

## Section 1 - STARTING A CHAPTER

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### Starting A Chapter

#### **What is the National Space Society?**

"The shortest and best way to make your fortune is to let people see clearly that it is in their interests to promote yours." -- La Bruyere

The National Space Society is a non-profit, educational organization (United States IRS designation 501(c) (3)) open to citizens of all nations. Our purpose is to develop the nearly limitless resources of the solar system and permit the establishment of a space-based civilization. The Society sees this civilization as economically self-sufficient and supported by a free enterprise structure.

To this end we promote interest in space exploration, research, development and habitation through the media of conferences, the press, library and museum exhibits and other literary and educational means by stimulating the advancement and development of applications of space and related technologies; and by bringing together people from government, industry and all walks of life for the free exchange of information.

The National Space Society, which is the result of the merger of the National Space Institute and the L5 Society in 1987, was founded on the insight that free space, not the surface of a planet, offers the best location for the expansion of industrialized humanity. The Society wants to share both this insight and the prospects that it offers for a hopeful future. In short, we want "Space for everyone to live, work and play!"

The emphasis in the Society is on volunteer leadership and labor. The functions conducted by these volunteers, often done in other organizations by paid staff at great expense, give the Society an impact far beyond its limited resources. This performance, however, exacts a price of its own since volunteers, no matter how dedicated, have their limitations. Whether this is caused by limited free time, a shortage of volunteers or lack of interest in specific projects, the availability of 40 hours/week in volunteer labor is NOT equivalent to a full time staff person.

Remember this when you start organizing your group: you can only take on and perform tasks at a level consistent with the availability and interests of your chapter members.

#### **What is a National Space Society Chapter?**

The NSS exists because of the membership's desire to see an aggressive, ambitious space program leading to space settlement.

What activities does a local chapter pursue? No two chapters are alike. They take on a personality consistent with the talents, interests and availability of local members. Another important factor is the availability of funding and local resources (does your area have a science museum, planetarium, etc?). The broad range of chapter activities includes the following:

- Sponsoring speakers and films.
- Forming a Speakers Bureau for use by local civic and school groups.
- Space Week organization.
- Appearing on radio and TV shows as "local Space experts."
- Visiting local Congressional representatives.
- Political awareness campaigns (letter writing, etc).

- Phone Tree organization.
- Exhibits and Information Booths (at malls, conventions, etc.).
- Teaching courses (continuing education, etc.).
- Co-sponsoring Explorer Posts, Young Astronaut Chapters or other youth groups.
- Operating your own chapter website, hosting chats or a Bulletin Board for space information

Whatever your group decides to do, you need to become an expert in public relations. No matter how good your event, it is only a limited success unless you can get some widespread attention, particularly in the local media. While an activity like teaching a course can be productive in its own right, making an ever wider audience aware of our existence, purpose and goals, is the path to eventual success. Publicity gives us this level of visibility.

### A Look at the Chapter Rules

The Chapter Rules and Rebate Program was developed to protect the interests of the Society as a whole and to provide certain minimal support needed by any chapter. This is a summary of the current rules:

a) We have an incentive program. The Society returns to the chapter a portion of dues paid by new members joining at the Regular and above levels who are recruited by the chapter. A new member is anyone joining the Society who has not been a member during the previous six months. If the person joins at the \$35 and higher rate (Regular, Supporting, etc.), NSS HQ returns \$15 to the recruiting chapter. Any discounted memberships, including special promotions (introductory \$25 level, etc.) are always \$20 first to NSS HQ and the rest to the chapter.

b) There is a minimum requirement of three regular National Space Society members needed to start or maintain a recognized chapter. A regular member is defined as anyone who receives the NSS publication, *Ad Astra*, and who has an NSS membership card..

c) The chapter application and the chapter bylaws must be submitted to the U.S. Chapters Coordinator and copied to the National Space Society, Attn: Chapters. The U.S. Chapters Coordinator is responsible for reviewing the chapter documents and recognizing the new organization.

