



Neighborhood/Special Interest Group Leader's Guide

An ASG Leadership Library Publication

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This publication is intended for American Sewing Guild neighborhood group leaders. In any situation in which advice given in this guide contradicts policies in the *Policies and Procedures Manual for ASG Chapters*, the latest edition or amendment to the *Policies and Procedures Manual for ASG Chapters* will prevail.

A leader is encouraged to speak with her/his chapter's neighborhood group coordinator, the president and other members of her/his chapter's Chapter Advisory Board, or with her/his fellow neighborhood group leaders for additional help or clarification.

For purposes of conciseness, the term "neighborhood group" as used in this guide encompasses special interest groups and youth-oriented groups..

If you are organizing or working with a youth-oriented group, please refer also to the manual entitled *Teach Another Generation (TAG) Guide for ASG Chapters* for additional guidelines for working with minors.

References in this guide to the ASG website refer to www.asg.org.

Any comments or suggestions regarding this guide may be directed to the chair of the ASG Board of Directors.

Table of Contents

Section 1	ASG Neighborhood Groups	1-1
	About Neighborhood Groups	1-2
	What Is a Neighborhood Group?	1-2
	When Does a Group Meet?	1-2
	What Happens at a Neighborhood Group Meeting?	1-2
	What Does a Group Leader Do?	1-3
	Who's a Member, Anyway?	1-3
Section 2	The Neighborhood Group	2-1
	Getting Organized	2-2
	The Structure of the Meeting	2-2
	Meeting Notification	2-2
	Meeting Setup	2-3
	Milling Around	2-3
	Welcome	2-3
	Business and announcements	2-4
	The Program	2-4
	Refreshments	2-5
	Show-and-Tell	2-5
	Clean up	2-6
	\$\$\$\$\$\$	2-6
	Program Planning	2-7
	Program Ideas	2-7
	Community Service Projects	2-8
	Field Trips	2-8
	Hands-on Programs	2-8
	Challenges	2-9
Section 3	Working with the Chapter	3-1
	Neighborhood Group Coordinator	3-2
	Communications Personnel	3-2
	Membership Chair	3-2
	Retail Liaison	3-2
	Special Events Chair	3-2
	Special Situations	3-3
	Difficult Situations at Meetings	3-3
	When It's Time to Pass the Baton	3-4
	When Nobody Comes to the Meetings	3-4
Section 4	By the Numbers	4-1
	Very Small Groups	4-2
	Extra Large Groups	4-2
	Splitting the Group	4-2
	Have Fun, Good Luck	4-3
Appendix A	Programs	A-i
	Program Ideas	A-ii
	Sample Program Agenda	A-vi
Appendix B	Ice Breakers	B-i

In-place icebreakers (the group remains seated):	B-ii
Active icebreakers (the group has to move):.....	B-ii
Index	i

Section 1

ASG Neighborhood Groups

So, you're a neighborhood group leader! Were you drafted into the position? Did you volunteer and now wonder why you did it? Maybe you have just taken over or perhaps you are an experienced leader. Your group may be small and intimate or large and animated. Or maybe there isn't even a group yet; you want to start one.

New or experienced, with a big group or small, you are the glue that holds the American Sewing Guild, Inc., together. Most of the ASG's members will make their sewing friends and learn the most within "their" neighborhood group, so your leadership will be the face of the American Sewing Guild, Inc.

This guide is designed to help you lead as well as you can and to share some of the experiences of a few veterans. This guide is intended in particular for the new leader of a group that has about a dozen members and has been meeting for several years. If you are in a different situation, your circumstances will be addressed also.

About Neighborhood Groups

What Is a Neighborhood Group?

A neighborhood group is a part of a chapter of the American Sewing Guild, Inc. It is organized by members of a chapter to get together and discuss sewing topics that interest them. Often the group gets started because its "founders" live near each other in the same neighborhood or small town within the area served by the chapter. Sometimes neighborhood groups are formed because the participants are interested in a particular area of sewing, like machine embroidery, and draw from the whole chapter instead of just one locale. Special Interest groups are often started this way. Youth-oriented groups also fall into this category, their commonality being the ages of the participants.

When Does a Group Meet?

Usually a neighborhood group meets monthly at a regular day and time, for example, at 7:00 of the 2nd Tuesday of the month. Most often meetings are 2 hours long, although many may schedule a whole morning or afternoon for a special program, like community sewing day. Some groups choose not to schedule meetings for one or more summer months, either because of attendees' vacations or because their regular meeting place is not available.

What Happens at a Neighborhood Group Meeting?

A meeting will consist of a short "business and announcements" segment, a program, and the "show and tell" portion, during which all members are encouraged to show their sewing projects. Some neighborhood groups also serve refreshments "to keep their creative juices flowing."

A neighborhood group meeting should be informal, fun, inclusive, and a learning experience for the participants. And it is you, the group leader, who can make this happen.

What Does a Group Leader Do?

The neighborhood group leader is the group's guide. You serve as the contact person for the group, field phone calls from interested members and nonmembers, and guide the pace and content of the meetings. You communicate the group's activities and concerns to the Chapter Advisory Board and communicate news from the board to the group.

But for all of this, the neighborhood group belongs to the members of the group and not to you, the leader. You do not rule the group; you don't present all the programs; you don't make all decisions for the group without involving them.

How about sharing the job? Sure. Lots of groups have co-leaders. This works especially if the group leaders work outside the home or have special family commitments. One person might like to handle the running of the meetings, while the other acts as the contact person and keeps the newsletter editor up-to-date. With the information in this guide, maybe you can decide how you want to split the jobs if you have someone working with you as a co-leader.

Who's a Member, Anyway?

Any ASG member is welcome to attend any neighborhood group(s) -- anywhere. In fact, once you join, you can go to as many sewing meetings as you can fit into your schedule.

The majority of your group will be regulars, ASG members who rarely miss a meeting except when they are on vacation.

