TOPS® GUIDE FOR MEMBERS:
Enriching Our Chapter Experience
You came to TOPS® looking for change. Welcome it, support it, and be transformed!

TOPS Guide for Members: Enriching Our Chapter Experiences

In TOPS, the two important words often mentioned are “support” and “change”.

First, no matter what we do in our lives, support is vital. Access to supportive cheers for our successes and reassuring comfort and encouragement when we are struggling provides the needed energy to continue the journey to a healthier life.

This TOPS Guide is designed to support efforts to enrich our experiences in TOPS Chapters. This is true for in-person meetings as well as internet-based interactions.

Secondly, we all came to TOPS looking for change, and yet, sometimes we are unable to make it. Sometimes we are consistently unwilling to consider alternatives to “the way we have always done it.”

If we continue on our journey to a healthier life, losing weight on the way, change has to happen.

Mark Twain once said, “If you want to change the future, you must change what you’re doing in the present.” There are some more colorful quotes from Mr. Twain about changes, however, this quote, in my opinion, strikes at the core of what we as TOPS members need to work on to improve the chapter experience for our members.

Changes never seem to stop. This TOPS Guide is specifically designed to be flexible. Always consult TOPS Rules or your Field Staff for further clarifications.

In order to make a change (whether large or small), one needs to modify current behaviors. You cannot change what has happened in the past, but you can certainly work on controlling the present to affect your future.

Mr. Twain was right when he said to change what is in the present. This advice works well for all of us in this wonderful organization. TOPS roots were set deep many years ago, providing nourishment for growth. We must properly tend these roots so hope and health continue to thrive.

Rick Danforth
President, TOPS Club Inc.
Messages across the years from
Esther S. Manz, TOPS Founder

“So far, the old familiar 'see you lighter' has been an appropriate (although punny) closing for most letters, but let's not forget that it's TOPS to be KOPS.”
October, 1961

“It behooves you to know the rules because this is the surest way to prevent a disqualification for recognition and honors.”
June, 1968

“...Requests have come to TOPS Headquarters for 'close-to-home' help. We agree that is what TOPS needs. Naturally this is an important new development that needs careful preparation. We are definitely working on this and hope to give you the highlights.”
June, 1963

“The funds derived from the project must be used for the enhancement of TOPS. That is, you may use them to send one or more of your members to a TOPS gathering, or you pay the expenses of an area or county captain to visit your chapter. Your fund can be used as a contribution to TOPS Headquarters or research or building fund, which in turn are pledged to serve the members.”
April, 1967
“Please don’t let the thrill and brightness of one day in the spotlight blind and rob you of the many joys and benefits of your newly found victory. Guard it selfishly. Overweight does not go down in defeat permanently unless you rule that it must. Keep a sharp eye on your goal.” February, 1960

“Commercial-reducing organizations will take your money in sums up to $200 or more for a course, and you can take enough (courses) in a year or two to spend several thousand dollars, and many TOPS members have done just that before they joined us.” March 1957

“Folks can talk all they wish about the happy, jolly fat people. We are not really happy until that excess weight is gone.” May 1956

“The factor has us puzzled that it sometimes takes two months for the News to reach its destination after we get it in the mail.” December, 1958

“We want to feel better, look better, work better and we know that those inclined toward (being) overweight have no choices, because overweight is not measles or appendicitis. It is like alcoholism or a chronic illness. That means it is a threat, and we must have incentive and motivation to help us along.” March, 1957

“….The most important thing to remember is: You and I joined TOPS to lose weight. We did not join to win contests, prizes or recognition.” April, 1967

“Personally, I feel no qualms about the future of TOPS. The few gaps that were apparent will be rectified.” October, 1968

“…Further, what decision should be made by TOPS board of directors re: the use of the pig as a symbol of eating indiscretions? The members of the board discussed this subject. While no formal resolution has been adopted, it was the unanimous opinion that we recommend abandonment of the pig symbol.” April, 1969
Questions about anything in this Guide?
This Guide is to be used with the official TOPS® Rules that are reviewed yearly, updated as required and printed in TOPS News whenever revised. TOPS® Rules are the primary source of information. Chapter support is always available. The name and contact information for your Coordinator is available on the back of each issue of your TOPS News and on Your Member Area page under “We’re Here for You” after you log in to www.tops.org. On request, your Coordinator can provide you with the most recent copy of TOPS® Rules or you can print off a copy from the Forms area of the website after logging in.

A Guide for Your TOPS® Experience

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The weight-loss journey is a personal one. At TOPS®, we respect each member’s individual journey and choices, while urging one another to be our healthiest selves.

Let us set aside what we think we know about TOPS® and other people, leave outside affiliations at the door, and pursue our common goal to Take Off Pounds Sensibly®.

We are here to help and support one another. This is our only purpose as a chapter.

