

CHAPTER SUCCESS GUIDE: CHAPTER MEETINGS



Some of the most common questions student leaders ask are about chapter meetings: How often to have them; what to do in them; who should run them; how to make them attractive; how to get members to come to meetings; and more. There isn't one answer that fits every chapter, and the right solution for you might change every year or term, but there are lots of different ideas and models you can try out to see what the best fit is.

Guiding Questions

Before planning your meetings for the month, term, or year, think about some of these questions:

- Why do people come to student organization meetings on your campus, and what's working well for them? For some, passion and professional interest drive their involvement, while friends and social connections might be a motivating factor for others. Think of some successful student organizations at your school and reach out to learn about how they plan their meetings.
- How are we balancing our chapter's goals and keeping meetings fun, purposeful, and engaging? Ask members what they want out of meetings, whether they be specific topics, guest speakers, discussions, activities, or something else, and think about what division of time makes the most sense for you.

- What is a reasonable schedule to keep our meetings fresh and get done the things we need to do? Some chapters, meeting on a regular schedule every other week, for example, is the perfect amount of time to plan for the content of the meeting, advertise and disseminate information, and provide structure for members. Other chapters may only host full membership meetings a handful of times throughout the term. They may meet every week as a smaller executive board or planning committee to work through logistics.
- How are we keeping people who can't attend our meetings in the loop? Some chapters send a regularly scheduled newsletter every other week or every month to summarize projects and decisions. Some chapters record their meetings, live stream them on social media, or create virtual engagement opportunities.

REMEMBER: *Meetings are only one of the many ways you engage with your chapter members, so don't be worried if one week you have lots of people and the following week you only have a few. Meeting attendance fluctuates throughout the term, so we encourage you to think about the other ways you engage your members and make a plan as you do for your meetings.*

Running a Successful Meeting

BEFORE THE MEETING:

- Create an agenda and allocate a certain amount of time for each item. If you plan the meeting with other students' help, delegate responsibilities for the meeting ahead of time. Check out the sample agenda for your first meeting below.
- Find a location that is open and accessible for as many people as possible, whether that's a classroom, zoom, or the counseling center. Make the best decision for your chapter and members.
- Ensure the room is equipped with what you'll need (table, chairs, technology, etc.)
- Be sure to advertise your meeting, create flyers, social media posts, and e-invites to promote around campus and online.

DURING THE MEETING:

- Greet everyone and make them feel welcome. Have snacks and/or beverages if possible; free food is a great incentive!
- Ask people to sign in and provide their name, anticipated graduation year, and email address.
- Stick to the agenda. If there's time at the end, address things that weren't on the agenda that people wish to discuss.
- Allow time for students to ask questions, be prepared to answer them, and encourage group discussion to collect opinions and ideas.
- Be sure to leave the group with the next steps of action and the date, time, and place for the next meeting.

AFTER THE MEETING:

- Add the attendees' e-mail addresses to your chapter's listserv or e-mail list.
- Follow up! Make sure to thank everyone for their participation. Summarize key points and include details about when the next meeting will be held, and any steps members can take in the meantime. Let people know who they should contact if they have any questions.
- Discuss any problems or issues that came up with the other students who planned the meeting and discuss possible improvements for future meetings.
- Plan your next steps before you meet again. Be sure to follow through on any plans made during the meeting.

Meeting Ideas

- **Neural Networks**
 - Break into small groups or pairs and discuss a specific topic. Have questions ready. Topics can include self-care, recent news articles, works of art dealing with mental health or mental illness, game, trivia, etc.
- **Present**
 - Provide a mental health 101 lesson or invite chapter members to present on topics they're passionate about.
- **Think, Share, Compare**
 - Break into pairs and brainstorm program ideas, then come together and share out.

- **Icebreakers**

- You can find dozens of fun ice breaker activities online. This will help build a sense of community and keep members coming back.

- **Guest Speakers**

- Invite someone from your campus or local community to speak. Many chapters have had members of the counseling center talk about self-care of mindfulness or have brought in professionals from their community to talk about their work in mental health.

- **Current Events**

- Share an article, study, video, song, or another piece of media related to mental health and have a group discussion.

Resources

- Find Chapter resources, success guides, opportunities, and more on the [Active Minds Chapter Hub](#).
- Connect with Active Minds National Staff! Get advice, ask questions, and brainstorm with our team. We're here for you. The Chapters team hosts weekly [office hours](#) where you can learn about chapter success tips, ask questions, work through any challenges you may be facing, and more!
- Sign up for Slack and chat with student leaders from across the country! Slack is a comprehensive platform that gives you the ability to ask questions, provide ideas, shares successes, and overall build a more cohesive network of Active Minds, mental health advocates, and activists. [Sign up for Slack](#) and download the app onto your phone and/or computer.

Sample First Meetings Agenda

Active Minds at [SCHOOL] First General Meeting--[Date, 4:00 PM-5:00 PM]

3:45-4:00 PM-- Setting Up: ([Name] to bring candy and sign up sheet)

The executive board arrives early to set up the room, put out free candy and sign-up sheets, and greet people as they enter.

4:00-4:15 PM--Introductions and Icebreaker: ([Name] to lead)

Everyone shares their name, pronouns, year, major, and a fun fact about themselves. Executive board members share their title, responsibilities, and why they got involved with Active Minds.

4:15-4:30 PM--About Active Minds: ([Name] to lead)

Share what Active Minds is nationally and on your campus, including things like:

- The Active Minds story
- Show the Active Minds' [Organization Video](#)
- What our chapter has done in the past
- Goals and priorities for the year
- Talk about any leadership team vacancies you have and if there will be an election.

4:30-4:45 PM--Tentative Events Planned this Term: ([Name] to lead)

- We plan what events we need in the coming weeks that we need logistical support on (people to bake things for the bake sale, people to sit at a table for these times, people to post flyers in their dorms, etc.)
- What kinds of events are coming up this term (Suicide Prevention Month, Active Minds Spirit Week, Stress Less Week, and other events)

4:45- 5:00 PM--Open Brainstorming Time: ([Name] to lead)

Time to let members discuss what they would like to see out of their engagement with Active Minds. Prepare questions to get feedback on specific things or ideas we have in mind or increase discussion if it is slow.

- What kinds of events would you like to attend or help plan?
- How can we better use our social media platforms?
- What other groups can we reach out to collaborate better?

Follow Up: [Name] will add new people to our email list and send out highlights from the meeting and the date and time of upcoming meetings and events.