

# GUIDE TO SATELLITE CLUBS



Do you want to start a Rotary club but don't have enough members? Are you in a Rotary club that isn't meeting your or your members' expectations? Are there members who love your club but can't keep attending when it meets? Would you like to start a new club with a small, energetic group committed to community service? If you answered yes to any of these questions, starting a satellite club might help.

## WHAT IS A SATELLITE CLUB AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

Rotary has had satellite clubs since 2013. At first, satellite clubs were for people who wanted to join Rotary but didn't have a large enough group to start a club. Unlike regular Rotary clubs, which require 20 members to start, a satellite club can form with just eight members. Satellite clubs also give community members and Rotarians the chance to make a positive difference in a club environment that often differs from their local Rotary club.

Like all Rotary clubs, satellite clubs hold regular meetings, have bylaws and a board, and get involved in community service projects. A local Rotary club sponsors the club and provides advice and support. Satellite club members are Rotarians. Officially, they are members of the sponsor club.

When a satellite club grows to 20 members or more, it can choose to remain a satellite to its sponsor club or it can apply for a charter to become a standalone Rotary club. Some clubs prefer to continue as satellite clubs regardless of their size and enjoy the benefits of being tied to their sponsor club. You decide what's right for your members.

## WHY START A SATELLITE CLUB?

Just like starting any Rotary club, forming a satellite club brings community and business leaders together to exchange ideas and take action to improve people's lives. Satellite clubs can also:

- Attract members who have different vocations or service interests
- Be a more affordable club experience. All members pay the same amount of dues to Rotary International, but clubs can choose to lower club dues. Districts also set their own dues.
- Provide an alternative meeting experience or format where members can experiment with different forms of club organization

## SATELLITE CLUBS ARE NOT:

- A substandard form of a Rotary club. (Satellite club members are Rotarians.)
- A separate club. (Satellite clubs must have a sponsor Rotary club.)
- A Rotaract club. (Rotaract members, however, can form or join a satellite club.)
- A solution for a struggling club. (Ask your district governor if you need help.)

- Allow Rotary clubs to offer service opportunities and membership experiences that appeal to a smaller, focused group
- Bring Rotary to communities that might not be able to support a standalone club
- Serve as transitional Rotary clubs

Starting a satellite club offers the additional benefits of expanding project possibilities, visibility, and the impact of Rotary in your community. It also develops more leaders in your community and the Rotary district.

## HOW DO YOU START A SATELLITE CLUB?

Starting a satellite club begins at the club level, but the process can vary depending on the club and its circumstances. Unlike starting a standalone Rotary club, the process does not require approval from the district governor. Use the steps below as a guide, but remember that your process may differ.

- ① **PREPARE.** Review the **frequently asked questions** about satellite clubs before you proceed.
- ② **FIND A SPONSOR CLUB.** Ask a Rotary club to sponsor your satellite club. Talk to the club's leaders and get their support. Inform other clubs in your area and your district about the new club so they can offer help and send interested members your way.
- ③ **FIND MEMBERS.** You'll need at least eight members to start. Good prospects can come from groups in the community who are underrepresented in nearby Rotary clubs, retired people, young professionals, community interest organizations, Rotary program **alumni**, former and current members, and friends and family.

Your satellite club can be a new group with a different variety of vocations and interests. Rotarians who are disenchanted in their current club might also want an opportunity to bring their skills and knowledge to a new satellite club.

- ④ **GET ORGANIZED.** Meet with the sponsor club to decide:
  - How the new club will make a difference in the community
  - How the satellite club experience will differ from that of the sponsor club
  - Whether the goal is for the satellite club to eventually become its own club
  - How club and district dues will be structured and whether the district will subsidize initial membership fees or offer other financial support
  - Where and how the satellite club will recruit members
  - What membership types the satellite club will offer
  - Membership criteria
  - How both boards will work together
  - How disagreements or disputes will be resolved

Having an experienced member who is knowledgeable about Rotary and committed to supporting the formation of the satellite club will help the new club succeed.

These steps may not always take place in this order. You may discover that finding members first and then approaching your sponsor club as a group works better for you.