1. Every TOPS® member has a right to privacy at weigh in, and no member is obliged to weigh in.

2. No member is obliged to reveal how much weight was gained or lost each week during roll call. Saying “gained”, “lost” or “stayed the same” is adequate. Members may also “pass” if they choose not to weigh in or are not comfortable sharing.

3. Every member has the right to limit personal information available to other members. No member’s address, email, phone or birthday may be shared with the chapter as a whole without that member’s permission in advance.

4. No member is obliged to participate in any contest or to “buy in” to any contest in which that member is not participating.

5. No member is obliged to participate in any activity that the member considers to be gambling.

6. No member should be subjected to others’ social or political opinions during any part of a TOPS® meeting. Group discussion should focus only on weight control and support thereof.

7. No member is obliged to participate in prayer if prayer is part of the meeting.

8. No member is obliged to get a goal slip from a licensed healthcare professional until/unless that member is getting close to goal and wishes to be a KOPS®.

9. No member is obliged to participate in any event. Members should inform the chapter Leader or event organizer if they do not wish to be publicly recognized.

10. Every member has a right to know that participation in all aspects of all TOPS® events and activities at the chapter, area, state, provincial and international level is completely optional.
TOPS Terms

BEST LOSER: Your chapter may honor a weekly, monthly and/or quarterly “best loser,” “thinner winner” or best weight loss award to the one who has recorded the most weight loss among chapter members for that period. Criteria for winning should be in your chapter bylaws.

BYLAWS: Each chapter establishes its own bylaws. These are a set of rules to specify dues, govern chapter functions, recognition, and other chapter-specific matters. Bylaws may not conflict with TOPS® Rules that govern all chapters.

CENTURY AWARD: TOPS® members who lose 100, 200 and 300 or more pounds from the highest weight recorded at TOPS Club Inc. and maintain that loss for 52 consecutive weeks become Century Award winners. They receive a medallion for their achievement.

DIVISION WINNERS: Annually, members compete for weight loss honors in nine divisions. Two divisions are by age -- teen and preteen, and one is for those using bariatric surgery as a tool. The division is determined by a member’s first weight of the year.

FIELD STAFF: Advocates and Coordinators provide guidance and support to chapters and members and help to fill out paperwork quickly and correctly. They should be your first point of contact for TOPS questions.

GOAL SLIP: The goal slip prescribes a healthy weight for you and is signed and dated by a licensed healthcare professional as defined in current TOPS Rules.

HEADQUARTERS: Activities of TOPS® Club Inc. are coordinated at Headquarters in Milwaukee, WI.

KOPS®: Means Keep Off Pounds SensiblySM. A member who has reached goal weight no higher than highest weight recorded at TOPS may become a KOPS.

KOPS LEEWAY: To remain a KOPS, a member must maintain his or her weight within a range of 3 pounds over goal and 7 pounds under goal.

RECOGNITION DAYS: These annual events honor successful “losers” and are intended to bring members together for inspiration. Recognition Days are held by area (ARD), state (SD) and province (PRD).

ROLL CALL: During your chapter’s roll call, members may state their progress as a loss or gain for that week, as well as other victories and challenges. Roll call enables your chapter to award victories, support challenges and encourage all. It gives every member the chance to receive support while sharing the week’s challenges and progress.

ROYALTY: Members who, at the end of the calendar year, have officially recorded the largest weight loss from highest weight recorded at TOPS Club Inc., to goal, regardless of time taken to reach goal, are referred to as Royalty. They can be honored on the chapter, area, state, province and international level.

TOPS®: Stands for Take Off Pounds Sensibly®. It refers to a member of TOPS Club (a TOPS) and is the popular term for TOPS Club Inc.

WEIGH-IN: TOPS members may choose to be weighed in private weekly at their chapter by the Weight Recorder and Assistants. Those arriving after the weigh-in period has ended are weighed after the meeting closes.
Chapter 1 • The Heart of Our Chapter Is You

A group of like-minded people working toward a common goal is more powerful than what any of us can do alone.

One of the things that sets the TOPS® program apart is group support. No matter what kind of diet or exercise program you follow, no matter what health goals you set for yourself, having the support of others who share your goals and challenges can make all the difference. The TOPS® method is scientifically proven to help members as you start making changes you’ll love and can keep for a lifetime. But the heart of this change is you.

TOPS® Provides the “Do It.”

TOPS® can’t do the work for you. You only get out of TOPS® what you put into it. We can’t guarantee you’ll lose weight just by attending meetings, but we do provide you with the tools, information, support and accountability you need to be successful at each stage of the journey, including after you reach your goal.

A Little About What TOPS® Is.

TOPS® is a nonprofit, noncommercial weight-loss support group founded in 1948. TOPS® stands for Take Off Pounds SensiblySM, and that’s exactly what we have done for more than 75 years.

TOPS® doesn’t pay celebrities to endorse us, and we don’t promise quick fixes or promote unrealistic images of the “perfect” body. TOPS® focuses on making small, steady lifestyle changes that provide lasting weight loss and better health. That’s what we mean by Real People. Real Weight Loss®.

