HOW TO BE A CLUB PRESIDENT

CFWC / GFWC Club President Procedure

THE PRESIDENT'S ROLE

The President is the **chief elected officer and leader of the club**. The President's responsibility is not to do everything herself, but to organize, communicate, delegate, follow the bylaws, and help the officers and chairwomen succeed.

A successful President should remember:

LEAD — DON'T DO IT ALL.

The President represents the entire club and should remain fair and impartial when presiding.

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1. AT THE BEGINNING OF YOUR TERM

Immediately after taking office:

- Obtain the club's current **Bylaws and Standing Rules**.
- Obtain any Policies and Procedures Manual.
- Obtain the previous President's records.
- Obtain the current CFWC and District information.
- Review the club's budget.
- Review the club calendar.
- Confirm all officers and chairwomen.
- Obtain current membership information.
- Review upcoming District, CFWC and GFWC deadlines.
- Meet with your Executive Board.
- Establish goals for the administration.
- Make sure every officer understands her responsibilities.

One of your first questions should be:

"What does our club need to accomplish this year, and who is responsible for each part?"

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2. KNOW YOUR BYLAWS

The President should probably know the bylaws better than anyone except the Parliamentarian.

Pay particular attention to provisions concerning:

- Duties of officers

- Membership
- Meetings
- Quorum
- Executive Board
- Executive Committee
- Elections
- Nominations
- Delegates
- Committees
- Finances
- Dues
- Amendments
- Discipline/removal procedures
- Convention
- Parliamentary authority

Never assume, "That's how we've always done it."

Check the bylaws.

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3. BUILD YOUR TEAM

Meet with your officers early.
Make sure each officer knows:
President — leads and presides.
Vice President(s) — perform duties assigned by the bylaws and President and are prepared to assume the President's duties when required.
Recording Secretary — maintains the official minutes and meeting records.
Corresponding Secretary — handles authorized correspondence.
Treasurer — maintains the club's financial records and reports.
Financial Secretary — performs the financial duties assigned by the club's bylaws, if the club has this office.
Parliamentarian — advises the President and organization on parliamentary procedure.
Chairwomen — administer their assigned programs, projects and committees.
Don't allow one officer to take over another officer's responsibilities simply because "she has always done it."

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4. BEFORE EACH EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

The President should prepare.

Review:

- Previous minutes
- Unfinished business
- Treasurer's information
- Committee reports
- Upcoming deadlines
- District communications
- CFWC/GFWC communications

- Upcoming events
- Items requiring Board action
- Items requiring membership action

Then prepare an **agenda**.

Your Recording Secretary can help identify unfinished business from previous meetings.

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5. BEFORE EACH GENERAL MEETING

Have an agenda ready.

A typical order might include:

1. Call to Order
2. Opening/Invocation/Pledge, according to club custom
3. Introduction of guests
4. Approval of Minutes
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Officer Reports
7. Committee Reports
8. Unfinished Business
9. New Business
10. Announcements
11. Program
12. Adjournment

Your bylaws, standing rules or club customs may establish a different order.

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6. PRESIDING AT THE MEETING

CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER

The President announces:

"The meeting will come to order."

From that point forward, the President controls recognition of members and maintains order.

FOLLOW THE AGENDA

Do not allow the meeting to become a series of unrelated conversations.

Move the organization from one item of business to the next.

RECOGNIZE MEMBERS

Members should be recognized by the Chair before speaking.

This prevents several people from speaking simultaneously.

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7. HANDLING A MOTION

When a member makes a motion:
Step 1 — Motion
A member states:
"I move that..."
Step 2 — Second
Another member seconds the motion when a second is required.
Step 3 — President states the question
The President repeats the motion clearly.
"It is moved and seconded that..."
This is important because everyone must know exactly what is being considered.
Step 4 — Discussion
The President asks:
"Is there any discussion?"
Step 5 — Vote
When discussion has concluded:
"The question is on the adoption of the motion..."
Take the vote.
Step 6 — Announce the result
The President must announce what happened.
"The ayes have it, and the motion is adopted."

or

"The noes have it, and the motion is lost."

The vote is not complete until the Chair announces the result.

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8. DO NOT LET DISCUSSION BECOME PERSONAL

The President sets the tone.

Discussion should address the **issue—not the individual**.

If discussion becomes personal, insulting or disruptive, intervene.

A President should never use the Chair to embarrass a member, settle a disagreement or silence someone simply because she disagrees with the President.

The Chair protects everyone's right to participate.

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9. THE PRESIDENT AND DEBATE

When presiding, the President should generally maintain impartiality.

