

How to start a Gavel Club

All financial information given is based on our experience starting the Queen City Gavel Club in 2002. Your costs might differ.

1. Request a start-up package from Toastmasters International at <http://www.toastmasters.org/startclub.asp> . In the comment section, be sure to indicate that you want to start a GAVEL club and not a Toastmasters club; the packages differ.

2. Start advertising and getting members. I recommend you set dues at \$35 per member per year if you have 20 members. Our club's policy is that dues are non-refundable and non-transferable. For instance if one sibling quits, another sibling may not take his place without paying new-member dues. Remember, it's easier to refund extra money or have an end of year party with it than it is to raise dues mid-year! Your start-up costs will be approximately:

Charter Fee \$50

Annual Dues \$50

Any fees for renting a room to meet in? In our club, we had a \$25/mo. fee

Start up materials: awards, officer booklets, training booklets, ballots, light system, stop watch, extension cord, tape, pencils, nametags, copying costs: \$150

Will you video tape meetings? If so, add the cost of tapes.

If you will not have a room-use fee or video expenses, you could consider lowering the dues. In 2002, some clubs in town charge \$18/year for returning members (those who already have a manual) and \$34 for new members (to cover the cost of manuals). When you charter, you will be given a one-time supply of 20 manuals, samples of various forms you can order from Toastmasters, a gavel, and one packet of ballots. Once you use up those 20 manuals, additional new-member kits are \$16 plus shipping and handling.

3. Our club accepts members in the 6th – 12th grades. We found it a lot easier to find younger members than teenage members. To ensure a balance in ages, we capped the membership at 11 middle schoolers and 9 high-schoolers. Our goal is to maintain this balance as much as possible. We try to keep a waiting list with both age groups represented. The ages you accept in your club are up to you. One club in town is comprised of 4th – 6th graders and it's doing very well.

From your list of members, assign officer roles. You can hold elections a month or two into your meetings, when the students get to know one another. The only officer who will really need to "do" anything at the meetings until an election is held is the President. Orient him/her on how to open and close the meetings.

4. Find a place to meet and get approval to do so. We also developed a "Cooperation Covenant" for new members to sign, basically saying that they'll respect the facilities we're using...also that they'll respect one another and will come prepared for the meetings.

5. Fill out the paperwork to charter your Gavel Club. It took us about 5 weeks to receive our charter and another week or two to get the start-up materials (manuals, etc.) The Queen City Gavel Club started the process of forming a club, finding a place to meet, and applying for membership in April 2002. We received our charter and all the materials we needed by July. Here's a brief timeline of our club's history:

March – decided we wanted to start a Gavel Club...started talking about it

April – asked for approval to use church facilities as a meeting place for Gavel Club

May – rec'd approval from church; applied for charter

June – received charter

Late June – received all manuals and other supplies

July – built light system and planned demonstration meeting

August – held demonstration meeting

September – held first weekly club meeting

October – elected officers

6. Decide if your club will give awards for Best Table Topics, Best Speaker, and/or Best Evaluator. In our club, we give Best Table Topics Speaker and Best Evaluator award. In some clubs, all 3 are awarded each week.

7. Make a weekly schedule for the various roles. In our club, the sponsors create the schedule. We make sure that the students rotate through each of the roles and that they have an equal number of speaking opportunities. The schedule we distributed to the Gaveliers in August covers the first 20 meetings of our club. Each of our 20 members can look on that schedule and see the week they will be Toastmaster or Joke Master or Table Topics Master. By the end of those 20 weeks, each member will have had 4 speeches, have done 4 evaluations, and have had 4 opportunities for Table Topics

8. Schedule a demonstration meeting. If you do not have experienced Gaveliers in your club, you could ask a local Toastmasters club to let your new club visit. Have the new members observe how a Toastmasters meeting is run. Tell them that a Gavel Club meeting is just like a Toastmasters meeting except every role is performed by students. Sponsors and other adults don't run the meeting. They have no role in the meeting except as audience members. In our club, my co-sponsor comments on the meeting at the very end when the President says, "Does anyone have or any announcements?" She encourages Gaveliers and gives them one or two pointers to smooth out any rough edges.

After the demonstration meeting, pass out a description of roles and a schedule.

9. Hold your first meeting. If Gaveliers forget to recognize the person who introduced them, rap on the table as a reminder. In our club, Gaveliers also rap on the table when someone uses the Word of the Day and, as a drum roll, just prior to the Ballot Master announcing the awards. At the end of the meeting, when the President asks if there are any announcements, be sure to give words of encouragement to your students. Especially recognize the Toastmaster (big job!) for doing a good job with the agenda and making phone calls prior to the meeting.

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