

## Welcoming New Members

Dr. Maya Angelou once said, “People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” This is a crucial idea to keep in mind when potential new members come to meet your group. First impressions can make a big impact on whether or not a new member will return or disappear.

Your goal is to have new members leave feeling inspired by their first visit and eager to return for more. We want to ignite their passion for activism, engage and bond them with the group and have them contribute to your activities for years to come.

Centering IDEA principles in everything that you do, including how you run your meetings, will help to create an environment and a group culture that new members want to join. Beyond increasing diversity, it is critical to also work on inclusion *within* your group so that everyone who joins feels welcome and a sense of belonging; accessibility, so that new members can find your group and participate in meetings; and equity, so that all members are respected as valued contributors. It’s essential for groups to intentionally create an environment that elevates and centers the viewpoints, perspectives, experiences and leadership of those most impacted and closest to the issues as well as those who might otherwise feel disempowered to share.

### Tips on Welcoming New Members (In Person and Virtually)

- **Welcome Before the Meeting Begins**

Designate someone to greet new members as they arrive so they are comfortable joining the space. Have the greeter provide a quick orientation prior to the start of the meeting to share background on the group’s work and focus and review the meeting agenda. This can be in a separate space as the meeting begins, or in a breakout room if you are meeting on Zoom. Make sure new members feel seen, supported and welcomed.

- **Create a Clear Agenda**

Preparing a tight and clear agenda will help your meeting run more smoothly. You can use this [Virtual Group Meeting Template](#) to help create meeting agendas. Distribute the agenda in advance and share it again at the start of the meeting to make sure everyone has it. Include it in any emails, updates to your mailing list or in your member newsletter.

- **Lead an Inclusive Meeting**

Refer to the [Virtual Meeting Facilitation Guide](#) tool for useful suggestions on running your Zoom or online meeting effectively. Start the meeting with introductions, including names, pronouns and an icebreaker or what brought everyone to Amnesty International. Invite new members to share their experiences with human rights and ask what issues they are passionate about and want to work on.

Include an icebreaker at the start of the meeting to build a sense of community and set a positive tone for anyone joining your group meeting for the first time. You can find sample icebreakers in this [Building Group Community](#) resource.

Use this resource on [Managing and Addressing Micro-Behaviors](#) to ensure you are creating a welcoming and inclusive space for new members. Micro-behaviors are small and often subtle ways in which we say or do things that impact others without our intention or awareness. Have the group's greeter de-brief with new members quickly at the end of the meeting to see if they have any questions. Thank new members for attending and invite them to your next meeting.

- **Give New Members a Role**

When a person makes a commitment to come to a meeting or event, look for meaningful ways to involve them. If people feel a sense of ownership within the group, they are more likely to be involved for the long haul. Committed members can be asked to take on specific roles: 2<sup>nd</sup> Group Coordinator; Case Commitment Coordinator or Urgent Action Coordinator. Members may take the lead in group lobbying efforts, event planning, taking group minutes and following up with email burst or newsletter, etc. First time visitors may be asked to accept a light lift: distribute flyers to local businesses; invite friends or contacts to next meeting; etc.

- **Send a Follow Up Message**

Consider sending a monthly newsletter to your entire mailing list, in addition to your most active members, if you don't yet. This can be used to communicate news and updates, minutes from the last meeting, the agenda for the next meeting, and photos. You can also include announcements of new members with a short background and message welcoming them. This allows any established members who missed the previous meeting to catch up, and helps new members continue to feel included and welcomed.

- **Take These Practices with You**

These inclusive and welcoming practices should extend beyond your monthly meeting and into your group outreach. When planning actions or other events, consider how to make the event as accessible as possible with both the time and space you choose, and aim to expand your outreach into new communities.

Practice your 90 second Amnesty "elevator pitch" to explain our work succinctly and without jargon or Amnesty acronyms that new people would be unfamiliar with. Then you can spend more time asking new people about their interests and getting to know them.

Consider and manage your own behaviors and biases when tabling publicly, meeting new people at events, or working in coalition with partner groups. Be aware that different people can be impacted differently by the topic, content, or tone of your action or event. By focusing on the needs, interests, and experiences of potential new members, you will show them that your group is a space where they will be valued and make a difference.