d) The application must include a proposed name which includes the term "NSS." Geographical descriptions are preferred, with the obvious exception of school names for campus based groups, but should not cover an area greater than that from which members may reasonably be expected to travel for regular meetings (e.g. not Great Britain NSS or NSS Eurasia).

e) The chapter must have a democratic set of bylaws. The definition of "democratic" is left flexible but must include provisions for periodic elections of officers.

f) The chapter must not engage in any activities that are prejudicial to the purposes and interests of the Society, nor shall it represent itself as an authorized representative of the Society unless specific permission to do so is received from the Society.

g) The chapter must provide the Society with at least one name of a primary contact for the chapter, including mailing address, phone number and e-mail address. One person in the chapter must have access to e-mail. It is preferable that this information be provided for all officers. |

h) The chapter must submit an initial list of member's names and addresses with the chapter application. This list must be updated as requested by the Society. Any updates in the contact information for the chapter, which is posted on the NSS website and in *Ad Astra*, can be done by the chapter any time at <<http://www.nss.org/chapter>>.

i) Chapters are not granted an exclusive territory. Other chapters may form in any given area.

j) Chapters must provide the Society with a maximum of four copies of the chapter newsletter (if available), to be sent to the address on the attached list.

k) Chapters must submit an annual report in the format specified each year by the Society.

## Starting the Chapter

### convincing yourself

First, convince yourself that you CAN start a chapter. It is not that hard, even though it requires some work. One or two NSS members can easily run a meeting that will get the chapter off to a strong start.

For the most part, new chapters will start off with only a very limited budget and a small group of members. Small does not have to mean disorganized or unprofessional. Simply start out with projects that fit your resources and grow from there. Guard your group's reputation and public image jealously. It is all that you really have to "sell" to the public. If your group ever becomes known as "that flaky space group" you will have a tremendous uphill battle to overcome the image, much less begin to sell our goals or engage in any constructive activity.

### the organizational meeting

To build an organization, you are going to need to get prospective members together to measure interest and to develop a plan of action. The best source of prospective members is a list of Society members in your area that can be obtained from NSS HQ after your chapter has been recognized. Do not exclude other potential sources of members: astronomy clubs, computer clubs, etc.

The effort needed to organize the initial meeting depends on how much you want to put into it. All of the NSS members (and selected other prospects) should be contacted by mail 10 days to 2 weeks before the meeting. It might also be possible to get announcements in the newsletters of local groups whose members might be likely prospects. If at all possible, the prospective members should be contacted by phone two to three days prior to the meeting. This telephone contact should boost your attendance dramatically.

The place for the meeting is not highly critical but it should be comfortable and have plenty of room. In most cases, a member's home should be sufficient.

As an incentive to improve attendance, you should try to offer some type of programming (and let people know about it in advance). An easy first program could be to rent a NASA or space-related tape from the local videostore, view the tape and have discussion about the future of space and what chapter members' interests are in terms of science, exploration and education.

Refreshments should also be served at any gathering. The people who make the efforts to show up really deserve it! Don't make them wait till the end of the program either; serve the refreshments at the beginning and do a little "social mixing" while waiting for stragglers.

To get started, you should prepare a short presentation on NSS and space development in general. Keep it short (under 15 minutes) so that you don't lose people's attention. Then ask each person to state his name and why he is interested in space development. Start it yourself to establish a positive tone and get things rolling. When this is completed, explain your ideas for the chapter in the short term. For now, keep it simple and easy to accomplish at this point. Your major concern during chapter formation is frightening, and perhaps losing, potential chapter activists with the amount of work involved. Schedule the second meeting now, and have its agenda planned if at all possible. It should include something that you think will draw those present at the first meeting, and should also include a chapter's projects brainstorming session.

