

Complete Sample Bylaws

While there are certainly smart (and not-so-smart!) ways to write bylaws, the exact wording of your bylaws is up to your group. One hundred groups could each have bylaws worded differently and yet operate very well and quite similarly.

Here is a sample set of PTO bylaws covering a broad range of rules that PTOs typically include—and that we recommend. Feel free to adopt or adapt them for your own group.

Article I – Name

The name of the organization shall be the ABC Elementary PTO, Inc.

Article II – Purpose

The corporation is organized for the purpose of supporting the education of children at ABC Elementary by fostering relationships among the school, parents, and teachers.

Article III – Members

Section 1. Any parent, guardian, or other adult standing in loco parentis for a student at the school may be a member and shall have voting rights. The principal and any teacher employed at the school may be a member and have voting rights.

Section 2. Dues, if any, will be established by the executive board. If dues are charged, a member must have paid his or her dues at least 14 calendar days before the meeting to be considered a member in good standing with voting rights.

Article IV – Officers and Elections

Section 1. Officers. The officers shall be a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.

Reminder: While most states only require a president, secretary, and treasurer, we recommend you also have a vice president, to assist the president and provide for succession. Many state laws do not allow the same person to serve as president and secretary.

a. President. The president shall preside over meetings of the organization and executive board, serve as the primary contact for the principal, represent the organization at meetings outside the organization, serve as an ex officio member of all committees except the nominating committee, and coordinate the work of all the officers and committees so that the purpose of the organization is served.

b. Vice President. The vice president shall assist the president and carry out the president's duties in his or her absence or inability to serve.

c. Secretary. The secretary shall keep all records of the organization, take and record minutes, prepare the agenda, handle correspondence, and send notices of meetings to the membership. The secretary also keeps a copy of the minutes book, bylaws, rules, membership list, and any other necessary supplies, and brings them to meetings.

d. Treasurer. The treasurer shall receive all funds of the organization, keep an accurate record of receipts and expenditures, and pay out funds in accordance with the approval of the executive board. He or she will present a financial statement at every meeting and at other times of the year when requested by the executive board, and make a full report at the end of the year.

Section 2. Nominations and Elections. Elections will be held at the second to last meeting of the school year. The nominating committee shall select a candidate for each office and present the slate at a meeting held one month prior to the election. At that meeting, nominations may also be made from the floor. Voting shall be by voice vote if a slate is presented. If more than one person is running for an office, a ballot vote shall be taken.

Section 3. Eligibility. Members are eligible for office if they are members in good standing at least 14 calendar days before the nominating committee presents its slate.

Section 4. Terms of Office. Officers are elected for one year and may serve no more than two (2) consecutive terms in the same office. Each person elected shall hold only one office at a time.

Section 5. Vacancies. If there is a vacancy in the office of president, the vice president will become the president. At the next regularly scheduled meeting, a new vice president will be elected. If there

is a vacancy in any other office, members will fill the vacancy through an election at the next regular meeting.

Section 6. Removal From Office. Officers can be removed from office with or without cause by a two-thirds vote of those present (assuming a quorum) at a regular meeting where previous notice has been given.

Article V – Meetings

Section 1. Regular Meetings. The regular meeting of the organization shall be on the first Tuesday of each month during the school year at 7 p.m., or at a time and place determined by the executive board at least one month before the meeting. The annual meeting will be held at the April regular meeting. The annual meeting is for receiving reports, electing officers, and conducting other business that should arise. The secretary will notify the members of the meetings in a flyer sent home with the students at least one week prior to the meeting.

Section 2. Special Meetings. Special meetings may be called by the president, any two members of the executive board, or five general members submitting a written request to the secretary. Previous notice of the special meeting shall be sent to the members at least 10 days prior to the meeting, by flyer and phone calls.

Section 3. Quorum. The quorum shall be 10 members of the organization.

Reminder: It's a good practice to give notice of all meetings. Some states require a minimum notice prior to a meeting, but not usually for meetings held on the same day and at the same time each month (i.e., your regular monthly meetings).

Article VI – Executive Board

Section 1. Membership. The Executive Board shall consist of the officers, principal, and standing committee chairs.

Section 2. Duties. The duties of the Executive Board shall be to transact business between meetings in preparation for the general meeting, create standing rules and policies, create standing and temporary committees, prepare and submit a budget to the membership, approve routine bills, and prepare reports and recommendations to the membership.

Section 3. Meetings. Regular meetings shall be held monthly, on the same day and at the same time each month, to be determined by the board. Special meetings may be called by any two board members, with 24 hours notice.

Section 4. Quorum. Half the number of board members plus one

constitutes a quorum.