Our Chapter Mission and Vision

The TOPS® mission statement is “to help and support our members as they Take Off and Keep Off Pounds Sensibly.” That is also the mission of our chapters.

The TOPS® vision statement is “to be the best weight-loss support choice for people who want an active and healthy life.” That is also the vision for our chapters.

Circle of Friends

No matter how we are seated at meetings, we create a Circle, each of us connected in support of each other. What you give to your chapter continues through the nurturing Circle of Friends until it comes back to you. Simply put, the more you give, the more you receive. Any empty spot in the Circle could make all the difference -- a new member who is willing to share, a former member returning or a longtime member who is struggling. No matter your situation, you could inspire someone else going through the same thing, if you are present.

The exchange of ideas, caring concern, uplifting messages, open sharing -- all come together to support each of us traveling on this journey to good health. “Together We Can” is not just a slogan in TOPS®; it’s the foundation for each member’s success.

The TOPS® Member Bill of Rights is meant to foster an atmosphere in which all members feel welcome and make progress together. Read it together, discuss it often and honor each member’s rights, always focusing on weight-loss support.

There should be an atmosphere of safety, acceptance, openness, caring, concern and respect for each member’s feelings and opinions. Everyone should feel free to express himself or herself honestly without judgment. A TOPS® meeting is a safe haven.
Choose People Over Processes

The heart of the Circle is that time spent during the 80% portion of the meeting. Remember that paperwork or reports are not the primary purpose of the meeting. Using the 80/20 rule, aim to devote 80% of your meeting to helping and supporting each other.

The Elements of a Public Chapter Meeting

After weigh-in is completed, allow 30 to 60 minutes for discussion, program, awards and business (if any).

Before the Meeting

Each chapter should have received a laminated “Meeting Here” sign. If the meeting location allows, display it prominently at your meeting place to help visitors find you. In a large complex, a second sign also would be helpful. Providing nametags for members during each meeting, if they wish, helps everyone get acquainted.

Weigh-in and Roll Call

Accountability at the scale during a private weigh-in sets the basis for reporting the results of efforts since your last weigh-in at chapter. Whether a member weighs in or not, during roll call, members may briefly share what worked for them or what challenges they encountered since their last meeting. This is an opportunity for members to ask for and receive support if they feel comfortable doing so.

Program

The focus during the beginning of the meeting should be on the TOPS® chapter’s mission to support and encourage each other’s journey to better health.

1. Present an informative and interesting program based on the common purpose.
2. Build in time for fun to keep our spirits lighthearted on this difficult journey.
3. Foster and encourage sharing from each member, being careful to avoid one dominating voice that keeps others from participating.
4. Invite experts in their field as speakers to expand your opportunity to hear ideas from different sources.

It’s important when using any printed material to condense it into a manageable size. Share only key points at the meeting rather than taking an article from any source and just reading it verbatim. Members are encouraged to take turns presenting the program. TOPS® provides hundreds of programs appropriate for chapter meetings. Experts review program content for accuracy.

Note: TOPS® is not responsible for program content that chapters use from outside TOPS®. Be very careful about using online resources for programs. Misleading or false health and weight-loss claims abound on the internet. Be aware of copyright infringement.

Awards and Recognition

It’s important to cheer on those members who are making strides toward success, especially KOPS® in your group who are maintaining their goal weight. This will inspire others to lose and maintain weight losses and can provide a great source of motivation.

1. Keep members motivated with contests like Best Weight Loss of the Week, Month or Quarter.
2. Acknowledge consecutive weight losses and a variety of nonscale victories like walking, food journaling, inches off, supporting others, etc.
3. Present certificates and awards to celebrate these victories.

Business

This is the 20% of the meeting that does need to be addressed from time to time to make certain the chapter continues to receive support from TOPS® and recognition for individual and group accomplishments.

1. Toward the end of the meeting, reports may be heard from the Treasurer, Secretary, contest chair or others as needed. Business should never be the focus of a meeting.
2. When necessary, committee and officer reports, fundraising, coordinating for Recognition Days or Fall Rally and updating bylaws are best addressed in a business meeting. To save time, these can be:
   a. Handled by the Executive Committee in advance and brought to the chapter for discussion or vote.
   b. Outlined in a handout shared at one meeting.
   c. For discussion at a future meeting or distributed via email or mail, so members have time to consider the subject in advance.

Closing

The meeting should end in an uplifting way. Share an inspirational message or a supportive tradition that may have been set in your chapter.

Accentuate the Positive

Encouragement and support are key to a TOPS® meeting. Respect and consideration keep the doors of communication open.

Communicate Well

- Be the first to greet or say “hello.”
- Use eye contact and smile.
- Be a good listener.
- Express yourself clearly and concisely.
- Balance your ratio of sharing and listening.
- Separate facts from feelings.
- Be enthusiastic about others.
- Focus on the positive — compliment sincerely.
- Use humor to reverse a negative situation.

