

# Chapter Start-Up Guide

JSA isn't just about politics;  
it's about being involved  
in our community and  
promoting the issues that  
matter to you.



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A successful Junior State chapter is well worth the effort. It can bring political awareness to your high school campus, unite communities through a common cause, and help develop student leadership abilities. This step-by-step guide will lead you through the process of starting a JSA Chapter.

Contact the Junior State National headquarters to obtain copies of JSA chapter resources and promotional materials for upcoming events.

If you have questions about starting a chapter, please contact the JSA offices at [jsa@jsa.org](mailto:jsa@jsa.org) or (800) 334 - 5353.



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# Junior State of America: Overview

## MISSION

The mission of the Junior State of America Foundation (JSA) is to strengthen American democracy by educating and preparing high school students for lifelong involvement and responsible leadership in a democratic society.

## ACTIVISM

JSA promotes involvement in the school and wider community. Activism efforts often include voter registration drives, school-wide mock elections, debate watch parties, hosting candidate forums, and JSA's Fight Apathy campaigns.

## COMMUNITY

Each year, more than 10,000 students participate in JSA on over 400 high school campuses across 34 states and US territories. Once those students graduate, they join over 500,000 alumni who have gone on to become elected officials, cabinet members, and prominent members of the media, business, and academia.

## SUMMER PROGRAMS

Every summer, the Junior State of America Foundation sponsors academic programs at Princeton University, Stanford University, and Georgetown University, as well as other Summer Institutes at various universities.

## HISTORY

In 1934, with the help of Professor Ernest A. Rogers, high school students at the Montezuma Mountain School for Boys in Los Gatos, California founded JSA to combat the rise of facism and strengthen American democracy. JSA has since spread from coast to coast, engaging youth in politics, debate, and advocacy.



**Be the People:** JSA works to civically and politically engage students through debate, leadership development, and activism.

## STATE & REGIONAL LEVEL

### Overnight Conventions

- Fall State
- Winter Congress
- Spring State

### One-Day Conferences

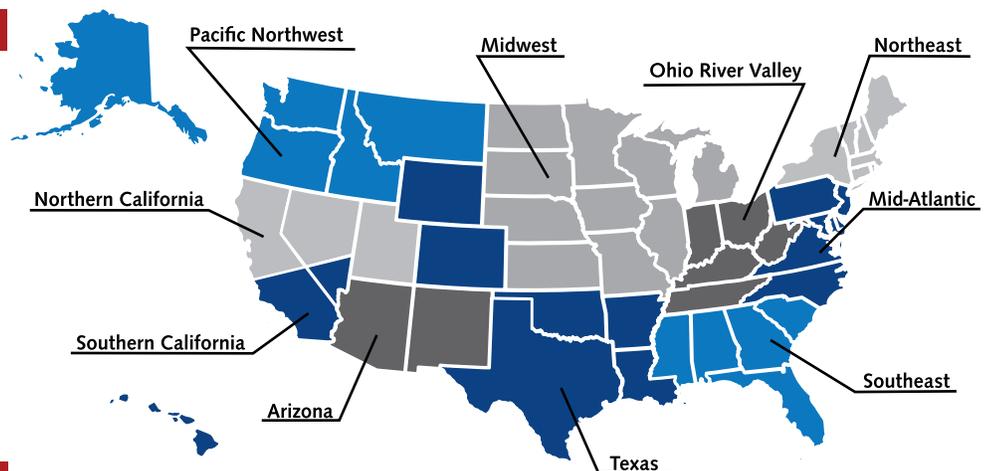
- State
- Regional

### Student Leadership

- Governor
- Lieutenant Governor
- Appointed Cabinet

## CHAPTER LEVEL

- At least 8 members
- Regular chapter meetings
- Chapter conferences
- Activism projects



The U.S. is divided into ten Junior States (as seen above). If you have any questions regarding which state you belong to, contact the Junior State of America Office.



## Taking the First Steps

Laying a strong foundation for a new chapter is key to ensuring that the chapter runs successfully for **decades to come**.

### FIND A TEACHER ADVISOR

Every chapter must have a Teacher Advisor. The Teacher Advisor accompanies students to conventions and supervises and mentors the chapter. They are also the chapter's advocate to the school administration and help to communicate your plans and goals. Make sure that they will be actively involved. If you are having trouble finding a Teacher Advisor, ask the social studies department chair at your high school for advice. The most successful JSA chapters have involved and supportive Teacher Advisors, but for teachers with little time, emphasize that JSA is student-run and that you or other student leaders will do most of the work. Prospective Teacher Advisors can contact the Junior State office for assistance at any time.