Reminder: Most states prohibit boards of directors from voting by proxy, mail, or email ballot unless the decision is made in writing and is unanimous. The thinking is that boards should meet and confer before making decisions, unless all board members agree.

Article VII – Committees

Section 1. Membership. Committees may consist of members and board members, with the president acting as an ex officio member of all committees.

Section 2. Standing Committees. The following committees shall be held by the organization: Fundraising, Hospitality, Membership, Communications, Arts and Enrichment, Family Events, Nominating, and Auditing.

Section 3. Additional Committees. The board may appoint additional committees as needed.

Article VIII – Finances

Section 1. A tentative budget shall be drafted in the fall for each school year and approved by a majority vote of the members present.

Section 2. The treasurer shall keep accurate records of any disbursements, income, and bank account information.

Section 3. The board shall approve all expenses of the organization.

Section 4. Two authorized signatures shall be required on each check over the amount of \$200. Authorized signers shall be the president, treasurer, and principal.

Section 5. The treasurer shall prepare a financial statement at the end of the year, to be reviewed by the Audit Committee.

Section 6. Upon the dissolution of the organization, any remaining funds should be used to pay any outstanding bills and, with the membership's approval, spent for the benefit of the school.

Section 6. The fiscal year shall coordinate with the school year.
Reminder: State laws often dictate what records must be made available to an organization's members and to the general public at the school. Also, federal law requires that a nonprofit tax-exempt organization's IRS Form 1023 and copies of the organization's annual information returns (IRS Form 990 or 990EZ) for the most recent three years be available for public review when requested.

Article IX – Parliamentary Authority

Robert's Rules of Order shall govern meetings when they are not in conflict with the organization's bylaws.

Article X – Standing Rules

Standing rules may be approved by the Executive Board, and the secretary shall keep a record of the standing rules for future reference.


Article XI – Dissolution

The organization may be dissolved with previous notice (14 calendar days) and a two-thirds vote of those present at the meeting.

Article XII – Amendments

These bylaws may be amended at any regular or special meeting, providing that previous notice was given in writing at the prior meeting and then sent to all members of the organization by the secretary. Notice may be given by postal mail, e-mail, or fax. Amendments will be approved by a two-thirds vote of those present, assuming a quorum.

10 Key Points About Bylaws

 [Print](#)



What you should know, why you should have them.

Written by Christy Forhan

6 Things You Should Know About Your PTO's Bylaws

1. Whether you have them. If you can't find a copy, you need to create them.
2. Where they are. Just saying you have bylaws isn't enough; you need to get your hands on the actual document.
3. The content. Read and understand them. If they don't make sense to the way your PTO actually operates, it's time for a revision.
4. The format. If you only have a hard copy, type them up so you can share and revise them electronically.
5. Their age and the last time they were revised. Look at the end of the document for a revision schedule. If there isn't one, add the first entry when you type up the document.
6. Revision rules. If your bylaws need revising, follow the procedure spelled out in the document itself. If there are no revision rules, follow Robert's Rules.

4 Primary Reasons To Have Bylaws

- **Consistency.** Rules and policies that have been documented in the form of bylaws can be applied consistently so that emotion and personalities do not get involved.
- **Efficiency.** Your bylaws include procedures for decisionmaking so that your PTO can conduct all its business according to the rules and as efficiently as possible.
- **Protection.** Strong bylaws help protect the group from internal conflict, financial risk, and "mission creep."
- **Legitimacy.** A strong set of bylaws is a sign that the PTO takes itself seriously. Bylaws give the members assurance of the mission, structure, and policies of the group. Besides, the IRS requires bylaws if your PTO files for 501(c)(3) status.

Procedures Book: Your PTO's Instruction Manual

 [Print](#)



A policy and procedures manual isn't as hard to create as it might seem...and it can make it much easier for leaders to deal with sticky situations.

Written by Darylen Cote

What good can a bit of long-term organization do? Consider these dilemmas.

- Sharon recently agreed to chair the annual fun fair fundraiser. Almost all of the members who worked on this in the past have moved on with their children to another school. Where to start? No one seems to know.
- A conflict has arisen about the proper way to handle money generated for the PTO from a vending machine in the school. One faction of parents wants to use it for scholarships, another for projects that benefit the greatest number of students, and a third wants to dedicate the revenue to the teachers for classroom supplies. What to do? Where is the guidance for how to handle this kind of monetary disagreement?
- Susan is the new president of her PTO. The recent leadership of the group was part of a fairly exclusive clique, and now that their children have graduated to middle school, they have disappeared. The immediate past president did spend some time with her in the spring answering what questions Susan could think to ask, but new questions keep popping up about how things get done, and that person is simply no longer available. Is inventing new ways of doing things inevitable with every change of leadership?

