

Are you looking to have a retreat?

Have you wondered how retreats are planned? Are you planning on having a retreat, but have no idea where to start? Organizing a retreat may seem like a tough task, but with these simple reminders and helpful hints, your organization will be on its way to a successful and meaningful retreat!

The 5 W's of Retreat Planning

Q: What is a retreat?

- A:** A retreat is an integral part to an organization's growth and an opportunity to take the group out of its normal surrounding and convene in a more secluded setting for group discussion
- Retreats bring new members closer to the organization

Q: Where should a retreat be held?

- A:** Off-campus retreats provide a more secluded location, however, retreats can be on-campus also
- If held off-campus, all student organization travel guidelines must be met
 - Ample time must be allowed to reserve the venue and any necessary accommodations
 - Ensure the location is safe and fits your budget

Q: When can a retreat be held?

- A:** Generally, a retreat is held at the beginning of the scholastic year or when there may be officer changes
- Retreats can last from a half-day session to an overnight or even a full weekend

Q: Why do organizations have retreats?

- A:** Retreats can be an excellent way to unify your organization
- Retreats bring people together
 - Allow individuals to make connections and build support bridges
 - Retreats serve as an opportunity to set goals
 - All members can express their opinions and set the tone for the semester or even the year
 - Allow members to learn their new roles within the organization or express early interest in future officer responsibilities

Q: Who should go on a retreat?

- A:** All members who can contribute should be encouraged to attend the retreat as it is for their benefit
- All executive officers should be in attendance to provide new members a chance to meet the officers in a more informal setting
 - The advisor for the organization should also be involved in the entire retreat process and should be invited to attend. In most cases, the advisor will attend to ensure the safety of everyone involved and that the retreat stays on track .

Six Keys to a Successful Retreat

A retreat cannot be planned overnight. Time and effort are imperative for a successful retreat. Here are six tips to make your retreat one to remember, from before the retreat to the post retreat follow-up.

Have retreat objectives:

- What do you want to achieve?
- What will your goals and strategies be?
- Do you want to improve group relationships and/or communications?

Develop an Agenda:

- Base the retreat agenda on your objectives
- The agenda should include dates, times, location(s), presenters and descriptions of each workshop

Initiate group participation:

- Make sure each person gets involved
- Will each member's strengths be utilized?
- Set ground rules for sensitive topics
- Create an encouraging environment

Select a retreat committee:

- Use either your executive/office board or create an ad-hoc committee
- Have a diverse representation of members in the planning process
- Evaluate the budget for the retreat

Have "presenters":

- Multiple people facilitating session adds variety to the retreat and allows attendees to not lose interest

Conduct post retreat activities:

- Make available all ideas and suggestions discussed at the retreat
- Thank those who attended
- Let those who could not attend know they were not forgotten
- Conduct a post-retreat meeting for recap

Adapted from Joel A. Rose & Associates Planning the Successful Retreat

Create a Check-List

Have you tried creating a check-list to plan your retreat. This can be the perfect way to make sure that nothing gets left unattended. Make sure your check-list has the essential areas addressed. Here are sample questions that you can have on your check-list:

Before the Retreat

- Is the date chosen for the retreat?
- Has everyone received advanced notice of retreat date?
- Is there a committee in place?
- Is there a location?
- What is the budget?
- Are all arrangements in order to provide adequate security?

During & After the Retreat

- Is everyone getting involved in each activity?
- Have all members been thanked for their attendance?
- Has a follow-up meeting been announced?
- Has a post-retreat evaluation been conducted?