projects include such things as a voter awareness day, state or national mock-election, leadership training of civics, voter registration assistance, patriotic assembly, and serving refreshments at polling locations.

**Health and safety.** Designed to present facts regarding student health or safety and develop healthier choices. Projects include such things as a blood drive, wellness day, AIDS awareness day, cancer/leukemia/heart/lung educational awareness day, safe schools week, and substance abuse program/workshop.

**Human relations.** Designed to bring better understanding between individuals or groups within the school or community. Projects include such things as a teacher appreciation activity, canned food drive, coat drive, Thanksgiving or Christmas baskets for the poor, tutoring with Head Start, senior citizen dance, special Olympics, visits to nursing home, food fair/ethnic day, and peer mediation.

**Orientation.** Designed to acquaint new students, faculty, and parents with policies and activities of the council and school. Projects include such things as 8th to 9th grade transition events, freshman orientation, PTA or faculty meeting, and visits to feeder schools to answer questions.

**Service projects.** Designed to offer service to the school, community, or individuals. Projects include Toys-4-Tots, polishing school trophies/cleaning trophy case, school painting, collecting items for needy, walkathons, fundraisers for charity, tutoring, weatherizing senior citizen homes, and trick-or-treating for UNICEF.

**School/Community Relations.** Designed to promote better understanding between the community and school. Projects include such things as community clean-up days, hospital visits, services for shut-ins, sending welcome let-

ters to new students' parents, car washes, serving on city/county/state youth commissions, developing council Web site to share information.

**Social.** Designed to provide social and recreational opportunities for students. Projects include such things as a yearbook signing, mixer dance at beginning of school, kite flying contest, game room, carnival, Easter egg coloring contest, Valentine post office, pizza party, and skating party.

### The 12 Ws of Project Planning

The following 12 questions give student leaders a consistent and logical approach to project planning and can be used by any student who is leading a project planning committee or team. The questions are arranged to help create a blueprint for initiating and carrying out any project. They are not designed to simply walk students through the project from beginning to end. The first nine questions prompt students to examine and provide answers for aspects of both logistical and ancillary needs. After the project is completed, the student organization can use questions 10 through 12 to reflect back and evaluate the project.

1. What are you planning to do?
2. Why do you want to do this project?
3. When and where will the activities or events take place?
4. Who will benefit from the project?
5. Who needs to approve the project?
6. When will the basic planning be done?
7. What funds are needed? When will the money be needed? Who will arrange for getting the money?
8. What committees are necessary? List committees, tasks, chair, and deadlines.
9. What kind of publicity is needed? When is it needed?
10. Who deserves a special thank you? Who will write thank-you notes and when will they be done?
11. Was the project worthwhile? How do you know? What changes are needed?
12. What's next? Where do we go from here?

### Problem Solving

One of the goals as an adviser is to assist the students in learning and using problem solving skills. Problem solving skills are a great asset to them both now while they are still students and once they go out into the world. Problem solving skills will help in all the project planning and committee work of the council throughout the year. In the steps below, remember the rules for brainstorming: suggestions should be creative, spontaneous, and not

judged or discussed at all when given. Problem-solving basics in simple terms are:

**1. Identify the problem.** Brainstorm and develop a list of current concerns or issues for the school, council, or community. (Listing can be done on poster paper, blackboard or whiteboard, etc.) Together, everyone reviews each item to discuss and to prioritize the list. At this point during discussion, items may be dropped from the list.

**2. Analyze the problem.** Brainstorm a list of things that will help with each concern or issue. Create another list of things that could be an obstacle to it. Review each list and prioritize as you did in the first step.

**3. Generate solutions.** Review the lists from the analysis step. Brainstorm a list of ways to reduce or eliminate each obstacle.

**4. Plan of action.** Review the solution list and use the best judgment of the group to choose and list the best solutions. Then build a plan for action showing each problem, issue, or concern, list of helpful things, and also obstacles with possible solutions to make it work.

**5. Forecast consequences of action.** Weigh the possibilities of success against the work required to implement and complete the action. Imagine what could go wrong.

**6. Taking action.** Take the first steps in the selected action plan. Never expect perfection and always work hard to do the best possible job, but realize that some things—the weather, for example—are out of a planner's hands.

**7. Evaluate action plan.** Upon completion of the plan, evaluate what was effective and what could be improved. Write all suggestions and comments down for future use.

By using these steps repeatedly, the students will begin to think and work in this problem-solving process. And that just helps the adviser's job become easier!

### Working as a Group

Council students are often leaders when they become members. Individual leaders may be adept at using their specific skills alone, but they must learn how to use their skills as part of a group. The personal growth of each student leader—becoming part of a team—should be an adviser's major goal.

The group needs common goals and a process to work together. The group must be structured so that members share responsibilities and each member's roles should be defined and understood by all. Each member is important to the success of the whole group. Communication is a vital interaction within the group that must take place to bring members together. Members need to learn to be open and trusting with one another. There

must be a climate of acceptance. An adaptation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a good reference:



Developing leaders to live and work together in a democracy is one of the key components of life in our society. It also underlies the entire concept of student council. We must give our youth opportunities to make decisions if they are to meet the challenges ahead of them. Groups require effective leadership to hold them together and to lead them in the direction they choose to go for the success of common goals.

## Your Role With the Principal

How you and your council work with the principal is an indispensable factor in the success or failure of the group. Responsibility, authority, and control in a secondary school are the primary duties of a principal. Most decisions, however, are not made by one person but are influenced by input from student, teacher, and parent involvement. An understanding must take place between the adviser and council on the role of the principal, who has legal responsibilities for every student in the school. You can't effectively approach the principal with requests from the council without knowing the laws and board of education policies by which your school is governed.

## Financial Oversight

Local policies, state laws, and regulations control record keeping for student activity funds. Check with your school and/or district financial office for those rules. In all cases, ensure that accurate and detailed accounting records and processes are kept. The actual work is usually done by the council treasurer working with the school accountant or bookkeeper. Advisers and student councils must adhere to school and district policies regarding the raising, maintenance, and disbursement of all funds.

Students may come up with many needs for money that require fundraising projects. Discuss with council members why they need the money. This needs assessment will help determine if money is really needed and might also suggest ways to raise it. Because every other group in the school also needs to raise funds, this assessment should be very carefully reviewed with the principal. There are probably specific state, district, or school rules governing what can and cannot be done.

## In Conclusion

A student council adviser has responsibility in the school and is in a position to do enormous good. The adviser's personal attitudes influence the school leaders and can carry through to the entire student body. Student council can be the very best tool for teaching democratic principals and practices with the council members the student body. Modeling is the best technique for influencing students.

The adviser adds the adult maturity needed to ground the council. Often that maturity can bring common sense to any spur-of-the-moment student decisions. Advisers need to encourage cautious deliberation and thinking. The adviser is the indirect leader of the council—always there with input to help student leaders come up with activities, projects, events, and goals that are practical, realistic, worthwhile, fun, and inclusive.

The job of adviser may be difficult at times, but it is one that is also exciting and full of many rewards. The concept of student activities is students being involved in their education and having a voice in decisions that make a difference in their lives. For secondary schools to be successful, they need the involvement of their students—the students are the biggest stakeholders at the school!

As you begin to have a feel for being a student council adviser, you will become just that—an adviser. You should not be a worker but one who is always there to steer and guide your students. Don't be afraid to pitch in and work as part of the team, but do not take away their work or the feeling of accomplishment they gain by doing it themselves.

As with the students, you will make mistakes. Do not let them get you down. With the help of students and others, mistakes can be corrected or learned from, and the lessons learned can be applied to future endeavors. Always keep your sense of humor.

The student council adviser has a challenging job, but also one of the most rewarding in education.

## The Student Leader's Code of Ethics

Student council leaders are public officials who must hold themselves to a high standard because they serve as role models for other students. If they are to lead effectively and hold the confidence and respect of those they serve, their conduct must conform to an ethical code. An ethical code is a set of guidelines that serves as a guidepost for the day-to-day behavior of persons holding leadership positions.

Each school should develop its own code of ethical conduct for student leaders. Respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, caring, and citizenship are the basis for an ethical code, which could include items such as those found on the following list.

As a student leader, I will:

- Be courteous, honest, and fair with others.
- Treat others with respect and act with respect for the property of others.
- Communicate in an appropriate, purposeful, and positive manner.
- Appreciate and promote diversity in the student council.
- Develop positive relationships with students, advisers, teachers, and administrators.

- Respect that the position I hold carries certain privileges; I will avoid any abuse of authority arising from my role.
- Conduct myself at all times to be a credit to my organization, school, community, and family.

No written formulas can cover all of the challenges that may face student leaders. Your council leadership should develop an expectation that student leaders will exercise good judgment and take personal responsibility for decisions that affect their ability to serve as leaders. (For more information about developing an ethics code, see the *Student Council Handbook*.)

# Project Planning Guide

Name of Project: \_\_\_\_\_ Proposed Date and Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**Objectives/Goals:**

**A. Why are we doing this project?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Who will benefit from this project?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**C. Support. Ask the groups who will benefit from your project to pledge their support.**

**Needs/Tasks**

**A. Fact Finding.** How can your group find out more about the project—its possible good and bad points—in order to be prepared?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Approval. Whose approval do you need to conduct the project?**

Approval Needed?	Deadline	Person Assigned	Okay?
Principal			
Adviser			
Executive Committee			
General Assembly			
Student Body			
Other			

**C. Resources.** What resources will be needed for this project?

Resources Needed	Where to Locate	Person to Obtain	Okay?
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			



**D. Budget.** This must be clearly planned and itemized.

Item to be Purchased	Anticipated Cost	Deadline	Buyer	Amount Paid
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

**E. Publicity.** What types of publicity do you need? What will be most suitable to the project and the audience?

Item	Person Responsible	Deadline
Handouts		
P.A. Announcements		
Bulletin Boards/Website		
Newspaper Articles		
Mass Media (radio, TV)		
Other (be creative!)		

# The President



**Y**ou did it! You've been announced as the new president. You can hardly believe it. After weeks of hard work and campaigning, you've actually won the office. Everyone congratulates you and tells you they know you'll do a good job, and you resolve to do the best job you can. As the excitement begins to fade, you begin thinking about the job ahead. For a moment you may panic. "What do I do now?!"

Now the work and the fun begins. You will be expected to:

- Know nearly everything about every subject
- Spend your time planning, organizing, listening, and, of course, studying
- Be everywhere, do everything, be popular, admired, cheered, and possibly ridiculed and maligned
- Walk a tightwire between right and wrong, best and worst, greatness and pettiness, humility and pride, achievements and goofs
- Learn from both success and failure.

In short, you will be expected to lead.

**Leadership development** is a lifetime journey, not a brief trip. You are beginning your own personal journey of leadership! To help you along on your journey, this guide outlines the skills you will need to be an effective president and provides resources where you can find answers to your questions.

## Tools of the Trade

A student council president is not like many of the other officers who focus on a specific skill or area, such as the secretary, treasurer, and parliamentarian. The president must know a little about all of those offices and skills. The president's main goal is to lead, inspire, guide, speak, and use all the basic leadership skills. A good president should:

- Be familiar with your council and school district structure, council constitution, and bylaws because you must work within the parameters of these set structures. Check with your adviser for a copy of the council constitution or look on your council Web site. The constitution outlines your responsibilities, your role in the school, and the authority of the adviser and the principal. Another good resource is to review the past year's meeting minutes. Become very

familiar with your role; it could save you time and energy to find out if something has already been done or it is against a set structure to do.

