

# orientation guide for new exchange members

An effective orientation can be your key to a growing and vibrant Exchange Club. Warmly welcomed and informed members are more likely to become involved in your club activities and feel good about their decision to join America's greatest service club. It is important that a new member receive an orientation immediately upon his or her election to membership when interest and curiosity are at their peaks. The new member is waiting to see what will happen now that he or she has become a member.

When you activate new members within 90 days of joining your club, you dramatically increase the odds of them continuing their membership for years to come. A great way to launch a new member's activation is with an orientation event. If several members are inducted at the same time, a special meeting should be scheduled. However, do not delay the orientation of one new member while waiting to set up a group session. It is vital that the new member learn of Exchange in order to become motivated immediately.

How you conduct your orientation meeting is up to your club and the committee responsible (Membership Expansion & Retention Committee or Exchange Education Committee.) Orientations should be conducted no less than quarterly. An evening event with refreshments and a social atmosphere may be appropriate. Your club may decide to hold a special session either before or after a regular meeting. If only one new member is brought in during the time period, a one-on-one meeting with a past president might do the trick. There are many possibilities.

The bottom line of an orientation event is to inspire new members to become active, long-term members.

Additional goals include:

- To give them a better picture of your club and how they can fit in.
- To meet key players in your club.
- To meet other new members.
- To make them aware of opportunities for their involvement.
- To resell them on what a great idea it was to join your club.

The following outline will help your committee design an orientation agenda, whether a group session or one-on-one talk is used. Chief sources of information are *History of Exchange*, this *Club Leader Monthly Planner*, *Exchange Education* and the *New Member Kit*, all available from the National Exchange Club Headquarters.

## Outline of Topics to Cover During Orientation

### Our Club:

- Rewards of membership (satisfaction, fellowship, individual growth)
- Responsibilities of membership (attendance, participation, committee work, fundraising, membership building)
- When chartered
- Charter members still active
- Dues (Local, District, National)
- Officers and board of directors
- Committees
- Achievements

- Program of service
- Fundraising

### District:

- Geographic boundaries
- Officers, clubs, convention
- Services

### National Exchange:

- History
- Officers, clubs, convention
- Bylaws
- Program of service projects (Americanism, community service, youth activities and child abuse prevention)
- Covenant of Service
- Motto - "Unity for Service"
- Services

In addition to the above, new members should complete the Member Interest Finder (see Appendix) to determine their interests and move them on to the involvement phase. The new member should also have an opportunity to sign up for club committees and projects. The new member's sponsor and a club's membership committee should use the New Member Activation Form (see Appendix) to guide the new member's education, participation and leadership opportunities. Successful completion of this form ultimately strengthens both the individual and the club.

Here are some other suggestions for a successful orientation. (From author Cynthia D'Amour):

1. Keep the "official talk" short and to the point.
  - Too often, club orientations are boring and long-winded. Try to maintain a 1:4 ratio of presentations to mingling.
  - In a one-hour orientation, presentations should be kept to 12 minutes or less. Give specific time limits to anyone who is going to talk.
  - You want new members to be excited about joining your group — not dreading the next boring meeting.

2. Have key members such as your board, officers and committee chairs attend and mingle with the new members.
  - New members are very excited to get a moment of an officer’s time. This short interaction helps them feel like they are an important addition to the club.
  - It’s also a great time for one-on-one recruiting for committee work. The personal interaction is a powerful way to get new members involved.
3. Make sure that new members meet each other.
  - Joining a club can be very intimidating. By linking up with other new members, individuals get a buddy with whom to explore your club. The relationship serves as a confidence booster for both.
  - These buddies are easier for you to activate and tend to remain members due to their new friendships.
4. Plan for and support the networking that happens at your orientations.
  - You can use “ice breaker” activities to get the conversation flowing. Another idea is to have an older member host and introduce each new member around. It’s also a great time for a short, interactive program on how to build their networks in your club.
  - Remember, your goal is to help new members to find buddies in your group.
5. Provide new members with a sign-up sheet for committee and special project work.
  - As your new members meet different chairs and hear about various projects, they’ll get a feel for what’s a good fit for them.
  - Some may hand in their sheet that night. Most new members will be overwhelmed and need to turn it in later.
6. Have someone follow up with new members within two weeks of attending your orientation.
  - Check to see if they have any more questions. If they have not filled in the committee work sheets, the follow-up person can do it over the phone.
  - Follow-up callers should encourage the new members to attend the next event and share any details that will make the new member feel more confident, like they are “in the know.”
  - It’s also a great opportunity to further activate current members and to help them continue to build their network into your club.

A well planned orientation is an ongoing process and helps your new members confidently take their first steps into building a long-term relationship with your club.

A successful orientation is the first step to rewarding involvement in Exchange. For further assistance, contact your National Headquarters at 800-XCHANGE (800-924-2643).

*Orientation goals and suggestions reprinted with permission from “Orientations That Get Results,” Cynthia D’Amour, author of “How to Turn Generation Me Into Active Members of Your Association,” [www.peoplepowerunlimited.com](http://www.peoplepowerunlimited.com).*