

RED CROSS CLUBS: CLUB MEETINGS

Making the Most Out of Your Meetings

There are many different types of meetings you may have when running a Red Cross Club, such as Executive Board meetings, general Club meetings, and committee meetings. All of these meetings allow members to come together to discuss ideas, plan events and receive updates. Meetings are also a great way to collaborate with other school clubs or faculty to discuss concerns and coordinate service projects. Although you may have different reasons for holding meetings, the basic steps outlined will help your meetings be a success.

It is important to plan your meetings in advance and distribute a clear calendar with dates and locations. Follow the four phases in this guide to plan and run an effective meeting.

1. Planning the Meeting—It is important to clarify what you want to accomplish in the meeting and share this purpose with those invited to attend. Before setting your objectives, please take a look at the following issues and try to identify which are most relevant:

- **Meeting purpose**—Decide on the reason for the meeting. Will you share information, brainstorm, plan the next steps on a project, or discuss other topics of interest?
- **Outcomes**—What are you trying to get out of the meeting? Members' agreement, project plan, new ideas, shared information or updates?
- **Topics to be discussed**—Prepare a meeting agenda and make the most of the limited time you have available. Cover as much information as possible without rushing through important details.
- **Attendance**—Decide who should attend the meeting. Is the meeting limited to Club officers for a specific committee, or for all Club members?
- **Date, time and location**—Lunch break or after school? School or local Red Cross Unit? Make sure to select a time and location that is convenient for the majority of members who are expected to attend the meeting.
- **Meeting Invitation**—Make sure that Club members know when and where the meeting will be held. Post the meeting information on your Red Cross Club Volunteer Connection GroupShare page and post or send out a reminder 1-2 days before the meeting.

2. Meeting Agenda

What is a meeting agenda?

A meeting agenda is an outline of the topics that will be discussed during a meeting, giving participants time to prepare beforehand. Agendas are sent out prior to meetings—typically a day or two in advance.

Developing a meeting agenda

Things to consider:

- **Establish the time frame for your meeting.** If you have a number of topics to cover, consider holding multiple meetings or asking members to do some preparation work before the meeting. This will allow for more meaningful conversation surrounding each topic, rather than feeling as though you must rush to cover the content.



- **Use an icebreaker.** Start out with an icebreaker that gets everyone excited and ready for a productive meeting. An icebreaker is also a great way to engage new members. In general, work to ensure that all members feel welcome and that their contributions are valued.
- **List the topics to be covered during the meeting.** Review past activities or issues that need to be wrapped up.
- **Tackle your most important/time-critical item on the agenda.** It is essential to discuss the most important item at the beginning of the meeting, making sure it gets as much time as needed.
- **Put brainstorming last.** Brainstorming new or less important issues may use time needed to discuss more critical items.

Learn from your peers: Make sure your agenda accounts for lag time—allow about five minutes for people to arrive, sign in and wrap up extended discussions. It is realistic to have some time set aside for these situations; they will inevitably occur. Make sure you have enough time to cover all items on your agenda and all officers have approved.

Here is a sample agenda for your first Red Cross Club meeting of the year:

[Name of Red Cross Club]
 Meeting Agenda
 [Meeting Date]
 [Meeting time]
 [Meeting Location]

Welcome & Icebreaker *(Insert leader name)* (10 Minutes)

- Sign In
- Make name badge
- Ice Breaker: favorite summer blockbuster
- Materials pick-up: agenda, giveaways

Welcome to the new school year *(Insert leader name)* (15 Minutes)

- Mission of the American Red Cross
- Goals for the club this year
- Introduction of officers
- Expectation of members
- Club Constitution
- Registering as an American Red Cross volunteer in Volunteer Connection
- Red Cross Club GroupShare page in Volunteer Connection

Club Projects *(Insert leader name)* (15 Minutes)

- Preparedness Week in September *(Project Lead: Name)*
- Bake Sale to benefit Disaster Relief Fund *(Project Lead: Name)*

Brainstorming Future Club Projects *(Insert leader name)* (15 Minutes)

- Projects for November, December

Recap & Conclusion *(Insert leader name)*

(5 Minutes)

- Bake Sale: Date, Time, Location
- Action Items: What needs to be done before the next meeting and who is responsible for doing it
- Next meeting: Date, Time, Location

3. Setting Up the Meeting—Prior to the meeting you need to ensure that you secured the following aspects:

- Location
- Time
- Audio visual equipment
- Guests—sponsor/advisor, Red Cross Unit Contact, guest speakers

It is extremely important to communicate information about the meetings with your peers in a timely fashion. In an ideal case, your Club should have a calendar of meetings for each semester developed in collaboration with your officers. Reminders are proven to be efficient tools for keeping everyone informed and ensuring strong meeting participation.

Most importantly, you need to use a number of different communication avenues to share information with all of your Club members. You should consider sending messages via Volunteer Connection, e-mail, text, school announcements, social media and mobile apps.

Once developed, the meeting agenda should be shared with the Club members, allowing time for advanced preparation if needed.

Look out! If you have a guest speaker joining you for the meeting, remember to remind them one week in advance and no later than 1–2 days before the actual meeting takes place. This is just an extra precaution, ensuring that they will be prepared to join your meeting.

4. Running the Meeting—Starting your meeting on time always sends a professional message; at the very latest you need to start your meeting five minutes after the time announced. Don't confuse your meeting with a lecture. Think of it as a structured discussion or conversation; ensure active participation, positive feedback and a great group dynamic.

Advice from the Pros: *When moderating a discussion (i.e., brainstorming ideas for possible service projects), it is important to share with the participants the scope of the project and how they should approach the project. Share relevant information, explain the context and avoid unclear requests.*

Did everyone sign in?

You want to make sure that you keep track of everyone who attended your meeting. Use the meeting sign-in sheet to make sure you don't miss any Club members. After each meeting, the information should be entered into Volunteer Connection.

Take Meeting Minutes

Meeting minutes are detailed notes taken during the course of a meeting, documenting all key topics that were discussed for future reference. In a nutshell, you will ask the note-taker or Club secretary to follow the agenda and fill in the blanks with some key points.

There are a number of benefits associated with capturing the information discussed during your Club meetings:

- Information for the members and advisors who could not attend the meeting.

- Keep track of the progress of events or serve as reference for future members and leaders.
- Use it as a reminder for members that committed to work on specific assignments.

After your meeting, the meeting minutes should be posted on your Red Cross Club GroupShare page in Volunteer Connection so all Club members can view them.

Advice from the Pros: Designate one point person to take the minutes at every meeting and an alternate to assist with documentation should the primary note-taker be unavailable. Electing a secretary to the Executive Board is a great way to engage a student leader to ensure this is completed. If both are unavailable, the note-taker can be determined on a voluntary basis.

Meeting Follow Up

Especially after general Club meetings, make sure to meet with the rest of your Club's officers and get their specific feedback on the general atmosphere, if the meeting met its purpose and if there were any outstanding items that need follow up. If necessary, reach out to your Red Cross Unit Contact or Club Advisor to clarify any questions or concerns which arose during the meeting.

Don't forget to post the meeting minutes within two days after the meeting. Highlight all assigned tasks, deadlines and action items!



Contact your local Red Cross Unit for more information about these activities.

