



Activities to Make Your New Member Program Hard But Not Hazing

You want your new members to grow and learn through affiliation with your organization and at the same time, you want them to feel like they worked hard to achieve something great—the privilege of wearing the letters you value. You want to challenge them. How do you do that in a way that isn't hazing? Below are a few ideas for activities you can plan that challenge new members to work together, test their personal courage, and teach them new skills.

Step 1: What are the outcomes you hope to achieve through the activity and how do they relate to your organization's values? What do you want to teach them? Ex. New members will be able to work as a team.

Step 2: What activities and events can accomplish this objective?

Step 3: Evaluate the options and select an activity.

Step 4: Make it clear to participants that all activities should be "challenge by choice," meaning that individuals should feel comfortable to not participate should the activity be too challenging for them. Please remember, something that is overly challenging does not help people learn. It actually results in the opposite—they shut down.

Step 5: Lead a discussion following the activity to talk about what everyone learned. Help make connections with your organization's values. This is the most important part of the activity! Sample questions include:

- What was challenging about this activity?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- What would you do differently if you could do it over?
- What did you learn about the group?
- How does this relate to being a new member in this organization?
- How can you take what you learned and apply it to the fraternity/sorority?

Sample Goals of a New Member Program

- Encourage individual leadership development
- Promote adjustment to college life
- Build respect for the individual
- Stimulate intellectual growth
- Promote an understanding of the fraternity or sorority
- Promote social graces
- Provide an environment for the free exchange of ideas between all members
- Promote friendship

Please note: Do not do any of the climbing or winter activities without a trained guide or facilitator with you. Contact information is provided for contacting these facilitators below.

Outcome: Leadership Development

- Raft building exercise in the WPI pool: Reserve the pool for this exercise. Have new members write the creed of the organization on a piece of tissue paper. Then challenge the new members to build a raft using foam noodles and rubber bands and other floatable objects. All of the new members need to ride on the raft across the pool while holding up the creed so it doesn't get wet. For a good size new member class, consider breaking the new members into competing teams. Materials for the raft may be "purchased" from the "store" and decisions as what to buy, how much to buy, and how to build the most successful, efficient, and sea-worthy craft is at the discretion of each team. How successful teams develop and carry out a winning strategy becomes a potentially powerful metaphor for excellence, leadership, and effective teamwork within the organization. Teams can be purposefully created: new members vs. initiated members; seniors/freshmen vs. juniors/sophomores, etc.
- Go cross country skiing together (<http://www.bu.edu/outdoor/conferences/teambuilding/index.html>). People have to stay together, its physically tiring, and people need to work together.
- Divide new members into two teams. Give them each a box full of miscellaneous materials. Give them one hour to devise a competitive game using all of the items (only rules: everyone must plan and no one can get hurt). Have the two teams compete against each other.
- Leadership styles test—have new members learn about their leadership style and styles of others. Contact the Student Activities Office, sao@wpi.edu, for access to leadership tests and quizzes.
- Forced choice exercise (http://ctb.ku.edu/tools//sub_section_tools_1201.htm) Choose differences that are controversial---pro-life, pro-choice, etc. Have them debate. This is a great way to talk about 1) conflict and how you resolve it and 2) that your chapter accepts people for their differences.
- Take an ice climbing course through Plymouth State (<http://www.plymouth.edu/venturecenter/>)
- Ask each new member to be responsible for identifying someone in the chapter they think is a leader and interviewing him/her.
- Help new members learn about conflict management and how to deal with conflict. Contact the Student Activities Office, sao@wpi.edu, for resources.
- Do a chapter fundraiser to send a new member to the North-American Interfraternity Conference's FuturesQuest program or UIFI leadership programs (www.nicindy.org).
- Borrow the Project Adventure teambuilding kit from the Student Activities Office. There are tons of challenging team builders for your new members to try. Contact sao@wpi.edu for more information.

Outcome: Self Knowledge

- Go rock wall climbing at the YWCA (<http://www.ymcaworcester.org/>) or Central Rock Climbing (<http://www.centralrockgym.com/>)
- Have new members go for a 1-2 hour walk with their big brother/sister. Ask them to talk about what the fraternity means to them, how they will be better because of it, and how they will make the fraternity/sorority better because of their membership.
- Have each new member pair with another new member and get to know him/her over lunch, etc. Over the holiday break, have him/her design a binder or clipboard or something that represents who he/she is as a person. Have them include important information about the chapter inside (ex. House



rules, bylaws, calendar of events, etc). Have new member present their gift to the new member they were assigned at a new member meeting. You could also do this with big /little brothers or sisters, too. (This also has the following outcomes: presentation skills, creativity, learning about other people, relationship building.)

