

GSA TREE CHECKLIST

A strong and well-run GSA, like a tree, is dependent on how well it is maintained. This checklist is meant to help you build your GSA by focusing on the three parts of a strong GSA:

THE ROOTS > THE TRUNK > THE BRANCHES

The Roots: What Grounds Your GSA

Establishing Your Club's Purpose

- Pick your GSA's mission:** Decide if your GSA is a **support group, activism club, social group or a combination.**
- Mission statement:** Address the nature of your club and its goals in an official mission statement
- Know your GSA's vision & values:** Have conversations with your GSA about what kind of school you want. Having a vision of what the impact your GSA will have is important because it helps keep your GSA focused.
- GSA Leadership:** Decide how your GSA will be run. You can try having a traditional Officer system with a President, or a Board system with a group of equal leaders.



Preparing for Meetings

- Leadership meetings:** However your GSA is lead, be sure that the leaders of the club meet regularly (at least twice a month) to plan your GSA meetings, take care of any work that has to be done, and keep the GSA's projects moving forward. Many GSA leaders will meet every week after they've had the regular GSA meeting and work on the ideas that came up in the meeting.
- Make an agenda:** Make a list of the topics you're going to talk about in your regular meetings. Assign a set time for each topic so that you don't over schedule. At the beginning of each meeting be sure to give your members a chance to add a topic to the agenda. If additional items come up or if you run out of time, start a "parking lot" using chart paper to make a list for future meetings.
- Make a meeting calendar:** At the beginning of the school year, plan out all of your meetings and make a calendar of for your members.
- Publicize the meetings:** Figure out the best ways to reach as many people in your school. Use daily announcements, flyers, posters, newspaper/TV ads, social media, etc.
- Bring Food:** People are happier when they're fed, so you can raise money from your members through a donation jar, ask for in-kind donations from local businesses, or use other strategies from our Fundraising for Your GSA Resource Guide [see page 11].

The Trunk: What Keeps Your GSA Strong

Running a Good Meeting

- **Use ground rules:** Set ground rules for your meetings so that all members feel safe and that their voices matter.
- **Decision-making:** Figure out how your GSA is going to make decisions. Will you use majority vote, consensus, secret ballot?
- **Facilitate meetings:** Be sure to have a facilitator to keep your meetings moving and focused on the agenda. It's a good idea to have different members take a turn running meetings so that more members develop their facilitation skills.
- **Take notes:** Assign a person to take notes for each meeting. This can be one of your leaders or a member of the GSA. Make sure you record any actions that the GSA or members need to take for the next meeting. Be sure to post the notes so that people can read them, even if they don't come to meetings.
- **Involve your members:** Your GSA members are what make your GSA possible, so it's super important that they have a chance to have their voices and ideas heard. Be sure you give your members lots of chances to say what they think.



Staying Organized

- **Keep good records:** You won't be the GSA leader forever, so be sure to create a GSA binder with good records of everything your GSA does for future leaders. Your binder can have meeting notes, event plans, flyers, group photos, copies of letters/emails to your school administration, etc. Also, include a document that summarizes what the GSA has done for the year. These documents can be almost like letters from one GSA leader to the next leader, letting them know what the GSA did, what goals it accomplished and what things it still needs to work on.
- **Stay in touch:** Help your members stay in touch with each other by creating a Facebook group page for your GSA. This can help you spread information about events, projects and meetings, as well as let you post the notes from past meetings and agendas for future ones.



The Branches: Your GSA in Action

Making Ideas Happen

- Have a brainstorm session:** When coming up with ideas for GSA activities and events, let all your members and leaders share their ideas in a brainstorm session. Set up blank posters around your meeting room and let everyone write down their ideas. If members see an idea they like, they can put a check mark next to it. Afterwards, organize your ideas into the top three. This will help your GSA decide which they want to do.
- Make a plan:** Writing down your plan for making an event or activity happen is the most important part of making your ideas happen! Set dates when things are due, who is responsible for what, what supplies you'll need, and any fundraising you might need to do.
- Set up committees:** Make committees to take care of projects (like planning an event) outside of meeting times. Meeting outside of your regular GSA meeting will leave your GSA time for members who don't want to work on the project and will give your committees more time to get their work done.
- Ask for help:** Asking for help can be hard, but no one can get things done by themselves! Ask your GSA advisor, fellow GSA leaders, GSA members, friends outside of the GSA and GSA Network staff for help. You can also go to GSA Network's Facebook page, facebook.com/GSANetwork, or website, gsanetwork.org, to ask questions and get tips from other youth.



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