### SCHOOL APPROVAL

A JSA chapter must have school approval. Work with your administration, become familiar with school policies, rules and procedures; find out whose approval you need, how to get equipment or a place to meet, and what forms need to be completed. New clubs often must submit chapter constitutions for student government approval. Connect with your principal and director of student activities, establish a good relationship, and get school approval for your chapter. Administrators' support is essential to the success of your new chapter, so make sure they understand JSA's positive impact on students.

Meet with your principal or other administrators who are in charge of clubs on campus and show them how your chapter can benefit the students at your school. Highlight your plans for chapter activities. At the end of the school year or after each convention, present the successes of your chapter (such as who won Best Speaker gavels at conventions, what volunteer events were held, which debates had a good turnout, etc.) to your school's Parent Teacher Organization or Booster Club, which may be able to provide funding for your chapter in the future.

### THE FOUNDERS' MEETING

Call a well-planned meeting of all potential chapter officers. This "founders' meeting" should include your Teacher Advisor and three or four involved students. Get them excited for your new chapter, give them a good understanding of JSA, and gain commitment for the rest of the academic year. Everyone should come away from the founders' meeting with a strategy of membership recruitment and plans for a first meeting.

### RECRUIT NEW MEMBERS

Get students interested and hold a first meeting for members. Speak to government, speech, and history classes; approach the Honor Society, Debate Team, and journalism staff. Ask teachers for names of politically interested students, but aim for diversity so all new members bring unique perspectives and feel welcome.

## WRITE A CONSTITUTION

A sample chapter constitution and guidelines for an acceptable constitution can be found later in this packet, you may copy and edit the framework or create a unique one. Your constitution must abide by school rules, but the rest is up to you. This constitution will need to be approved by your JSA Governor and Program Director.

## COLLECT DUES

Send your annual dues (membership fees) of \$5 per member to the Junior State Office via check or credit card. After sending dues for at least eight members and registering these members on the MyJSA system, your chapter will officially be recognized by JSA.

## CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Publicize your new chapter at school and in the community. Start organizing diverse chapter activities such as traditional debates, thought talks, activism projects, informal discussions, structured debates, educational simulations, challenging mock trials, invite informative political guest speakers, or host voter registration drives. You can also seek support from civic organizations in your community, such as:

- Kiwanis Club
- Optimist Club
- Rotary Club
- Lions Club
- The League of Women Voters

## ELECT CHAPTER OFFICERS

Recruit future chapter leaders (again, focus on underclassmen) so your hard work has a lasting impact. Don't be afraid to ask for their help in planning activities; many times they will be flattered and more willing to help in the future. Giving younger members leadership opportunities will help train them to effectively lead the chapter.

## PLAN THE FIRST MEETING

Call a well-planned meeting of potential members to promote and organize your new chapter. The meeting should be engaging and interesting but productive so potential members take your club seriously. Make sure you attract underclassmen to ensure sustainability. JSA student leaders from other high schools are often available to come to your meetings to relay the Junior State experience and give advice. You may contact these students through the Junior State Office.

## Make it Official:

What does it take to be recognized as a JSA Chapter?

✓ **Chapter Advisor**  
Every chapter must have an advisor to provide guidance and assistance.

✓ **Administration Approval**  
The chapter must be an approved extra-curricular activity with your school.

✓ **Chapter Constitution**  
With the help of the founding members, write a Chapter Constitution by which the chapter members will abide.

✓ **Pay Dues**  
Dues are \$5.00 per member and are paid to the Junior State Office.

✓ **Recruit Members**  
To become an official JSA chapter, you need to have 8 dues-paying members.



# Writing a Chapter Constitution

Writing a chapter constitution is simple. You are free to structure your chapter however you and the other founding members see fit, as long as it remains a democracy and complies with any rules or guidelines that your school has for clubs.

## Chapter Constitutions Must Include:

**Preamble:** State the purposes and goals of your chapter.

**Name:** State the name of your chapter.

**Membership:** Indicate how you become a member.

**Officers:** Decide what officers your chapter will need. Some chapters use traditional titles of president, secretary, etc., and others pattern their titles after local government. List your officers, specify their duties, and state how they will be selected.