Before concluding the meeting you need to be certain that each person feels that their time was not wasted at the meeting, and that their time would be well spent with the chapter in the future. A simple short activity, done right away, can be very helpful. For instance, you can ask everyone to write a letter to one of your congressional representatives. Provide stationery, envelopes, writing instruments and stamps. The potential chapter people will go away feeling that they accomplished something constructive, which increases the chance that they will return for a second meeting.

### **taking the plunge**

"No man can have society upon his own terms. If he seeks it, he must serve it too." -- Emerson

You have now started your chapter. To quote Han Solo, "Here's where the real fun begins." From the first meeting you should have some idea of how to get people to attend the second. After the second meeting's speaker, film, slide show, debate, or general bull session, it is time to do some serious work. People will be more comfortable with each other and it is now time to have a group brainstorming session on what can be done to draw local attention to space issues. Don't judge ideas at this point. Help to focus attention on 1) becoming informed on NSS and other space topics; 2) spreading this information to the public via booths, displays, talks, etc.; and 3) Phone Tree or legislative action.

You'll get more ideas if you ask "What would you like to see someone else do?" List these ideas on a blackboard or flipchart if you have one, and then have the group think of small tasks that would get a project going. Examples: Large task: booth at a shopping mall; Small task: call three malls to discuss their policy on information booths.

When the list is done, THEN have people volunteer for the small tasks. Try to have as many people as possible take one of these assignments. It will make them feel involved and important. Schedule the next meeting and establish a firm schedule for completion of all of these tasks. Have everyone complete a copy of the "Membership Interest Survey" because you will not be able to remember everyone's interests and skills; a permanent record will prove extremely valuable.

You should set a date, two or three months down the road, at which the chapter will elect its first slate of officers. The two or three month delay will give members a chance to see who actually performs, and what responsibilities are involved in the positions. In the meanwhile, volunteers should serve as active officers to get the chapter going. It is probable that the people calling the first meeting will have to be among the people doing the initial work.

The other items required for the chapter to be officially formed are to choose a name (please, do NOT ignore the comments on using geographical description for names!); to adopt a set of bylaws (a sample is included in this Handbook which will save us effort, and speed recognition); and to authorize the acting-President to make the formal application.

Before the meeting ends, the schedule and tentative agenda for the third meeting should be set. Conclude the meeting again on a positive note by having the potential chapter do another small project, such as writing a letter to the local newspaper's editor about space development, or having each person submit a design for a chapter logo.

**keeping it rolling**

As the chapter organizer (and presumably the acting-President, although this is not necessary) you will probably have a reasonable share of the workload of the chapter's initial activities. For the long term success of the chapter it is essential that a number of active people be developed by delegation of responsibility, with follow-up by the acting-President to see that it gets done. It is common at this stage of the chapter for new members to not finish their tasks. If this happens, the President needs to take charge of the situation, or things will not get done.

At least one week before the next meeting, call members "to see how things are going." Then, as the date of the meeting approaches, you will need to call people "to remind them about the meeting." And to check whether they have completed the tasks they volunteered to do. As stated previously, it would be a good idea to contact the list of prospective members both by mail and by telephone.

At the next meeting, have each volunteer talk about their progress. If they have done anything constructive at all, reward them strongly with specific praise. Remember, having someone find out what can't be done is also valuable as long as they report it: you will not have to waste time on it again. This general pattern of brainstorming tasks, getting volunteers, reminding, reporting, praise and perhaps even other "rewards" for anyone who does ANYTHING is a general blueprint for building a successful volunteer organization. Praise is probably THE most important reward you can give, because the volunteer who is made to feel useful, successful and appreciated will more than likely be the first in line to volunteer next time. This pattern also helps to avoid meetings where nothing is planned or done. Meetings that only lead to more meetings accomplish nothing.

**other helpful hints**

1) Don't have any one person take on too much work, including (especially) yourself. This leads to exhaustion and disillusionment. Spread the tasks around or reevaluate the size of your projects.