Be an Inspiration

- Accept others just as they are.
- Have confidence in your own abilities.
- Share your successes and those of others.
- Accept and work within your limitations.
- Share inspirational messages.
- Keep meetings focused on healthy lifestyles.
- Involve others in chapter activities.
- Encourage members to succeed.

Tools Available to Your Chapter

All materials provided by TOPS® and purchased by the chapter must be turned over to the newly elected officers. These should be available at meetings so they may be shared with interested members.

When a new in-person chapter starts, TOPS® Club Inc. provides the chapter with a starter kit with the most current helpful tools, such as:

1. Free posters, promotional items, membership applications, forms and other materials, which are available on www.tops.org or from your Coordinator.
4. Additional tools and awards may be purchased from TOPS® Club Inc. using Awards Order Forms and mailing with a Chapter Check, money order or credit card or purchase online in the TOPS Store.

Programs, materials and ideas to keep meetings focused and interesting are available in the Leaders Corner and the Members Area of www.tops.org.
Your Chapter Basics

TOPS® Club Inc. provides caring, knowledgeable field staff; educational and promotional materials and tools; and volunteer training and support.

The chapter is responsible for acquiring:
1. A meeting place.
2. An accurate scale: Always bear in mind that the scales need to be sturdy. These may be balance beam or digital and should weigh to at least 400 pounds. The Coordinator may have a “loaner” scale that a new chapter may borrow until purchasing their own. Check the Members Area of www.tops.org for links to an approved scale provider.
3. Officers: Public chapters select by affirmation (a show of hands “yea” or “nay”) a leader and affirm other officers they deem necessary. The Leader appoints a weight recorder and, if needed, an assistant weight recorder. It is not necessary to have two candidates for a position. Refer to current TOPS® Rules for more information. If you have questions, contact your Coordinator for support.
4. An account book: A simple journal for recording any chapter transactions — TOPS® also encourages public chapters to open a checking account if the financial needs of the chapter would benefit from such.

The scale, meeting place rental and basic chapter supplies should be paid from modest chapter dues collected from your members, unless a workplace, healthcare provider, and place of worship or other organization sponsors your chapter.

The Elements of an Online Chapter Meeting

Online refers to internet-based members. The online experience can be tailored to the amount of support each member needs. All online members receive a weekly message and can choose to attend any meeting(s) from the several offered each week.

The online meeting experience can also be tailored to how involved a member wants to be. Everyone chooses his or her level of participation. At the beginning of the meeting, all are invited to share their progress and challenges as well as nonscale and scale victories. A program based on TOPS® materials follows this: After the program portion, a chance for members to do more sharing in a Friendship Forum. The program portion of the meeting is in the first 30 minutes to allow those with limited time available to benefit from it fully. The facilitator of the meeting leads a 15- to 30-minute Friendship Forum of open topic discussion after the program.

Online members are able to make connections to other members during the meetings and through a Facebook group monitored by the Online Facilitator.

Online members may participate in TOPS® award and annual recognition programs. TOPS® Rules include all of TOPS® nation.

Another option is a Virtual Chapter, which is facilitated by a member involved with the chapter. These meetings are conducted using a virtual platform.

“Folks can talk all they wish about the happy, jolly fat people. We are not really happy until that excess weight is gone.” May 1956
Chapter 2 • Meeting Policies and Practices

Answers to the most-asked questions about chapter do’s and don’ts:
* Inappropriate behavior * Children at meetings * Fundraising
* Gambling * Firearms * Smoking * E-cigarettes * Alcohol
* Politics * Eating * Shaming * Surgery

This chapter deals with policies and practices created by TOPS® Club Inc. and those you create in your chapter to reflect the desires of your members.

Ground Rules for Success

TOPS® Rules and this Guide cover rules and procedures specific to TOPS®. If these two documents ever seem to contradict one another, TOPS® Rules shall always prevail. Any time you are unsure of a policy, please contact your local Advocate or Coordinator for clarifications.

TOPS® Position on Chapter Meeting Activities

The official TOPS® Rules outline the consistent standards set for all the TOPS® recognition programs. TOPS® Headquarters provides TOPS® Rules to each member upon joining. When TOPS® Rules are updated, a copy is published in TOPS® News, usually in the January/February issue. Additional copies are available from your Coordinator and in the Forms section located in TOPS® Resources found in Members Area of www.tops.org.

Food and Drink at Meetings

Eating and drinking are generally not allowed at meetings with a few exceptions. Weigh-in period is part of the meeting.

1. Chapters may have a tasting meeting where a sample is offered to provide a small taste of one special low-cal, low-fat, or low-sugar item or recipe.
2. Chapter members are encouraged to develop healthy habits that lead to steady, maintainable losses—with their healthcare professionals’ approval, not to emphasize being at a certain weight one day a week.

TOPS® neither encourages nor discourages members from dining out together after meetings. Learning to eat reasonable portions and balanced meals (whether at home or away) is an important aspect of long-term weight management.

