

Orientation Guide

The Importance of New Member Orientation

The importance of a proper, thorough new member orientation cannot be emphasized enough. Imagine belonging to an organization and having only a vague idea of its goals, the responsibilities of membership, its program, history or traditions. Would you feel like you belonged? Would you be motivated and committed to help the organization reach its goals? Of course not! You'd likely be wondering why you joined the organization at all.

The information provided during orientation provides a foundation for members. It helps them understand how the club functions, what their roles will be and gives them the big picture of the association. When new members are properly informed, they are more likely to feel comfortable with the club and become actively involved immediately in club activities.

According to a recent online survey of Lions, more than 80% of respondents believed that new member orientation is extremely important. However, less than 40% have any type of formal orientation in place. Many rely on the sponsor to handle new member orientation on an individual basis, or let the new member "learn as they go."

The danger in these methods is that there is no consistency in what information the new member receives. Having a formal new member orientation that follows a specific agenda ensures that all new members are being given the same information.

Elements of a Successful Orientation

There are many different ways to conduct a successful new member orientation. The Orientation Guide has suggestions that can be adapted in a way that best suits your club.

When planning an orientation, you want to keep the content relevant and brief, so as not to overwhelm participants. It is very important to not only impart specific information, but also inform new members where they can turn to find out additional details and whom to contact with questions.

Be sure to allow plenty of time for questions and answers and discussion. Set a tone that encourages new members to feel free to speak. Keep the pace lively.

Consider preparing a folder or binder for each new member with information about your club, such as:

- Current Club Newsletter
- Club Brochure/Fact Sheet
- A Recent Issue of THE LION Magazine
- New Member Materials from Lions Clubs International Headquarters

Orientation Content

When deciding what content to present, keep in mind that you want to give new members a complete picture of what they will need to know as a member without overloading them. Think about what information you found helpful when you became a Lion. Consider asking some fairly new members what information they thought was important to know and if there was anything that they wished they would have learned right away. Following is a brief, suggested outline for a new member orientation. The Orientation Guide contains a more detailed outline, along with presentation suggestions.

1. ***Brief History and Current Statistics of the International Association:*** This gives the new member an idea of the “big picture.”
2. ***The Local Lions Club:*** Everything the new member needs to know to function productively in your club. This includes not only pertinent club information, such as dues, meeting times and policies, but also the benefits of membership and opportunities for service.
3. ***The District and Multiple District:*** It is important for a new member to know about the regional support and programs available.
4. ***The International Association:*** Explain the programs and support available from the international office.

Order the Orientation Guide

Planning and instituting consistent guidelines for presenting new member orientations in your club will have benefits for both the new member and the club. The small effort needed to create the guidelines will have lasting positive effects in your club for years to come.

To begin, order the Orientation Guide (ME-13). This helpful publication takes clubs step by step through the process of planning a new member orientation, including tips and suggestions for planning an orientation, an orientation outline and content suggestions. It also includes useful checklists, self-help exercises and worksheets. To order, contact the Membership Operations Department at: memberops@lionsclubs.org
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