

RED CROSS CLUBS: RECRUIT, RETAIN AND RECOGNIZE CLUB MEMBERS

There are many different stages in the life of a club. Some of you might just be starting a Red Cross Club while others have a well-established program. Regardless of how advanced your Club is, member recruitment, retention and recognition are always an exciting challenge and need to be focused on every year.

In this section, we discuss some strategies that will enable you to recruit new members, successfully engage the existing ones and recognize those who have made a difference and followed through in their commitments.

Recruiting New Club Members

At the beginning of a new school year, you should develop a recruitment plan with your officers and set some specific directions for recruiting and involving your peers in Club activities.

Designing Your Recruitment Strategy

Recruitment strategies should have two major components¹: “Creating the Ask” and “Making the Ask”

Creating the Ask:

Why do young people volunteer?

When making the pitch to your peers about joining your Club, it is important to know what makes *them* interested in the Red Cross. What are they looking for in a student organization? Why would they decide to embrace your cause and join your Red Cross Club?

Here are some reasons why youth decide to volunteer with the Red Cross:

- To make a measurable and tangible impact
- To feel good about helping others
- To save lives in their community
- Because they believe in the mission and values of the Red Cross
- Because they want to use their passions to drive action
- To gain leadership skills and development opportunities
- To add meaningful experiences to a resume or college application
- To gain service hours
- To create life-long memories with friends

What are your membership needs?

- Understand your Club’s present situation and growth potential: If you are just starting a new Club, you will mostly rely on your officers and a handful of enthusiastic members. The recruitment effort usually starts at the beginning of a semester or school year.
- Examine the number of projects planned for the entire school year and the additional



¹ Material adopted from *Tips for recruitment of new volunteers*, Points of Light Foundation

responsibilities the Club needs to handle: For example, developing/maintaining a club blog, teaching preparedness education classes, hosting a blood drive, fundraising, and more.

Making the Ask:

What are the best avenues to recruit new members? You should schedule at least two major recruitment campaigns—one in the fall and the other in the spring.

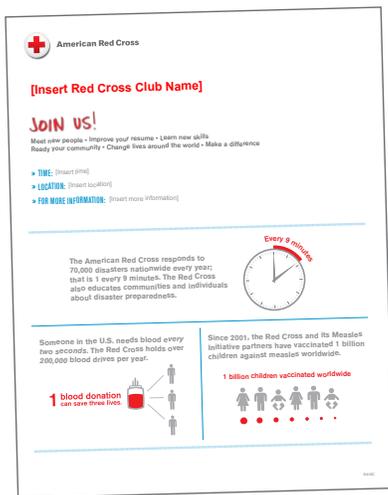
- **Consider your Club's social network:** Make sure to include your friends and classmates that expressed interest in learning more about your Club. Do not hesitate to personally ask friends and classmates to join the Club.
- **Host a face-to-face meeting:** Schedule a specific informative meeting and invite all your peers that expressed interest. This meeting should provide a fun way for potential members to meet current members and learn about Club activities.
- **Attend the Club activities fair:** If your school hosts an activities fair, make your booth or table interesting—have candy, games and prizes to entice people to your table to learn about your Club.
- **Take advantage of all opportunities to advertise even when you are not conducting a specific recruitment campaign:** Use flyers, posters and other promotional materials to build visibility for your Club. If you are hosting an event, such as a bake sale or blood drive, be sure to have information about joining the Club available and visible.
- **Host service projects or special events:** Invite your peers to attend your Club events, which show that you can have fun while still making an impact. Remember, making flyers and posters should add to, not replace, the personal connection.
- **Use social media:** You can also use social media and other avenues to recruit members. Be sure to reference and follow guidelines in the [Social Engagement Handbook](#).

Here are some other recruitment suggestions:

- Attend a community outreach fair.
- Place flyers and posters in busy areas in your school.
- Make announcements advertising the Club over the school communication system.
- Get on your school's audio and video announcements.
- Get an article in your school's newspaper or newsletter.
- Pass out small giveaways (e.g., bookmarks) with information about the Club.
- Start a Facebook group and invite your friends.
- Spread the word through other social networking Web sites.
- E-mail friends about joining the Club.

When using any of these methods of communication, make everything look professional and ensure that the Red Cross logo is used correctly. This is important in creating a positive image of your Club.

To make this even easier, reach out to your Red Cross Unit and ask for the Red Cross Club recruitment post cards, tent cards, brochures and flyers.



Recruitment Follow-Up

After taking these steps, making the appeal and connecting with your peers through face-to-face meetings and/or indirect communication, following up and asking people if they would be interested in joining your Club is very important. If you get their commitment, give details on the next steps to becoming a Club member (meeting information, how to register, etc.) and don't forget to introduce them to the team and thank them for their pledge.

