



STARTING A NEW CLUB

TIPS, IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS

If you have any new tips, ideas or suggestions, please email them to the Development Officer.

These notes will be updated from time to time

Please also see the notes on "Recruitment" and "Retention"

These notes are not in any particular order.

WHY START A NEW CLUB

- Because your existing club is approaching the practical limit of 30 members
- Because you, or some of the other members of your club are travelling a long way to club meetings and would welcome a nearer club
- Because you, or some of your colleagues, want to exploit a new catchment area in your locality
- Because you want the challenge of starting a new club
- Because you want to!

GETTING SUPPORT

- Most new clubs will be started with the support of other clubs nearby:
 - ✓ To enable visitors from other existing clubs to come and pad out the audience in the critical first year
 - ✓ So that experienced members can attend to chair, evaluate etc
 - ✓ To inspire the new members by showing what can be done in a successful club
- Form a small task force of existing members and perhaps some prospective new ones – it is very difficult to do it all yourself – delegate as much as you can.
- Enlist the help of your Area President, your District President and as many clubs within reach as you can.

- Consider enlisting the help of other voluntary organisations such as Rotary, Round Table, etc or a large local employer or a university
- You will need mountains of enthusiasm!

THE VENUE

- Getting the right venue is important – prospective members are encouraged, or put off, by the venue
- Find somewhere that is easy to get to from the proposed club area
- The venue should be easy to find, and inviting when members and visitors arrive
- There should be easy and convenient parking
- The venue should be big enough (but not too big!) and provide facilities for tea and coffee, or a bar for breaks during the programme.
- Consider whether there is a convenient location, in the building or nearby, for socialising afterward – developing a team spirit is essential.
- The venue should be warm (both literally and in appearance – avoid barn like meeting rooms) and feel comfortable
- Have a different meeting night from that of local clubs so that the maximum number of existing members will be free to come to the new club

GETTING STARTED

- Try to collect as many new members as possible for the new club by personal contact – if you have enough interested new members and support from other clubs you could start holding meetings straight away. You probably need about 6 or more new members (over and above the support from existing members) to make a start.
- Publicise the new group and its first meetings.
- Consider holding a “demonstration” or “taster” evening (or evenings, perhaps a series of three) using members from existing clubs. It is easier to effectively advertise an event than it is to advertise the “ordinary” club programme
- Have promotional material available to hand out at the first few meetings, and generally in response to enquiries, so as to encourage visitors to turn up at the next meeting.
- Have a visitor’s book so that you know who came – if they don’t turn up next time phone them and ask why!

ADVERTISING

- Advertise extensively (see recruitment and retention tips, ideas and suggestions).

FINANCE

- Get realistic financial arrangements in place from the start – the new club may not be self financing in the first year – plan a realistic budget with outgoings such as room hire, refreshments, and advertising as outgoings and membership subscriptions and meeting fees (if you propose to charge one) as incomings.
- Can you borrow lights, gavel, lectern etc initially or will you need to buy them?
- Discuss finance, fix a membership fee and meeting fee from the start – make it realistic so that the change will not be too drastic next year. However, consider concessions in the first year.
- Seek financing from your existing club, the Area and District
- A start-up grant of £100 is available from the ASC – an application form is available from the National Secretary.
- Initially you can run your club without being chartered (ie becoming a formal member of the ASC). When the club charts members will not need to pay a capitation fee during the calendar year in which they charter - ending 31st December. However they will be liable for a 50% capitation during the year following charter - payable as at 1st January that year. Thereafter full capitation dues will apply.
- You are entitled to 5 free Speakers Guides (you can still charge new members for them)
- Once you Charter (join the ASC) you do not pay for your Presidential regalia (which will be provided by the ASC, and which belongs to them).

FIRST MEETINGS

- Consider whether you intend to follow the established programme for meetings, or whether in the initial stages you want to include word games, a greater proportion of topics, debates, readings or just general conversation until you have enough competent members to follow the usual programme.
- Consider “demonstration” speeches and evaluations from members of other clubs.

COMMITTEE

- The new group needs to be self managing as soon as possible (otherwise you will be looking after it forever!). Identify prospective committee members as soon as possible after you start and form a committee, involving new members as well as some more experienced people from other clubs (to provide experience and guidance), as soon as you can.