- Realize that your responsibilities extend beyond the students within the student council. An important responsibility of a president is to serve as a spokesperson for the student body at large, since representing the students is the primary goal of the student council organization. Make an inviting atmosphere in which all students may attend council meetings or work on a committee. The more students involved, the easier the work and the better the whole school environment will become.
- Know yourself, your limitations, and your strong points. You must be mature, be organized, have sound judgment, and have the ability to work with many different kinds of people and personalities. Use your strengths and ask other officers to manage projects that are in your weaker areas. You may be a skilled speaker and communicator but lack great organization skills. Turn to your secretary or another officer to help keep you organized so things are not missed. You may also only know the basics of budgeting or accounting, so turn it over to the treasurer and adviser.
- Create a balance between leading and encouraging other officers, members, and interested students to take on leadership responsibilities. There is also the practical side of being president that requires energy, careful management of time, and a good relationship with the council and student body. Your own personality should show through—don't try and be something you are not, because people see through that.

## Duties of the President

Check the constitution at your school for specific duties of the president. A president's duties usually include the following:

**Plan and conduct meetings with other officers.** Work with the secretary, treasurer, vice president, and adviser to

prepare an agenda for officer (executive council) meetings and general council meetings. See the **meeting agenda** guidelines for ideas of what should be included in a meeting agenda and how to format the agenda for distribution.

Make sure expectations for each officer at the meeting are defined and their roles are clearly understood. The officer meetings can be more informal but if discussions get out of hand, you may need to use parliamentary procedure to keep things under control. General council meetings are usually more structured and parliamentary procedure or other meeting rules are needed. However, these rules should not be so formal as to limit input from the members.

As president, it is your responsibility to conduct productive, useful, orderly, and democratic meetings. Keep the meeting centered on its business, maintain rules of order with courtesy, withhold your own involvement in discussion, encourage involvement of others, and help members understand the problems or issues better. The president should:

- Encourage expression of individual ideas
- Provide for membership involvement
- Make every meeting worthwhile for the participants
- Stress consensus in decisions.

One of the most important tasks of the president is to preside over meetings with a democratic group atmosphere. Your council meetings should be a time in which:

- Ideas are reviewed by their merit rather than on the status of the person who proposed the idea
- The agenda is followed and discussion is not allowed to jump to other topics not currently being considered
- Adequate time is allocated to discuss each agenda item while adhering to the time restrictions of the meeting
- Decisions are made by the whole group with each member participating
- Both quantity and quality of work are expected
- Spontaneous ideas are exchanged
- The leader is objective rather than subjective in praise and criticism
- The leader functions as a regular group member, sharing work with the group
- Genuine interest in work produces high motivation
- Creative thinking continues with or without the leader present
- Effective leadership stimulates awareness of those outside the group and the needs of the student body at large.

**Coordinate the work of the council through the other officers and committees.** No president—or any other officer—can do it all alone. Successful leadership of a council takes a team. It is the president's role to coordinate all the work and follow up to ensure that it is being done. If someone needs assistance, find a way to provide it, either through your own help or that of another member. Attend committee meetings as possible, but do not attend so much that members are looking to you for direction and not to the committee chair. Remember: you can't do it all. You need to rely on your officers, chairs, and members to take responsibility for and ownership of their own work.

The vice president should be your right-hand person. In addition to standing ready to take over presidential duties when you are unable to do them, a vice president should have specific responsibilities. Plan to meet with the vice president before the school year or term of office begins. Determine the role and the specific responsibilities she or he will hold. Look to any weakness that you may have that the vice president may be strong in. Also, in many councils, it is the vice president who oversees the work of all committees, along with reporting, scheduling, and recruiting volunteers. This allows the president to have more time to be the spokesperson for the council and student body.

**Give assistance, guidance, and praise when appropriate.** When you see a need, fill it. It could be in the form of helping yourself or finding someone else to help. Never feel that a job is beneath you: you are there to serve and be a positive role model. If work needs to be done, help. When guidance is needed on how or why, give it. Always show appropriate appreciation and praise for the work of council members.

**Act as a facilitator of group discussion by summarizing and clarifying.** Many members will not be as familiar as you or the officers with the discussion topics or the rules the council must operate under (e.g., constitution and bylaws). You need to clearly and concisely explain each discussion item and answer questions that arise.

**Maintain frequent contact with faculty and administrators.** The best councils work in cooperation with teachers and administrators to fulfill their mission and projects. The faculty and administrators have been there before you and will be there after you have gone. They have experience that can help you and your council be successful. They are also there to assist you to grow in personal leadership skills. Plan and schedule as many interactions with these adults as possible.

**Work closely with the student council adviser on all planning.** The best advocate for an officer, especially the president, is the adviser. He or she is your first line of authority within the school and is there to guide the coun-

cil. Your adviser is probably most aware of what will work, what has been tried before, and how the school works. You must have a positive working relationship with your adviser to get things done. Whenever you're in doubt about a rule or procedure, use your adviser as a resource.

**Keep the principal informed of student council activities.** Set up a meeting with the principal before school begins. Exchange goals for the council and school for the coming year and discuss how you can work together to make them happen. Meet regularly with the principal to review progress, concerns, or updates on projects.

**Be a spokesperson for the student council at school, community, and civic organization meetings.** You are the student representative of the school. As such, you will be involved in community events and that includes meetings. If you show interest in their events, they will be interested in you and your school events. Be visible in a positive way. Be involved.

**Participate in student council-sponsored activities.** Your participation as a member in any activity will encourage others to be involved. This is also a great way to know students in general, in a less formal way than at meetings. Make sure to take advantage of the fun part of activities.

**Impartially select responsible individuals to serve on essential committees to achieve council goals.** Your knowledge of human nature and personalities are extremely important here. The selection of committee chairs and members is the backbone of all the work of the council. Projects can either succeed or fail depending on your selection.

There should be two goals in selection of members:

1. The person must be willing, able, and trustworthy to complete his or her responsibilities for the project.
2. Share the workload among many students. Do not always pick the same overworked people. It may be easier to pick friends, but the more people you involve, the more creative and less stagnant the projects will be. Encourage volunteers to share the workload.

**Select energetic, self-starting, cooperative, responsible chairs to guide the committees.** Selection of chairs should be similar to selection of committee members. The added dimension is that they must possess quality leadership skills to get the best work from the committee. (See **committee chair profile**.)

**Prepare evaluations of council activities, meetings, and goals.** This is an important step for each activity, meeting, or goal. Every council needs a plan to improve its activities and likewise improve each individual's skills. To do this, an evaluation must be done as soon as the activity, meeting, or project has been completed so that everything that happened is fresh members' minds. The evaluation can be formal, informal, verbal, or written. It must be conducted in a positive manner so that it does not point blame at an individual or group if the activity has not gone well. This is a learning experience to help in the future. Go over each part of the activity or meeting and ask for positive comments from everyone or helpful suggestions on how it could be done better. Forms such as the **Project Evaluation** form can be invaluable in helping to complete an effective evaluation.

**Meet deadlines and achieve goals.** A president must be punctual, reliable, and trustworthy. Do not be late to meetings or with deadlines unless prior notification has been given to the adviser or vice president to assume the presidential duties. All council members must meet deadlines or the work of the council can topple like a house of cards. As president, you set the standard for meeting deadlines. Promise only what can be delivered and then follow through with the promise.

To keep track of all the obligations and deadlines you will have as president, you will need to make use of a time management system. This can be a paper document as simple as a calendar with days marked in hours. Or it can be more technologically advanced such as a computer program like Microsoft Outlook's calendar or a PDA or Blackberry. Select one that leaves enough space to write in your scheduled appointments, meetings, and activities. This should be used for your council work, personal commitments, and school academic work.

Check here for a **sample weekly planner** and for tips on **scheduling regular meetings**.

The honor of being president carries responsibilities for hard work, dedication, and determination. It takes time, energy, enthusiasm, and personal commitment. You need to know your abilities, strengths, and weaknesses and how to apply them to your position. You need to learn from the successes and failures of yourself and your council. Listen to and trust in yourself, council members, and fellow students. Your goals should be those that will best serve the student body you serve. Your challenge is to care enough to win victories for others by doing those things that help them to succeed.

# Project Evaluation

Attach any related information information to this report, such as planning sheets, copies of purchase orders, etc.

Project: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluation completed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_

How would you rate this project?       outstanding       good       needs improvement

How would you the students rate this project?       outstanding       good       needs improvement

How would the faculty rate this project?       outstanding       good       needs improvement

List all the things about your project you would do again.

List all the things about your project that should be changed next year.

List any special recommendations or ideas for next year's committee.

List all the people, businesses, or groups that should be thanked for their part in this project.

# Meeting Agenda

The agenda is a list of things to accomplish during a meeting. Items are listed in the order they will be considered. There is a specific order of items that is usually used, but variations can be made. Plan the agenda well in advance of the meeting to be able to distribute and post it before the meeting. This will allow members to plan their attendance and also allow those who are asked to report during the meeting to be prepared. The order and items in a standard agenda include:

- Call to Order.** Official opening of the meeting by the presiding officer.
- Roll Call.** Read by the secretary, who reports whether a “quorum” exists (more than half of the members must be present to conduct any official business, like motions).
- Review of Agenda.** Asking the attendees/members to review the agenda and see if there are items to be added or deleted. Both addition and deletion require a motion and vote to do so.
- Reading Minutes.** Minutes are the record of what took place at the last meeting. The minutes are read by the secretary. If minutes have been distributed to everyone, it may not be necessary to read them aloud. Instead, the presiding officer may refer to the minutes and ask the audience/members if there are any corrections that need to be made. Any changes that are mentioned are reviewed by the presiding officer and forwarded to the secretary if there needs to be a change. If there are no changes, the presiding officer says, “Minutes stand as presented.” If there are needed changes, the presiding officer says, “Minutes will be amended to say...” A motion should be made and seconded to approve the minutes, either as presented or as amended.
- Officers’ reports.** Each officer should report on his or her work since the previous meeting. Officer reports should be brief, possibly with a time limit. To save time and ensure accuracy, they should be given in writing with a verbal summary or explanation. If an officer makes a recommendation, its form and content should resemble a committee recommendation. After the report is given, the chairperson should restate the recommendation in the form of a main motion and ask for a second.
- Standing Committee Reports.** Each standing committee should give a report on its work since the previous meeting. Standing committees include committees that serve all year and are usually mentioned in the constitution/bylaws. The rules that apply are the same as those of the officer reports.
- Special Committee Reports.** Special committees are appointed for a limited time and specific purpose, and their existence terminates with their final report to the assembly. These reports should also be in writing with a verbal summary.
- A detailed committee report that offers a recommendation for the assembly should include:
- A description of the way in which the committee undertook its task
  - The information gathered and/or the facts discovered
  - The findings or conclusions derived from the facts or information
  - Resolutions or recommendations.
- Unfinished Business.** This should include any items that were not completed at the last meeting or any ongoing business. Items may be listed in any order along with the person who will be giving the report.
- New Business.** This can be new items from the officer team, adviser, committee, or other members that need to be addressed or reported on to the entire council. New business can be submitted prior to the meeting when the agenda is being developed or it can be given at the beginning of the meeting and handwritten into the agenda. If more information is needed, the item can be left unfinished and be taken up under old business at the next meeting.
- Announcements.** Reminders of upcoming events, programs, or messages from the principal or adviser.
- Adjournment.** Formal closure of the meeting by the presiding officer. Adjournment ends not only the meeting but also the session. The next time the assembly convenes, it must start from the beginning of the agenda. There is no debate on a motion to adjourn.