Your group may also have "floaters," ASG members who attend sporadically. As leader you may want to make an extra effort to welcome them back when they do attend, to introduce them around, and to find out something about them. If they don't find a "sewing soul mate" or interesting programs, they may also float out of the Guild.

And then there are the "newbies," usually new members of your chapter.

Some neighborhood groups assign sewing buddies or mentors to support new members and floaters. The sewing buddies make phone and/or email contacts, arrange car pools, make introductions, and generally help make the new person or occasional attendee feel at home.

Sewing buddies in your group should know basic information about your chapter, the group's meeting information, and should be prepared to support their buddies until the buddies feel "at home."

Non-ASG members are welcome at all meetings. However, after attending two group meetings, guests must join the American Sewing Guild, Inc., to continue to participate in any of the group's activities.

If you do not regularly get your chapter's membership roster, contact your chapter's membership chair or neighborhood group coordinator to verify attendees' membership status. The membership chair may have to check the ASG membership database to determine status of seasonal residents.

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Section 2

The Neighborhood Group

Getting Organized

One of the easiest ways to feel competent is to be organized. Just having things under control will let you relax in front of the group. Here are a few things you will need:

- A roster with all members' names, addresses, home phones, and e-mail addresses: If it has been a while since the group's roster was updated, this will be one of your first projects as group leader.
- A plastic jar to collect petty cash to be used for such incidentals as making copies and postage, supplies for a program, etc. More information about this is in the section called "\$\$\$\$\$\$" (see 2-6).
- Several clipboards with pens attached for your sign-in sheet, event sign-ups, etc.
- A small box with masking tape, felt-tipped markers, inexpensive scissors, pins, pens, pencils, a note pad, index cards, and plastic bags.
- A few of the most recent chapter newsletters: they contain membership forms for new members and as a reference for announcing chapter events.

And here are a few things that are also helpful to have:

- A bell, which can be used as an attention-getter, to signal the end of a break or to bring a meeting (back) to order.
- Nametags: these help members of larger groups remember names and help new members get to know everyone.
- A small (about 18" x 24") dry erase board plus markers and eraser and some way to prop it up: this is handy for drawing directions to a new location or to help a presenter illustrate a technique.
- Some scrap paper: to make a sign to direct the group to a different room, for someone who wants to take notes on a program, or to help illustrate a technique so that everyone can take a sample home.

The Structure of the Meeting

A typical neighborhood group meeting consists of the following parts:

Meeting Notification

When a neighborhood group is just getting started, it is a great idea to make a personal phone call to possible participants. Either the group leader or a phone committee can make the calls from the chapter's membership roster. Remember, as a leader you deserve to get help from the rest of the group.

If you have a phone committee doing the calling, you might want to phone them yourself to give them the information about the meeting (if, for example, people need to bring scissors and come at 10:00) and also to see how well they do on the phone. You probably want the callers to be "phone friendly."

Many chapters use Listservs as a communications tool; whether you are organizing a new group or leading a continuing group, you should post an announcement of your

group's meeting here as well. Ask your chapter's Listserv administrator to set up a basic announcement that repeats monthly.

Once the group is established, find out from participants the best way to get in touch with them, whether it is by email, text, or phone. Begin by contacting the group at least 2 weeks in advance and then a day or two before the meeting.

You and your group should also plan how to notify regular participants if you have to reschedule or cancel a meeting. A combination of a phone tree and email may be the easiest answer.

Some neighborhood group leaders use self-addressed stamped envelopes to get meeting notices and supply lists to the group, or at least to individuals who do not use email. In this situation, each person is responsible for supplying the leader with her/his stamped envelopes.

Meeting Setup

Before the meeting starts, you will want to check out the room, get the sign-in clip board in place, etc. If you are meeting in a store or public place, you may want to "check in" and chat with the owner or supervisor.

The setup of tables and chairs will depend on your program and the limitations of the facility. If you are having a lecture/demo program, a table for the speaker's supplies is a necessity. Also, consider the best arrangement of chairs to enable participants to see the presentation.

If the program consists of everyone sharing, a circular arrangement would be good for a smaller group, while everyone may need come up to the front of the room to be seen and heard if the group is large.

Milling Around

You may want to give the group about ten minutes after the designated start of the meeting before you "officially" start the meeting. Then they can do some of the socializing they'll want to do anyway, so it won't disrupt the program. You can also use this time to chat with guests and new members or make last-minute arrangements with the program presenter. This might also be the time designated for people to check out books from the library box, if you have that; look over the "free to a good home" table; or buy things from each other -- all the activities you really don't want going on once the meeting is underway.

Of course you don't want this time to go on too long, so ring your bell and start the meeting.

Welcome

Start out the meeting with some way of welcoming the folks, not only for the obvious purpose, but also to serve as a transition between the small-group socializing during the milling around stage and the cohesive whole of the rest of the meeting.

Here are some suggestions for welcoming your attendees:

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- Spend 3-5 minutes telling about how much the American Sewing Guild means to you, tying it into something that has happened to you in the last month.
 - Welcome guests and people who have been away by name and “factoid” (sewing-related detail).
 - Use icebreakers if your group is large.

Business and announcements

Now is the time you tell the group items of sewing interest. It probably helps if you have prepared an agenda for yourself so that you don't forget an item

There are often chapter activities or positions to be filled that need to be publicized. Other announcements could be of sales at our retailers, classes that are going to be offered, news about museum displays, and activities of other guilds. If you have any of the Chapter Advisory Board among your attendees, you may want to call on them to give chapter announcements. You may have a list from your membership chair that you could use to remind people by name that they need to be sending in their checks to renew.

There may be news about members, but you may want to check with a person before announcing personal information.