Gambling at Meetings

TOPS® has no issue with gambling, contests or fundraisers like 50/50 if the chapter adheres to state/provincial/local law governing this activity. No member is obligated to participate in an activity s/he considers gambling.

Prayer at Meetings

TOPS® is nonsectarian and neither supports nor opposes prayer at chapter meetings and functions. Some chapters choose to begin or end meetings with prayer. This decision is by secret vote of all members, and, if passed by majority vote, no member is obligated to participate in the prayer.

Political Messages

TOPS® is nonpolitical. Political messages are not shared at chapter meetings.

Email Policy

Do not forward emails that are political or religious, chain letters or jokes automatically to a chapter email group. Members provide their email to be kept informed of TOPS® chapter updates, and not to receive unsolicited messages of this nature. If a member asks to be taken off the chapter email list, by law, you must stop emailing them. This is applicable for all chapters, regardless of the country of origin.
**Children at Meetings**

Children 7 years of age and older may be members of an adult chapter if they are interested in losing weight and are able to attend and participate. The chapter may vote on whether minors must have an adult guardian present with them at meetings. The chapter may also vote on whether children of any age who are nonmembers are allowed at chapter meetings.

**TOPS® Position on Exercise**

TOPS® believes that all people, regardless of age or ability, can improve their fitness level and overall well-being through increased physical activity approved by their healthcare professional.

TOPS® provides a number of informational articles and chapter programs addressing physical activity. Participation in any exercise program or activity at chapter -- or at any TOPS-related function -- is always optional, and other members should respect people’s decisions. Participation comes at each member’s risk.

**Don’t Forget the Waivers!**

Remember that any time your members participate in a walk, run or other physical activity as a chapter, everyone participating needs to sign and date the TOPS® Activity Waiver in advance. Keep these at least one year. (Sample in Appendix)

1. If you do some type of activity regularly in your chapter, like DVDs or resistance band exercises, members may sign one waiver annually.
2. If your chapter does a separate activity (fun run, fall walk, or other event outside chapter hours), be sure to have members and all guests sign a separate waiver for that and keep it for at least one year.

**TOPS® Position on the Chapter Meeting Place**

The local chapter chooses its meeting places. TOPS® can neither control nor guarantee the conditions of any meeting place.

As specified in TOPS® Rules, a chapter shall not agree to indemnify, defend and hold harmless the owner of its meeting place from liabilities and expenses on account of personal injury of a member attending a chapter meeting. A Chapter has no power or authority to enter into any agreement on behalf of TOPS®, nor to waive any legal rights on behalf of TOPS®.

**Liability Insurance**

When a public chapter’s meeting place requires liability insurance, send the Annual Meeting Insurance Application available in the Members Area under Forms or from your Coordinator, with a check or a money order made payable to TOPS® Club Inc., directly to Headquarters.

Refer to current TOPS® Rules for more information on chapters meeting in private residences. If you have questions, contact your Coordinator for support.

**TOPS® Position on Weight-Loss Surgery and Diet Medications**

TOPS® has no opinion on weight-loss surgery -- because surgery is a personal decision that a member makes with his or her licensed healthcare professional. Surgical procedures to remove excess skin resulting from weight loss is not considered weight-loss surgery.

Chapters often wonder how to include Division 9 members (those who have had surgery for weight loss) in local contests. That varies by chapter, so refer to your chapter bylaws.

**TOPS® Position on Using Weight-Loss Programs and Diets**

TOPS® exists to help and support our members as they Take Off Pounds SensiblySM. Since what works for one person may not work for another, members are welcome to participate in any meal plan, nutritional counseling or other weight-loss program that their licensed healthcare professional finds beneficial for their situation.

1. TOPS® offers group support and a structure for weight loss and healthy living that can stand alone or be used together with other programs.
2. People whose objective is to gain weight do not have the same purposes and
objectives of TOPS® Club Inc., and may be denied membership into TOPS® Club Inc.
3. TOPS® does not sell or promote food or food products.
4. TOPS® advocates three healthy eating plans and provides members with a wealth of information on using these meal plans in our publications and on our website. The information is written and/or reviewed by Registered Dietitians to ensure its accuracy.
   a. MyPlate by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
   b. Canada’s Food Guide by Health Canada
   c. Food Exchange System, created by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and the American Diabetes Association
   d. No foods are required and no foods are prohibited in TOPS®. TOPS® takes the position that, when eaten in moderation, all foods fit in with a healthy diet.

Bylaws Your Chapter Makes

Chapter bylaws are rules your chapter makes by voting, usually by secret ballot. We recommend you keep your rules simple and few. In fact, if your chapter doesn’t find it necessary, you do not need to create bylaws. TOPS® provides sample bylaws. (See sample in the Appendix).