# Weekly Day Planner

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
<b>DATE:</b>							
7:30a							
8:00a							
8:30a							
9:00a							
9:30a							
10:00a							
10:30a							
11:00a							
11:30a							
Noon							
12:30p							
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4:30p							
5:00p							
5:30p							
6:00p							
6:30p							
7:00p							
7:30p							
8:00p							
8:30p							
9:00p							

## Tips for Scheduling Regular Meetings

Consider the following list of people, groups, and meetings you might need to schedule regular meetings with. Block their meeting times out on your schedule.

**Council officer and adviser meeting.** Schedule a specific period in the school day, if possible, or a specific time before or after school. Meet with everyone at least once per week for discussion and updates. Communication by phone, e-mail, or individual personal conversations should take place as needed.

**Principal meeting.** When you meet with the principal the first time, set up a specific time for regular meetings. The principal has the obligation and responsibility for the entire school, the building, faculty, administrators, and students. It is only through cooperation and a good working relation with the principal that the student council can be successful.

**School board and district office.** Find out their meeting schedule and attend as an observer, at least occasionally. This will let them get to know you, and you will have an idea of their work and procedures. If there comes a time when you need to do a presentation to the board or district, it will be less intimidating if you have already been to a meeting.

**Community and charity organizations.** It is useful to attend these meetings occasionally also for the same reasons. Attend such groups as the City Council, Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, League of Women Voters, Special Olympics, Red Cross, March of Dimes, and Junior League, to name just a few.

**School organizations.** Don't forget to attend and know the leader of each student organization at school including athletic teams, FBLA, DECA, FCCLA, HOSA, drama club, choir, newspaper, and band.

Working with all these groups will make the job of president much easier. Of course, that also means busier!

# The Vice President



**C**ongratulations on your election to the position of vice president! Now the work, challenges, and fun begin. The vice president's primary and very necessary position is to be the official replacement for the president should the president fail to function or be unable to fulfill responsibilities. This job is viewed by many as insignificant and nothing more than a popular figurehead position.

It doesn't need to be that way. The vice president, more than any other officer, has the opportunity to be creative in the position beyond the primary job description. The vice president is the president's closest student adviser and assistant. The vice president and president must work very closely together to create a productive student council. The president can't be everywhere and do everything required of the council's leader. There must also be another—a vice president—to assist and lead.

## Tools of the Trade

A student council vice president is not like many of the other officers who focus on a specific skill or area, such as the secretary, treasurer, and parliamentarian. The vice president must know a little about all of those offices and skills. Like the president, the vice president's main goal is to lead, inspire, guide, speak, and use all the basic leadership skills. A good vice president should:

- Realize that your responsibilities extend beyond the students within the student council. An important responsibility of a vice president is to serve as a spokesperson for the student body at large, since representing the students is the primary goal of the student council organization. Make an inviting atmosphere in which all students may attend council meetings or work on a committee. The more students involved, the easier the work and the better the whole school environment will become.
- Create a delicate balance between leading and encouraging other officers, members, and interested students to take on leadership responsibilities. There is also the practical side of being vice president that requires energy, careful management of time, and a good relationship with the council and student body. Your own personality should show through—don't try and be something you are not, people see through that.

- Work with the president to take on duties outside of filling-in for or replacing the president. Your organization and leadership abilities will be needed to organize others and oversee committees.

## Duties of the Vice President

Check the constitution at your school for specific duties of the vice president. A vice president's duties usually include the following:

### **Be prepared to assume the president's duties when necessary.** (Read the President's Guide for reference.)

Work with the secretary, treasurer, vice president, and adviser to prepare an agenda for officer (executive council) meetings and general council meetings. Make sure expectations for each officer at the meeting are defined and their roles are clearly understood. The officer meetings can be more informal, but if discussions get out of hand, you may need to use parliamentary procedure to keep things under control. General council meetings are usually more structured and parliamentary procedure or other meeting rules are needed. However, these rules should not be so formal as to limit input from the members.

When presiding over a meeting, it is your responsibility to ensure that it is productive, useful, orderly, and democratic. Keep the meeting centered on its business, maintain rules of order with courtesy, withhold your own involvement in discussion, encourage involvement of others, and help members understand the problems or issues better. You should:

- Encourage expression of individual ideas
- Provide for membership involvement
- Make every meeting worthwhile for the participants
- Stress consensus in decisions.

**Work closely with the president and have frequent scheduled meetings.** Meet with the president as much as possible, but at least weekly. These can be quick update meetings on who is doing what, when, or longer in-depth meetings as needed. You can meet at school or at home, whichever works better for both. But it should be a place conducive to one-on-one discussions.

**Coordinate the work of the committees and possibly chair a committee yourself.** The work of the committees is the backbone of a student council—this is where the work gets done. It is your responsibility to organize and keep track of the committee work and reports.

Go over the committee goals with each chair and help set up their schedule of work and reports. Each chair is responsible for his or her committee's work. You are there to assist and advise when they need help. Forms such as the **Committee Assignment and Work Sheet** for Initial Planning and the **Committee Timeline Form** can help you and the committee chairs plan and keep track of the work of the committees. See also **Project Planning Guide**. Help the chair and the committees define and understand their roles. Make sure the chairs clearly understand their responsibilities so they:

- Know what resources are available
- Know to whom the committee reports
- Know when the committee should make decisions and when it should make recommendations to the council for decisions
- Ensure that written reports are complete and on time
- Give oral reports at council meetings
- Set deadlines for the committee work
- Assist the progress of the group toward workable solutions.

Set up a regular schedule of meetings that will include all chairs. At each of these meetings, have chairs give progress reports. This will allow the entire group to see how things are progressing; offer any suggestions, assistance, or praise; or possibly get ideas for their own committee. This helps give the chairs an overview of all that is going on and who is doing what. It also helps keep project work from overlapping.

You may also chair a committee such as an interclub committee. This committee has a president or officer of each school club as a member. This informational meeting can be held monthly to go over and coordinate, if needed, any activity that a club is sponsoring. This committee can help clubs avoid competing for students' time or funds at the same time. It therefore maximizes the work of each club.

**Serve as ex-officio on each committee and attend as much as possible.** It is best to set up a schedule where you can attend at least one committee per week. There may be times when a committee seems to be having difficulty and you may need to attend to see what assistance you can offer.

**Give assistance, guidance, and praise when appropriate. When you see a need, fill it.** It could be in the form of helping yourself or finding someone else to help. Never

feel that a job is beneath you to do: you are there to serve and be a positive role model, so if work needs to be done, help. When guidance is needed on how or why, give it. Always show appropriate appreciation and praise for the work of council members.

**Act as a facilitator of group discussion by summarizing and clarifying.** Many members will not be as familiar as you or the officers with the discussion topics or the rules the council must operate under (e.g., constitution and bylaws). You need to clearly and concisely explain each discussion item and answer questions that arise.

**Maintain frequent contact with faculty members and administrators.** The best councils work in cooperation with teachers and administrators to fulfill their mission and projects. The faculty and administrators have been there before you and will be there after you have gone. They have experience that can help you and your council be successful. They are also there to assist you to grow in personal leadership skills. Plan and schedule as many interactions with these adults as possible.

**Work closely with the student council adviser on all planning.** The best advocate for an officer, especially the president or vice president, is the adviser. He or she is your first line of authority within the school and is there to guide the council. Your adviser is probably most aware of what will work, what has been tried before, and how the school works. You must have a positive working relationship with your adviser to get things done. Whenever you're in doubt about a rule or procedure, use your adviser as a resource.

**Be a spokesperson for the student council at school, community, and civic organization meetings.** The president will not be able to attend all the events or meetings at which attendance is needed or requested. You will need to coordinate with the president, during your weekly meeting, a schedule of who can and will attend each one. It is important for the student council to have a presence in the community and be known by the students and community members.

**Participate in student council-sponsored activities.** Your participation as a member in any activity will encourage others to be involved. This is also a great way to know students in general, in a less formal way than at meetings. Make sure to take advantage of the fun part of activities.

**Serve as needed as the parliamentarian or meeting manager to keep meetings operating smoothly.** There may be guidelines within your school constitution to elect or select an officer to serve as parliamentarian. If this is the case, then you will not need to be the primary meeting manager. But you still should know the basics of parliamentary procedure or other meeting management tools.

*Roberts Rules of Order* is a book that is widely used, but it is not a quick reference. Several Web sites and books give the basics of meeting management, including *Parliamentary Procedure Without Stress*, which is available from the NASC sales office. See the parliamentary handbook for more information.

**Meet deadlines and achieve goals.** A vice president must be punctual, reliable, and trustworthy. Do not be late to meetings or with deadlines unless prior notification has been given to the adviser or president. All council members must meet deadlines or the work of the council can topple like a house of cards. As vice president, you help set the

standard for meeting deadlines. Promise only what can be delivered and then follow through with the promise.

To keep track of all the obligations and deadlines you will have as vice president, you will need to make use of a time management system. This can be a paper document as simple as a calendar with days marked in hours or it can be more technologically advanced, such as a computer program like Microsoft Outlook's Calendar or a PDA or a Blackberry. Select one that leaves enough space to write in your scheduled appointments, meetings, and activities. This should be used for your council work, personal commitments, and school academic work. Check here for a **sample weekly planner**.



**Steps to accomplish plan:**

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) \_\_\_\_\_

(for a large project/assignment use more space on another paper)

**Person(s) responsible for each step** (full name)

- |          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| 1) _____ | 2) _____  |
| 3) _____ | 4) _____  |
| 5) _____ | 6) _____  |
| 7) _____ | 8) _____  |
| 9) _____ | 10) _____ |

**Requirements of plan** (personnel, equipment, materials):

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) \_\_\_\_\_



# Committee Timeline

Committee name: \_\_\_\_\_

Committee chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Scheduled meeting date/time/place: \_\_\_\_\_

Attendees: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Tasks for Plan 1****Deadline for completion**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Person(s) responsible for Plan 1 \_\_\_\_\_

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**Tasks for Plan 2****Deadline for completion**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Person(s) responsible for Plan 2 \_\_\_\_\_

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**Tasks for Plan 3****Deadline for completion**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Person(s) responsible for Plan 3 \_\_\_\_\_

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**Tasks for Plan 4**

**Deadline for completion**

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Person(s) responsible for Plan 4 \_\_\_\_\_

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**Tasks for Plan 5**

**Deadline for completion**

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Person(s) responsible for Plan 5 \_\_\_\_\_

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**Tasks for Plan 6**

**Deadline for completion**

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Person(s) responsible for Plan 6 \_\_\_\_\_

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**Tasks for Plan 7**

**Deadline for completion**

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Person(s) responsible for Plan 7 \_\_\_\_\_

**Submit copies of this completed form to the Vice-President and Adviser.**

# The Treasurer



**C**ongratulations on your election to the position of student council treasurer! Now the work, challenges, and fun begin. The treasurer's primary responsibility is to keep accurate records of all financial transactions of the student council and periodically report a summary of these transactions at meetings. The treasurer predicts how money will be used in the future and makes concrete suggestions for saving money and increasing efficiency. To do the job correctly, a treasurer must keep track of all expenditures and add the appropriate transactions to the books. The treasurer should be the person concerned with regulating the flow of money, especially when many people want to spend it. The treasurer must follow good fiscal practices; exercise sound accounting judgment; and be honest, accurate, and dependable. The treasurer is the most important technical position in any organization.