In addition, there may be “housekeeping” items that you need to bring up to the group. Examples of this are finding another place to meet or appointing a committee to arrange car pools for an event. If there are questions that need to be voted on, try to reach a consensus before the vote is taken. Otherwise, “majority rules.” You will have to decide whether feelings are running so high that a written ballot should be taken instead of a voice or hand vote.

During the discussion of chapter and other neighborhood group activities, you should pay attention to the words you use. The use of “we” and “our” do much better at conveying that this neighborhood group is part of the chapter than the words “they” and “their.” It is not “their advisory board” but “our advisory board.” Also, you can encourage attendance at chapter events by your enthusiasm for them when you make your announcements. Sometimes it just takes arranging a car pool to get people to an event.

The Program

As the group leader, you have several responsibilities during this segment of the meeting.

Planning the year's programs and doing the programs are two responsibilities where the rest of the group should have input and contribute. Almost every member of the group should be expected to give or plan a program. Many times, your group's program ideas will be based on new techniques demonstrated during “Show and Tell” (see pg. 2-5).

Appendix A (see pg. A-i) contains a list of program topics. Most of these topics could be covered in a variety of ways, depending not only on the presenter but also on the size and interests of your group.

Another responsibility is to help the presenter with the pace and conduct of the program. It is helpful to the presenter if you set a target time limit for the presentation. You should also determine how the presenter will be reimbursed for any expenses related to the

program. During the program, you should be certain that everyone has a chance to see the samples or examples. If you see puzzled looks on people's faces, you can ask a "dumb" question. If a Q and A session is monopolized by one person, you could interject to say something like, "One more question for Mary and then we'll have coffee." You may have to help by ringing your bell to get people back into "listening mode."

A third responsibility is to "keep a program in your hip pocket" in case the program falls through. If this happens during the meeting, you could ask everyone to tell about how she/he learned to sew, to describe her/his sewing masterpiece, or to describe the piece of fabric she/he can't seem to cut into

If you have a little more notice that the planned program won't happen, ask everyone via your phone committee or email to bring her/his favorite sewing book, a favorite notion, or a gadget that has never been used. Then the program can be each one sharing her/his favorite book or best loved notion. Sometimes the spontaneous programs are the best ones.

About the program itself:

If you have a "beginner" doing a program, you might want to encourage the presenter to describe how to find instructions on the topic, where to find special gadgets and supplies, what mistakes she/he made, and how she/he might do it next time. The presenter might just find a video on the topic, arrange to show it for the group, and lead the discussion afterward.

On the other hand, if the presenter is very experienced, you might want to encourage her/him to bring a trunk show to inspire the group, give basic overview of the topic, and then offer a class (perhaps for a fee) to teach the details.

Refreshments

If refreshments are important to you and your group, responsibility should be shared by the group's attendees. At the yearly planning meeting, determine whose turn it is to bring goodies. If the group meets in someone's home and the hostess insists on making the coffee, the group's petty cash fund could help defray some of her/his expense.

Again, this time could also be used to introduce newer members to others and encourage socializing and the other activities mentioned under "Milling Around" (see pg. 2-3).

If the facility you use won't allow refreshments, that's not a problem either. Remind everyone of the calories being saved. You may need to call a break between segments of the meeting to allow for stretching, bathroom visits, and more socializing.

A few minutes before you want the group back in "meeting mode," ring your bell.

Show-and-Tell

For most groups, "Show and Tell" is the favorite part of the meeting – when you have participation.

How do you get people to bring items to show? Some neighborhood groups have a drawing for a little prize: you get a ticket if you bring a show and tell. It helps to have

someone who will rush right home and try today's technique and bring it to next month's meeting. You might have to ask attendees ahead of time to bring what they have done. Or ask in a meeting for people to sign a "pledge to bring so many items during the next year to show." This makes a good activity in the January meeting – everyone can write down her/his "sewing resolution." Collect and put the resolutions away; read the resolutions the next January, or at mid-year to give people a chance to work on their resolutions.

How you moderate the show and tell segment can increase participation too. Try to say something sincere to everybody who participates. You want people to know that you value their participation.

You might have to ask questions to draw someone out or to explain a particular technique. Or you might have to cut someone off if she/he gets into too much detail. One way to do this is to demonstrate "how to show and tell" during your turn.

Clean up

The clean-up begins before people have left. At the end of the meeting, you have the following things to do:

- thank the presenter for the program
- remind everyone about the time, date, topic, and supplies for the next regular meeting of the group
- mention again any chapter events that are coming up
- remind people of things they have to do, buy, or sign up for
- ask several people to help move chairs back, carry stuff out to cars, pick up in the kitchen, etc.
- and now, you can say "good-bye."

Remember, you deserve help, especially with the physical part of the job. In addition to getting your supplies back into your carrier, there may be people you have to see to handle something you'd rather do in person than on the phone, such as thanking the hostess, store manager, or building supervisor.

At home, you will want to sort out your supplies, file the attendance list and agenda, and make out a new sign-in sheet for next month. The neighborhood group coordinator may want a copy of the attendance sheet. The membership chair may want to know about guests. You might have been given a membership form and a check from a brand new member; send it in and phone the chapter's membership chair to let her/him know.

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Each neighborhood group can decide on how it wants to handle its running expenses. Expenses may not be much, but there will be some. Some groups ask each attendee to donate between \$.25 and \$1.00 per meeting. It will depend on the average size of the group and where it meets. A few chapters allocate money to each of its neighborhood groups each year, not necessarily to cover all of their expenses, but to provide tangible evidence of how much neighborhood groups add to the vitality of the chapter.

