

## Quick Tips

### Constitution vs. Bylaws

#### *What's the Difference?*

#### A Constitution:

- Is concise
- Clarifies the group's purpose
- Explains the fundamental purposes of the group
- Provides the basic framework for the group's processes
- Provides historical perspective
- Is rarely revised

#### Bylaws:

- Outline specific procedures for the group's functioning
- Help group conduct business in an orderly manner
- Provide further definition to the constitution
- Easily revised, and revised regularly as procedures change

## Leader Hints:

are available on the following topics

- Agendas
- Advising Groups
- Budgeting
- Co-Sponsorship
- Community Service
- Conflict Resolution
- Constitution and Bylaws
- Delegation
- Difficult Members
- Elections
- Event and Program Planning
- Fundraising
- Goal Setting
- Group Performance Evaluation
- Icebreakers
- Individual Evaluation
- Meetings and Minutes
- Motivation
- Newsletters
- Officer Transition
- Parliamentary Procedure
- Publicizing Events
- Recruiting New Members
- Retreats
- Starting a New Organization
- Stress Management
- Team Building
- Time Management

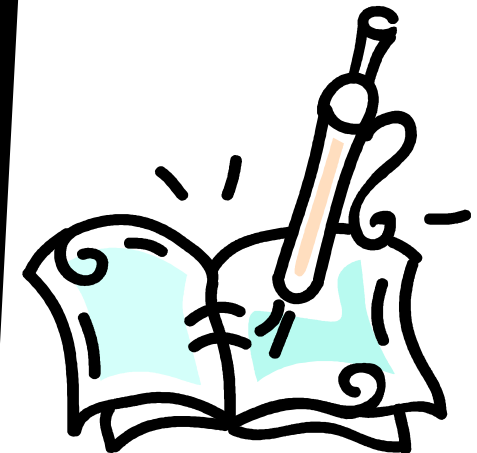
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# Leader Hints

Leadership Development Tips  
for Student Organizations

## Constitution and Bylaws



## What should be covered in a Constitution?

**Always** include the date of the most recent revision at the top of the first page of each constitution and set of bylaws!

Constitutions should be concise, yet contain the important framework of an organization. They should be between two and four pages in length, leaving the detailed procedures of a group's daily functions to the bylaws. Below is an outline of the kinds of information that should be included in a constitution.

If your organization chooses only to write a constitution, make sure you cover the important parts of the Bylaws in your Constitution. For example, Membership should cover selection requirements, eligibility, resignations, expulsion procedures and rights and responsibilities.

### **Article I - Name**

Include any affiliations with state or national groups.

### **Article II - Purpose**

What are the ideals the group is founded upon and what is its purpose?

### **Article III - Membership**

Include the anti-discrimination statement provided on the charter form. Neither membership in, nor services provided by the organization will be denied to anyone on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, physical or mental handicap, age, sex, sexual preference, ancestry, or medical condition. Exempt groups may not discriminate on any basis other than gender. Examples of exempt organizations are National Fraternal Organizations. Organizations may establish additional membership and academic eligibility for their organization.

### **Article IV - Officers**

Include titles, terms of office, eligibility, removal procedure and how and when elected.

### **Article V - Advisor (s)**

Include term and how and when selected.

### **Article VI - Meetings**

Frequency, special meetings, how called.

### **Article VII - Quorum**

The number of members required to conduct business. Usually stated as a fraction of the number of members, such as 3/4 or 2/3.

### **Article VIII - Legislation**

Procedures for changing the Constitution and general directional statements.

### **Articles IX - Amendments**

Procedure: notice required, voting procedures.

## What should be covered in Bylaws?

Bylaws are the daily working procedures of an organization. They contain the detailed processes of a group. They are usually easier to change, requiring only a simple majority, than the constitution which normally requires a 2/3 vote. Below is an outline of the kinds of information normally covered in the bylaws.

**A. Membership** - Selection requirements (such as GPA, number of hours completed or enrolled), resignations, expulsion procedures, rights and responsibilities

**B. Dues** - Amount, how collected, special fees, when payable, and to whom

**C. Executive Board** - Structure, membership, powers, responsibilities

**D. Responsibilities of Officers** - Powers, responsibilities, specific job descriptions

**E. Committees** - Standing, special, how formed, chairpersons, meetings, powers, responsibilities, how dissolved

**F. Responsibilities of Advisor (s)** - Outline the responsibilities and roles the advisor should play with your organization.

**G. Elections** - Include when, voter eligibility, voting method, winning vote margin, procedures for filling unexpired or unfilled terms of office, removal from office, and the appeal process.

**H. Parliamentary Authority** - Authority used, such as *Robert's Rules of Order—Newly Revised*

**J. Amendments** - How to propose, notice required, voting procedures

**K. Other specific policies and procedures unique to your organization** (such as adherence to national organization's constitution, etc.)