1. Basic information to include in your bylaws:
   a. Chapter name and ID number
   b. Last revision date
   c. Day, time, location of meeting/weigh-in
2. Cost of chapter dues and whether they are to be paid weekly, monthly or otherwise
3. List of any rewards or fees
   a. How your chapter will spend money on things like cards, gifts or awards offered to incoming or outgoing officers, “best losers,” KOPS® members, members who are ill, etc., and whether/how much your chapter pays to send weight-loss winners to Recognition Days events.
   b. Rules for participating in contests and eligibility for chapter awards.
4. Your chapter bylaws shall not conflict with the TOPS® Rules or any provisions of this Guide.
5. A chapter should review and vote on bylaws annually.
6. The chapter may vote to amend its bylaws at any time. Forward your new bylaws to your Coordinator who will review and advise you if a bylaw conflicts with TOPS® Rules. If so, it must be removed. Give a copy to every member.
7. All new members must receive a copy of current chapter bylaws at time of joining.
8. If members wish to form a special focus chapter (gluten-free, vegetarian, bariatric, etc.) and specify it as such in their chapter bylaws, it will be a closed chapter, marked as “non-referral.”

Guidelines for a Chapter Social Media Site

If creating a place on social media where members can chat and touch base in between meetings:

1. To ensure consistency of the TOPS® message, TOPS® Club Inc. has established these guidelines for regional or local TOPS® social networking sites:
   a. Page must include unofficial, unauthorized disclaimer. Suggested disclaimer: “The purpose of this unofficial page, featuring news for and about [insert name of area or chapter], is to help and support each other as we Take Off and Keep Off Pounds Sensibly. It is not monitored or endorsed in any way by TOPS® Club Inc. Visit Official TOPS® Club Inc. at www.tops.org. TOPS® and KOPS® are registered trademarks of TOPS Club Inc., Milwaukee, Wisconsin.”
   b. Update your page regularly.
   d. Your local page must “like” or “follow” the Official TOPS® Club Inc. page for that network.
e. Content cannot conflict with the TOPS® mission and/or rules.
f. To protect member privacy and open sharing, create the page as a private group.

2. Share chapter updates:
   a. Unavoidable cancellations or last-minute room changes at your facility
   b. Registration deadlines for local/regional events
   c. Reminders of upcoming chapter activities

3. Share on chapter page triumphs and challenges in the weight-loss journey. Keep positive and focus on being healthy and active.
   a. Do not criticize fellow members
   b. Do not argue over methods and means.
   c. Do not share political posts or commentary on current events.

Settling Disagreements

Your chapter’s copy of the Democratic Rules of Order sets the ground rules for fair and orderly meetings that allow everyone to voice opinions in a constructive way. It is an invaluable tool for settling disagreements impartially.

For help in dealing with difficult people or problems within the chapter not covered by the TOPS® Guide, Democratic Rules of Order or your chapter bylaws, contact your Coordinator for additional ideas and suggestions. Seek guidance before a situation escalates into something that detracts from the focus of your meetings.

Financial Concerns

TOPS® strives to keep our membership fees low, so that as many people as possible can benefit from our group support. In addition to yearly TOPS® Club Inc. membership fees, chapters may collect dues from each member to pay chapter general expenses. Although not required, your chapter bylaws may specify other small fees.

Chapter Funds:

1. As an unincorporated, nonprofit associate of TOPS® Club, Inc. (i.e. a chapter), all funds, no matter how raised, and assets, are permanently dedicated to the purposes of TOPS®.
2. Funds must be used to sustain TOPS® mission, such as providing weight loss and weight control education, motivation, group support and recognition at both chapter and state/provincial events.
3. A chapter is authorized to pay reasonable compensation of services rendered and to make payments and distributions for the purposes of TOPS®. If a chapter disbands, all funds and other assets are conveyed to TOPS® Club, Inc. to fulfill TOPS® mission and purpose.

Dues

Chapter dues, which are collected from each member, are decided by secret ballot vote of members. Your chapter should review and vote on these annually and update information in your chapter bylaws. Chapter bylaws may require local dues be kept current to receive chapter awards. Dues paid in advance should be refunded on request when a member quits or transfers.

Fundraising

1. Fundraising may be held to build a Recognition Days Fund or go toward other special projects approved by the Coordinator. General Fund should be covered by chapter dues whenever possible. Fundraising activities shall never take precedence over educational and support components of your meetings.
2. A Chapter Leader may appoint a Fundraising Committee Chair.
3. Fundraising ideas must be approved by the chapter Executive Committee.
4. 50/50 raffles and/or casino-type events must comply with local ordinances.
5. Members may not sell, solicit or conduct fundraising for any outside cause during any portion of a chapter meeting.

Gainers Fees and Fat-Shaming Practices

Gainers fees: Paying a fine for a weight gain is a form of punishment and fat-shaming. Punishments and shaming have been proven ineffective as motivation to lose weight. Discontinuing this
and similar practices is strongly recommended. Encourage people to develop healthy habits. Self-confidence beats shame.