You and your group should decide on what the money should be used for. Here are some examples:

- copies of presenters' handouts
- get-well and other cards and postage
- refreshments
- phone calls, especially of the leader and phone committee
- postage to mail out special meeting notices, items to the newsletter editor, or new memberships to National Headquarters
- name tags
- fabric and other supplies for hands-on programs or community service projects
- a bell
- room rental or gift for the facility operators
- mileage for speakers who are not regulars at your neighborhood group

As leader, you are the custodian of this money. **The neighborhood group is not allowed to open its own bank account or to maintain a kitty over \$100.** If your group's kitty does exceed that limit, the group might decide to

- send the money to the chapter for safekeeping, with the understanding that your group will draw on it as needed
- forego collecting money for a while
- invite a speaker to whom you would pay an honorarium
- buy the main dish at a neighborhood group potluck
- provide part of the funds needed for a field trip
- furnish the fabric and findings for a special class
- buy some videos or books for the chapter library
- make a donation to your chapter

The group probably does not want to buy things. Things need to be stored, maintained, and remembered. And they need to be disposed of if the group disbands.

Program Planning

It is a great idea to plan your programs a year to 14 months in advance. It cuts down on stress for you. You can prepare and copy a program agenda for the year – it might show the dates for the meetings, who is responsible for the program and refreshments, and what people have to bring in the way of supplies for hands-on programs. And you can send a copy to the newsletter editor so she/he has the proper information for each issue and to your chapter's Listserv administrator. An example of a program agenda is in Appendix B (see A-vi).

Program Ideas

Besides the list of ideas in Appendix A (see A-ii), your attendees will be a great source. Keep a running list of topic ideas that are suggested over the course of the programs during the previous months. Particularly during show and tell time, program ideas abound. Someone who shows a kid's tee shirt that she/he stamped to cover the food stains might be willing to do a program on stamping. It may end up that this presenter isn't the one

who will do the program -- and that's important, because you don't want people to get afraid of participating for fear of having to do a program.

You can also get ideas by reading columns in your chapter's newsletter about other neighborhood groups or by reading the newsletters from other chapters all over the United States. You can access these online in the Members-Only section of the ASG website.

You and your group might decide on a theme for the year or a theme for each meeting. Your group could even tie their refreshments into their meeting theme sometimes. For example, a "Designing Women" theme might include hot dogs to go along with a program on picnic baskets.

As group leader, you should suggest enough ideas to get the group excited and keep quiet enough for them to burst forth with their own ideas. At the stage where the group is just brainstorming, don't let anyone squash ideas or elaborate on them too much. One idea may not be doable, but it may spur someone else to think of a great idea.

Community Service Projects

Many groups like to commit to major community service efforts. They do sew-ins for one or more monthly meetings or call special meetings to do so. Besides filling a need, this sewing can be practice for those who need it. It is also especially satisfying for those who have sewed all they can for themselves and their families.

Your group may want to appoint a community service committee to make the contacts with agencies in need, make prototypes, and draw patterns. The committee should check with the Chapter Advisory Board to see if there are community service projects that the whole chapter is doing. Members of the group may want to donate the materials or spend some of the group's petty cash on the effort. Even if a meeting can't be spent sewing, perhaps it could be spent cutting out projects and assembling kits.

Field Trips

Your group might want to plan a field trip. If they do, you, along with the planner, should be certain that the group includes the following in the planning:

- know the route and have maps for everyone
- be certain everyone has your (or the planner's) cell phone number
- knows where the group will eat lunch
- determine where the group will meet
- she/he call the stores to tell them your group is coming
- give "we're going to get going in 10 minutes" warnings at each stop
- be enthusiastic, but don't get rattled; be willing to tell someone to shape up.

Besides fabric shopping trips, a neighborhood group can go to a museum, to the costume department of a theater, a small manufacturing plant, a craft show, or a "tour of sewing rooms" field trip.

Hands-on Programs

When you have a hands-on program scheduled, you probably need to be extra careful to remind people what they need to bring, either at the meeting before or during reminder phone calls or e-mails. If possible, the program presenter should have a supply list

available the meeting before. And if you can, bring a few extras yourself. In particular, scissors, pins, extension cords, and waste bags seem to be needed.

It helps if the presenter can have samples at various stages of completion to pass around. With a small group, allow participants to gather around, a few at a time, to get a closer look. And good lighting on the demonstrator helps a lot.

If your group is too large, or your space too small, or sewing machines too heavy, here are some program ideas that can still be done “hands on”:

- pressing techniques (everybody brings an iron)
- ribbon embroidery
- red work embroidery
- origami/origami flowers for embellishment
- appliqué
- covering a box, a frame, or shoes with fabric
- ribbon weaving
- knitting / knitting a beaded purse
- crocheting
- sewing labels into community service projects (you could even have a program going on while people are doing this)

Challenges

A “challenge” is another fun program, especially when there is a lot of participation. One challenge is to ask the attendees to come up with their own interpretation of the challenge project; for example, everyone sews a shirt from the same pattern, or everyone sews “something that holds something.” In this latter case, attendees might bring in tote bags, a sling to carry a baby, and a bra.

This program probably works best when announced several months in advance. Some challenge ideas are listed in Appendix A (see A-ii).

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Section 3

Working with the Chapter

Neighborhood Group Coordinator

Most chapters with more than a few neighborhood groups have a person on their Chapter Advisory Board (CAB) who serves as the neighborhood group coordinator. She/He is there to help you out, providing information from the CAB, reporting back to the CAB, and offering advice, should you want it. The neighborhood group coordinator speaks for the neighborhood groups at chapter board meetings. In addition, she/he will probably plan a Neighborhood Group Leaders' Meeting once or twice a year. This meeting is a time to get the group leaders together to share program ideas and refine leadership techniques. You will probably want to keep her/him abreast of changes in your group.

Communications Personnel

The newsletter editor, web master/mistress and Listserv administrator are other CAB persons you should maintain contact with. They need to know your program information. That's why it is a good idea to plan for a full year or even fourteen months. You'll want to keep them in mind also whenever you change something -- a program topic, your meeting time, date, or place, and the group's leader(s). In addition, some newsletters publish "minutes" of group meetings; if yours does, this has to be provided by the newsletter deadlines. Maintaining these contacts would be a good job for another member of your group.

