



The American Sewing Guild, Inc.'s

## **Guidelines for Chapter Standing Rules**

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# What are Chapter Standing Rules?

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**Standing Rules** are the rules a chapter of the American Sewing Guild puts together to aid in the running of its specific chapter.

Standing rules are not by-laws. All chapters are governed by the American Sewing Guild, Inc. By-laws. **The ASG By-laws cannot be changed by an individual chapter, only by a vote of the corporate members of the American Sewing Guild, Inc. at an annual meeting of the corporation.** Any standing rules your chapter adopts *must* conform to ASG by-laws.

Standing rules are more specific and can be more detailed than by-laws, as suits your chapter, as long as they do not contradict the by-laws and the policies and procedures of ASG.

Another big difference between standing rules and by-laws is that your CAB can suspend the rules (if they don't involve denying the right of a member to vote) for the duration of a meeting with a majority vote of the CAB.

Standing rules are informal, yet detailed, guidelines that describe the procedures of the chapter. Their purpose is to provide guidance regarding the procedures, expectations, and standards of the chapter. These guidelines are meant to be flexible and they may be revised at any chapter advisory board meeting by a majority vote.

## Why should you have Standing Rules?

Standing rules are helpful in many instances that might otherwise cause dispute or hard feelings. Standing Rules set expectations up front, before problems arise. A set of standing rules can take “ego” out of an emotionally charged situation. One chapter president referred to standing rules as the “backbone” of the chapter. Putting together and adopting a set of standing rules for your chapter may also become a good exercise for your CAB, facilitating discussion of how your chapter has been operating and how you might want it to operate in the future.

## How do go about creating Standing Rules?

The chapter advisory board should draft and propose a set of standing rules that pertain to how your chapter operates, or how you want your chapter to operate. You may want to recall challenging situations the CAB/chapter has faced that might have been avoided with applicable standing rules in place.

You can start by viewing “**Revisiting Standing Rules**”, a *Leadership Track Webinar* archived in the Leadership area of the ASG website. It can be helpful to take a look at standing rules created by other ASG chapters. Query other presidents through the Chapter President's Discussion List – many will be happy to share a copy of their own chapter's standing rules. Confer with the ASG Chapter Development Coordinator for advice on addressing “sticky situation” issues. You may also want to refer to *Robert's*

*Rules of Order.* A committee of two or three current and past CAB members may be tasked with putting together the first draft, followed by review and discussion by the entire CAB prior to calling for a vote to accept the standing rules. Including someone involved with creating existing previous standing rules can offer insight into what the thinking was behind some of the existing rules.

Among the rules needs to be a section on how the rules are adopted and amended by the CAB. As a suggestion, the incoming CAB could review the standing rules at the beginning of the year and elect to reaffirm or change the standing rules for the coming year.

Some chapters use a formal style and numbering system for their rules and others, simply an informal document. However you do it, try to make sure the language is unambiguous. You want to set expectations correctly. You do *not* need to cover every little thing – standing rules should help your chapter avoid misunderstandings and run smoothly, not be overly burdensome or limit flexibility in accommodating new ideas.

## What Goes into Your Standing Rules?

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The following is a list of sections that you may want to consider including:

### **Membership**

- Will you publish a membership directory for the members?
- What will the chapter do in the case of illness or bereavement?
- How will your chapter welcome and engage new members?
- Follow-up with lapsed members?
- Handle problematic members?

### **Chapter Advisory Board Members**

- Besides the required officers (president, secretary, and treasurer) which committee chairs will your CAB appoint?
- Position descriptions for CAB members if they encompass more than those in the *Policies and Procedures Manual*.
- Do you want a limit for the number of *consecutive* years a member can serve on the CAB in *any* capacity?
- Are there special considerations given for serving on the CAB, such as reduced event price?

### **Chapter Advisory Board Meetings**

- How often will the CAB meet? The CAB must meet at least quarterly.
- How will the general membership be notified of CAB meetings?
- What are your rules about adding items to agendas and committee chair reports?
- Are guests allowed to address the CAB? Are there limitations?
- How will disruptions/out-of-order behavior be handled?

### **Candidates and Elections**

- In which month of the last third of the year will you hold the annual meeting?

- Do you want to specify (beyond that specified in the *Policies and Procedures Manual*) who should be appointed to the nominating committee? For example, if yours is a large chapter, will you always have people representing various geographical areas of the chapter?
- Will you require someone to serve on the CAB before running for president? Will you require any other “prerequisites” for other offices?
- Do you have a plan for transition when officers turn over?

### **Chapter Finances**

- When will the annual budget be submitted for CAB approval?
- How will budgeted items be handled?
- What will be reimbursed for the president’s attendance at the annual conference? Other expenses? And to what extent?
- What will be reimbursed for CAB members?
- How will expenses be handled if they are not submitted in a timely manner? What is a timely manner? How and who will handle disputes about reimbursements?
- Do you want a uniform event refund policy or a policy just for certain events? What kind of notice will you require? Will you charge a “handling fee” under certain circumstances?

### **Newsletter**

- Number of issues? (The *P&P* establishes the minimum, one per quarter).
- Deadlines
- Advertising rates?
- Who solicits advertisements?
- Ads from individual members?
- Email distribution?

### **Neighborhood Groups**

- A neighborhood group’s responsibilities and expected support for chapter, such as completing tasks for chapter events, sending attendance rosters to CAB Neighborhood Group Coordinator, sending program topics to newsletter editor on a timely basis, etc.?
- Support for neighborhood groups from chapter, such as a yearly stipend, if any and annual neighborhood group leaders’ meeting?
- Chapter-wide term limits and election process, if any, for group leaders?

### **Amendment Process for Standing Rules**

- Who can propose changes?
- How quickly do changes take effect?
- Will there be a yearly review?  
Chapter Standing Rules should be easily accessible to all chapter members – you might post them in a members-only area of your chapter website or have copies available at chapter events.

Don’t wait for problems to arise before addressing standing rules; things can be humming along just fine..... until they aren’t. And then you’ll wish you had them!