Avoid dominating discussion from the Chair.

If you have a particularly strong position on a controversial issue, follow the parliamentary rules applicable to your organization rather than using the authority of the Chair to influence the outcome.

Your Parliamentarian can advise you.

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10. WORKING WITH YOUR PARLIAMENTARIAN

The Parliamentarian is an **advisor**.

The Parliamentarian does not run the meeting.

The **President rules.**

If a parliamentary question arises, the President may quietly consult the Parliamentarian and then make the ruling.

A strong President and Parliamentarian work closely together before difficult meetings.

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11. KNOW WHAT THE BOARD CAN AND CANNOT DO

This is extremely important.

The Executive Board only has the authority granted to it by the **club's bylaws**.

Do not assume the Board can make every decision for the club.

Before taking major action, ask:

"Do our bylaws give the Board authority to make this decision, or does the membership need to vote?"

This can prevent significant governance problems.

12. FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The President should understand the club's finances even though the Treasurer maintains the financial records.

Regularly review:

- Bank balances
- Budget versus actual spending
- Fundraising proceeds
- Restricted funds
- Outstanding obligations
- Reimbursements
- Required filings
- Insurance
- Contracts

Never spend club money simply because you are President.

Expenditures must be authorized according to the club's budget, bylaws, standing rules and adopted procedures.

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13. NEVER SIGN WHAT YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND

Before signing a:

- Contract
- Facility agreement
- Grant
- Insurance document
- Financial document
- Government filing
- Legal document

read it.

Determine whether you have authority to sign it on behalf of the club.

If necessary, obtain Board or membership authorization first.

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14. COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR DISTRICT

Your District is there to **support the club—not run the club.**

Keep District informed of:

- Officer changes
- Membership changes
- Club contact information
- Significant club events
- Reporting information
- Delegate information
- Problems for which assistance is needed

Take advantage of District training, chairwomen, officers and resources.

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15. KNOW YOUR CFWC AND GFWC CONNECTION

Club Presidents should understand the federation structure:
CLUB
↓
DISTRICT
↓
CFWC — California Federation of Women's Clubs
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GFWC — General Federation of Women's Clubs
Your club is part of something much larger than its local meetings.
Encourage members to participate beyond the club level.
CFWC Official Website
GFWC Official Website

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16. KNOW YOUR DELEGATES

The President should know:

- Who is entitled to serve as a delegate
- How many delegates the club receives
- How delegates are selected
- Whether alternates are permitted
- Registration deadlines
- Credential requirements
- Voting responsibilities

Do not wait until the week before District Convention or CFWC Convention to determine who can vote.

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17. REPORTING IS A PRESIDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TOO

Don't leave reporting entirely to your chairwomen.

The President should make sure:

- Projects are being tracked.
- Volunteer hours are recorded.
- Donations are recorded.
- In-kind donations are documented.
- Programs are documented.
- Chairwomen understand deadlines.
- Reports are submitted on time.

Your chairwomen prepare their areas, but **the President establishes the expectation that reporting matters.**

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18. HANDLE PROBLEMS EARLY

Small problems become large problems when leadership ignores them.

When there is a concern:

Listen → Check the bylaws → Get the facts → Consult appropriate officers → Follow procedure → Document when necessary → Resolve professionally.

Don't conduct club disputes through gossip, group texts or social media.

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19. CONFIDENTIALITY

Some information belongs in the Board room.

Protect:

- Personnel matters
- Member complaints
- Disciplinary matters
- Sensitive financial information
- Legal matters
- Executive-session discussions
- Personal member information

Being President does not give you permission to repeat confidential information.

20. MONTHLY PRESIDENT'S CHECKLIST

Before every meeting, ask yourself:

- Have I reviewed the minutes?
- Is there unfinished business?
- Have I spoken with my officers?
- Have I reviewed the finances?
- Are there District deadlines?
- Are there CFWC/GFWC deadlines?
- Are reports due?
- Are delegate deadlines approaching?
- Are there membership concerns?
- Does anything require a vote?
- Does the Board actually have authority to act?
- Is my agenda prepared?
- Have I contacted the Parliamentarian about complicated business?
- Have I recognized and thanked our volunteers?

THE PRESIDENT'S GOLDEN RULES

Know your bylaws.

Prepare before the meeting.

Follow the agenda.

Be fair to every member.

Delegate—don't dominate.

Never spend without authority.

Never assume the Board has authority—check the bylaws.

Keep the membership informed.

Ask your District for help when you need it.

Leave the club stronger than you found it.