

How to Retain AAUW Branch Members

The following resource is based on notes from the AAUW of Oregon and AAUW of Washington joint state convention in April 2014.

Successful member retention starts with the first interaction and continues that contact throughout the lifetime of the relationship. A branch's ability to attract and retain members relates not only to AAUW's [benefits](#) and [mission](#) but also the satisfying and rewarding experience of being part of the branch team. Retention is about more than just meeting expectations. It's about exceeding expectations so that people want to become AAUW advocates and active members of your branch.

Below are seven keys to exceeding expectations. Many of these will be familiar to you and you may have put them into practice already. This list is a work in progress, so check back for updates in the future!

1. Encourage member involvement.

Build connections by promoting interaction and involvement.

- Invite new members to check out the different interest groups and projects.
- Conduct introductory interviews with new members to find out what they are looking for.
- Reach out and personally thank new members for joining your branch.
- Inform new members about branch activities.
- Give personal invitations to join you at [meetings](#), [interest groups](#), and other activities.
- Take note when a new member does not attend branch meetings, and follow up politely.
- Be sure to encourage noninvasive involvement — don't force it! Engage and inquire with new members rather than instructing, directing, or demanding. Ask yourself: What's in it for **them**, not how can they help us?
- Create different paths to engagement that require varying levels of commitment (for example, developing a newsletter while at home with children or on the road with work).

2. Demonstrate value.

Develop a plan to encourage board and branch members to help new members feel welcome.

- Meet and greet new members throughout the year; consider having door greeters at your [branch meetings](#) and other [events](#).
- Consider a special induction of each new member at branch meetings and interest group activities.
- Use a name tag format to differentiate new members (such as a different color).
- Take some time to get to know new members as people and not just part of a group.
- Send personal thank-you cards welcoming them to the branch — not just e-mails!
- Highlight and welcome new members in [your newsletter](#) (with their permission).
- Provide a photo album or include member pictures in the branch directory to help new members get to know everyone.

Coordinate activities with branch leadership to provide meaningful, fun meetings and events.

- Meaningful programs and projects that support women and girls help people find value in membership.
- Announce member birthdays.
- Celebrate member and branch achievements.
- Fun social events help engage members. Social events can also lead to mission-based programming.

Provide information about AAUW's mission and goals.

- Include the [main AAUW](#) and branch website addresses and other resources.
- Let them know how to access passwords.
- Tell them how to access the branch, state, and [AAUW national Facebook pages](#), [Twitter](#), or [other social media](#).

3. Communicate appropriately.

Develop membership surveys for all branch members.

- Ask what works for them and what does not.
- Why are they choosing to stay with AAUW?
- Ask for suggestions, and build and develop programs around those ideas.

4. Segment your membership.

Hold a new member orientation.

- Assign a current or former branch or local board member to mentor each new member. Match each new member with someone who has similar interests or experience.
- Conduct a new member orientation once or twice a year.

5. Use a multilayer approach for renewal.

Use every channel available to communicate with members.

- Develop a planned approach that involves phone calls, e-mail, postal mail, and in-person contact with members.
- Track member involvement at all times, and use the information you collect to remind your members of the programs and resources they've taken advantage of during their membership.
- In your e-mail and postal mail communications, remind members about their contributions to AAUW, where their gift will go, and any other details you can give.
- Reiterate the benefits of membership.

6. Survey former members.

Conduct an exit interview or survey when a member does not rejoin.

- Ask why they are not renewing their membership.
- Ask for suggestions for improvement.

7. Focus on your target audience.

Work on promoting positive vibes in your branch.

- [Increase visibility in your local community](#).
- Share any new information about your branch, state, and AAUW national.
- Strive for balance between your personal and volunteer lives.
- Show enthusiasm at all times! Be excited and celebrate your members.
- Solidarity means creating a fellowship between your members.

This document can be found online at <http://www.aauw.org/resource/how-to-retain-members/> There are many links imbedded