As treasurer, you will be expected to:

- Be the chief financial officer for your student council
- Know nearly everything about money, accounting, and budgeting
- Be called upon to give financial advice
- Be able to research and develop cost analysis
- Keep accurate records of the council's finances.

Leadership development is a lifetime journey, not a brief trip. You are beginning your own personal journey of leadership! To help you along on your journey, this guide outlines the skills you will need to be an effective treasurer and provides resources where you can find answers to your questions.

## Tools of the Trade

There are several skills and items you will need to do your job correctly. Some items you may not have easy access to, but most are readily available either within your school or library.

- The most basic and fundamental function of your position as treasurer is to keep track of all the council's funds. To do this, you must have at least a basic understanding of good accounting or bookkeeping practices and procedures. You can set up your own system using a spreadsheet program, purchase a computer program that is specifically designed for financial matters, or use a traditional bookkeeping

ledger. The ledger should contain accurate records of all transactions, money received, and money spent.

- Make sure you also have accounting and bookkeeping references easily accessible to you. These can be in books or through the computer.
- Know the policies and procedures for the school, the district, and the state regarding acceptable account processes for student accounts. Consult with your school's bookkeeper or business manager to determine what specific policies are applicable in your school for such things as purchase orders, paying invoices, and depositing cash.
- A receipt book is essential for recording all monies the council receives. These receipts should be in triplicate with the original going to the person paying the money, a copy to the school bookkeeper, and a copy remaining in the council files.
- Access to a computer and printer either at school or home is necessary. If they are compatible, it may work to keep information on both and move items between them by e-mail or disk. A handheld calculator is also recommended.
- Hard-copy records of all financial matters for the council must be kept in a financial notebook.

## Duties of the Treasurer

**Work closely with the student council president and adviser on all planning.** As treasurer you, with the adviser, will guide the president on all financial matters. This is extremely important as so many goals of the council depend on adequate finances. To plan effectively, the treasurer will determine the financial implications for any action or activity of the council.

Your role will be especially important when planning the council's budget. The process of determining the council's budget should rest with a budget or finance committee guided by the treasurer and the adviser. When you start to prepare the annual budget, you will need to review the expenses of the previous year as well as previous budgets. Have each committee submit requests for project money that they will need throughout the year.

Also take into consideration operational costs using former budgets/financial reports as a guide. Look for areas that could be cut, list priorities, and determine the amount of money needed for each activity. Include extra money for unexpected items or projects. Estimate the amount of revenue you can anticipate from revenue-generating activities such as dances or fundraisers.

Using all of this information, put together a budget using a computer spreadsheet. Determine income and expenses, see how they can balance, and make recommendations to the adviser, council, and principal. The group may find too many expenditures and not enough income and need to make adjustments or some deletions. (See **sample budget format**.)

**Work with the school financial officer or bookkeeper on acceptable procedures.** Each school manages student finances differently according to state or district laws. But all use basic accounting practices common to good money management. You must know acceptable school procedures and basic planning and budgeting techniques. Whenever you have a question, ask the school financial official responsible for working with you. This person will be your most valuable resource in helping you properly keep the financial records, follow the correct procedures, and learn more about the world of accounting.

Before you start your job as treasurer, check last years budget and financial reports. Review them with an adult who is knowledgeable and experienced with accounting procedures. This may be an accounting teacher, your adviser, or the school/district financial person. They can help you determine if there need to be modifications or if there is anything new in the accounting or school procedures.

Students cannot enter into a legal contract or payment for services or products on behalf of the school. Be sure that council projects are entered into legally by an adult. A district or school financial officer knows regulations, always work with them.

School districts are usually tax-exempt. Learn from the school financial officer how and when this can be used when dealing with outside business.

**Keep accurate, complete, up-to-date records of all student council funds.** Maintaining an accurate and detailed financial record requires some sort of bookkeeping ledger, either a traditional ledger—available at any office supply store—or a software program that will allow you to track finances. You can set up your own system using a spreadsheet program, or purchase a program such as *Quicken* or *Quick Books* that is specifically designed for financial matters. There are many accounting, bookkeeping, or spreadsheet software packages available. Your school probably has at least one that can be used for your reporting needs. If you are not familiar with the type at school, find the software manual or have a teacher show

you how to use it. Hopefully, whatever software package is at school you can also have on your home computer. This will make entry and reporting much easier if it can be done at either place.

The council's financial ledger should contain accurate records of all transactions, money received, and money spent. Keep all the records up-to-date so you can help keep the council out of any financial difficulties or at least get them corrected quickly. Make frequent deposits of funds, keep receipts, and keep track of everything in written records.

Whether accounting by hand in an accounting book or by computer, you must keep a hard copy notebook of reports for your use. This can be computer printouts or standard accounting forms. This financial report notebook will allow you to make changes/notations on the reports as needed to update even if you do not have immediate access to a computer. (See **sample ledger for deposits and withdrawals**.)

**Review and evaluate budget requests for committee projects by their cost and potential benefit to the council/school and make recommendations for future activities.** This may be one of the most time-consuming responsibilities you will have. A committee must submit a proposed budget whenever it is planning a project or event. That budget should be reviewed carefully to check for accuracy and completeness. To do this you will need to do more than just look at the figures. You will also have to discuss the project or event with the committee chair and have it described to you to make sure nothing has been overlooked. Sometimes just in the discussion, the chair remembers an item that is needed but was not noted on the budget. It is a good way to double check. If the project has been done before, also take into consideration operational costs using former budgets/financial reports as a guide.

Whether accounting by hand in an accounting book or by computer, you must keep a hard copy notebook of reports for your use. This can be computer printouts or standard accounting forms. This financial report notebook will allow you to make changes/notations on the reports as needed to update even if you do not have immediate access to a computer. (See **sample ledger for deposits and withdrawals**.)

There may be many reasons not to do a project or hold an event. One major reason would be that it was not financially sound. Sometimes if the project is deemed worthy enough, the project may proceed even if it will lose or cost money. Most often, the project should at least cover its costs, unless it was planned for in the council's budget. Determine income and expenses; see how they balance; and make recommendations to the adviser, council, and if appropriate the principal. When you analyze income and expense for any activity, it gives you an objective picture of what the council can afford. (See **sample budget format**.)

**Aid the fundraising committee.** Most student councils have a standing fundraising committee. Its sole task is to raise funds for the council, a worthy cause, or charity. The treasurer can serve as chair of this committee or at least serve as an ex-officio officer on it. As with other committees, the treasurer reviews proposed fundraising projects for their financial feasibility and makes recommendations.

Check your adviser's bookshelf or the NASC publications for fundraising project ideas and procedures. Local charities have officials who can help with procedures.

**Keep the principal informed of student council activities and financial status.** Each school has different methods and this may be the treasurer's responsibility or the adviser's. Check with your adviser to see how it is handled at your school. But this usually involves scheduled written reports to the principal that the treasurer is at least responsible for preparing.

**Keep detailed receipts and entries for all monies deposited and withdrawn from accounts.** Impress on all the officers, committee chairs, and committee members the importance of doing this. Disbursements from student council funds are usually made by the student council treasurer through a written order approved by the adviser and/or principal and then given to the school's central treasurer who issues a check. Council members who need to pay for services or products should follow established procedures for doing so. Usually this involves obtaining a purchase order. Occasionally items need to be purchased first and then council members are reimbursed. Be sure to stress the importance of keeping receipts for accurate reimbursement.

If one is not already set up you should make a simple check or cash request form that must be completed for every transaction. This request with the receipts is what auditors look for to verify compliance with accounting rules. It is a great way to ensure all monies raised and

spent are used correctly and accounted for properly. Make sure all executive council members abide by financial rules set by the principal, adviser, and treasurer.

**Meet deadlines and achieve goals.** Financial reporting and accounting are deadline intensive professions. Meeting deadlines will be much easier if you keep records always up-to-date. Develop skills and techniques to effectively present financial reports in a timely manner. Reports must be submitted regularly to the adviser, council, and principal and at meetings. (See **sample financial report**.)

**Participate in student council-sponsored activities.** Of course the treasurer must attend all officer and council meetings to give reports, but you should also attend as many other activities as possible to join in the fun and successes of the council. Your participation as an officer in any activity will encourage others to be involved. This is also a great way to know students in general, in a less formal way than at meetings. Make sure to take advantage of the fun part of activities.

The honor of being treasurer carries responsibilities for hard work, dedication, accuracy, and detail. It takes time, energy, enthusiasm, and personal commitment. You need to know your abilities, strengths, and weaknesses and how to apply them to your position. You need to learn from the successes and failures of yourself and your council. Listen and trust in yourself, your council members, and fellow students. Your goals should be those that will best serve the student body you serve.

SAMPLE BUDGET FORMAT			School year 2003-04					
Committee	Activity	Items	Cost / Income specifics	Projected Expense	Projected Income	Actual Expense	Actual Income	
Executive	Meetings	Refreshments	\$20 per mtg. X 20 meetings	\$400.00	\$0.00			
	Retreat	Summer full day mtg.	Supplies & meals \$20 x 12	\$250.00				
	Retreat	In-kind donation of above			\$250.00			
	Office supplies	Paper, pens, etc.	Approx. \$30 per officer x 12	\$360.00				
	Office supplies	In-kind donation of above			\$360.00			
Executive	<b>Total</b>			<b>\$1,010.00</b>	<b>\$610.00</b>			
Assembly/Rally	school assemblies	Approx. 9 per year	Outside speaker/entertainer x9 Sponsor/in kind donation	\$900.00	\$500.00			
	Advertise supplies	Poster paper, markers In-kind donation of above	Paper roll & marker bucket	\$100.00	\$100.00			
	Assembly/Rally	<b>Total</b>		<b>\$1,000.00</b>	<b>\$600.00</b>			
Elections	Officers & Reps.	Exec. Officer Advertising of openings	Web & Printed materials with Titles and job responsibilities	\$200.00				
		Class Reps. Advertising of openings	Web & Printed materials with Titles and job responsibilities	\$200.00				
		Scantron forms	\$100 per 500 x 4	\$400.00				
		Elections	<b>Total</b>		<b>\$800.00</b>			
SAMPLE BUDGET FORMAT			School year 2003-04			Page 2 of		
Committee	Activity	Items	Cost / Income specifics	Projected Expense	Projected Income	Actual Expense	Actual Income	
Dance	All-school dances	Approx. 5 per year	Band/DJ \$400 x 5	\$2,000.00				
			Security \$100 x 5	\$500.00				
			Refreshments \$200 x 5	\$1,000.00				
			Donation of some refreshments Decorations/cups/napkins, etc	\$700.00	\$500.00			
			Donation of some decorations		\$300.00			
		Ticket Sales	Approx. 200 attend x 5					
	Homecoming	1 per year		Band/DJ	\$400.00			
				Security	\$100.00			
				Refreshments	\$300.00			
				Donation of some refreshments Decorations/cups/napkins, etc	\$100.00	\$200.00		
Float supplies Royal Court supplies				\$100.00 \$50.00				
Dance	<b>Total</b>			<b>\$5,100.00</b>	<b>\$1,000.00</b>			
Fundraising	Can food drive	2 times per year	Can food donated Collection bags-bins donated Advertising-Posters, Web	\$50.00				
			Toy drive	1 time per year	Toy donation Collection bags-bins donated Advertising-Posters, Web	\$50.00		
	Fundraising	<b>Total</b>			<b>\$100.00</b>			
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>Using all Committee Totals</b>			<b>\$8,010.00</b>	<b>\$2,210.00</b>			

