



support  
education  
research

[info@multiplesofamerica.org](mailto:info@multiplesofamerica.org)  
[www.multiplesofamerica.org](http://www.multiplesofamerica.org)

## **CLUB TIPS** for PRESIDENTS

The president of a local club is the leader who brings all the efforts of the other officers and committee workers together to provide a year of support, fellowship, education and fun for all the members and their families. The job is certainly very challenging, but it is also one of the most satisfying and rewarding experiences a member can undertake, both for her club and herself!

### **DUTIES IN BRIEF**

1. As a local club president, you will become familiar with:
  - the bylaws and standing rules of your club
  - Multiples of America procedures
  - your state/regional parents of multiples organization's procedures
  
2. As your club's leader you will:
  - take the lead in setting goals for the club year, with input from officers and members
  - work with the treasurer and other officers to set a budget for the year
  - supervise officers and committees throughout the year and give advice, praise, encouragement, or constructive criticism as needed
  - attend as many club meetings and activities as possible
  - act as chief spokesperson for the club
  - keep members informed about what the Board and committees are doing
  - encourage participation of all members
  - try to get along with everyone in the club
  - protect the rights of all members to express their opinions
  - be objective in all discussions and not take sides
  - keep conversations in confidence as needed
  - speak "on the record" with - and about - all members
  - act as mediator to resolve conflicts
  
3. As the chief officer you will:
  - prepare agendas for board/business meetings
  - call board meetings/business meetings to order and preside over the meetings with basic rules of order
  - delegate assignments as a result of business approved by the membership during meetings
  - act as a co-signatory on club bank accounts
  - sign any contracts or official documents
  - keep information organized and accessible, such as Multiples of America's Member Club Manual, Multiples of America mailings, state mailings and rosters, local contacts, etc.

4. Depending on your club’s bylaws and traditions, you may

- write a monthly letter for the club newsletter
- write or approve posts for social media
- appoint a nomination committee to select officers for the next year
- install new officers at your club’s installation meeting or banquet
- act as advisor for the next club year

**SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Bylaws and Standing Rules** Whether you have been a member of your club for years and years or are just really starting out, you need to know the WRITTEN rules of your club. The bylaws state who can be members, how much dues are, what officers should do, when elections are held, and so on. Many disagreements can be avoided by FOLLOWING the bylaws. Due to the fact that most clubs don’t have permanent storage space, it’s not unusual for some files - including bylaws - to get lost as club materials move from house to house. If your club can’t find its bylaws, you will need to formulate some new ones. You can contact the Multiples of America Executive Office for further assistance.

**Keeping Records** Now that you know the basics of your club, you are ready to tap the creative energies of your members to plan programs and events to serve your membership and their families. As the supervisor of all this activity, you may want to start a box of file folders or a binder to keep reports, notes, minutes, etc. together if your club doesn’t have these files set up already, or develop an electronic storage system using jump drives, google docs, dropbox, etc.

**Working with Officers and Committee Chairs** Many clubs choose to hold (or their bylaws call for) Board Meetings to accomplish the bulk of the club’s business. This leaves more time at the general meeting for support and fellowship activities. The Board usually consists of club officers and committee chairpersons, but generally any interested member can attend a Board Meeting. Some clubs have a board meeting before or after a general meeting; some clubs choose to hold the Board Meeting on a different night, either in person or using online video communication, such as Zoom.

The business that comes before the Board depends on how the individual club is set up. Some clubs have Board procedures spelled out in their bylaws while some Boards do things “the way it’s always been done.” The Board and committees of most clubs generally work out the details of the speakers and programs, family parties and picnics, fundraising, etc. at the Board Meetings. Depending on the specific club bylaws and standing rules, the entire membership will vote on broad issues, such as the budget for the upcoming year, proposed changes in the bylaws, and so on. Some clubs run annual surveys on what the members would like the club to do, and some clubs have a suggestion box at each meeting to get regular input.

**Communicating and Delegating** Good communication with all the officers on the Board and with all committee chairs is very important for running a club smoothly. Each officer and chairperson should feel free to offer her input. Everyone needs to realize, however, that there are going to be different opinions at times about club activities and spending. As stated earlier, if the president is very familiar with the club bylaws, she can settle some issues right away by referring to the bylaws. On other issues, the President’s job is to guide the board and committees through the decision-making process in a professional way, leaving personality clashes out of the discussion.

Clubs should keep minutes from both their Board Meetings and General Meetings. If an officer or chairman cannot attend a meeting, she should let you know ahead of time and give you her report.

As president, you need to keep tabs on your officers - sometimes you may do well to call a week ahead to remind your officers about upcoming reports. It's also a good idea to ask officers and chairs to document their work and leave contacts, procedures, etc. for the next person who takes on the job.

As president, you need to delegate responsibilities for different activities and projects to the existing committees or recruit someone for heading up a new committee, if needed. Many presidents take on a special task themselves when no one steps forward, and while this shows a lot of dedication, in the long run it usually leads to problems, either because the president overextends herself and burns out or because there's not really a broad base of support for the activity, causing it to fizzle.

Some presidents have reported that it seems like the same people are doing all the work and that most of the membership is not volunteering to help out. If this is the case, the president and the Board need to look honestly at the situation and figure out, realistically, why others are not stepping forward. Possibly the Board needs to:

- provide very specific information about a job so that a prospective volunteer knows what she would need to do (as mentioned earlier, written notes from a predecessor would be extremely helpful)
- divide the responsibilities of a big job and approach two members who might enjoy working together to head up the job
- approach members one-on-one and establish more rapport
- give a lot of positive feedback to members about their contributions to the club, whether it be ideas, refreshments, or even just attendance at a meeting. This might boost the confidence of a member who feels she doesn't have enough expertise or know enough about the club to step in and lead a project.

