

The Steward's Quick Guide for Welcoming New Members



As a steward, part of your role is to introduce new members to the union so they understand what the union is, what it does and how important it is for members to be involved. This can be done during break time, lunch time, and before or after work.

Introduce Yourself

Set up a convenient time for both you and the member to talk one-on-one free from distractions. During this meeting, you should introduce yourself and explain your role as a union steward—you are there to keep the member informed and to help them with any problem they may have. Tell the member a little bit about yourself and ask a few questions about where the member worked before and prior union experience. Talk to the member a little bit about your workplace—what it is like to work there and what your first day was like. Give the member a copy of the contract and other useful local union information. Always have authorization (or “sign up”) cards on hand along with information on D.R.I.V.E., our political action committee.

Explain the Contract

Explain to the new member that the contract is an agreement negotiated between the union and management covering wages and other working conditions for a specified period of time. Mention that there is a grievance procedure in the event that there is a problem in the workplace.

What is a Union?

Let the new member know that a union provides a voice on the job and a procedure for appealing management decisions. A union is only as strong as the members who join and stick together on issues of mutual interest. Let the new member know that our union—the Teamsters Union—represents 1.5 million men and women in every occupation, in the both public and private sectors.

Answer Questions

Allow enough time for the member to ask questions. One question that usually arises is about dues. Be ready to explain how much union dues are and how dues finance the activities of the union on the member's behalf—grievance handling and arbitration, contract research and negotiations, organizing, etc. If you don't know the answer to a question, tell the person you will find out and respond later. Be sure to follow up with the member in a timely fashion.

Start to Get Them Involved

During your first meeting with the new member, you should be careful not to overload the person. Make it a point to talk to the new member again and share more information about the union and worksite. Have the member sign a membership application and then begin to involve the person in the activities of the union—for example, going to a union meeting or participating in the political action activities and fund of the union, namely D.R.I.V.E.

New Hires

In the past, union stewards were reluctant to reach out to new hires. Stewards need to understand the concerns of new hires while reaching out to them in less formal ways. Introduce yourself. Offer to show them around. Make sure you introduce them to other union supporters so that when they do qualify to join the union upon successful completion of their probationary period, the union and its members are no longer strangers to them.

Unity • Pride • Strength