Sample Budget Format		School Year 2003-04		
Account Name and Number	Budgeted	Actual	Difference	
<b>Income Accounts:</b>				
1001 - Homecoming tickets	\$1,250.00	\$1,275.00	\$25.00	
1002 - All school dance tickets	\$5,000.00	\$5,100.00	\$100.00	
1003 - In-kind donations				
Exec. office supplies	\$360.00	\$350.00	(\$10.00)	
Exec. retreat supplies/meal	\$250.00	\$265.00	\$15.00	
Assembly supplies	\$100.00	\$90.00	(\$10.00)	
Assembly speaker	\$500.00	\$700.00		
Dance decorations	\$300.00	\$310.00	(\$10.00)	
Homecoming decoration/supply	\$250.00	\$300.00	\$50.00	
Dance refreshments	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$0.00	
Dance DJ	\$0	\$400.00		
Collection bags	\$0.00	\$0.00		
Scantron Forms	\$0.00	\$50.00	\$50.00	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$8,510.00</b>	<b>\$9,340.00</b>	<b>\$210.00</b>	
Account Name and Number	Budgeted	Actual	Difference	
<b>Expense Accounts:</b>				
2001 - Executive				
Meeting Refreshments	\$400.00	\$380.00	\$20.00	
Retreat Supplies	\$250.00	\$250.00	\$0.00	
Office Supplies	\$360.00	\$340.00	\$20.00	
2002 - Assembly/Rally				
Speakers	\$900.00	\$800.00	\$100.00	
Supplies	\$100.00	\$105.00	(\$5.00)	
2003 - Elections				
Exec. Advertising	\$200.00	\$180.00	\$20.00	
Class Rep. Advertising	\$200.00	\$205.00	(\$5.00)	
Scantron Forms	\$400.00	\$415.00	(\$15.00)	
2004 - Dance				
Band/DJ x 5	\$2,000.00	\$1,600.00	\$400.00	
Security	\$500.00	\$520.00	(\$20.00)	
Refreshments	\$1,000.00	\$1,050.00	(\$50.00)	
Decorations	\$700.00	\$680.00	\$20.00	
2005 - Homecoming				
Band/DJ	\$400.00	\$380.00	\$20.00	
Security	\$100.00	\$110.00	(\$10.00)	
Refreshments	\$300.00	\$260.00	\$40.00	
Decorations	\$100.00	\$120.00	(\$20.00)	
Supplies	\$150.00	\$140.00	\$10.00	
2006 - Fundraising				
Advertising	\$100.00	\$80.00	\$20.00	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$8,160.00</b>	<b>\$7,615.00</b>	<b>\$545.00</b>	
<b>Grand Totals</b>	<b>(\$350.00)</b>	<b>\$1,725.00</b>	<b>\$335.00</b>	



# The Secretary

**C**ongratulations on your election to the position of student council secretary! Now the work, challenges, and fun begin. The secretary's primary responsibility is to keep the official records of council business and serve as the official correspondent for the council. The historical memory of the student council depends on the quality of the secretary's performance. Yours is a job that requires accuracy, neatness, and completeness.

The duties of the secretary are much more comprehensive than simply taking minutes. Your work will be the memory of all that is done by the council.

As secretary, you will be expected to:

- Be the keeper of the records, designer of the agenda
- Become organized at the beginning of the year and remain so
- Know nearly everything about every meeting
- Be alert to the calendar and the progress of committees
- Be knowledgeable about meeting procedures
- Spend all your time planning and organizing the council's work
- Accomplish major miracles in minimal time and minimal miracles exactly on time.

## Tools of the Trade

Several items are vital to your efficiency. You may not have easy access to some of the tools, but most are readily available within your school or library.

- **Ring-bound notebook.** Obtain a fairly large notebook to keep all your materials together. You will need to prioritize your notebook and use marked tabs to quickly access a section. At the front, you will need a copy of the constitution/bylaws and current member names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mails.
- **Meeting agenda.** Agendas are a guiding force in the lives of council secretaries
- **Computer and printer at school or home.** If the computers are compatible it may work to keep information on both and move new items between them by e-mail or disk.
- **Notepaper or steno pads, pencils, and pens.** Use the tools that help you keep neat notes.



- **Member record sheets.** Keep plenty of copies so you can put them directly into the notebook. If you prefer, the information on the sheets could be transferred to the computer.
- **Activity calendar in the notebook and/or on the computer.** There are several computer programs that include a calendar to use for scheduling. Find out what is available on your school computers or can be purchased with council funds. It would also be good to have the calendar connect with the council Web site so everyone can view it. You can remove, add, or change activity dates after council sessions.

## Duties of the Secretary

**Work with the president to prepare the meeting agendas.** As secretary, it is your responsibility to make sure the president has the list of unfinished business from the last meeting.

**Distribute agendas.** Make enough copies of the agenda to distribute to all the council members and post around the school. Also post the agenda on the school or council Web site and include it in either the printed or Web version of a school newsletter. (See **sample agenda**.)

**Take roll of attendees at meetings, either written or verbal.** The method of checking attendance depends on the size of the council. For an officer meeting, it is just a matter of printing off a list from your computer and verbally checking of names of those present. Taking attendance at large all-member meetings is better accomplished by a written attendance sheet that is sent around when the meeting starts or at a special table set up as they enter. When you have all council members' names in a database or at least a computer listing, it is easy to import the names into the form and print it out for easy meeting check-in.

**Take minutes of the proceedings of all student council meetings.** Taking minutes may not be what you would think of as exciting, but learning how to take minutes efficiently can turn what could be a difficult job into an easy, exciting one. By definition, minutes are the record of business transacted at any meeting. When completed and approved, they become the official council

record. In other words, you are responsible for writing an accurate history of your council that if kept neatly, can be referred to for years to come.

Here are some hints to make taking minutes easier:

- Minutes are a record of what is done at a meeting, not everything that is said. They include motions and decisions made by the council, as well as highlights of reports given.
- Be prepared for each meeting with fresh paper and pencil with a good eraser. Use pencils instead of pens because corrections are more easily made. If you are a pretty fast, knowledgeable typist, you record the minutes on a laptop computer by using the agenda items and order as a template to fill in as the meeting proceeds.
- Record the date, time, and place of the meeting. Also note if this is a regular meeting or a special meeting.
- Record each motion, who makes it, who seconds it, and the resulting vote (by yes/no/abstain count or majority of verbal or hand raising). To make sure the motion is reflected accurately, you should either reread it to the group or ask the one making the motion if it is worded correctly. Or, have the motion maker submit a completed motion form to you in his or her own words.
- Keep a summary of announcements made by committee chairs, advisers, or guests.
- Be sure to record the names of those who volunteer for activities or committees. This is an invaluable list to the chair of that committee or activity.

**Prepare and distribute the written minutes, with the president's assistance, in a timely manner.** Complete the minutes as soon as possible after the meeting. That way items are still fresh in your memory and any missed items in your notes can be recalled. **Formats** for minutes vary; Look at your council's past year's minutes for **examples**. Also check with your adviser and business teacher for styles. There may be a traditional format within your school, but if you feel there is a better format you should suggest it.

Once you, the president, and adviser have reviewed the minutes for any inaccuracies or typographical or grammatical errors, print one copy for the president to sign. Then make and distribute copies to all officers and council members, as well as administrators and faculty members. Like the agenda, the minutes should be posted on the school or council Web site or in the newsletter. The meeting minutes will be distributed again at the next meeting as one of the first items of business for approval.

**Maintain council files including minutes and agendas.** The secretary must know how and where to keep records. Files must be kept up-to-date and orderly so that any offi-

cer who needs an item can locate it quickly. Make sure there is a file cabinet just for student council. The file cabinet should have a folder for each meeting that contains the minutes, the attendance roster, and officer and committee chair reports. An archive notebook that includes a list of officers, committees, and chairs; a copy of the constitution and/or bylaws; and meeting minutes should be kept for each year.

Maintain frequent contact with faculty and administrators. All the council officers should have a good working relationship with the faculty and administrators. The office administrative assistants can be a wealth of knowledge and help to the council secretary.

**Type all required letters for the president, vice-president, and adviser.** Most officers and advisers are proficient with the computer, but there may be times when a letter needs a mail merge you will need to do. Or the officer may key in the letter and you may be the one to format and print it. Whether you are typing correspondence for the officers or reviewing the letters they have written, keep in mind the importance of content, format, and style.

**Good letters have a clear introduction, main body of information, and a conclusion.** They are free from errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation, and free from slang or inappropriate language. Good proofing is essential—even a computer spell check doesn't catch it all. The information should be given quickly, completely, and accurately. Avoid phrases like "at the present time" or "at this point in time" when you mean "now." Why use four or five words to do the job of one word?

Letters should be written specifically for the people who will be reading them. Letters to business people should have a different tone than recruitment letters for 8th-grade students. Follow an acceptable **letter format**. For examples of these formats check a typing manual or *Webster's Secretarial Handbook*. If you have doubts or questions, have an English or business teacher or a school administrative assistant look it over to suggest improvements. For future reference, make a hard copy as well as a computer copy of each letter you send.

**Maintain contact names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mails.** The council officers will communicate regularly with specific people. Keep the list of contact information in a computer software program that will allow mail merges, label printing, or data-pulls for e-mail blasts. You'll need to update the list periodically and check for accuracy.

Names and addresses aren't the only items necessary for complete records. Also maintain a record of member awards, service hours, committee service, chair positions held, etc. Setting up a short two-letter code for each category you need will make notations easier. Make sure

the letter code used is visible so everyone can interpret it. Examples are: P=present, A=absent, E=excused, CC=committee chair, CM=committee member, PR=president, VP=vice president, SC=secretary, TR=treasurer, AD=Adviser, and so on.

Send thank-you notes, birthday cards, and other appropriate correspondence to teachers, administrators, and support staff members. The personal touch is something everyone appreciates. It can help build a warm and welcoming council. Your adviser or principal has access to birthdates and will let you know an appropriate format for recognition.

**Coordinate all council reporting from committees, student body, administrators, faculty members, and others.** Develop standard formats for various reports to be submitted. These formats can be in a hard copy form or on the computer. If possible, have report formats on the computer so the person reporting can complete the form online and save it in an appropriate file. You won't

have to rekey the reports and they'll be readily available for printing.