**Financial Hardship**

Chapters should do their best to work with those who cannot afford the fee to join TOPS®. The chapter Executive Committee may decide to pay this fee on behalf of a member who is unable, and/or to waive local chapter dues for a member. TOPS® Club Inc. does not provide scholarships to cover or waive national membership fees or chapter dues.

**Contributions**

Any donations to funds listed in the back of TOPS® News, the Heritage Society or Esther Manz Memorial Garden, may be made with Contribution Forms found in the Members Area of www.tops.org and available from your Coordinator.

**Keep Name, Address and Contact Details and Membership Current**

Staying in touch with each other is essential. Please keep contact information current. At any time, chapter leaders may download a report from www.tops.org containing this information or may request the report from their Coordinators.

Each time a member moves or contact information changes, please email or mail your Coordinator and TOPS® Headquarters. Do so at least eight weeks ahead of time to ensure uninterrupted delivery of TOPS® News and your renewal form.

Members may also update address, email and phone information themselves using the website. **Name changes can only be completed by Headquarters staff.** At renewal, member and officers should verify that all member contact information and the chapter number are current on the renewal form.

In addition, a member should use the U.S Postal Service or Canada Post Change of Address form to ensure forwarding of TOPS® News. TOPS® Club Inc. is not responsible for issues of TOPS® News not received due to a change of address not being filed with Headquarters at least eight weeks ahead of time.

Members are responsible for keeping their TOPS® membership up to date at Headquarters.

If a currently attending member lets membership lapse, s/he is disqualified for annual awards, including KOPS®.

If the Leader and/or Web Designate does not keep his or her membership up to date, the chapter will miss important mailings and updates.

**Forms Needed**

If not mailed to the Leader, all forms mentioned in this Guide are available from your Coordinator or may be downloaded from the Forms area or Leaders Corner of www.tops.org. When downloading forms, please double-check that you have the correct number of pages for each form. Some forms have several parts.

**To Email or Not to Email?**

Forms that do not require payment may be emailed or faxed to the appropriate recipient, such as Field Staff or to TOPS® Headquarters. Attach any other supporting documents to the email or include with the fax.

**Field Staff are Here to Help Your Chapter.**

Field Staff are responsible for supporting chapters and members, administering the TOPS® program in your area and helping chapters provide a consistent, quality experience for all members. To accomplish this, they need your chapter’s cooperation and support, as well. Communication is key.

**Coordinator**

Your Coordinator needs to receive a few forms and reports for recognition and support planning as well as communication purpose from the chapter. These will be sent in a timely manner for you to return to your Coordinator or send directly to TOPS® Club Inc. as noted on the form.

**Advocate**

Advocates schedule an annual check-in visit and other visits on request when possible.
Chapter 3
Membership, Visitors and Chapter Options

Each TOPS® chapter—public, private or virtual—offers different advantages. Visitors who attend as potential members should be informed of these choices.

Greeting Visitors

Warmly welcome visitors to your chapter. Anyone ages 7 and older who is interested in TOPS® is welcome to attend a meeting at your chapter one time without charge and without obligation.

Prospective members are encouraged to visit it more than one chapter to find the best fit for them.

TOPS® members may visit other chapters near or far at any time.

Special rules apply to repeat visitors who are not members—specifically, children, caregivers of children and caregivers of members with disabilities.

When a Potential New Member Attends:

The Leader should make certain that someone—a New Member Coach, officer, or caring member, for example—is available after the meeting to answer questions from new and prospective members. If this is not convenient, the leader may exchange emails or phone numbers and arrange to be available for questions. Some chapters use a guest book so they can keep all visitor information together.

Members in attendance should briefly introduce themselves by first name. During the meeting, the New Member Coach or a caring member may sit with the visitor to explain what is happening. This will help those who choose to join feel welcome, included and informed from the very start.

Checklist for New Members

1. Inform the new member that they will receive a copy of My Day One mailed directly from TOPS® Headquarters as well as the TOPS® Rules. You may want to keep a copy handy to review.
2. Give the member a copy of your chapter contact sheet that notes the chapter officers specifically. Do not add the new member to this contact sheet without their permission.
3. If your chapter has bylaws, provide new members a current copy. If the chapter does not have bylaws, the chapter contact sheet should include meeting times, fees and any other pertinent chapter information the new member will need.
4. Go over the chapter rules for participating in any contests or challenges that may be going on.
5. Offer to take a beginning “before” photo that can be used to track their progress. However, do not insist, if they do not wish to participate.

Chapter Choices

TOPS® offers a variety of meeting options and membership types, but regardless of category, all chapters focus on:

1. Being accountable to one another for losing weight or developing healthier habits that lead to weight loss.
2. Sharing and discussing helpful weight-loss and maintenance information.
3. Reaching out to help others in the community who are dealing with the same issues.

TOPS® has four primary types of chapters: Those open to the public and listed in “Find a Meeting,” private, business, and online/virtual chapters.