Membership Chair

You and the membership chair are a team; sometimes she/he knows of a new member first, and sometimes you do. It would be nice if the membership chair called new members and directed them to one of the chapter's neighborhood groups or if she/he let the various group leaders know of new members living in their communities. Then you could call and invite the new member to a meeting. When you "snare" a guest at your group and convert her/him to an ASG member, let the membership chair know. She/He may want to follow up with a new member's packet.

Retail Liaison

The retail liaison for the chapter may ask for your group's help to provide information to the retailers in your community. Many times this will consist of delivering new issues of the newsletter to the retailer and making sure flyers or posters in their stores are in good condition. The liaison may know about classes and sales chapter-wide, so she/he is a good person to know.

Special Events Chair

Some chapters like to have each neighborhood group be responsible for some aspect of putting on a special event -- maybe making centerpieces for a luncheon, contacting retailers to come to an expo, or scouting out hotels, churches, and community centers in which to hold an event. In this case, you would get a committee from the group to work with the special events chair to accomplish this. If you think the task is beyond the ability or manpower of the group, you may have to talk with the neighborhood group coordinator to ask her/him to intervene.

Special Situations

Difficult Situations at Meetings

Inappropriate language

The first major problem is when something objectionable is said at a group meeting that you have to handle on the spot. You might say, “Clarise, we are here to have fun/enjoy each other’s company/learn more about sewing, and lewd remarks/lots of complaints/attacks on another person/talk about religion and politics/too many questions about topics we have already covered will not be tolerated (or “make people uncomfortable”).”

These are all examples of using this formula:

- Clarise, we are here to learn more about sewing and too many questions on what’s already been covered prevent that.
- Clarise, we are here to have fun, and lots of complaints prevent that.
- Clarise, we are here to enjoy each other’s company, and talk about religion makes people uncomfortable.
- Clarise, we are here to learn more about sewing, and side conversations keep us from hearing our speaker.

You may or may not want to use a person’s name depending on the situation. The first part of the statement says what the purpose of the group is and the second part of the sentence says what is preventing that from happening.

Cliques

Another difficult situation is that of cliques within the group. If your group is fairly small, perhaps one approach is to use the socializing or break portions of the meeting to get everyone up and moving around. Perhaps some activities where everybody counts off -- “one,” “two,” “one,” “two” -- and then divides up into the “ones” and the “twos” will separate people and get them to talking to others. Perhaps identifying the leader of the pack and asking her/him help to bring so-and-so into the group might be an approach.

This is a problem that will take time to resolve.

Ramblers

What if someone talks too much or is b-o-o-o-o-ring? Here again, you have to break in and say, “thanks, Rae, I think we have the idea now” or “yes, Rae, I remember now that you told us that before” or even “Rae, we have to move on now.” If it happens at every meeting, you may have to talk with the person away from the meeting to clue her/him in (and if she/he doesn’t “get” it, maybe the group will tolerate her/him anyhow). If you are afraid that you yourself are the one who is boring, you may have to ask a friend in the group what she/he thinks and be prepared to swallow hard.

The Old Guard

If you have inherited the group from someone who still comes to the group and you want to change the way things have been done, you can. Maybe you’ll want to talk with your neighborhood group coordinator or the chapter president first. If your ideas aren’t out of

line, go ahead: tell the group what you want to do; often the reason you want to change is that doing it the “old” way just isn’t comfortable for you. That is not a reflection on the previous leader. But be prepared for everyone offering advice. Sometimes just jumping in and making the change is all that is needed, with no explanation needed; the group may never even notice.

When It’s Time to Pass the Baton

Some groups change their leaders every year. This often works in a small, stable group; then everybody shares in the leadership, and there is enough variety so that things don’t get stale. At the other extreme there are groups that will soon have to buy silver watches for their leaders; they have been in the job so long. If your chapter has had a tradition of waiting to replace group leaders only after someone burns out, you may want to discuss this with the neighborhood group coordinator. Groups should name new leaders before its “old” leaders wear out.

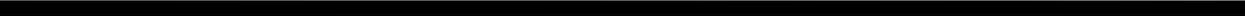
When you know that the job is getting stale, that your “performance” is going downhill, or when a situation in your “other” life changes, it’s time to look around the group for a successor. Ideally, this person enjoys the amount of speaking before a group this job entails and is at a place in her/his life where she/he can spend some time doing leading the group. Sometimes she/he can be convinced to become a co-leader with you with an eye toward taking over sometime in the future. Speak to several potential candidates to see if they are interested in taking over.

Sometimes you know a date when you’re going to quit, and you can inform the group. If none of the people you have talked with have shown interest, you may just have to open the position to the group. You may want to have the neighborhood group coordinator present at this meeting. You or the coordinator need to present alternatives, including that the group may dissolve without a leader. Remember to talk about the possibilities of sharing responsibilities and turning over responsibilities in a fairly short time. Then wait in silence for the group to come up with a solution.

When Nobody Comes to the Meetings

If your group is getting very small, discuss it. Are the programs dull? Are the members no longer driving? Is the place where you meet dingy, too far away, too expensive, or unsafe? Are you, as leader, talking too much, doing all the programs yourself, or otherwise driving people away? Maybe there are no longer ASG members living in your locale. Then it might be the time to do a lot of local advertising or make phone calls to ASG members living in surrounding towns. Maybe an announcement in the newsletter will get more attendees. Discuss it too with your neighborhood coordinator and the chapter president.

Or maybe it is just time for the group to disband. Do it in an orderly manner, letting the Chapter Advisory Board know through the neighborhood group coordinator. Put an item in your chapter’s internal publications, and turn over any supplies and petty cash to the chapter.



Section 4
By the Numbers

How many people are in a neighborhood group? As many as you want.