**Work closely with the student council adviser on all planning.** A secretary can be the right hand of the adviser. By working as a team they can keep the council organized and scheduled.

**Participate in student council-sponsored activities.** Of course the secretary must attend all the meetings to take notes and minutes, but should also attend as many other activities as possible to join in the fun and successes of the council as well.

**Meet deadlines and achieve goals.** Deadline dates should be set up early in the school year. It is important for the secretary to keep a record of the dates and remind others periodically. A large wall calendar is valuable to show deadlines, events, and activities. This information also can be kept on the computer or council Web site so everyone can readily access it.

# Sample Meeting Agenda

South Lake Area High School  
Student Council Meeting  
December 4, 2003  
Library  
3:00–4:00 p.m.

- Call to Order** Jeff Marshall, President
- Roll Call** Marsha Phillips, Secretary reviews attendance for quorum
- Review Agenda** Jeff Marshall reads agenda
- Officer reports** Jeff Marshall, President  
Mary Todd, Vice President  
Leslie Phillips, Treasurer  
Marsha Brown, Secretary
- Committee Reports** Holiday Dance Committee, Sid Mathers, Chair  
Adopt-a-Family Committee, Ashley Smith, Chair  
Tutoring Committee, Brad Andrews, Chair  
Appreciation Committee, Maggie Berwin, Chair  
Inclusion Committee, Sarah Ives, Chair  
Principal Advisory Committee, Max Sims, Chair
- Unfinished Business** Submission of evaluations of Thanksgiving can drive,  
Can-Food Committee, Justin Taylor, chair  
  
Final discussion of starting review of council by-laws,  
Tristin Worthers, Parliamentarian
- New Business** Discussion and recommendations on change in January calendar of events,  
Mary Todd, Vice President
- Announcements** Review of upcoming events on calendar and committee projects,  
Marsha Phillips, Secretary
- Adjournment**



# Sample of Basic Minutes

**Date:** 11-2-03

**Time:** 2:40 p.m.

**Place:** Little Theater

**Type meeting:** General All Council Meeting

**Attendance #:** 88

**Presiding Officer:** Jeff Marshall, President

## **Review of Agenda:**

Agenda As presented

Motion by:

Seconded by:

Agenda with following additions:

Add to Unfinished Business, report from Homecoming Dance committee, Megan Clark

Motion by: Megan Clark

Seconded by: Max Sims

Approval of Previous Minutes:

Minutes as presented

Motion by: Mary Todd

Seconded by: Cynthia Crews

Minutes with following changes

Motion by:

Seconded by:

## **Officer Reports Summary** (reports attached)

**President:** Jeff Marshall spoke at the School District meeting on upcoming events and activities of the student council and other school clubs.

**Vice President:** Mary Todd spoke at a PTA meeting asking for service project support.

**Treasurer:** Leslie Phillips gave the monthly financial report

**Secretary:** Marsha Brown gave an update on new computer software for the student council computer.

## **Committee Reports Summary** (reports attached)

**Holiday Dance:** Sid Mathers reported that the committee is on schedule and meeting all deadlines for completion of plans. Dance ticket sales are going extremely well, the DJ is contracted, decoration supplies and food are ordered.

**Adopt-a-Family** Ashley Smith reported that the two churches they are working with have identified 8 families in need. They have put together a list for each family the food items, gifts, and chores that the committee can provide. Many of the items and gifts have already been collected. A list of needed items, gifts, or chores was given out and will be on the council web site for donations.

**Appreciation** Maggie Berwin reported that the monthly teacher appreciation for October was complimentary donuts and muffins in the teacher lounge last Monday morning.

## **Unfinished Business**

Thanksgiving can drive evaluation—Justin Taylor handed out the results of the evaluations of the thanksgiving can drive from students, faculty and those that received the donations. There were some excellent recommendations that will be considered when planning for next year.

**New Business**

Calendar of events change: Mary Todd recommended that the January council meeting date be changed because of a conflict with two other school events. Current date is January 15, change needs to be January 18.

**Announcements**

Upcoming events, projects, and calendar—Mary Todd read the November calendar of events and projects.

**Adjournment Time:** 3:55 p.m.

**Next meeting set for:** November 16, 2003

## Letter Formats

**A standard letter for official business has:**

<b>A Heading</b>	Official council or school letterhead or return address information Date
<b>An Opening</b>	Inside address to sender Optional attention line Appropriate salutation (Mr., Ms., Mrs., Dr.)
<b>Body</b>	Optional subject line Message paragraph(s)
<b>Closing</b>	Complimentary closing (Sincerely, etc.) Writer's identification and signature Enclosure notation, if needed Copy notation, if needed

**The letter format can be in one of four basic styles.**

**Modified Block:** The date line, complimentary closing, and writer's identification all begin at the center tab. All other lines begin at the left margin.

**Indented Modified Block:** The same as above except for one additional feature—the first line of each paragraph is indented one tab.

**Block:** All lines typically begin at the left margin. Nothing is indented except for table and similar materials.

**Simplified:** Like the Block, all lines begin at the left margin except the salutation is replaced by an all-capital subject line and the complimentary closing is omitted

# Template Sheet for Taking Minutes

**Date:**

**Time:**

**Place:**

**Attendance #:**

**Type meeting:**

**Presiding Officer:**

**Review of Agenda:**

Agenda as presented

Motion by:

Seconded by:

Agenda with following additions:

Motion by:

Seconded by:

**Approval of Previous Minutes:**

Minutes as presented

Motion by:

Seconded by:

Minutes with following changes

Motion by:

Seconded by:

**Officer Reports Summary** (reports attached)

President:

Vice President:

Treasurer:

Secretary:

**Committee Reports Summary** (reports attached)

Committee 1

Committee 2

**Unfinished Business**

Item 1

Item 2

**New Business**

**Announcements**

Upcoming events, projects, and calendar

**Adjournment Time:**

**Next meeting set for:**

# The Parliamentarian



**C**ongratulations! As Parliamentarian, you play a key role ensuring that the business of the student council runs smoothly and fairly. While all officers and leaders should know the rules of conducting meetings, your expertise will leave no room for doubt. You will be the person the presiding officer turns to in matters of parliamentary procedure and governance.

As Parliamentarian, you will be called upon to:

- Be knowledgeable about parliamentary procedure
- Be gracious and tactful
- Keep meetings organized and discussions focused.

## Tools of the Trade

It's easy to conduct productive meetings when you incorporate parliamentary procedure.

Parliamentary procedure is basically meeting management; its purpose is to plan and organize meetings and control discussions. By following the rules of parliamentary procedure the council keeps to the business of the meeting and respects the time and opinions of others. The council considers only one item at a time and respects majority opinion.

As the parliamentarian, you should

- Know the purposes and history of student council. Start within the local school and then progress to the state and national student council organizations. (Information can be found in the *National Association of Student Council Handbook* and Web site [www.nasc.us](http://www.nasc.us))
- Know your student council constitution and bylaws. This knowledge will help you guide the parameters of the council's work and responsibilities. Also understand the school district policies that relate to student council—the student council adviser will be able to provide these for you.
- Understand parliamentary procedure. Meetings are held in every type of profession and knowing how to manage them is an asset. The four basic principles of parliamentary law are:
  1. Courtesy and justice to all
  2. Consider one thing at a time
  3. The majority must be heard
  4. The majority must prevail.

## Duties of the Parliamentarian

Instruct the officers about meeting procedures. This can be done at a workshop for officers and/or before each general council meeting. Clearly identify the steps that need to be followed for each meeting, check the order of business on the **agenda** to ensure it conforms to *Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised*, and have a copy available for reference at meetings. Also have a copy of your constitution and bylaws. Use these and the attachments to assist the other officers and members to learn at least the basics of parliamentary procedures. You may also consider bringing in a local registered parliamentarian to present a workshop on parliamentary procedure. Check your local phone book and library for a listing or go to one of the various meeting management organizations. National Association of Parliamentarians (NAP) [www.parliamentarians.org](http://www.parliamentarians.org) or the American Institute of Parliamentarians (AIP) [www.parliamentaryprocedure.org](http://www.parliamentaryprocedure.org) or [www.robertsrules.com](http://www.robertsrules.com)

**Advise the presiding officer about parliamentary procedure and help him or her conduct the meeting.** Let the presiding officer know immediately if he or she does not follow proper procedure and be sure all discussions pertain to agenda items.

**Receive all proposed motions.** Work with the secretary to develop a **motion form** and have several available for each meeting. If someone wishes to make a motion, give them a form to fill out stating their exact motion in writing. This form captures the precise meaning of their intended motion for the minutes. The motion is then read aloud again to make sure that everyone is clear as to what is being proposed. The motion must then be seconded before discussion of the motion can take place.

**Keep the constitution and bylaws updated.** The parliamentarian becomes the chair for the **Constitution and Bylaws Committee** when it is required. Although these documents should have been developed so they need only occasional modifications, as times and school environments change there will be occasions when one or the other needs to be revised. Specific steps must be followed to make those changes and they should be spelled out within the documents themselves.

**Chair the elections committee.** Elections require specific procedures, from nominations to voting. As Parliamentarian, you ensure all **voting procedures** comply with the standard rules.

**Check attendance.** For business to be done legally at a meeting, a minimum number of members—a quorum—must be present. Each organization may set its own quorum, usually the largest number of members who can be depended upon to attend a typical meeting. The quorum should be stated in the bylaws. If it is not, common parliamentary law sets it as a majority of the entire membership. Your job is to ensure a quorum is present before decisions are made.

## A General Overview of Motions

The word *motion* refers to a formal proposal by a member suggesting that the assembly take a specific action. Motions are classified into five groups.

1. Main motion. Officially brings business before the assembly for action.
2. Subsidiary motion (secondary motion). Assists the assembly in handling the main motion. Subsidiary motions are applied to another motion, can be applied to any main motion, and fit into an order of precedence. They can do any of the following to a main motion: approve; defeat; amend; refer to committee; postpone consideration to another meeting; table it until later in the meeting; or limit, extend, or even stop debate.
3. Privileged motion (secondary motion). Concerns matters of immediate and overriding importance which without debate should be allowed to interrupt the consideration of anything else. These are motions related to the rights of the members.
4. Incidental motion (secondary motion). Relates in different ways to pending business or the business otherwise at hand. They commonly arise out of another pending motion or sometimes another motion or item of business.
5. Restorative motion. Brings a question back before the assembly.

## How To Make a Motion

1. A member rises or raises hand and addresses the presiding officer by title.
2. The presiding officer recognizes the member. The chair may recognize a member by name or by another verbal or physical acknowledgement.
3. Upon recognition by the chair, a member is said to “have the floor” and is the only member who may present or discuss a motion.

