

# Committees

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## Point of View

The committee is the “task force” of any democratic organization. The chairman of the committee is the leader of that task force. And the chairman and the committee members need to realize that if they fail to perform their task, then democracy fails. Committee members get satisfaction from their work . . . when they can see results developing from their time and efforts.

## Purposes of Committees

- To plan activities
- To assign tasks
- To brainstorm ideas
- To evaluate the value of a project
- To decide on action or carry out an assignment
- To follow through and complete a job
- To save time by discussing and eliminating way-out, impractical ideas
- To present plans for consideration.

## Kinds of Committees

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**—Many organizations coordinate the work of all officers and committees by forming an executive committee or steering committee to direct over-all plans.

**STANDING COMMITTEES**—Usually exist for the duration of the term of the appointment authority or some other stated term. Usually has a continuing task. Examples: membership, finance, program.

**SPECIAL COMMITTEES**—Usually appointed for a definite task. Has a specific job to do, and a time limit in which to get it done. When the task is completed, the committee should be dismissed.

## Things Which Hold Back Committee Progress

- Lack of direction; unclear goals
- Lack of time
- Poor organization and use of talent
- Domineering member
- Too much smoke and no fire
- Attempting too much.

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Source: Meetings That Matter !  
For Student Leaders and  
Advisors , NASSP, 1993

### Traits of a Good Committee

- Well-organized work plan
- Enthusiastic chairman
- Good attendance
- Goals to work toward
- Knowledge of previous achievements
- Understanding of their limits
- Cooperative members
- Atmosphere that enables all to express their feelings
- A feeling of "we"
- Leadership shared
- Able to evaluate ideas apart from personalities
- Able to follow through the steps of logical problem-solving.

### Duties of the Member

- Know the job assigned.
- Attend all meetings.
- Participate and share your ideas and ask questions.
- Assume responsibility; help carry the load.
- Bring in ideas.

## Committees

The committee is the cornerstone of any democratic organization. The committee leader and the members need to realize that if they fail to perform their tasks, then democracy has not been served. Committee members get satisfaction from their work when they can see results developing from their time and efforts. The bulk of the actual proceedings is enacted by and through committees. Efficient functioning in general meetings is conditioned by means of committee action. Assignments are delegated to committees to be investigated, discussed, and plans of action devised to be reported back to the entire organization. Consequently, committee action is one of the most important phases or working forces within an organization.

The size and circumstance of a functioning committee sets the stage for freedom and effective operation. In any group meeting, both time limitations and the size of the group participating necessitates rules of procedure in order to accomplish the business. This limits the extent of individual action and involvement.

An excellent opportunity for the development of leadership training is made possible via committees. The informality, as well as the fact that only one project or activity is being considered, tends to produce a unity of purpose. Keener insight is developed if all members have a chance to express their views. In the hands of a skilled chairman each member is given a responsibility and consequently becomes an active, involved individual. The success of any student group is contingent upon the nature, extent, and thoroughness of committee action. Committees provide a natural situation for the development of leadership through a democratic environment.

### *Principles for Effective Committees:*

1. They are the informal work groups of any large body, involving the resources and wisdom of the students in decisions by defining problems, discovering solutions, and communicating these to the larger body.
2. The lifeblood of a continuing program is involvement, and committees provide this opportunity.
3. Committees have value only if their members understand the job to be done, prepare to do it, meet on time, participate fully, and report their best thinking to the entire group.
4. There must be a committee-developed plan of action in terms of organization, schedule, as-



signment, facilities, self-evaluation, and responsibility.

5. Members must know and understand the extent of their authority as well as responsibility.
6. Students need a voice in decisions about activities of their organization. Members need a chance to formulate ideas in small groups with a flexible agenda. The results achieved by committee work are no better than the work done by committee members. The process calls for thoughtful, responsible effort by individuals.
7. Divergent views must be clearly presented and every member given an opportunity to voice an opinion.
8. Each committee member needs a specific assignment. A sense of being an active part of the committee provides incentive.
9. A permissive environment, where each member is encouraged to participate and is allowed full expression, creates a positive, constructive atmosphere. Self-satisfaction is developed from being understood and accepted and is essential to a feeling of well-being. To be able to give and take within a group with a common purpose will help stimulate and motivate accomplishment.