**Activities:** Specify how often the chapter will meet, when these meetings take place, and who presides over them.

**Amendments & Ratification:** Describe how the Constitution may be adopted and amended.

Chapter discussion during the ratification process is important. Also, while general guidelines should be clear, your constitution must be flexible and withstand change. What should be left to new leadership, and what should remain constant? A good constitution should last decades.



**Constitution of the Washington High School Chapter of the Junior State of America**

**PREAMBLE**

We, the citizens of the Washington High School Chapter of the Junior State, in order to achieve high standards of citizenship, improve our understanding of democratic processes, develop responsibility in the individual, and promote involvement in community affairs, do establish this organization.

**ARTICLE I: NAME**

The name of this organization shall be "The Washington High School Chapter of the Junior State."

**ARTICLE II: MEMBERSHIP**

Membership will be granted to all students who have paid their annual membership tax and are attending Washington High School.

**ARTICLE III: OFFICERS**

**Section A**

Any student may run for office provided that the person is a chapter member in good standing.

**Section B**

The officers shall be elected by secret ballot at the second to last meeting of the elected term. The candidate receiving a majority of votes cast shall be declared the winner. If no candidate received a majority, the candidate receiving the fewest votes shall be dropped from the ballot, and a new election shall commence. The process shall continue until a candidate receives a majority of the votes cast.

**Section C**

The term of the officers shall start June 1 and end the following May 31. In the case of a vacant position, the President may appoint a replacement with the approval of a majority of the chapter. If the President resigns or is impeached, the Vice President becomes President.

**Section D**

There shall be four (4) elected officers:

1. The President is the chief executive officer of the chapter and is responsible for representing the chapter at all events. The President will preside over all meetings and be a member of all committees. (S)he is responsible for running the chapter's educational program. The President may appoint other officers as the need arises.
2. The Vice President assists the President and becomes President if there is a vacancy in that position.
3. The Secretary will keep minutes of all the meetings. The Secretary will record and maintain all chapter records.
4. The Treasurer will be in charge of all financial matters of the chapter. The Treasurer will collect monies and keep records of members attending state and regional Junior State events. The Treasurer will prepare a financial report ready at all chapter meetings.

**Section E**

Any officer may be removed by a two-thirds vote of chapter members present and voting, provided that notice has been given that this motion will be considered.

**Section F**

The chapter will have a Teacher Advisor in accordance with the rules and regulations of Washington High School. The Teacher Advisor will provide educational guidance, supervision and serve as a liaison to the Washington High School administration and faculty.

**ARTICLE IV: ACTIVITIES**

**Section A**

The chapter shall meet a minimum of twice a month during the school year. Meetings may be called by either the President or the Teacher Advisor.

**Section B**

All meetings shall be run according to Robert's Rules of Order.

**ARTICLE V: AMENDMENTS**

This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the chapter members.

**ARTICLE VI: RATIFICATION**

This Constitution shall take effect upon ratification by a two-thirds vote of the chapter and approval of the Junior State Governor and program director.

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# Chapter Positions

Tailor the positions in your chapter cabinet to suit the talents of your members and the goals of your chapter. Some example chapter positions include:

## Chapter President

The Chapter President must be able to make informed decisions, motivate others, delegate work, and listen to others. This individual must have respect from both students and faculty, and be trusting and honest with their Teacher Advisor. Chapter Presidents serve as the official leader of their chapter and may appoint a chapter cabinet to help run their JSA chapter. High-quality meetings must be called regularly. A Chapter President may receive informational mailings and phone calls throughout the year and is responsible for chapter taxes, convention registration, leadership delegation, and conduct during events.



## Vice President

The Vice President serves next in line to the Chapter President. The individual is expected to assist the Chapter President and take over if there is a vacancy in the Presidency. Vice Presidents are usually elected.

## Fundraising Director

The Fundraising Director plans, schedules, and runs the chapter's fundraising efforts to increase event attendance and help students afford conventions. They must be an effective motivator.

## Secretary

The Secretary records minutes at both chapter and officer meetings and assists with chapter projects. They are frequently responsible for communication with chapter members and parents.

## Publicity Director

The Publicity Director is responsible for advertising chapter events, meetings, fundraisers, and activism efforts targeting potential new members and the wider community. They may be in charge of chapter photography and social media accounts.

## Debate Director

The Debate Director ensures quality chapter debates and assists with chapter projects and meetings. This individual is responsible for training members in debate and moderating. A Debate Director should be comfortable with public speaking.

## Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible for all financial matters of the chapter. The individual must manage the chapter's bank account, keep records of financial transactions, and follow school policies relating to club finances. A Treasurer should be especially competent and trustworthy.

# Chapter Structure

## SET GOALS

Discuss what needs improvement, create a solution, and set goals for its implementation. If a chapter has good meetings, but low turnout, it may set better publicity as one of its main goals and appoint a cabinet member to work specifically on publicity.



## KEEP IT SIMPLE

Some think that an elaborate council and complicated structure strengthen their chapter, but a simple structure with clearly defined responsibilities is most efficient. Less bureaucracy will prevent confusion and keep people accountable.



## RESPONSIBILITIES

If a chapter doesn't define who is responsible for each of its tasks, jobs are left undone. Compile a list of all major tasks that the chapter must do (planning meetings, convention registration, financial records, etc.), then decide who will take care of each, spreading work evenly.

## PEOPLE & RESOURCES

Consider each member's skills and talents. A fantastic writer could write a chapter sponsored column in the school newspaper. A strong orator could train new debaters. A creative artist could design outreach posters. The opportunities are endless.



## TEACHER ADVISORS

Your Teacher Advisor is there to help you when needed and can be fundamental to your chapter's success. However, Teacher Advisors are volunteering their time and energy to help your chapter, so please make everything as easy as possible for them. Be sure that your Teacher Advisor is consulted before any major decision is made and before any meetings or programs are announced.



## BE ADAPTABLE

In the course of the year, people may resign, your Teacher Advisor may change, school rules could be revised, other clubs may form, etc. Create a chapter constitution that is flexible enough to prevent transitional issues in the case of external factors.

# Effective Leadership

When electing student officers, consider these qualities as guidelines for successful leadership.



## DECISIVENESS

Leaders know which decisions to let others make and which decisions to make their own. A leader also makes firm decisions and takes actions to benefit the chapter as a whole.

## GOAL ORIENTED

It's important to evaluate your chapter's progress and find ways your chapter can improve throughout the year. A good leader thinks optimistically, plans pragmatically, and documents these goals.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

For many, the most difficult idea of being a leader is personal responsibility. Chapter officers are the highest authorities within the chapter and must be trustworthy and reliable workers.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Every leader will, at some point, make mistakes. People respect those who assume responsibility, admit their mistakes, try to fix them, and move on, thereby improving your chapter.

## COMPROMISE

Power struggles are extremely destructive – a chapter needs unity to reach full potential. Most power struggles result in both sides losing. The best leaders know how to compromise; leaders cannot be too strong-willed, or nothing will be accomplished.

## TIME MANAGEMENT

A good leader is proactive. This involves delegating work to the person who is best equipped to handle the job. Proactive leaders also use their time efficiently and work at large tasks in small steps over several days. Additionally, they prioritize their goals. If you cannot get everything done, get the most important things done.

## INCLUSIVENESS

The best leaders are also inclusive of others. They work to incorporate the opinions of chapter members when appropriate and ensure that everyone feels welcome and accepted at chapter events.

# Your First Chapter Officers' Meeting

At the earliest possible time, have a meeting with your chapter officers and Teacher Advisor. At this meeting, you should discuss your chapter and its future and your plans for the year.

## CHAPTER MISSION: SETTING GOALS

The Junior State of America was founded with very specific goals in mind: to make high school students aware of and involved in the American political process. We strive to achieve this goal by conducting political education/awareness activities and by having students run their own government. Political education activities give students an awareness of local, state, national, and international political issues. The student-run nature of the Junior State lets student leaders develop an appreciation of the values and principles of democracy.

Use JSA's mission and values to guide your chapter-specific goals and practices. The newly elected leadership should set targets for the chapter to work toward. These goals should link back to important objectives, such as recruitment and retention, convention attendance, fundraising goals, activism outreach. Create a timeline for each goal and assign specific tasks to each officer.



## OUTREACH & RETENTION

Generate ideas about how to run chapter activities that appeal to members and hold their interest. The more people involved in the planning, the better ideas and support you will have. Some teachers offer extra credit to participants in JSA's educational activities. If you need more teachers to overnight at conventions, you will need to be on good terms. Holding a debate with two popular teachers as speakers draws students.

