A Guide to Holding Your Interest Meeting!

Peace Action Student Chapter

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

Ask Someone to Take Notes!

Make sure you have someone at your meeting who is willing to take detailed notes throughout the meeting. After the meeting, this person should send you the notes to edit, finalize, and send out to your group’s listserv. Taking minutes during your meeting will be useful for your student chapter for several reasons:

1.) Students who could not attend the meeting will be able to stay informed on what was discussed and what were the meeting outcomes.

2.) What decisions were made when?? Who was supposed to do what??? Maintaining a record of what occurred during the meeting helps to clarify how, when, why, and by whom decisions are made. You and your chapter members will be able to look back and see what were the ideas presented, decisions made, duties assigned, problems solved, and items placed on the backburner.

3.) Meeting minutes are also important to record next steps for action. By writing these action steps down and sending them out to your chapter members, responsibilities are less likely to be forgotten and work gets done!

4.) Keeping a public record of your minutes also promotes transparency within your student chapter!

Have an Agenda!

Creating a meeting agenda is a great idea for several reasons. An agenda maintains the direction of the meeting and helps prevent your chapter members from getting side-tracked. It is okay to allow the meeting to occasionally explore a tangent, however, when your meeting gets too far off track, ask the group to ‘get back to the agenda.’ You will find that a written agenda makes it easier (and more likely) to cover all the items that need addressing!

- People get bored easily. If the meeting seems to be dragging on forever and has no end in sight, your peers will most likely lose attention. On the contrary, if your chapter members have an idea of where the meeting stands (“OK, we’re more than halfway through the agenda, I can do this!”), they are more likely to follow along and participate.

- Try emailing out the agenda before each meeting. You save yourself the printing costs of making copies for your group, and you give your chapter members a preview of what the meeting will be about prior to the scheduled day. Creating an agenda before the meeting will help organize your thoughts, and will help chapter members come more prepared.

Note: Don’t forget to tell chapter members to bring the agenda with them so they can refer to it during the meeting.

Get Organized and Get a Binder!

This is huge. Record, print, and save everything – you will love yourself later for it (and so will the next chapter leader!). Get a binder to store: student organizing manual, meeting minutes, Officer list, members’ contact info, copy of club constitution, usernames and passwords, important forms, samples of flyers you’ve used, clippings of newspaper mentions, important emails, interesting articles, and anything else you might think is worth saving ☺️
SAMPLE AGENDA

1.) About [student chapter name]
Use your first interest meeting to get to the heart of why you’re starting a peace club on campus.
- Start with an introduction of yourself and how you came to be involved in your Peace Action student chapter.
- Explain the mission of Peace Action, of your student chapter, and the goals that you wish to accomplish through this student chapter. Refer to your club’s constitution for this information.
- **Tip:** it might be useful to have a handout ready with the description and contact information of your student chapter, especially if your meeting has a few late-comers!
- Have one or two **goals** that you want to get out of this meeting and tell your group what those goals are! Make it clear why you invited them to this meeting. e.g. “My goals for today’s meeting are to tell you more about what we’re trying to do here and find out who is interested in joining us.”

2.) Who’s Who?
This is a GREAT chance to learn more about the students interested in your peace club and what kind of resources they can contribute to your student chapter.
- Have everyone state their name, year, and why they decided to come to the meeting. Get creative and make an ice-breaker activity out of it!
- Ask meeting attendees to fill out the ‘Know Your Chapter Members” form (find the form under ‘Tools and Resources’ on panys.org/student-network). It is important to not only know who your chapter members are, but also the amount of commitment you have among members, and what kind of resources exist within your group.
- **Note:** you may only have to repeat this section of the agenda in the first, second, or third meeting. Afterwards, we suggest keeping a few copies of this form handy in case you get some new faces in the future!

3.) Brainstorm!
You might not be able to dig deep into all the different kinds of actions and events your student chapter can do over the course of the semester, but this is a great opportunity to lay the groundwork for future strategy meetings.
- Brainstorm about the all the different kinds of issues your chapter might tackle and actions you might take together. We call this **Divergent thinking.**
- Create a list of all the ideas presented at the meeting.
- Remember this meeting is about exploring! Stay open to everyone’s ideas and consider all the possibilities.
- At the end of your brainstorming session, cast a vote among your peers to find out which issues and actions resonate the most with your group. Record the results!
- **Note:** depending on the level of attendance for your first meeting, this list is not meant to be exhaustive and should be flexible for future input. Nevertheless, it is useful to get a sense of how your chapter members and potential-members see [student chapter name] taking root on campus.

4.) Recap & Next Steps
This may be the most important part of your meeting’s agenda! A lot was talked about during your time together – go over your meeting outcomes and plan for what happens next. You will also be helping out your Secretary taking notes!
- What decisions were made? Were responsibilities delegated out?
- Identify clear and measurable steps for action; label these actions as **Next Steps.** The more details, the better! Does a certain action have a deadline? Is your next step a goal, and if yes, is it measurable? (e.g. increase our chapter membership interest by 50% over the next month).
- **Note:** refer back to these ‘next steps’ in the first few items of next meeting’s agenda. This will be useful to track your progress, ensure any necessary follow-up, and maintain the direction of your chapter. For example: Was ‘x’ goal accomplished? ‘Did we pull off a ‘x’ tabling event last week?’ Has our membership increased?