2) Elect permanent officers only after it is clear to the group who actually takes responsibility and accomplishes something, as opposed to simply talking at the meeting.

3) Choose a short, snappy name for the group.

4) Correspond with other successful NSS chapters to get new ideas and excitement into the group. Talk with your Regional Organizer to get ideas and support. If another chapter or your region's organizer is close enough, you could arrange for a guest lecturer or even a joint meeting. Some of your strongest support will come from nearby chapters. People from other chapters are often willing to travel several hundred miles to attend another chapter's meetings, especially to help a forming chapter.

5) Keep the Chapters Coordinator, your Regional Organizer and Headquarters informed about your activities.

6) For matters not requiring a vote of the membership, keep your decision-making body small. Once it gets past about nine members, communication among them becomes unmanageable and even scheduling a meeting that all can attend becomes very difficult.

7) When possible, have regular meetings scheduled well in advance. Work parties can be done this way very successfully.

**education and training**

"Few men make themselves masters of the things they write or speak." -- John Selden

What can your new group, probably a small one, do to further our goals: to draw public attention to space issues and to educate them about the real potential of space? The first step is to educate yourself and your members about these issues. If you have come this far you probably have a significant amount of background already but, to pass as “the local space experts,” you are going to need to fill in the gaps. If someone asks you a question that you cannot answer, don't try to fake it! Say that you don't know but that you would be happy to get the answer for them at a later date. Then follow through either by looking it up in a book or calling some other chapter, the Chapters Coordinator, Headquarters or even NASA. The next time the question comes up, you'll be ready. Remember, if you know ANYTHING about space, you probably are a local space expert since the general public knows next to nothing about space issues in general.

### **identifying skills and interests**

As new members join, you'll want to get to know them better. Not everyone who wants to organize an activity will be able to remember everyone else's special interests and abilities. If each member fills out a skills and interests sheet, such as the one included in the Handbook, even a new person will be able to locate members with needed skills. For example, you'll want photos of your events. Photography is a very common hobby; it won't be long before you'll find a good amateur photographer in your group.

### **financial**

It is important to keep careful records of both income and expenses from the very start. You'll want to establish a definite procedure to authorize spending. This is the only way to avoid the following: “But So-and-So said it was approved! The chapter HAS to pay me back. That was my \$50 that we spent; you can't desert me on this!”

Revenue for the chapter may be raised by establishing local chapter dues for your members. You may notify Headquarters of the amount of your local dues.

### **“Follow the Yellow Brick Road”**

Becoming well organized is not a simple matter, and your chapter will probably have to experiment to find a scheme that works for your particular group. Remember, running a volunteer group such as ours is a business, as serious as any other. You will be investing your time, energy and money in the effort. The group's “profits” will be increased public awareness and support of space activities. The manner in which the group conducts itself will reflect on the goals we profess: if the chapter does not represent itself in a credible and reasonable fashion, the public and the media will question the legitimacy of the projects and ideas we support.

Know your limits. If the group is small and has limited resources, plan to live within your “budget” or members' time, funding and materials. Do not represent yourself as some large monolithic organization when, in fact, the group has a handful of members. Don't be embarrassed if the group can only organize one event every quarter, or even less, to start. We must start somewhere. If you operate within your limits, the group will be able to sustain itself and grow for years to come.

Accumulating the successful organization that we need will take time and effort. We must start somewhere. The sooner you start your chapter, the sooner those goals can be achieved.

“For a thing to remain undone nothing more is needed than to think it done.” – Gracian

### Letting Us Know You're Ready to Go

If you have not done so, send your name, address and telephone number to the Chapters Coordinator and your Regional Organizer (current addresses are listed in an Appendix). If there are already NSS members in your immediate geographical area, you may obtain a list of them from Headquarters by sending a letter which identifies the specific 5-digit zip code designations for the communities which are within a half hour drive of your location.

### First Public Meeting

If there are no NSS members in your area, you will have to hold a public chapter organizing meeting. Try to get someone to help out or contact another chapter, members from another city or your Regional Organizer for assistance and moral support.