Usually we say it takes four people to start a group. A group of four to eight or ten is able to do a lot of hands-on projects, take field trips when the inspiration hits, and generally do things together. Because they don't need the space a larger group requires, they can often meet in each other's homes. Generally a small group will run very informally.

Very Small Groups

If yours is a very small group of only four to six, you have several things to consider. The first is that the group has to be inclusive, to remain open to welcoming new people into the group. It's hard to give up the intimate feeling and spontaneous actions of a small neighborhood group, but there are wonderful people just waiting to join you.

The second thing to watch is letting boredom creep into your programs and activities. If the core group has been together for several years, each person may have presented ten variations on the same program. You may have to change leaders more often; you may have to work to bring in speakers or programs from other parts of the chapter; you may have to plan your programs around a new theme or type of sewing different from what your group normally does. Your advantage is that you can talk about a potential problem with the group and come up with solutions to make sure that your group remains fun and provides a learning experience for everyone.

Extra Large Groups

At the other extreme are very large neighborhood groups, groups that have more than 50 or 60 members on their rosters. The disadvantages of the small groups are the advantages of large groups – lots of variety in the interests of their members and the ability to include new people. Two particular disadvantages of a large group are finding a place to meet that is free and the extra requirement on the group leader to create an informal, friendly atmosphere in meetings, without letting the group get out of control. Each community will have its own customs on allowing non-profit groups to meet in its facilities. Churches, community centers, fire houses, banks, hospitals, libraries, schools, condo rec rooms, and retirement centers may have room for you, although there may be a charge. Some groups ask for a special assessment from each group regular (\$5 -\$10) every six or twelve months to pay for the meeting space. You can also use your group's petty cash to help fund the "rent."

To maintain a friendly atmosphere, the group leader needs to keep the meeting going on schedule, while ensuring that attendees feel included and recognized. We mentioned icebreakers previously. A list of other icebreakers included in Appendix B (see B-i) can help. Especially with a large group, potlucks or informal get-togethers allow for more socializing and are helpful to remind people who's who. As group leader, you should try to use names when calling on people for questions, announcements, and show and tell

Splitting the Group

When a group gets very large, it may be beneficial to form another neighborhood group, which meets on another day of the week and at another time. Your neighborhood group coordinator, as well as the *Neighborhood Group Coordinator's Guide*, can give you

pointers. Be aware, however, you have just made two opportunities for people to talk and learn about sewing; many people will go to both meetings.

Have Fun, Good Luck

Sewing people are the best. And you will get to know members of your group well. You will help them to have a great experience with the American Sewing Guild. That can be a lot of satisfaction. You will get practice in speaking before a group – and it's a friendly group, too. You can practice your presenting skills, if you choose to give a program, or your ad-libbing. Best of all, you can have fun.

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Appendix A. Programs

Program Ideas

Many of these topics can be presented in several ways, depending on the size of your group and the presenter – lecture/demo, hands-on, video showing, or a challenge – so use this list to spark the creativity of your group.

Guest Speakers

Dry cleaner
Fabric shop owner
Sewing machine repair person
Professional fabric artist
Alteration specialist
Professional custom clothier
Costume maker Color/Image consultant
Quilt judge
Computer person
Museum textile restoration specialist
Closet organizer/kitchen planner
Interior decorator
Fashion designer
Chiropractic physician or physical therapist
College or high school fashion teacher
Fashion buyer for department store

Sharing

My favorite sewing gadget
My newest sewing notion
My favorite sewing book
How I learned to sew
My most ambitious sewing project
My favorite fabric in my stash
The ugliest fabric in my stash
The oldest fabric in my stash, etc.
Quick gift ideas
My favorite web site
What I want for my birthday
My favorite fabric store
My experience with mail order sources

Challenges

Cover something

Sew an accessory
Make a camp shirt
Make a sweat shirt jacket
Make a tote bag
Make a pillow
Make something for your house
Make a vest
Everyone start with a fabric sample
Everyone sew something from the same fabric
Finishing one of your own UFOs
Finishing someone else's UFO
Brown Bag challenge
Sewing hints
Something new from something old
Make something from an independent pattern company
Make a hat
Decorate a tee shirt
Give new life to a thrift store purchase
Make a quilt block
Make a doll or stuffed animal
Dress a doll or teddy for a project

Field Trips

All our participating retailers
Fabric stores in a nearby town
Museum (for design ideas)
Museum to view textile exhibit
Small local manufacturer
Craft and street fairs
Dry cleaning plant
Theater costume department
Commercial embroidery plant
Sewing room tour
Thrift shops
Pillow stuffing factory/ upholstery shop
Home decor fabric stores
Up-scale dress shops and department stores

Hands-on Programs

Bibs (adult mini aprons) for nursing homes
Walker and wheelchair bags
Cancer caps
Mastectomy pillows
Heart pillows
Tote bags for Cancer Society
Duffel bags for foster care kids
Baby and preemie quilts, layettes, etc. for hospitals
Baby burial garments
Mending for nursing/retirement homes
Clothing modification for handicapped children
Stuffed animals for sheriff and police departments
Show-me dolls for hospital pediatric wards
Quilts for ABC Quilts or Linus Project
Kids clothes for migrant workers, foreign orphanages, homeless families
Stamping on fabric
Stenciling on fabric
Embossing fabric
Notebook covers
Picture frame covers
Gardening angel
Embellishment samples
Book covers
Fimo buttons
Crocheted and wound buttons
Tassels and cording
Simple silk ribbon picture
Other types of embroidery
Stamping and stenciling samples
Microwave mitts
Cutting out community service project/ making up kits
Various pincushions
Let's try to knit
Let's try to crochet
Let's try to tat
Sew your own thing
Community service sewing
Let's fit each other

Making a duct tape double
Let's do our mending
Putting each other's quilts together