Retaining Club Members

Retention shows your Club's ability to keep members active and engaged. Most clubs have a fluctuating membership base. Whether you are in your first year or you have a prestigious Club with years of experience, you might have retention issues for various reasons.

When growing your membership base, together with your officer team, you will need to reassess the Club structure and explore how you can expand the leadership team and adopt a more advanced Club structure.

Inevitably, not everyone will stay with the Club the whole year, but there are some *strategies* you can use to *improve your Club's ability to retain members*:

- **Communication is key.** Keep members up-to-date with all major developments in the Club. Request feedback and make Club members part of the decision making process. Learn from past mistakes and improve your interactions with members. If you find some members have become less active than they previously were, reach out to them personally to find out why and let them know they are missed.
- **Be proficient in managing Club meetings.** Host well-structured, engaging meetings and pay close attention to the general atmosphere. Make sure to use ice breakers, establish a welcoming work environment and manage conflicts in a professional manner. Integrating simple service projects, such as making thank you cards for blood donors, or hosting a guest speaker, are wonderful ways to encourage members to attend meetings.
- **Monitor member work load.** Burnt out or bored members are two extreme situations you need to avoid. It is important to involve the entire team, starting with the planning stages of the project, and empowering club members to take ownership of the project they are implementing.
- **Create leadership and development opportunities.** Often, during stressful times, the president has the tendency to take charge of everything. But when possible, let other officers, committee leads or Club members take on responsibilities as well. This will allow your members to take ownership and have a sense of the impact.
- **Learn Club members names.** It is important for the Club members to feel wanted and remembered. Learn the names of all members and send personal follow-ups to those who miss meetings to let them know they were missed.
- **Have fun!** The most important thing is to get to know each other and cultivate friendships.

Advice from the Pros: Retention is vital to any group or club. It's easy to get people out to one meeting, have them put their contact information on a sign-up sheet and never hear from them again. It's crucial to have a retention strategy that works and is consistent. Planning meaningful service projects will also help retention.

Tracking Club Members' Participation

Having accurate information on your Club members, the volunteer hours your Club dedicated to a project, the number of hours served by a Club member during a semester, and the best way to contact a Club member represents important elements in ensuring volunteer retention.

All Club members should be registered volunteers with the local Red Cross Unit and registered in Volunteer Connection. Once your club has registered, you will be able to use your Red Cross Club GroupShare page to share information about upcoming meetings and events and send reminders to Club members. Make sure all your Club members are included in your Red Cross Club GroupShare.

The Executive Board should have an accurate record of volunteer hours for all Club members.

When tracking volunteers, you should keep in mind three different pieces of information:

- **Overall volunteering information:** This data is essential for your Club activity reports, recruitment campaigns, and/or when writing funding/small grants proposals. You should collect data on the following items:
 - Number of club members.
 - Number of volunteering hours (per semester or per year).
 - Number of service projects.
- **Contact information for Club members:** Collect relevant information on your officers and members, including primary contact information, roles, attendance and volunteer hours.
- **Information on prospective Club members:** Maintain lists of people attending school fairs or a recruitment campaign for your club. This information is vital for your recruitment efforts and for renewing your Club membership. You should track the following items:
 - List of people who expressed interest in enrolling in the Club (names and contact information).
 - Dates the information was collected.
 - Follow-up status—additional actions the Club took to reach out to individuals who expressed interest. Contacting these individuals within 48 hours of them noting interest is essential to recruitment success.

Recognizing Club Members

Recognizing the work done by your club members must be a priority for your leadership team. As a general rule of thumb, it is crucial to recognize all members for their contributions and good work.

An indispensable tool in recognizing the people who walked the extra mile and stood out through exemplary commitment and service is provided by your capacity to *track volunteer hours and Club activities*. Make these transparent, so people can see how they are doing and what they are contributing. It will help to motivate them to stay engaged!

Advice from the Pros: Organize a service contest to see which Club member from each grade can complete the most service hours.

Recognizing your peers can be as simple as sending a thank you note after an event or a certificate at the end of the year. Through recognition, you can show your members that their time and effort is valued. There are many

ways to recognize your members, but at the very least, personally thank them for their contribution. Remember, praise the person, not the work that was done.

Some recognition ideas:

- Present members with pins, certificates or official Red Cross T-shirts.
- Recognize a “Volunteer of the Month.”
- Create an end-of-the-year recognition event for your outstanding members in conjunction with other Red Cross Clubs in neighboring schools.
- Share outstanding member stories with the local Red Cross and/or school newspaper.
- Nominate volunteers for Red Cross or other award programs.

You can also work with your local Red Cross Unit to see what types of recognition ideas or events they host throughout the year.



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