These situations could all have been made easier if the groups involved had used a simple binder system to record processes and practices. The formal name is a procedures book. It's also sometimes called a policy and procedures manual when it includes policy statements.

A procedures book is a key element to ensure at least some continuity to the steps a group follows to get

its work done. Think how valuable it would be for the new fundraising chairperson to receive a binder full of information on what fundraisers have been run, who to contact, and what worked and what didn't. Creating a procedures book means that you don't have to reinvent the wheel every time there's a leadership change. It also means all the hard work you did and the knowledge you gained as a leader will continue to benefit the group after you're gone. A procedures book can also transmit the values and time-honored traditions that are important to your group.

The procedures book doesn't have to be complicated. It can be compiled in a simple loose-leaf, three-ring binder for ease in amending or copying the contents. Not all procedures books are the same; the more information you include, the better tool your book will be. Following are many ideas for what to put in it. Together, these ideas constitute a very complete procedures book indeed. But even a basic reference with contact information, some dos and don'ts, and a basic synopsis of what has happened in the past can be very valuable.

Information for Your Book

Start your procedures book with a copy of your group's bylaws. Your bylaws are the foundation from which you grow the policies and procedures that help you carry out your mission. Everyone needs to understand the basic rules by which you govern yourselves. The rest of the procedures book then explains how your group carries out the rules toward achieving your mission day to day.

The next part of your procedures book might include important contacts within the parent group, school, and district. This section might also include a list of parent group offices and committees, plus any other pertinent organizational information.

Next could come job descriptions for all of the offices, including important committee chairs. Job descriptions should include those outlined in the bylaws and any you have created and use on a continuing basis. The basic function of any job description is to clarify expectations about who is going to perform what tasks. These job descriptions should be reviewed each year to fit with changes that have been made in the past year or changes that may need to be accomplished in the coming year.

Most job descriptions include a title, a job summary, a list of duties, and qualifications. (Qualifications only need to be basic. For example, if the secretary is in charge of creating the agenda, compiling meeting notes, and putting together the newsletter, it might be hard for a person without computer skills to do the job.)

With job descriptions in hand, your volunteers will have a clearer understanding of the tasks they are expected to perform and the time needed to get the job done.

Another section that many groups find useful is a timeline. Usually organized month by month, the timeline provides an overview of the major events and activities your group engages in throughout the year. Simply list the month and activities that take place within that month. (Or if you want to get more specific, use a calendar with no year listed.) For example, you know that your fall fundraiser always occurs in September, even if you don't necessarily know what that fundraiser will be from year to year. You know the carnival is held in October. Teacher appreciation week is in May. Do your best to include all of the activities you run. When in doubt, put it on the list. This is a reference, not an obligation to hold specific events.

More Ideas

The remainder of your procedures book might be divided by function (president's section), by project (fall fundraiser), or a combination. The method you choose needs to make sense for your group. The contents for each section consist of as simple an explanation as possible of how things are done for that position or project. It can be a step-by-step list developed chronologically, as in a timeline. This style is especially useful if you are describing procedures for a project. If you are describing how the parent resource room is organized, however, your description might take a more narrative form.

Some of the important procedures that groups choose to describe in their manuals include:

- How money is handled (including revenues from fundraising and any other sources). For example, you might choose to have the amounts counted and the totals verified by at least two group members, and then put in night deposits, never keeping any cash revenues overnight.
- Methods you use for building involvement (or recruiting members). It helps to chronicle what has worked and what hasn't.
- Major fundraisers.
- Major continuing or annual projects: the fall dance, the spring carnival, the winter arts performance.
- Descriptions of how the major functions for each office in your group are carried out.

In fact, the list could go on and on. Each group decides what is important to include. It could be the review process you use to choose books to donate to the school library or perhaps how you choose the teacher of the year.

Writing the actual procedures can take some time, particularly to think through which processes are important and repeated enough to include, and then to detail all the steps that are performed. It can be a good job for a past president (or two).

Creating a procedures manual will pay off by helping your group weather the inevitable changes in leadership to stay strong and healthy. That's not to say procedures can't be adapted and changed as the times change—of course they can. But having a starting place is simply invaluable. In fact, it's the best gift an incoming leader can get.

Too Much for You?

Does the idea of compiling a complete procedures book seem too overwhelming for your group? At its most basic, creating a procedures book involves purchasing a binder for every officer and committee chairperson. Each person simply three-hole punches every piece of paper pertinent to the job, makes a notation on it about what it is (when necessary), and places it in the binder. At the end of the year, you have at least a basic reference to help the next person who does that job. Compared to starting from scratch, this simple organizational plan can be a godsend for any new officer.

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