Lecture/Demo Ideas

Sewing machine feet
Sewing machine maintenance
Serger maintenance
Maintenance of scissors, rotary cutters, cutting mats
Caring for fabric (before and after sewing it)
Organizing your sewing room
All about folding fabric
Getting more out of your serger
Using your serger chain stitch
Bobbin work
Fitting your older figure
Rotating darts
Altering your patterns
Designing from a basic pattern
Making a pattern from ready to wear
How to make a sloper
How to use your sloper with commercial patterns
Fitting pants
Garment ease / design ease
Altering ready to wear
Wardrobe planning
What fabric is this?
Matching fabric to pattern to body
Sewing with men's ties
Making a vest out of screening or tulle
How to sew with fleece
How to sew with velvet
How to sew with leather and vinyl
How to sew with sheer fabrics, etc.
Making faux chenille
Industrial shortcuts and techniques
Sewing collars
Sewing cuffs
Sewing plackets – center front and sleeve
Making a great buttonhole
Making buttons
Sewing on a button
Unique closures

All about hems
All about waistbands
All about elastic
Setting in sleeves
Zippers – visible, invisible, jacket, etc.
Making mitered corners
Great bound edges
No fear welt pockets
Making and using piping
Sewing darts
All about interfaces
All about pressing
Bagging (putting in) a lining
Tailoring tips
Tailored jackets
Unstructured jackets
Making a jacket from a sweat shirt
Making a jacket from jeans
Inside pockets for vests and jackets
Ways to make a lined vest
Vest for sewers
Bias skirt and other things bias
Making a swim suit
Making active wear
Million dollar dress
Sewing my daughter's wedding dress
Sewing prom dresses and formal wear
One seam pants
Putting pockets in the one seam pants
How to make belts and other accessories
Hats – how to make and wear
Purses, purses, and more bags
Expanding tote
Tips for travelers
Travel garments
Hidden pockets
Sewing for baby
Sewing for the nursery
Sewing for children
Sewing for boys
Sewing for people with special needs
Heirloom sewing techniques
Choosing laces
How to sew with lace

Sewing lingerie
How to fit a bra
How to pack
How to choose an embroidery machine
All about copyright protection
Embroidery ideas
Embroidery placement
Embroidery threads and stabilizers
Using your embroidery software
Intro to digitizing
All about downloading embroidery designs
Computers in the sewing room
How to applique by hand
How to applique by machine
Free motion embroidery
Cut work with and without Fiber Etch
Making confetti fabric
Fabric embellishment by folding
Fabric embellishment by wrinkling, etc.
Pin and other tucks
Sashiko embroidery by hand / machine
Silk ribbon embroidery by hand or machine
Red work
Tatting
Knitting
Crocheting
Beading techniques
Painting silk / other fabrics
Stamping fabric
Stenciling fabric
Using dye discharge to embellish fabric
Quilted landscape wall hanging
Snippet techniques
Stack and Whack quilting
Stained glass quilting techniques
Paper piecing
String quilting techniques
Putting together color wash quilts
Crazy quilting
Reverse mola
Hints for machine quilting
Patch work and quilted clothing
Sewing home décor and accessories

Christmas tree skirts
Sewn Christmas tree ornaments
Wreaths to sew
Woven denim place mats
Gift bags, rice bags, pillowcases
Sewing holiday items
Making teddy bears / stuffed
animals
Progressive doll
making/dressing
Making dolls
Doll clothes
Doll clothes fashion show
Toy making time
What I learned at the ASG
Conference
What I learned at Puyallup
What I learned at the Expo
What I learned at drapery school
Using tube turners and projects
Using my sewing gadgets
Viewing videos from our ASG /
private libraries
Stretching your creativity
Making your duct tape double
Drawing with your other hand
Sewing room exercising
Sewing room and rotary cutting
safety
Protecting your investment
Finding your colors workshop
Computer pattern software
How to use your computer to
help your sewing
Mail order sources for hard to
find notions

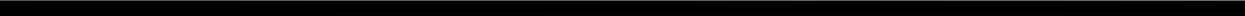
Sample Program Agenda

Here's a list of the programs that one neighborhood group planned. It is given to everyone at the beginning of the year. This group does not use phone calls to remind people of its meetings.

BOCA EVENING NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP of the FORT LAUDERDALE CHAPTER of the AMERICAN SEWING GUILD 2002 PROGRAMS

DATE	PROGRAM	PRESENTER(S)	WHAT TO BRING OR DO
January 8, 2002	Home Dec – window valences	Aliece Bristol	
February 12, 2002	Heirloom sewing techniques; Sweat shirt jacket challenge	Valerie Halverson Everybody	The sweat shirt you have turned into a jacket
March 12, 2002	Choosing your best collars and necklines	Jean Cady, Image consultant	
April 9, 2002	Making buttons	Bobbie Spiegel and Kay Hurley	Supplies on list given in February
May 14, 2002	Free motion embroidery	Valerie Halverson	
June 11, 2002	Machine maintenance	(Aliece Bristol to get the speaker.)	Your questions and problem samples
July 9, 2002	Sewing for your pets	Deb Bennett	
August 13, 2002	Replay of National Conference in Philadelphia	Conference Attendees	Notes and things you bought at Conference
September 10, 2002	Using your sloper to adjust commercial patterns	Lani Miller	Paper scissors; your sloper, if you have one
October 8, 2002	The Bag Lady	Evy Levy	The purses you have made
November 12, 2002	Planning for next year and Fabric Swap	Everybody	Fabric to swap , with labels, please
December 10, 2002	Pot Luck Party	Everybody	Dish to serve 6—8 Serving utensils Location to be determined
January 14, 2003	Matching fabric to a pattern to your body	Lani Miller	Fabric for a garment

The Boca Evening Neighborhood Group meets at **7:00 pm** at the Boca Raton Community Middle School (at the northwest corner of NW 12th Avenue and NW 8th street) on the **second Tuesday** of each month.