Generally, you can expect better results by stressing the positive aspects of the club and its activities, rather than dwelling on not having enough help. After all, who wants to take on an assignment when it sounds like volunteering will only bring stress and complaints?

If members are still not volunteering, you need to be realistic about what the club can accomplish. For example, if the club doesn't have the volunteers to coordinate a children's party, perhaps interested families, could meet at a park or indoor play area for a casual get together, with each family taking care of its own refreshments. While scaled back activities might disappoint a president who had hoped for "greater" things, there are some years when the membership seems to be content with low-key activities. It might help to remember that some clubs experience cycles of very active memberships and then enter a period of scaled back activities. As president, you want to provide the leadership to help members have the kind of club they want.

**SETTING THE AGENDA**

As president, you prepare the agenda, or schedule of items for discussion. Below is a typical agenda, which can serve for either a Board Meeting or General Meeting:

- Call to Order
- President Opening Remarks (welcome to new members, introductions, parenting "question of the month," etc.)
- Minutes Approval - Secretary
- Income/Expenses/Account Balances - Treasurer
- Reports from National and State Representatives
- Committee Reports
- Old (Unfinished) Business
- New Business
- Announcements
- Adjournment to speaker, support discussion, etc.

To save time, many clubs print meeting minutes, financial report, and committee reports in the club newsletter or email them to members, then ask only for corrections, comments, and then approval at the general meeting. Some clubs have copies of the minutes available at the meeting for members to read before the meeting starts, and then ask for corrections and approval.

### **PRESIDING OVER CLUB MEETINGS**

While many Parents of Multiples clubs are fairly informal, you will probably need to preside over business discussions and call for a vote at some time during the year. Roberts Rules of Order is the time-honored resource book for conducting very structured, orderly discussions and elections. For most club business, the following guidelines may serve:

When the bylaws call for member approval for an action such as spending money, changing the by laws, etc., a member should make a motion. You may have to prompt this by saying, "Do I have a motion from the floor to approve?"

A club member should say, "I move to approve \_\_\_\_\_" and someone should second the motion. Again, you may keep things moving by saying, "Do I have a second?"

Once a motion is seconded, ask if there is any discussion. If so, members discuss the motion that is now "on the floor." Rules of order generally call for a set amount of time for discussion before calling for a vote. Vote can either be by voice ("All in favor, say AYE," etc.), by show of hands, or by ballot.

Club discussions can get very heated, and as presiding officer, the president should be objective during all discussions and not appear to be taking sides. While this can be very difficult, the president should set a good example. Hold yourself to the same standards as everyone else. People generally rise above pettiness and can surprise you with their commitment to what is best for the club as a whole if they see it in the president.

### **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

When conflicts do arise, it's up to the president to resolve them fairly. Here are some suggested steps toward working through a disagreement:

1. **Identify the problem** - Everyone should be discussing the same issues. For example, the disagreement may have started about the site for holding an event, but the underlying issue to some people might actually be that an officer or committee has consistently spent more money than originally budgeted.
2. **Listen to each side of the argument** - Each side gets a chance to present its point of view. One person speaks at a time, and everyone else listens.
3. **Identify possible solutions** - Each side offers suggestions on how the conflict can be resolved.
4. **Respond to suggestions** - Each side gets a chance to respond to the suggestions, again, one at a time, with everyone else listening.
5. **Reach a compromise** - The group needs to keep running through steps 3 and 4 until a decision is reached that everyone can accept.

### **MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR CLUB'S NATIONAL AND STATE AFFILIATIONS**

Multiples of America is dedicated to supporting local parents of multiples clubs in all their efforts. Multiples of America offers *Multiple Connections*, a publication emailed directly to each member of your local club, as well as educational materials on a wide range of topics of interest to parents of multiple birth children. In addition, Multiples of America provides research connections, monthly online gatherings, support services for families with special needs, group exemption for non-profit status, and much more. As president, you will want to learn about all of these products, services, and opportunities to benefit your club.

Upon joining the National Organization, a club receives access to the Member's Only section of our website. This section includes a storehouse of information specific to parenting multiples and club management: booklets, presentations, toolkits, research connections and more. The "Member Club Manual" is also there, in three parts. As a new president, you will want to take some time to go through all the valuable information in this manual. Your club will also receive at least three mailings from National each year via email and a bi-monthly publication, *Club Helpline*.

It's especially important that you understand these Multiples of America procedures:

- Renewing membership in Multiples of America
- Filing and Maintaining Group Tax Exemption with Multiples of America, if your club desires
- Establishing voting credentials for Multiples of America's annual business meeting

If your club is a member of a statewide or regional Parents of Multiples organization, you will want to familiarize yourself with that organization as well and make the most of your affiliation. Networking with other clubs in the state is a great way to share ideas and find more information to help your own local club.

### **CONCLUSION**

As your local club's president, you have the opportunity to lead your club in a year of educational, social and support activities for your members and their families, and maybe even the community at large. Organization, communication, and fairness are the key elements to bringing members together for an enjoyable year, with something for everyone. Remember that resources are available at the state and national level to help you with any concerns that may arise. While you can certainly expect challenges throughout your term, we know you will also find great rewards in a job well done!

11-25/MPA