Arrange for a room well in advance. A central location in the largest nearby town is ideal. Colleges, churches and libraries are likely prospects for free rooms; some companies and banks provide meeting rooms for their customers.

Publicizing the meeting is VITAL. Be assured that if it isn't well publicized, few will come. Don't be afraid to spend more time on publicizing than on preparing for the meeting itself--the time is well spent. Once you have a regular routine for your meetings, you can post your regular day and meeting place with your chapter information on the NSS website at <<http://www.nss.org/chapter>>.

Notify the general public through flyers, , press releases, calender listings in local newspapers and on cable systems, and public service announcements (PSAs). Postering colleges works well, and many places will let non-profit groups like NSS put up posters--try stores, senior citizen's centers, churches and libraries.

Press releases and PSAs are free, and most newspapers, radio and television stations will accept them if sent in early--usually two weeks to a month in advance. Call them to find out each one's policy. (See the "Public Relations" section of this Handbook for suggestions.)

Don't hesitate to personally invite individuals in your community who you think would be interested in space development or have expertise or contacts needed by your group. Such people as amateur astronomers, science teachers, computer hobbyists, engineers or science reporters may take an interest in your chapter's progress, even if they do not join.

### What To Do

Is there someone in the area who can give a short talk on the National Space Society? (Your Regional Organizer or a near-by chapter may have suggestions.) NSS Headquarters has one scripted slide presentation available for \$25 called "Opening the Space Frontier." There may be others available; check with HQ.

If you host a non-NSS speaker, be prepared to explain to the group what the National Space Society is and what its goals are. See membership literature for ideas. Different names for our goal include space development, space settlement and the New Space Program. Use the ones with which you feel most comfortable. The term "space colonization" is falling out of fashion because of bad connotations (colonialism, etc.).

If possible, bring to the meeting: stick-on name tags, index cards for names, addresses, and phone numbers, and refreshments. You can charge for refreshments (or put a donation cup next to them) to cover the cost. Don't forget the slide, overhead or other audiovisual equipment; extension cord and screen if you need one, or your speaker will be disconcerted!



At the meeting: DO NOT apologize for the smallness of your group. After all, this is an organizational meeting. Stress instead, the international scope of NSS with its system of chapters located all over the world. Explain that you (and the other NSS members if you have been able to contact any) feel that the people of your area would like to become actively involved in the exciting new field of Space Development.

Small does not have to mean unprofessional. One or two NSS members can still run a well-organized meeting that will get a chapter off to a strong start. Put yourself in the place of a person unfamiliar with NSS who has come to your meeting out of curiosity. What impression do you want to give him or her? Dress and act professionally. Keep it simple and do it right!

Pass out name tags and flyers as people come in. Start up an informal discussion to pass time as stragglers arrive. Begin the program with a brief introduction to NSS and explain that there will be a discussion period later, so the audience is clear about who is presenting the program and does not leave before the end.

Both the members of your group and the *Ad Astra* staff will get a real lift if you write up your activities and send them to HQ to be considered for inclusion in the "NSS in Action" section of *Ad Astra*. Seeing their names (and their faces, if you take photos) in *Ad Astra* will be a great reward and morale boost for active members and a stimulus to new ones. You'll be surprised at how strong a motivation this need for recognition can be, even for those reluctant to admit it. We all love to be appreciated.

### **Campus Membership**

Do you want to build a large membership at your college campus? If so, this Handbook is written for you. Today, few space groups have much membership on campus. That situation can change quickly by using the appropriate membership technology.

This section describes the membership technology of perhaps America's most successful student political group--The Washington and Lee University Republican Club.

For over twenty years, the Washington and Lee Republicans have made members of at least one-quarter of the student body. Favorable demographics explain part of this record. But, application of membership technology is the reason for twenty consecutive years of remarkable success.

