

Across the country, millions of students participate in GSAs (Gender & Sexuality Alliances or Gay-Straight Alliances) dedicated to making schools safer and more inclusive for all. The 10 easy-to-understand steps below are commonly used in public secondary schools where other extra-curricular clubs are legally allowed. Keep in mind that these are starting points; because situations and schools vary, no single process is applicable to every school.



1. FOLLOW GUIDELINES

Establish a GSA the same way you would start any other extra-curricular student-led club. Look in your Student Handbook for your school's rules regarding clubs.



2. FIND A FACULTY/TEACHER ADVISOR

Find teachers or staff who would be supportive or who have already shown themselves to be allies on LGBTQ issues.



3. FIND OTHER STUDENTS

Invite peers who are interested in building an affirming LGBTQ space. Check with existing clubs for students who might have an interest.



4. INFORM ADMINISTRATION

Let administrators know right away what you are doing. It can be very helpful to have them on your side. They can work as liaisons to teachers, parents, community members, and the school board. If an administrator opposes the GSA, provide them information about the www.glsen.org/gsa.



5. PICK A MEETING PLACE

You may want to find a meeting place within the school that offers some level of privacy, yet is still easily accessible. Or you may decide that you want to meet in a visible space to enhance the presence of your club at your school.



6. ADVERTISE

There are many ways to advertise; think about other outreach strategies. Use a combination of your school bulletin, announcements, flyers or word-of-mouth. Get creative through visuals that register with LGBTQ people like rainbows and trans flags.



7. PLAN YOUR MEETING

Organize the structure of your meeting from start to finish to stay on track and get the most out of your time together. There are tons of things you can do, from discussions to inviting speakers, holding workshops, playing games, and offering food or snacks. Dozens of possible activities are described within the GLSEN Jump-Start Guide and on our website.



8. HOLD YOUR MEETING!

You may want to start with a discussion about why people feel the group is needed or important. You can also brainstorm projects that your club could do this year and topics you want to discuss at the meetings.



9. 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 suggestions, check out our Community Agreements for Clubs resource.



10. PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Develop an action plan. Brainstorm projects. Set goals for what you want to work toward. (All of these steps are covered in The GLSEN Jump-Start Guide.) If you haven't already done so, contact GLSEN's Education & Youth Programs Department so that you may share ideas, resources, and information. You can also look into local GSA networks in your town or city.