4. The member makes the motion. Always introduce a motion in the form, “I move that” followed by a statement of the motion.
5. The chair asks if there is a second to the motion. Another member, without recognition from the chair, may say “I second the motion.” If the motion is not seconded it “dies for lack of a second.”
6. The chair repeats or “states the motion” to the assembly. Once it has been formally stated to the assembly, it may be referred to as “the question.”
7. After the motion is stated by the chair, it is open for discussion. Any speaker may be recognized by the chair. Several members may rise at the same time and then the chair should use the following to guide in recognition:
  - Preference should be given to the person first making the motion.
  - No member may speak more than twice on the same question.
  - All remarks must be pertinent to the pending question.
  - A member may speak no longer than 10 minutes without consent of the assembly.
  - Rights to extend length are not transferable.
  - For the chair to participate in discussion, presiding over the meeting must be relinquished.
8. When discussion appears to have ended, the chair asks “is there any further discussion?” If no one rises the chair presumes discussion is closed and then “puts the question to a vote.” The chair takes the vote by saying “All in favor (state the motion) say Aye” and “Those opposed say No.” If the chair cannot determine by difference in number of “Aye” and “No” votes say “The chair is in doubt, those in favor of the motion please rise.” The chair and parliamentarian both do a count of those standing and then say “Be seated.” “Those opposed please rise” again counted “Be seated.” It can similarly be done by a show of hands for a count. The chair must always call for a negative vote, no matter how nearly unanimous the affirmative vote may appear.
9. The presiding officer announces the result of the vote. It may be appropriate to say “The ayes have it and the motion is adopted (or carried).” After the vote has been announced, another motion may be considered.

At first, parliamentary procedure may seem overwhelming, but after studying it you get a good picture of the protocol and process of a meeting. Even if modified, informal parliamentary procedure provides guidance for a fair orderly meeting.

## **Alternatives to Parliamentary Procedure**

There are alternatives to straight parliamentary procedure for meeting management. These examples are for smaller or informal meetings.

- In action planning, a team develops its own action plan to handle a given type situation, solve a problem, or update an existing plan. No formal vote is taken, only consensus is reached.
- Interaction technique uses a group facilitator to give ground rules and help with participation. The facilitator keeps the group focused. This is most often used in committees because it is effective in fostering participation of everyone and a feeling of ownership in the committee's work.
- Open forum has a specific topic and gives each person the opportunity to express their opinion relative to it.

## Outline or Structure of a Constitution

An organization's constitution and bylaws provide its structure and help members:

- Stay focused on the goals and purposes
- Understand their role in the organization
- Determine the parliamentary authority used to rule the organization.

The typical order and type of contents are as follows:

**Name of the organization**—The formal name of the group.

**Stated reason for the organization**—The mission statement or statement of purpose on which the group is focused.

**Members/Membership**—Information defining membership qualifications, rights, dues (if any), attendance requirements, and categories/types of membership (full, associate, honorary, etc.). It also contains member responsibilities and implied responsibilities based on the purpose of the organization. Some of these are knowing what is contained in the constitution and bylaws, the issues of the group, and how meetings and elections are done properly.

**Officers**—The officer position descriptions, start and length of term, duties, nomination process, voting, and election procedures.

**Meetings**—Outline of when or how often regular meetings are held and procedures for special meetings, conferences, and quorums.

**Executive Board or Board of Directors**—Bylaws may state that an organization must have boards and committees entrusted with specific responsibilities. Large organizations have boards elected to represent specific populations. Smaller organizations are administered by executive boards/committees/councils/cabinets. Both function in a similar manner with their makeup, authority, and quorum clearly defined.

**Committees**—The bylaws identify the designated standing/permanent committees whose members are appointed/elected each year, for the year. The name, makeup, selection, attendance, and duties are outlined here. Special, temporary committees are not listed in the bylaws for their short-term tasks. Limits of committee size and number of committees may also be stated in this section with one person authorized to chair only one committee.

**Parliamentary Authority**—The rules of order must be stated. The most common is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* but other well-known guides are *Sturgis Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure* and *Demeter's Manual of Parliamentary Law and Procedure*.

**Amendment of Bylaws**—This section clearly outlines the requirements and procedures to amend the bylaws.

## Parliamentary Table for Using Motions

Motion Type	Can speaker be interrupted	Is a Second Required	Is it Debatable	Is it Amendable	Type Vote Needed	Can it be Reconsidered	Sample Wording	Example of Use
<b>Main</b>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes	I move that the council sponsor a dance, Friday, October 20.	Someone introduces new business or declares a proposal for the group to act on.
<b>Subsidiary</b> <i>(Change, in some way, the main motion.)</i>	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	Yes <i>(only if positive vote cannot be reconsidered.)</i> or No	I move the matter be postponed	Used to test the strength of the main motion. If the subsidiary motion carries, the main motion is abandoned.
Amend <i>(changes)</i> or Substitute Motion	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes	I move to amend the main motion by striking out the words Fri. Oct. 20 and insert the words Sat. Oct. 21. Or—I move a substitute motion, that the dance be on Oct. 21st.	To modify a motion. Ways to amend are to insert, add to, strike out, or strike out & insert. A substitute motion replaces the main motion, if passed.
Amend <i>(change)</i> Amendment	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	Yes	I move to amend the amendment by striking the words Oct. 21 to insert the words Oct. 27.	Pertains only to the specific item referenced that has been included in amendment
Refer to a Committee	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes <i>(can only be re-considered before the committee has begun consideration.)</i>	I move that we refer this matter to the social committee.	To delay action. May be assigned to a standing committee or to a new committee to be appointed or elected, with instructions to investigate, recommend or take action on the motion.
Postpone to a Definite, Set Time	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes	I move to postpone any action on this matter until our next meeting.	Purpose is to delay action to some specific time.
Limit Debate or move to Previous Question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	Yes	I move to the previous question, namely the main motion.	To provide more or less time for debate. Applies to main motions only.
Table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No	I move to table the motion.	The purpose is to limit or stop debate.
<b>Privileged Motions</b> <i>(have precedence over main motions and all subsidiary motions. The further down the list, the higher the priority.)</i>	Yes	No	No	No	Majority	No	I call for the orders of the day, or I move that we consider the topic on the agenda, namely...	To temporarily set aside an item of business. Purpose is to postpone to more pressing business. It can be later in meeting or until next meeting
Question of Privilege	Yes	No	No	No	Chair	No	I rise to a question of personal privilege.	This demands conforming to the agenda topics and order.  Purpose is to bring up an urgent matter of members rights, i.e., noise, disturbance, etc.

Motion Type	Can speaker be interrupted	Is a Second Required	Is it Debatable	Is it Amendable	Type Vote Needed	Can it be Reconsidered	Sample Wording	Example of Use
<b>Privileged Motions</b> (continued)								
Recess	No— <i>but may interrupt in an emergency or urgent matter.</i>	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	No	I move we have a ten minute recess to count the ballots.	Intermission as for meals, counting ballots, etc
Adjourn	No— <i>but may interrupt in an emergency or urgent matter.</i>	Yes	No	No	Majority	No	I move to adjourn.	Purpose is to terminate the meeting.
<b>Incidental Motions</b> <i>(have equal ranks. No priority except to associated motions.)</i>								
To appeal a decision of the Chair	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	Yes	I appeal the decision of the chair. (state appeal)	Must be made immediately. Used when it is thought that the chair has made an incorrect decision.
To suspend a rule	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	No	I move to suspend the rules in order to allow the speaker his full 30 minutes.	An agreement to temporarily change order of business. If there is no objection, the chairman may call for a vote.
Objection to consideration of a motion	Yes	No	No	No	2/3 negative	No	Applies to main motion only, and must be made before any debate.	I object to the consideration of this motion.
Division of the Assembly	Yes	No	No	No	Chair	No	I demand the vote be verified by hand, standing, or roll call.	If a voice vote is questioned then a division of the assembly requires another type vote.
Parliamentary inquiry <i>(for information.)</i>	Yes	No	No	No	Chair	No	I rise to a parliamentary inquire, or, I rise for information (state question)	An inquiry or request is addressed to the chair, but if permission is granted, may be to other group members .
Withdraw motion	No	No	No	No	Chair	No	I request permission to withdraw my motion, namely . . . <i>(state the motion)</i>	Withdrawal of a motion is made before discussion or with general consent before the vote.
To Close Nominations	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3	No	I move the nominations cease	Chair may close nominations without a vote after opportunity to make more nominations.

Motion Type	Can speaker be interrupted	Is a Second Required	Is it Debatable	Is it Amendable	Type Vote Needed	Can it be Reconsidered	Sample Wording	Example of Use
<b>Unclassified Motion</b> (cannot be if any other motion is currently pending.)	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No	I move the motion, namely (state motion) be taken from the table.	The purpose is to bring up for debate motions that have been tabled earlier. (Must be made during the meeting or at the next meeting.)
To reconsider	Yes	Yes	Yes (when motion is debatable.)	No	Majority	No	I voted with the prevailing side of the motion which (state motion), and move to reconsider the action taken, or ... move to have the matter reconsidered at the next meeting.	Motion to reconsider may be made only by a person who voted on the prevailing side. Must be made during meeting or at next meeting.
To rescind or repeal	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3 (unless previous notice is given.)	Yes	I move that we rescind the motion (state motion, which was passed at the meeting of (date).	The purpose is to rescind or repeal previous action. May be done with majority vote if prior notice is given.

# Outline Procedures for Election Voting

The cornerstone of democracy is a citizens' right to vote. Voting is used not only to select people and institutions to govern but in organizations, neighborhood associations, church councils, clubs, and societies. All familiar functions in our society but we need to understand and follow the proper procedures to exercise our vote correctly. Familiar phrases such as *majority vote*, *two-thirds vote*, *plurality vote* all refer to the numbers necessary for voting. How we vote can be stated in voice vote, rising vote, show of hands, ballot vote, machine vote, roll call, absentee vote and general consent. An outline of these terms will help you understand the mechanics of voting.

**Majority vote.** Most decisions are made using this means, which is more than half the number of voting members. No specific number is used as that varies by situation. A "simple majority" means just that. There can also be a "majority of the membership" which is the majority number of the entire membership, not just those in attendance.

**Two-thirds vote.** It is simply two-thirds of the votes cast. This type of vote can be made by voice vote, unlike a majority vote that requires a count by standing, hands, or ballots. Typically this type vote is used for motions that change/interfere with the rights of members.

**Plurality vote.** In three or more choices of candidates, plurality is the greatest number of votes for a specific candidate. If a majority vote is required for candidates, a plurality that is less than a majority cannot elect. It is not wise or democratic to elect or pass anything that receives fewer than half of the votes cast.

**Voice vote.** Simply the familiar "aye" and "no" vote.

**Rising vote.** Any two-thirds vote should be a rising vote. The presiding officer, secretary, and parliamentarian all take separate counts of those standing.

**Show of hands.** This is an alternative to a voice vote or a rising vote that is usually faster than a rising vote and more accurate than a voice vote.

**Ballot.** A vote by ballot keeps preferences secret. It can be a piece of paper that a member writes on or a printed form prepared in advance. A process for honest and accurate distribution, collection, counting, and reporting votes is essential. Ballots must be kept until there is no chance they may need to be recounted.

**Machine vote.** A mechanical ballot that is fast and accurate. It also gives students practical experience in using a voting machine for local, state, and federal elections.

**Roll call.** This vote records how each member votes and is not done in secret. Voting by a signed ballot is a variation because each member's choice is recorded.

**Absentee vote.** If a member will not be present for the vote, he or she can submit a sealed ballot vote prior to the actual vote.

**General consent.** When minutes are approved as read, they are approved by general consent. It is not used to pass a main motion, elect officers, or decide other important issues.