## WHAT'S NEXT

① **HOLD AN INFORMATIONAL MEETING.** Invite prospective members to a meeting to explain what your club has to offer and how members will benefit from being involved in Rotary. Avoid discussing Rotary's structure or using jargon. Here are some topics you might discuss:

- What attendees want from their club experience
- Their role in crafting the new club
- Rotary's mission and commitment to service
- The causes or types of projects attendees are passionate about
- How Rotary can fit into and enhance their lives
- Where, when, and how often the club will meet
- Membership requirements
- Club dues and any other financial or time commitments
- The next steps, such as completing the Satellite Club Member Information Form

Use Rotary resources to inspire participants:

- **Impact Begins With You** — Distribute this [prospective member brochure](#) to people at the meeting. It explains what Rotary is and how it's different from other organizations.
- **Connect for Good** ([purchase](#) or [download](#)) — Either hand out this short publication or provide the link to the download. It explains how prospective members can get involved.
- **Discover Rotary** — Show this [PowerPoint presentation](#) at your meeting to highlight the value club membership offers.
- **Power in Our Connections** — Share this video, found on the [Brand Center](#), that shows the impact that people of action can have.

② **SET YOUR SATELLITE CLUB BYLAWS.** The satellite club determines its own bylaws in collaboration with its sponsor club, which approves them. Make sure your bylaws address who participates in elections.

③ **SUBMIT THE FORMS.** When your prospective members and your sponsor club are ready, complete the [Satellite Club Application](#) and [Satellite Club Member Information Form](#) and send them to your Club and District Support representative.

④ **CELEBRATE AND PUBLICIZE YOUR NEW CLUB.** Tell other clubs in your area and your district governor about your satellite club. Promote it in your community.

When your eight prospective members and your sponsor club are ready, you can elect your officers: chair (instead of a president), vice chair if it's helpful, secretary, and treasurer.

Create a [My Rotary account](#) to access information and resources:

- [Learning Center courses](#)
- [Sponsor Clubs](#)
- [Informational Meetings](#)
- [Club Meetings](#)
- [Online Club Meetings](#)
- [Brand Center](#)

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## YOUR SPONSOR CLUB RELATIONSHIP

Satellite clubs that are successful have regular meetings with their sponsor clubs. Developing this connection helps both clubs work together to offer members unique experiences and service projects. You can hold these meetings online using apps that make remote gatherings convenient.

The regular meetings should include discussions about whether or when the satellite club intends to become a separate club and how this would affect both clubs. If a satellite club has enough members and chooses to become independent, the members who charter the new club will no longer be counted as members of the sponsor club.

Other best practices include:

- Having a member of the sponsor club attend satellite club meetings for the first year
- Creating a committee in the sponsor club that focuses on supporting the satellite club and its new members
- Focusing on service rather than protocol
- Holding joint meetings quarterly, with any meal being optional for satellite club members
- Inviting the chair of the satellite club to attend board meetings of the sponsor club
- Encouraging new satellite club members to attend other Rotary events to expand their networks and learn more about Rotary's impact worldwide
- Working together to carry out service projects in your community

Members of satellite clubs have access to My Rotary just like any Rotary club member. But only the sponsor club can report changes in satellite club membership. The relationship between the sponsor club and the satellite club is considered permanent until the satellite club dissolves or becomes a standalone club.

A thriving club, whether a sponsor or satellite, is relevant in its community and assesses its strengths and challenges every year. The **Rotary Club Health Check** can help.

Both the sponsor and satellite clubs should promote both clubs to prospective members and guests. Having brochures ready can help you show prospects their options. Find a customizable brochure on the **Brand Center**.

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## WHERE CAN WE LEARN MORE?

Rotary has many resources to support satellite clubs.

### RESOURCES ABOUT SATELLITE CLUBS:

- [Satellite Club Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Satellite Club Application](#)
- [Satellite Club Member Information Form](#)
- [Learning Center course: Practicing Flexibility and Innovation](#)

Find a Listing of Sponsored and Satellite Rotary Clubs in the reports tab of Rotary Club Central.

**Find your Club and District Support representative** to help with any additional questions you might have.

Resources for new members and leaders:

- [How to Create a My Rotary Account](#)
- [Rotary Basics publication](#)
- [Rotary Basics online course](#)
- [Introducing New Members to Rotary: An Orientation Guide](#)