### Kinds of Committees

Most organizations have three kinds of committees in operation:

1. Executive Committee:

This committee coordinates the work of all officers and committees by forming an executive or steering committee to direct the overall plans.

2. Standing Committee:

This committee usually exists for the duration of a specific term such as the school year. It normally has a continuing task such as membership, finance, program, etc. Generally, this is spelled out in the constitution.

3. Special Committee:

When there is a specific task to be undertaken or a special need arises, the chairman may appoint a temporary committee to do the job within a time limit. The committee is dismissed when the task is completed.

All committees should be given information concerning their assignments. Usually the secretary keeps a record of the creation of the committee and its assignments as well as its reports. Some organizations use a committee assignment form which includes a format such as this:

#### Committee Assignment

Assignment: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_  
Members: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Appointed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Specific Instructions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Scope of Authority: \_\_\_\_\_  
Available Resources: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
When To Report and How: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Deadline for Final Report: \_\_\_\_\_

Source: A Handbook for the  
Student Activity Adviser,  
NASSP, 1979

## Committee Plans

If a committee is to function successfully it must have a plan to follow and a structure to see

that its task is accomplished. The organization plan shown is effectively utilized by some groups to provide this structure.

<b>Committee Plan</b>			
Committee Name: _____			
Committee Task: _____			
Members: _____			
Goal	Objectives	Who Is Responsible	Deadline/Accomplishment

### Reporting

Committees are held accountable by the organization and must report to the responsible body when requested or when they have information to share. Most organizations ask that committee re-

ports be submitted in writing to the secretary so they can be included in the minutes. A convenient way to do this is by having the committee prepare a report along the format shown:

Committee Report	
	Date: _____
Report from: _____	Committee
Committee members: _____	
_____	
Assignment: _____	
_____	
Action to be taken: _____	
_____	
_____	
_____	
Comments: _____	
_____	
Respectfully submitted: _____	
(Chairman)	



Date assigned by council \_\_\_\_\_

Title of assignment: \_\_\_\_\_

Assignment of activity/event/project outline and outcome \_\_\_\_\_

Committee chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Date event/project scheduled: \_\_\_\_\_

**Selecting a plan for the activity** (use brainstorming):

**Proposed idea** (done first)

### Advantage

### Disadvantage

(use additional sheets of lined paper if needed for more ideas)

Source: Nat'l Assoc. of Student Councils -Officer Guides  
NASSP, 2006

**Steps to accomplish plan:**

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) \_\_\_\_\_

(for a large project/assignment use more space on another paper)

**Person(s) responsible for each step (full name)**

- |          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| 1) _____ | 2) _____  |
| 3) _____ | 4) _____  |
| 5) _____ | 6) _____  |
| 7) _____ | 8) _____  |
| 9) _____ | 10) _____ |

**Requirements of plan (personnel, equipment, materials):**

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) \_\_\_\_\_



[illegible]

Source: Nat'l Assoc. of Student Councils -Officer Guides  
NASSP, 2006

## Committee Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Report Date: \_\_\_\_\_

[illegible]

Source: Nat'l Assoc. of Student Councils -Officer Guides  
NASSP, 2006

**Committee Timeline**

Committee name: \_\_\_\_\_

Committee chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Scheduled meeting date/time/place: \_\_\_\_\_

Attendees: \_\_\_\_\_

**Tasks for Plan 1****Deadline for completion**

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Person(s) responsible for Plan 1 \_\_\_\_\_

**Tasks for Plan 2****Deadline for completion**

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Person(s) responsible for Plan 2 \_\_\_\_\_

**Tasks for Plan 3****Deadline for completion**

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Person(s) responsible for Plan 3 \_\_\_\_\_



**Tasks for Plan 4****Deadline for completion**

Person(s) responsible for Plan 4 \_\_\_\_\_

**Tasks for Plan 5****Deadline for completion**

Person(s) responsible for Plan 5 \_\_\_\_\_

**Tasks for Plan 6****Deadline for completion**

Person(s) responsible for Plan 6 \_\_\_\_\_

**Tasks for Plan 7****Deadline for completion**

Person(s) responsible for Plan 7 \_\_\_\_\_

Submit copies of this completed form to the Vice-President and Adviser.

Source: Nat'l Assoc. of Student  
Councils -Officer Guides  
NASSP, 2006