



UNITED STATES *Dressage* FEDERATION
SECTION SEVEN - ACTIVITIES

In this section, you will find some general guidelines for running meetings as well as ideas for club activities.

Meetings

Meetings are necessary to generate order and direction for a Group Membership Organization. Many successful groups adhere to *Robert's Rules of Order* as a guide for running meetings. Various editions of *Robert's Rules of Order* can be purchased at local bookstores. GMOs have found the following ideas helpful to keep the meetings running smoothly.

Preparation is the key to an organized meeting.

Agendas

- Prepare prior to meetings.
- Include topics to be discussed and voted on.
- List board members and provide contact phone numbers.
- Announce time and place of meeting.
- Distribute, either by mail or web site, and have plenty on hand for the meeting.

Time

- Set time limits for meetings and stick to them.
- Allot time for each topic on the agenda.
- Appoint a moderator to watch time and ensure efficiency.
- Continue at another time if issues are lengthy or need more input.

Minutes

- Keep them concise.
- Distribute by mail, include in newsletter, or post on web site.

Attendance

- Encourage members to participate.
- Stick to agendas and time limits to keep it fresh and moving.
- Ask your membership for input and then listen.
- Plan fun activities: pot lucks, games, meeting prizes, trail rides, etc.

Making the First Meeting a Success

Preparation

Plan the first board meeting as soon as possible after elections to get the board together and working in the same direction. While working on the agenda, discuss with the officers of the board important items to include.

- Mail the agenda and appropriate educational materials to the board at least two weeks prior to the meeting.
- Be prepared to appoint all appropriate committee chairpersons. Contact any person who you may wish to continue, thank them for their commitment, and ask for their continued support.
- Create any new committees, with board approval, if necessary.
- Invite the editor of the newsletter to attend the first meeting.
- To compile information and ideas, read the most recent USDF official communication, newsletters, equine magazines, view organization web sites, and talk to trainers and competitors.
- Familiarize yourself with *Robert's Rules of Order* and basic parliamentary procedures.
- Plan simple refreshments, if appropriate. Involve the board to share the responsibilities.
- Be familiar with the issues listed on your agenda. If you do not have a clear understanding of any item, contact someone who does prior to the meeting.
- Invite the general membership to visit board meetings. It may eliminate the ideas of secrecy.

The Day of the Meeting

On the day of the meeting, arrive early so that you can arrange the furniture to your liking. You will also want to be there when the refreshments arrive. Each board member should receive an extra copy of the agenda, minutes from the last meeting, and any other pertinent information before the start of the meeting. These items can be placed in their board notebooks or folders.

- Start the meeting on time. If needed, set the arrival time to allow for a social or networking period.
- Begin with introductions. Invite the new board members to give a brief overview of themselves, their family, horses, work, and other interests. This helps the board members learn to be comfortable with and to begin to trust each other.
- Recap the material each board member should have received. Have extra copies of all materials available to replace forgotten pages in their board notebooks or folders.
- Set up a meeting schedule for the year and determine meeting places.
- Be positive. Keep the meeting on course, allowing no one person to dominate any discussion. Compliment and give thanks when needed and deserved. This will help to create an enthusiastic board.
- Introduce new ideas and projects. If needed, give the board members an opportunity to think about them until the next meeting.
- Emphasize planning ahead one to two years for most activities. Proper publicity and planning are critical to success.
- Balance education with competitions.

- Stress the importance of quality and doing everything correctly and in accordance with the rules.
- People can concentrate better when they know that a meeting will end promptly. Even if some material has to be cut short or postponed, it will be to your advantage to stick to the schedule. Board members will catch onto the discipline of getting to the point if they know that this is not an endless meeting. It is difficult, but try to stop on time.

Follow up

The next day, review your notes. Act upon any issues that were assigned to you.

- Contact anyone who made a significant contribution to the meeting and anyone who seemed puzzled or uneasy about specific issues. This will be the working staff for the year and the lines of communication should be established and remain open throughout the year. Take advantage of this contact to start planning the next meeting.
- Go over the minutes with the secretary. The minutes should be available in a timely fashion.

Club Activities

Activities are one of the main reasons our GMOs exist. Variety and proper planning of activities assure the group membership of the things they expect from their organization: competition, education, fun and camaraderie.

Activities are limited only by imagination. Some of the more popular functions offered by GMOs are:

- Clinics
- Ride a Test
- Camps
- Lectures
- Videos
- Ride in the country
- Play days
- Club grounds clean up day
- Pool parties
- Cookout/potluck
- Shows

Planning of activities for your GMO can be made easier by keeping the following in mind:

- Appoint a chair or manager.
- Create a budget.
- Advertise. Is there enough time for mailing and response? Are there ways to advertise for free or inexpensively?
- Staff (see Section 6 on Volunteers).
- Time. Is there enough time to plan, prepare and carry out your activity?
- Education. Official nonprofit 501 c3 GMOs must provide something each year. (See Section 2 on Setting Up Your GMO).
- Evaluate functions. Was the event successful? Does the membership have comments?

Shows

Horse shows are some of the most exciting and profitable activities our GMOs provide. Publications such as USDF Member Guide, *USDF Connection* and the USEF rule book section on dressage help serve as excellent sources of information when planning a show of your own as do the USDF and USEF web sites. You may also wish to seek guidance from seasoned show coordinators or from other club organizers utilizing the GMOPrez List discussion group.

GMOs should poll their membership regularly to see what types of shows are desired. Some prefer more play days and ride a test shows due to economics and flexibility while others prefer for the USEF/USDF recognized shows.

The USDF web site offers most forms needed to register your show, and links to the other pertinent organizations, as well as an array of forms that might be needed before, on, or after the date of the show. The show manager and secretary should be familiar with the USEF rule book and refer to it, along with the USDF Member Guide, regarding questions pertaining to their level of show offered. If a Technical Delegate is required, they will be able to answer questions relating to USEF rules. The show office should have on hand the USDF Member Guide and a copy of the dressage section of the USEF rule book.