## Election Committee Responsibilities

### Clearly State the Rules

- Set a specific limit on the amount of money a candidate may spend.
- Require a written disclosure of all expenses and value of donated materials to be provided before elections.
- Determine how, where, how many campaign materials can be given out or exhibited.
- Approve candidate speech or skit and set maximum time.
- Set deadline for candidates to remove campaign materials after elections.
- Hold a mandatory candidate meeting to go over rules.

### Set a Schedule

- Use the constitution to set the election date and identify what offices are open for candidates.
- Establish a timeline of election events (such as poster hanging, meetings, speeches, rehearsals, etc.) and notify students, administration, and faculty.
- Publicize the elections.

### Nominate

- Publish criteria for nomination to an office.
- Encourage students to run for office and distribute nomination forms.
- Review completed forms, check eligibility, and compile an official ballot slate of officers.
- Print ballots.

## Assembly

- Determine and organize method for candidate presentations to the entire school, selected portions of the school, or through public announcement addresses.
- Plan and carry out the candidate assembly presentation. Get administration approval, inform candidates, hold rehearsals if needed, and set up any required equipment.

## Voting

- Check on use of voting machines.
- Order Scantron forms or other ballots early.
- Remind students to vote and to do so responsibly.
- Register students to vote or use a computer list of all students from the administration as a check-off.
- Plan voting schedule and place(s) to vote (home-room, gym, cafeteria, etc.)

- Contact administration and faculty to help monitor voting and counting.
- Prior to voting, select the method that will be used to announce the results.

## Follow-up

- Plan a system for clean up and to check that candidates are completing the process.
- Plan a social event/reception for all candidates after the election and encourage those who were not elected to remain involved in council activities and committees.
- Organize and produce installation ceremony of new officers.
- Thank all those that participated and helped with the campaigns and voting.
- Evaluate the process for possible improvements, changes, or additions.

# Motions Form

A form should be developed that is completed by the person making a motion at a meeting. This form assists the secretary in keeping accurate minutes and helps clarify exact motion wording to members. Prior to voting on the motion, the form is turned in to the secretary.

**Motions Form**

Name of person making motion: \_\_\_\_\_

Motion seconded by: \_\_\_\_\_

Exact wording of motion: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Disposition of motion:    passed    failed    tabled

# The Committee Chair



**C**ongratulations! As the chair of a committee, you play a key role in ensuring the success of not only the activities of your committee but also the success of the entire council. Why? Committee members do the work of the council: solving problems, proposing ideas, and getting the job done—and you are their leader. Sound like a daunting responsibility? It's not when you put your leadership and teamwork skills into action. As a committee chair, you'll be called on to

- Implement projects that realize council goals
- Research, discuss, recommend, act, evaluate, and report
- Adhere to deadlines
- Use teambuilding talents
- Work as part of a team, not just the leader.

## Tools of the Trade

You may have been appointed by the president, elected by the council, or volunteered to serve. Maybe you have special expertise in the focus area of your committee, such as fundraising or marketing. Or, maybe it's an area you want to learn more about. There are many different types of **committees** with myriad purposes. Regardless, your job is to create a sense of teamwork, focus the committee members, and get the job done well and on time. A good committee chair should have:

- A clear understanding of the purpose and parameters of the committee and its work. Ask the president or vice-president for a written description of your committee's responsibilities and follow up with a discussion about expectations.
- Good communication skills. Make sure what you want to communicate is clear in your mind, because in turn, you must be able to explain the committee's purposes and parameters to the committee members.
- Good listening skills. Being a good leader does not mean being a dictator. Encourage committee members to share their ideas and respect those ideas, even if they are not feasible or in line with your goals.
- Willingness to participate. You need to have a good, positive attitude about your own worth and the worth of others. Do not just lead the group, be involved with the committee and join in the work.

There will be problems that arise and you will need to lead the team in solving the problem. Many times it will take many ideas to come up with the best solution. Know your committee members and use all their talents wisely.

- Self-discipline, organization, and creativity. Plan with the committee's help and follow through with an organized way to accomplish the group plan. Keep everyone on task to complete work by deadlines, but do it while still having fun.

## Duties of the Committee Chair

A committee chair's responsibilities usually include the following:

**Establish the committee membership and meeting schedule.** Work with the adviser to set up a good time and place for the initial committee meeting. Then, alert students who may have already expressed interest in serving on the committee and post a sign-up sheet for others who may want to be involved. The size of the committee should depend on its purpose. The committee should be small enough so that all the members have a job to do, but not so small that they are overworked. Once the committee is formed and the first general meeting is held, prepare the work timelines and set meeting schedules.

**Make sure everyone has a clear understanding of the committee's function and responsibility.** Set standards for the committee. Establish goals and have a plan of action. Share the written description of the committee's work and the timeline for completion. Ask for any questions and clarify so everyone understands. This will help keep the group focused on their specific committee's work.

**Develop an action plan.** Develop a plan to accomplish your goals and then divide the work into logical subprojects. Ask for volunteers to carry out the work for each section and one person to lead the group. This will divide the work and responsibility of the committee into more productive parts. A **responsibility chart** will help you keep track. The number of members in each section should reflect the proportion of work to be done. Make sure each member has a job so your ideas and goals will be carried out.

**Make sure committee members have what they need to complete assignments.** Keep track of who is doing what with a **committee assignment and worksheet**. With a plan of action in place, research the items and resources necessary for completion. This research also can be delegated to the section leader. Compile a master list of all the resources, personnel, and school space requirements.

Constantly monitor progress. Check that everyone is on schedule and within budget/costs. Make sure everyone is doing his or her job and that the work is shared evenly. One person, section, or project should not be overwhelmed; if they are, get them help or offer suggestions to help ease their load. Be willing to step in and help out. Be cooperative, helpful, involved and available to the committee members.

**Stay in contact.** As a committee chair, you should stay in contact not only with your committee members, but also with the council officer who oversees committees and with the chairs of the other committees. Communication at meetings and informally will ensure everyone knows who is doing what and how things are progressing overall. It is also a time to offer any suggestions, assistance, praise or possibly get ideas to take back for your own committee.

Committee chairs have an important job. They are the ones who ensure the “behind the scenes” work gets done so their council can be successful. It is a true leadership position that requires leadership, teamwork, diplomacy, and lots of hard work. The reward comes with successful completion of the committee’s work and the realization that you, as the committee chair, was a driving force in that success.

## Types of Committees

Committees are formed for specific purposes. Some committees are a permanent part of the council structure; other committees are formed as needs arise. Some common types of committees are:

**Executive committee.** Members include the officers, adviser, an administrator, and often committee chairs or an elected board. This group plans, initiates, and organizes council activities. This group also recommends the creation of standing or special committees to carry out the plans it makes. (This can also be considered a standing committee.)

**Standing committee.** Members are appointed or elected for an entire year and their work is not necessarily limited to one project. Examples include a financial/budget committee, spirit committee, membership committee, or assemblies committee.

**Advisory committee.** This committee is formed to study a problem and report back with information and recom-

mendations. An example is a constitutional committee. (This can also be considered a special committee.)

**Special committee.** These committees have a specific job to complete or goal to accomplish and can be subgroups of standing committees. Examples include specific fundraising events, homecoming dance, Valentine’s Day, or Teacher Appreciation Week.

## Examples of Standing Committees

**Assembly committee.** Assembly programs are designed to provide entertaining or educational presentations during special times throughout the year. The job of the committee is to produce a year of quality assemblies.

**Awards committee.** Recognition for something well done is important. One way to recognize outstanding students is to hold an awards assembly, ceremony, or dinner. Depending on the size of the council and the number of activities, there can be several types of awards committees or one large one. Awards can be given for accomplishments or achievements such as academics, athletics, and service.

**Election committee.** The strength of an organization lies in its leaders. An **election committee** establishes guidelines and procedures that will help ensure the most qualified candidates will be elected. The candidate guidelines must be clear and in writing so there is no confusion. The election committee plans the election schedule, nominating process, assembly, actual voting, and follow up.

**Fundraising committee.** The success of this committee is essential for a student council to achieve as many projects and programs as possible. Raising money is not easy and requires planning and coordination within the entire council and many times the entire school or community. Members must be adept at event planning, organization, publicity, and budgeting.

**Graduation committee.** Graduation is the crowning event in most high schools. The graduation committee works with school administration in planning and carrying out commencement and any other related activities, such as breakfasts, after-graduation events, and recognition programs. Parents often also play a vital role with this committee.

**Homecoming committee.** Homecoming usually includes a variety of activities, such as a pep rally or assembly; spirit week; Homecoming king, queen, and court; parade; and dance. Because there are usually so many activities to plan, success requires a stand alone committee separate from a general dance committee.

**Orientation committee.** Introducing new students to the school, to each other, and to current students is an important function of any student council. First impressions can

set the tone for a student's perception of and success at school. Orientation can include an assembly at the beginning of the year with administrator and student speakers welcoming new students as well as an end-of-the-year event to orient students from feeder middle schools. Committee members should be the friendly, informative tour guides who help the students feel more a part of the school.

**Prom committee.** This is another specialized dance committee that has special components that make it separate from the general dance committee. Members coordinate such activities as theme, refreshments, formal photos, invitations, fashion shows, a special venue, and after-prom activities.

**Workshop committee.** Helping fellow students work toward their goals and providing leadership training are a great way for the council to serve the student body. Workshops should be designed for general training for all interested students or some could be for a specific target audience such as all club and class officers. Well planned and attended workshops will help improve the entire school community. Careful planning should be used in developing the content of a workshop or workshops with a set goal in mind. Presenters can be experienced students, faculty members, administrators, skilled community adults, or outside professionals.

**Community service committee.** There are many ways to serve the school and local community, including fundraising, volunteering, tutoring, and food and clothing drives. The goal of the community service committee should be to see or find a need within the school or local community and try and fill it.

**Public relations committee.** This committee handles the communications from the council to those within the school and community. It can include weekly news announcements during homeroom classes, hall posters, ads in school and local papers, and TV or radio announcements. This committee works very closely with most other committees.

## Committee Activities

Following are a few samples of various types of projects that can be planned by one of the committees above or another named by the council. Many can be planned to involve either a widely diverse group or to reach or serve a special part of the school population.

**Fun activities:** Movie night, camp fires, roller skating party, table games, mock Olympics (tricycle races or balloon throws)

**Patriotic activities:** Color guard to open events, program for Memorial Day or Veterans Day, wear your school colors day.

**Personal development:** Organize workshops with speakers on topics that are of interest and helpful to your student body, such as general college entrance facts, career events, how to apply for a job, tutoring sessions.

**Service to others:** Assisting at community events; working with League of Women Voters to get the vote out for local, state, and national elections; volunteer work within various local organizations or charities.

## Action Plan for Success

These are the basic steps committees should follow for success. Include them in your action plan.

- Discuss.** Include input from as many people as possible.
- Decide.** Determine what activities your committee will undertake.
- Plan.** Develop ways to achieve the goals for each part of the project. Put them in writing.
- Schedule.** Determine a timeline for work, meetings, people, and resources.
- Contact.** Contact everyone needed to complete the plan, such as a speaker, a DJ, the principal, or a vendor.
- Confirm.** Follow through with contacts and members working on project.
- Check Details.** Go through the plan and make sure all details are covered and confirmed.
- Deadline.** Meet each deadline for completion of work.
- Follow up.** Clean up, evaluate, send a thank-you as necessary.

