

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

The volunteer orientation establishes the nature of the new relationship you are beginning between your organization and volunteers. It is your chance to make sure that all the volunteers know your organization's mission, what you are about, and what you expect from them.

For the volunteers, the orientation is a way to feel confident about what they have committed to, and a way to prepare to do their work. They learn how what they do fits into the big picture of everything the organization does. They learn how decisions are made, and what it will feel like to be a part of this group.

STEP-BY-STEP

For orientation, we recommend setting at least a few hours aside and providing some drinks and snacks. We also hand out a short manual for volunteers with all the information they hear in the orientation, for future reference.

Our orientation agenda includes:

1. **Getting to know you:** A chance for each person to introduce him or herself, and learn who is in the room.
2. **Overview:** A history of the organization, the mission, and the programs.
3. **Discussion:** Some group discussion of the issues the organization deals with, and what the organization's views or philosophies are about those core issues.
4. **Policies:** An overview of our organization policies (on sexual harassment, anti-discrimination, how to handle conflicts between volunteers, etc.) and volunteer policies (call the team leader if you have to cancel, no talking to media on behalf of the organization, no plagiarism, etc.)
5. **Icebreaker:** A team-building game, to practice and get a feel for what it's like working together as a team.
6. **Getting down to business:** We always end the orientation with a short ten-to-fifteen-minute team meeting, in which the volunteers talk about what they will do in the next week on their projects. In this way, the meeting ends with everyone feeling energized about the future. If your volunteers will need to learn to do special tasks, or need special knowledge, you may wish to set up a separate time to train them.

Keeping Track of Time We try very hard to end all our meetings at the scheduled time – especially the volunteer orientation. Our volunteers have other commitments in their lives, including work, school and family. By respecting the schedule, we show that just as we expect volunteers to respect their time commitment to the organization, we will respect their time also.

If it looks like a meeting may run late, we stop and ask everyone if they have time to stay for another half hour. If that is inconvenient for a majority of people, we reschedule the meeting for another time. This helps to build trust and mutual respect with your volunteers.

For more of the Nonprofit Survival Guide, visit:

www.asiacatalyst.org