**Appendix B.
Ice Breakers**

You might want to use an icebreaker if your group is rather large and a number of people don't know each other. Icebreakers can also be energizing for a group that's gotten sleepy.

In-place icebreakers (the group remains seated):

- The leader calls on people in order and has each give her/his first name and an alliterative sewing term, such as "Bobbin Betty." After a few people have introduced themselves, the leader goes back and the group recalls the names in order.
- Use the same method and ask each person to introduce her/himself and the place she/he was born. "I'm Betty from Akron." Ask the group to recall the names and birthplaces.
- Ask each person to recall the name of her/his first doll, teacher, boyfriend, etc.
- For this icebreaker, the group would not be asked to recall the names and items. Ask each person how many years she/he has been sewing. Have someone writing down and adding the numbers (a calculator will be needed) and announce the grand total.
- Ask each person to name her/his favorite food, place to go on vacation, kind of book, flavor of ice-cream, etc. Make the category not too personal.
- Ask each person to name a store where she/he would most like to spend a \$100 gift certificate.
- Ask each person to share which step in sewing that she/he dislikes the most, e.g. sewing gathers, putting in a hem. Or ask what step she/he likes the most.

Active icebreakers (the group has to move):

- Ask people to line up in birthday (month and day) order, with January 1 birthdays on the left and December 31 birthdays on the right.
- Ask people to line up by the number of sewing machines they have, one machine on the left to the most machines on the right. Give a nominal prize with a great deal of ceremony to the people who have only one machine, like a stick of gum or a picture of a sewing machine.
- Have a short scavenger hunt, in which people try to answer two or three questions, such as "Find two people who have the same middle name" or "Find two people who were born east of the Mississippi" by asking each other the questions.
- Pin or tape the name of a famous person or a sewing term or a kind of dessert, etc., to each person's back. People have to find out who or what it is by asking each other questions which can only be answered by "yes" or "no." Set a time limit.
- Ahead of time prepare by organizing pairs of buttons. Put as many buttons in a bag as there are people present. Each draws a button out of the bag and then finds her/his button mate. As each finds the other part of the pair, collect the buttons and tell them to sit together during the meeting. At appropriate times, ask everyone to get acquainted and tell them that you'll be asking a question at the end of the meeting that the other person knows the answer to. Before you end the meeting, ask the question, "What color was your button?"



Index

A	
“\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$”	2-2
active icebreakers	B-ii
ASG membership database	1-4
attendance sheet	2-6

B	
boredom	4-2
brainstorming	2-8

C	
car pool	2-4
challenges	2-10, A-ii
changing leaders	3-4
Chapter Advisory Board	i, 2-4, 2-8, 3-2, 3-4
clean-up	2-6
cliques	3-3
co-leaders	1-3
division of duties	1-3
community service	2-8
community service committee	2-8
conversation hog	3-3

D	
diminishing group attendance	3-4
donations for facilities use	2-7

F	
field trips	A-ii
floaters	1-3
friendly atmosphere	4-2

G	
group leader	
as guide	1-3
co-leaders	1-3
enthusiasm	2-4
organizing tips	2-2
overview of duties	1-3
responsibilities	2-4
successor	3-4
supplies	2-2
term limits	3-4
guest speakers	A-ii
guests	1-3, 3-2
guide	
purpose	1-2

H	
hands-on program	2-9
hands-on programs	A-iii
hip pocket programs	2-5
how to show and tell	2-6

I	
icebreakers	2-4, 4-2, B-ii
in place icebreakers	B-ii

K	
kitty	
limit	2-7
uses	2-7

O	
leader of the pack	3-3
lecture/demo ideas	A-iii
Listserv administrator	3-2

M	
meeting mode	2-6
meeting notification	2-2
meetings	
agenda	2-4
announcements	2-4
clean-up	2-6
frequency	1-2
housekeeping	2-4
icebreakers	2-4
parts of	2-2
publishing minutes	3-2
room setup	2-3
socializing	2-3
summer vacation	1-2
what happens during	1-2
membership chair	1-4, 3-2
mentors	1-3

N	
neighborhood group	
changing traditions	3-4
definition	1-2
involved in chapter special events	3-2
large size	4-2
membership in	1-3
purpose	1-2
small size	4-2
splitting	4-2
neighborhood group coordinator	2-6, 3-4
Neighborhood Group Leaders' Meeting	3-2
neighborhood groups	
cliques	3-3
newbies	1-3
newsletter editor	3-2
newsletters	2-8
non-ASG members	1-3

O	
objectionable remarks	3-3
occasional attendee	1-3

P	
pace of programs	2-5
phone committee	2-2
planning programs	2-4
program ideas	A-ii
program topics	2-5
programs	
beginner as presenter	2-5
brainstorming	2-8
cancellations	2-5
challenges	2-10
community service	2-8
experienced presenter	2-5
hands-on for small spaces	2-9
hands-on program	2-9
hands-on without machines	2-9
newsletters	2-8
pace	2-5
participation	2-4
running list of topic ideas	2-8
sample yearly plan	A-vi
sew-ins	2-8
show and tell	2-8
spontaneous	2-5
trunk show	2-5
yearly planning	2-8
yearly theme	2-8
publicity	3-2
R	
refreshments	2-5

retail liaison	3-2
----------------------	-----

S

samples	2-9
seasonal residents	1-4
self-addressed stamped envelopes	2-3
sewing buddies	1-3
sewing resolution	2-6
sew-ins	2-8
sharing	A-ii
show-and-tell	2-6
Special interest group	See Neighborhood group, <i>See</i>
Neighborhood group	
special meetings	2-8
structure of meetings	2-2

T

TAG	i
Teach Another Generation (TAG) Guide for ASG	
Chapters	i
trunk show	2-5

W

web master/mistress	3-2
welcoming attendees	2-4
word choice	2-4

Y

yearly planning meeting	2-5
Youth-oriented groups	<i>See</i> TAG