- Write the parents of all the new members and ask them to send a letter of support to their son/daughter as a surprise. Read them or give them to new members during the final week of the new member program.
- Have an expert come in and have the new members learn to meditate—this is hard! Learning to quiet your mind is VERY challenging.
- Have them write an essay about what values they think the fraternity/sorority letters represent based on the organization's actions and values before initiation—see how close they get. That will tell you if the chapter is living its values in a visible way to others.
- Plan a day of reflective silence for all members on a non-class day. This is designed to help all members spend time reflecting on the fraternity and what it means to them. Ground rules: individuals strive to avoid unnecessary conversation during the day by spending time by him/herself reflecting. Meal times should be times in which people may freely speak to anyone. This activity is not designed to be punitive if someone speaks or to restrict access to technology use; it is designed to be a personal challenge to spend time really focusing on internal reflection. It would not be acceptable to restrict members from speaking to anyone outside the group or to penalize someone who does speak. Remember, all of these activities are challenge by choice.

Outcome: Brotherhood/Sisterhood Relationship Building

- Do a GPS adventure with clues to various locations. At each location, a mental or physical teambuilder is conducted by a trained facilitator. (Sargent Center: <http://www.bu.edu/outdoor/conferences/teambuilding/gps/index.html>) (Also develops team building, leadership, and conflict management)
- Play Assassins—but not when anyone is in class. It is important the new member activities not disrupt one's ability to get an education.
- Involve the big brothers/sisters in more things. For example, can they come to the new member meetings? Why not plan events and activities as part of the weekly meeting where new members and big brothers/sisters work together as a team. Ex. give them some ethical dilemmas to talk through, or an activity where they learn about their leadership style.
- Have new members sit comfortably in a circle for two hours in a dark room with only a single candle for light in the center of the circle. Provide the group with discussion questions that they are talk about. Start with non-threatening questions or incomplete statements (e.g., "If I had a billion dollars, I would . . .") and end with more probing ones (e.g., "I'm afraid that . . ." or "If I could live my life over I would . . .") Option: have each member write a question on a card and put it in a question box. Select one question at a time and discuss it. (Also teaches self knowledge).
- Yellow page theatre for all members (learn confidence, creativity, thinking on the fly, and it's fun) Break the members into groups and give each group some ridiculous props from Goodwill, and have them pick three random pages from the phone book—they then have 30 minutes to put together a skit based on the topics on the yellow pages and with their assigned props.
- Have a talent show.
- Have a campfire and have every member talk about why they joined the fraternity.
- Have new members interview a graduate member about what they gained from the fraternity/sorority.
- Have new members compete in basketball, volleyball, or softball against current members or other groups.

- Have new members compete against current members in bowling (catch: everyone must use the opposite of their dominant hand).
- Have new members compete in laser tag or paint ball.
- Have the new members create a game show using fraternity history. Have them present the show with the chapter members as participants. They are much more likely to retain the information because they are teaching it and it also is a great refresher for members. (Also teaches presentation skills, self confidence, and organization).

Outcome: Accountability

- Require new members to do 3 hours of community service a week during the new member experience. Have them pick a cause as a class and do that—ex. work at the Mustard Seed (a local soup kitchen) once a week (they learn time management, responsibility, event management, etc). Go to the Community Service Center on the third floor of the Campus Center for service ideas.
- Talk to new members about bystander behavior. If you are with another member and he is doing something wrong, what do you do? Do you have a responsibility to stop him? When? How do you do that?
- Have the President come to the new member meeting to talk about the 5 year vision for the fraternity/sorority. Then ask the new members to come up with a plan for how they will help achieve the 5 year vision.
- Have each “family” within the fraternity/sorority cook breakfast for the chapter. Give a prize for the best breakfast.
- Ensure that house clean-ups are for all members, not just new members.
- Have a contest for who can recruit the most new members to join and reward the winner with a fully-paid membership badge or initiation fee.
- Ask new members to write a “letter to the founders” to thank them for the opportunity to join the fraternity.

Want more ideas? Have an idea that should be on here?

Contact Emily Perlow, Associate Director of Student Activities and Greek Life Programs, at eperlow@wpi.edu, to schedule a meeting. The Student Activities staff would be happy to help you design customized experiences based on your new member program outcomes.



Have a great new member program idea and need some help funding the event? Apply for a Fraternity/Sorority New Member Advancement Grant of up to \$10 per new member.

Contact Emily Perlow, Associate Director of Student Activities and Greek Life Programs, for more information at eperlow@wpi.edu