



Starting Your GSA

If you've been looking for a queer community, a way to make new friends, or a group of people who are interested in getting involved in advocacy, joining or starting a GSA is a great place to begin! **The 2019 National School Climate Survey** found that students in schools with a GSA are significantly less likely to hear anti-LGBTQ remarks in their schools, more likely to report feelings of safety, and more likely to feel a sense of belonging and support in their school.

FIND A GROUP OF INTERESTED STUDENTS.

Getting a new organization off the ground can be a lot of work, and while it's certainly possible to start a GSA by yourself, the process will be a lot easier (and probably more fun) if you do it with a group of people. If you already have a group of friends who want to be involved, great! If not, there are many different strategies you can use to recruit people. Check out the section below on recruitment for some ideas.

FOLLOW YOUR SCHOOL'S GUIDELINES FOR STARTING A CLUB.

Most schools will have a process in place for starting a new student organization. You may need to have a constitution, a faculty advisor, a statement of purpose, and/or other elements. You should be able to find these guidelines on your school's Clubs and Organizations web page. If you're having trouble finding them, ask another student at your school who has founded a club, any club's faculty advisor, or a member of your school's administration for help. If you attend a public school in the United States that allows other non-curricular clubs, the administration must allow you to start a GSA as long as you follow all stated rules for student organizations. If you are facing undue resistance from your school, **take a look at this resource** to learn more about your rights as an LGBTQ+ student.

FIND A FACULTY ADVISOR.

Your faculty advisor should be a supportive staff member at your school who is willing to advocate for your club and for LGBTQ+ inclusion more generally. To determine who might be a good advisor, think about which faculty members have already shown themselves to be allies to LGBTQ+ students. Is there someone with a **Safe Space sign**, a pride flag, or another visible display of support in their classroom? Do you have librarians who are really great about asking for pronouns or teachers who always include LGBTQ+ issues in their curriculum? These individuals might be great candidates to be your GSA advisor. If you have a supportive faculty member who is interested in being an advisor but would like some more information or training, refer them to our **GSA Advisor Resource**. They may also be interested in connecting with their local **GLSEN Chapter**.

RECRUIT (POTENTIAL) MEMBERS.

Invite peers who are interested in building an affirming LGBTQ+ space. Check with existing clubs for students who might have an interest. Social media is a great way to reach out to potential members! Also, if your school has a newsletter or school-wide announcements, you can ask to share information about the GSA there. For more ideas, check out our **tips for finding new GSA members**.

There are many ways to advertise; think about using a variety of outreach strategies. Use a combination of your school bulletin, announcements, social media, flyers, or word-of-mouth. Use colorful visuals that include your club's purpose and information about when and where the club meets. Participate in **GLSEN's Days of Action** to increase visibility of your GSA and its purpose.

PICK A MEETING PLACE.

First, check to see if your school has any specific guidelines about where clubs can meet. Working within these guidelines, consider the following when choosing your meeting location:

- Will you have consistent access to this space? You want to pick somewhere you'll be able to meet on a regular basis so you don't have to change meeting locations every week. You may also want to consider whether you'll have access to this space outside of regular meeting times, in case you need to access club materials or use the room to work on club-related projects.
- Does the space offer privacy? Some of your members may not be out to everyone, so it's important to have a space where members can feel safe participating in GSA. For example, you may not want to meet in the cafeteria because members may not feel safe with other students walking by.
- Is the space the right size for your group? For many clubs, a classroom can be a great meeting space. However, if your club has 100 members, for example, you may want to consider meeting in a larger space, such as a lecture hall or conference room.

PICK A MEETING TIME.

Pick a time that a majority of interested members will be able to attend. Send out a [When2Meet](#) or a [Doodle poll](#) to potential members at the beginning of each year or each semester to see what meeting times work best for folks. If your school allows it, try to have meetings during the school day (like during lunch), so members can avoid having to explain to potentially unsupportive parents why they are staying before or after school. If you need to have meetings outside of school hours, think about what times would be most practical for students. If many folks rely on buses for transportation to and from school, consider whether morning or afternoon meetings would work best. If your school offers early and/or late buses, that may be an additional factor to consider.

PLAN AND HOST YOUR FIRST MEETING!

Create an agenda so everyone knows the purpose and planned topics for the meeting. There are tons of things you can do, including having discussions, inviting speakers, holding workshops, playing games, offering food or snacks, and more! Check out the [GLSEN calendar](#) for a list of awareness days, days of action, and other events for meeting topic ideas.

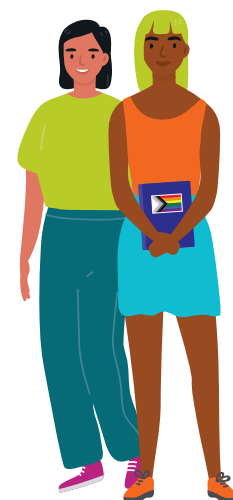
You may want to start with a discussion about why people feel the group is needed or important. This may also be a good time to decide on a leadership structure and recurring meeting schedule for your club. Members can work together to brainstorm projects for the club to do this year and topics to discuss at the meetings.

ESTABLISH COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS.

Creating ground rules helps to ensure that group discussions are safe, confidential, and respectful. Community agreements, such as "What is said here, stays here," help maintain confidentiality. For more suggestions, check out our [Community Agreements for Clubs resource](#).

PLAN FOR THE FUTURE.

Look at [GLSEN's calendar](#) to see a list of all of the LGBTQ+ related events for the school year. You can also look at your school's calendar to see if there are any on-campus events your GSA would want to be a part of. Then, develop an action plan and set goals to work on throughout the year. Look online for opportunities to partner with other organizations near you, like a GLSEN chapter, GSA collaborative, or LGBTQ+ nonprofit.



For more information and to check out all of our GSA resources and programming, visit www.glsen.org/gsa. If you have questions or need support, send us an email at students@glsen.org. To learn more about glsen, head to www.glsen.org, or find us on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter @glsen.