

Planning A Retreat

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A Retreat

"As citizens of this democracy,
you are the rulers and the
ruled, the law-givers and the
law-abiding, the beginning
and the end."

-Adlai Ewing Stevenson

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Advantages of a Retreat versus a Regular Meeting

- Eliminates distractions
- Creates shared experience
- Fosters informality
- Provides extended discussion
- Maximizes participation by all organization members
- Synergizes motivation by participants

Steps for Planning a Retreat

1. *Establish the purpose:* This is the first thing you have to ask yourself. What do you hope to accomplish with this retreat? Will you focus on team building, strategy planning, strengthening the group's working relationship, or resolving conflict? Your goals will shape how you plan the entire retreat. It is imperative that you know why you are planning it and design it with that purpose in mind. If the participants see no point to the retreat, they may not give it their best, and the retreat could fail. Developing clear objectives with your planning team establishes the direction of your planning and sets the tone of the retreat.
2. *Budget:* What's your budget? Will you need money for food, transportation, the retreat location, recreational activities, equipment, and lodging?
3. *Create activities and determine length:* The length of the retreat must be decided. Begin planning activities that will meet the goals you set. Maybe you have some specific tasks that the group needs to collaborate on and complete. You may be expecting a tangible finished product at the conclusion of the retreat. If your purpose is more abstract, create activities that will promote it. Lectures, discussions, games, skits, and songs are but a few possible activities.
4. *End the retreat with something that will tie the entire experience together:* Recap what you have learned or accomplished. Have some fun.
5. *Once your activities are established:* If you allot too little time, the participants will be frustrated because they may not have a chance to bring the experience to a close. If too much time is allowed, they will be bored. Be sure to schedule time for meals, breaks, and recreation. Plan some "down time" where your members can relax and get to know each other.

6. *Where will your retreat take place:* Ideally, getting off campus relieves the group of distractions. Taking the group off campus separates them from their school work and allows them to concentrate on the tasks before them.

7. *Refreshments:* Having a snack break gives people something to do. Furthermore, food tends to bring people together. Eating is something we all share and people tend to get hungry. They may become disagreeable if they are not fed. Depending on your budget, you could order pizza or subs, you could cook something yourself, or you could have all the officers bring a snack to pass. However you do it, make sure your members aren't hungry! College students seem to work best with food in their stomachs.

8. *Finally, remember to be enthusiastic and have fun.* No matter what your objectives, fun and laughter must abound. If your participants have fun while working, they will also learn how to work as a team. Teamwork does not come about with bickering and arguments, it grows out of sharing and laughing. Good luck!



Please remember, when planning a retreat for your organization, it is important to keep special needs in mind. Also, make sure you file the appropriate paperwork with University Activities (Student Center L104) in advance.