You should understand why people join organizations:

- > Social acceptance and community
- > Personal growth
- > Accomplishment
- > Increased learning
- > Peer recognition
- > Sense of worth
- > Meet people and make friends

For current chapter members, consider:

- > Age
- > Number of members
- > Gender
- > Political beliefs and interests
- > Preferred activities
- > Achievement goals
- > How well members know each other



## Integrating Social Media

### INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Private social media groups on sites like Facebook can be useful for communication and file sharing among chapter members. Delegates can vote on activities for a chapter meeting, share photos, or hold online discussions on current events. Don't rely solely on social media to reach your members. Phone calls and emails are also effective ways to communicate.

### EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Public Facebook pages, Instagram profiles, and Twitter accounts are a great way to publicize chapter events, such as fundraisers, activism events, voter registration drives, or a Fight Apathy campaign to the wider school and local community.

### EXERCISE DISCRETION

As always, be careful with what is posted on a chapter's social media pages. The content shared is a public representation of JSA and your chapter, and can affect both the chapter and JSA's reputation.

## Sample Chapter Calendar

Plan out a calendar for the semester. Varying chapter activities is vital to chapter health and member retention. Contact your state Chapter Internal Affairs department, your Program Director, or other student leaders for inventive ideas. Remember that activism and speaking up on local or school affairs are creative ways to become involved.

|                |  |                |  |
|----------------|--|----------------|--|
| <b>Week 1</b>  | "What is JSA" Meeting, pizza party                             | <b>Week 11</b> | Business Meeting                                     |
| <b>Week 2</b>  | Mon - Business Meeting<br>Thurs - Debate on Affirmative Action | <b>Week 12</b> | Question and Answer Session with School Board Member |
| <b>Week 3</b>  | Business Meeting   | <b>Week 13</b> | Business Meeting                                     |
| <b>Week 4</b>  | Speakers from the Democratic and Republican Parties            | <b>Week 14</b> | Holiday Party  |
| <b>Week 5</b>  | Fundraiser (Bake Sale)   | <b>Week 15</b> | Break - No School                                    |
| <b>Week 6</b>  | Debate Workshop  | <b>Week 16</b> | Softball game with Nearby Chapter                    |
| <b>Week 7</b>  | Business Meeting   | <b>Week 17</b> | Business Meeting                                     |
| <b>Week 8</b>  | Thought Talk on "The American Dream"                           | <b>Week 18</b> | Mock City Council Meeting                            |
| <b>Week 9</b>  | Potluck Dinner - Pre-Fall State Meeting with Parents           | <b>Week 19</b> | Business Meeting: Planning for next semester         |
| <b>Week 10</b> | Sat & Sun - FALL STATE CONVENTION                              | <b>Week 20</b> | End of the Semester Party, Humor Debate              |

# Key Takeaways

- JSA is a student-run, non-partisan, non-profit political awareness club.
- Students run the chapter meetings, decide on debate topics, organize activism, and oversee every aspect of chapter operations.
- JSA gives students an opportunity to voice their opinions on local, state, national, and world issues. The free exchange of ideas and views is a highlight of all JSA activities.
- JSA provides students valuable “citizenship training” by letting students run their own government. JSA’s National, State, Regional, and Chapter governments reinforce democratic principles and prepares students to be informed, active citizens.
- JSA chapters are centers of political awareness on high school campuses across the country. Being a member of JSA is a chance to meet and make friends with other bright, involved students who are aware of what is happening in the world around them.
- JSA holds Saturday conferences and overnight conventions that gives students from various high schools a chance to debate and discuss important issues. JSA events feature exciting activities, interesting political keynote speakers, and great social events.
- JSA provides a valuable opportunity for students to develop or sharpen public speaking skills. Public speaking is a major emphasis of JSA. Our debates and discussions help students develop the ability to verbally express their thoughts and opinions in a clear and persuasive manner.
- JSA helps develop critical thinking skills. JSA members challenge each other’s assumptions about the issues that affect their lives. This forces students to reevaluate their positions and develop more sophisticated arguments to support their beliefs or to change their position altogether.
- JSA chapters conduct a wide range of political awareness activities; informal discussions, structured debates, educational simulations, mock trials, guest speakers, and voter registration drives are a few of the many activities chapters can hold on their campus.
- JSA gives students a chance to develop important leadership skills. As a student-run organization, JSA helps its leaders develop skills such as organizing meetings, delegating responsibility and motivating their peers.
- **A strong, active JSA Chapter is an asset for any high school campus. JSA is a valuable supplement to a high school’s social studies curriculum.**

