



## Constitution and By Laws

Some organizations have constitutions, some have bylaws and some have both. If your organization has a constitution and bylaws, rules most likely to be changed are included in the bylaws.

### General or Detailed?

First, decide how detailed you want your document to be. When constructed to be loose, in general, it serves a purpose. Organizational procedures (dues, meeting times and committees) are often written in a handbook as standing rules. The standing rules may be changed or adapted easily to fit the needed situation. A constitutional change, on the other hand, is usually involved and drawn out.

### What to include?

When both a constitution and bylaws are adopted, the constitution usually contains only the following:

1. Name and Objective of organization
2. Qualifications of members
3. Officers, their elections and their duties
4. Meetings (leave the specific details for bylaws)
5. How to amend the Constitution

### Preventing Difficulty

An effective constitution should clarify basic procedures and offer guidelines before situations become troublesome. It should help an officer define their duties and, thus, keep them from taking over someone else's responsibilities. Special duties not spelled out in the Constitution can be contained in the bylaws or the standing rules. To be helpful, a constitution usually states what to do if an officer resigns before a term ends. A policy such as this, written before the problem arises, is most beneficial.

### Helpful Resources

If you're writing a new constitution or revising an old one, consulting a copy of Robert's Rules of Order would be helpful. There are several pages in this book that discuss constitutions and bylaws. Another helpful resource would be copies of constitutions from other organizations to be used as guides.



Suggested Constitution for Extension Homemakers Clubs  
Affiliated with the County Association and the  
Cooperative Extension Service of Purdue University

Article I. Name

The name of this organization shall be the \_\_\_\_\_ Extension Homemakers Club, a non-profit organization, which is affiliated with the \_\_\_\_\_ County Extension Homemakers Council and with the Cooperative Extension Service of Purdue University.

Article II Purpose

The purpose of this organization shall be:

- to work and study in programs and activities which pertain to the development of family, home and community.
- to encourage active participation of young people and worthwhile programs, such as 4-H.
- to promote adult education, leadership development and volunteer community support.

Article III Membership

Membership in this club is open to any person regardless of gender, race, creed or national origin. Each member shall hold voting privileges.

Article IV Dues

Funds shall be assessed annually, sufficient to cover necessary expenses incurred while carrying on the educational program set up by the \_\_\_\_\_ County Extension Homemakers Association and the local club. If dissolution of the \_\_\_\_\_ Club is decided by the same procedure as that of constitutional amendment, all funds remaining in the treasury, after bills incurred, as of that date, are paid, shall be donated to a non-profit organization chosen by the majority of the membership.

Article V Officers

The officers of this club shall be president, vice president, secretary, treasurer and past president. Those officers shall make up the Executive Committee of the club. Duties of officers are prescribed in the bylaws.

Article VI Elections

Elections shall be held annually at a specified time.

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