Technology in political management is that knowledge which enables ordinary people--people like you--to perform extraordinarily. This "off-the-shelf" technology will enable you to build an extraordinary membership on your campus.

There are four steps to conducting a campus membership drive. They are:

- The Poster Environment**
- The Membership Table**
- The Hard Core Meeting**
- The Attention Getter's**

The best time to conduct the membership drive is during the campus's scheduled club fair. Most colleges offer a day when students can learn about clubs and other activities that are on campus. But, if you've missed that time, begin now. The membership drive should be conducted quickly--in about a week. You and two or three fellow students are enough to start.

**poster environment**

You need to capture the imagination of your fellow students by dominating the poster environment on your campus. That means you need to put up more posters, and better posters, than anyone else on campus.

Some college administrations try to discourage posters. Don't be discouraged. Instead, remember the future of the human race depends on us, not the dean of students. Be prepared that you will need to, in most cases, obtain permission prior to posting.

If you're starting at the beginning of the school year, you'll want to post your posters the day before most students come back to school. Have a variety of posters with eye-catching slogans such as "Space is Cool ... -270°" or something else that's creative.

How will students join? You'll ask them to join at the membership table.

**membership table**

Start with a table. Find the biggest, sturdiest table you can get on campus. Check with campus officials about approved locations for your table and whether you need to register your display. Equip your table with:

1. More posters
2. Space information
3. A list to take down names and contact information (including e-mail addresses) of people interested in what your club has to offer (hopefully joining will come later!)
4. Membership cards to give to new members
5. Hard Core Meeting Notices (explained later)
6. **No chairs!**

"No chairs!" is important because you don't want anyone sitting down. Instead, you and your friends stand in front of the table. As someone approaches, you should:

1. Establish direct eye contact.
2. Smile!
3. Ask a question that will start a conversation: "Are you interested in exploring space?" "Are you fascinated by what we're learning about space?" "Have you heard about (mention latest space discovery, launch, etc.)?"

If someone says No--or starts to debate--move on to the next person. If people are interested, sell your club, your programs and your goals. If you are considering charging dues, don't get into that then. Instead, encourage people to sign up for an Orientation meeting, or your next program or, **for your listserv**. Most student chapters have set up listservs to facilitate communications and to get students to attend activities. Give them opportunities to "test-drive" your club before they "buy."

**hard core meetings**

The Hard Core program starts as soon as a new member has filled out his membership card and paid--or promised--his dues.

You want to separate those who want to work with your space club from those who want only passive membership. Ask "Would you like to become active in our space club right away? We are having a meeting tomorrow night".

From right then until the meeting begins, you will do everything you can think of to let each active member know you are counting on him personally to attend the Hard Core Meeting. For example, you will:

1. Hand the active member the meeting notice and include e-mail reminders.
2. Say, "See you tomorrow night".
3. Include on the meeting notice a membership interest survey, for the new member to fill out and return to you the next day.
4. Phone all the active members who forget to return the membership interest survey, reminding them of the Hard Core Meeting.
5. Post a new set of posters saying "Space Club meeting tonight".
6. Stand outside the meeting room, shaking hands with each member.
7. Provide each member with a name tag with his name already on it.

**Begin the meeting promptly.**

If your space club is new on campus, you might be tempted to elect officers. Don't do it. Your members came to the Hard Core Meeting because they wanted to be "active". Their activity will be the Campus Canvass.

**getting and keeping their attention**

Today's campuses feature students who are less interested in being active and more interested in being part of a discussion or a group or just following along with the pack. That means your first meeting or your programs should be real attention-getter's ... with titles like "Sex in Space" (a "biology in space" lecture in disguise).

Events are your real key to attracting students. Do not count on students to be your activists. There will be a few leaders, but they will find you, not the other way around.

Keep your level of activities simple but high -- trips, movies, lectures -- and keep them fun and you'll have a large membership.

**Congratulations. You've built an extraordinary membership.**