Public Chapters

Public chapters meet in-person weekly throughout the United States and Canada, are open to the public, are available for referral, and have a recognition program. They are located using Find-A-Meeting at www.tops.org and include contact information of the local Coordinator for questions and additional information. Those who call the
TOPS® 800-number looking for a chapter are given the local Coordinator’s contact information, as well.

Private Chapters

Private chapters also meet regularly in-person, but are closed to the public. Chapters are considered private when they:

1. Restrict attendance by meeting place location, such as meetings in private homes, gated communities, assisted living centers, and places that have occupancy restrictions, such as when membership is at the maximum number allowed by fire code.
2. Are refocusing on the TOPS® mission. These chapters remain active and receive all mailings if the Leader’s membership is current and the chapter has three or more members. Chapters of fewer than three members do not show on the chapter locator on the TOPS® website.

Business Chapters

Chapters meeting in a workplace are a type of private chapter that is organized by and meeting within the confines of a business, and open only to employees.

Online/Virtual Chapters (Internet-Based Members)

There are two primary online chapters, OL 0001 for U.S. members and OL 0002 for Canadian members (members from other countries are included in OL 0002). Online members may participate in Online meetings led several times a week by an Online Facilitator and visit a public chapter. They are eligible to participate in the TOPS® Recognition Program. Refer to current TOPS® Rules for more information. If you have questions, contact the Online Facilitator for support.

Another option is a Virtual Chapter, which is facilitated by a member involved with the chapter. These meetings are conducted using a virtual platform.

Changing Chapters

Any active member may transfer from one chapter to another at no additional cost.

1. When transferring from one chapter to another for whatever reason, TOPS membership year does not change. Depending on chapter bylaws, prepaid local dues may or may not be refundable. Check with the Leader.
2. The Weight Recorder will provide a member with a Transfer Weight Chart listing all weights to date on it. This is to be presented to the new chapter’s weight recorder.
3. If a member transfers from the an online or a virtual chapter to an in-person chapter for the first time, the in-person chapter notifies Headquarters of the transfer.

Starting a Chapter

If the date and time of your current chapter meeting no longer suits you, or if you just want to create a different chapter experience, you can start your own chapter. It only takes you and three friends to get started. Contact your Coordinator or Advocate for more information and assistance.

Dividing a Chapter

A chapter may grow too large for its meeting place or for the close personal support that members want. Some members may prefer to create a different experience for themselves. When a chapter divides into two or more chapters for any reason, those active members who leave to charter the new chapter(s) are entitled to a prorated share of the original chapter’s assets. If your chapter is thinking of splitting, you must notify your Coordinator right away to help you through the process.

Merging Chapters

Chapters must notify the Coordinator of the intent to merge with another chapter. Your Coordinator will help you complete the process.

Disbanding a Chapter

Chapters must notify the Coordinator of the intent to disband before doing so. If your chapter considers disbanding for any reason, your Coordinator will work with you before making any final decision.
**Membership Categories**

Membership is valid for 12 months from the date a member enrolls. Most TOPS® members fall into the Adult Full Membership category. This is for all chapter members 18 years of age and older and includes a subscription to *TOPS® News*. However, there are a handful of other membership options, including half-priced options in specific categories without *TOPS® News*. See current membership application form for details. All TOPS members are welcome at Recognition Days and other events (subject to registration fees, where applicable) and receive the same member benefits.

**Online Membership**

These members may attend online meetings supported by a TOPS® Online Facilitator or may form a virtual chapter, choosing a leader from within the group.

**Joining Online Looking for a Chapter**

These are new members who join online looking for an in-person chapter. A TOPS® Online Facilitator and the local Coordinator help them in finding a chapter near them. TOPS Headquarters emails them the same starting messages as online members and the weekly Online Facilitator newsletter until Headquarters receives a completed Membership Application showing they are from the in-person chapter selected.

**In-Person Membership**

These members attend a public, private or business meeting in person in their local areas. The public meeting location, day and time information is available at www.tops.org in the “Find-a-Meeting” area.

**Finding Membership Numbers**

Each member is issued a seven-digit membership number, which is printed on the back cover of *TOPS® News*. Half-price members who don’t receive *TOPS® News* will find their membership number printed on the membership card mailed to them. If you joined online or provided an email on a paper application, then Headquarters sent a welcome email with your membership number, or if you are able to sign in to the Members Area, you’ll find it listed under “My Profile.” If you can’t find the welcome email or magazine, email support@tops.org or ask your Leader or Coordinator to look that up for you.

**Nonmembers at Meetings**

A potential member may visit an in-person chapter once at no charge. To continue to attend, the person must join TOPS®.

**Enrolling New Members**

The Membership Application and Substitute Renewal may be used as a new or renewal application. Have the new member read the entire application form (including the back if using a multi-part form) before signing. A parent or guardian must sign the application of a child 7 years of age or older, but less than 18 years old.

The member’s insurance provider may reimburse the membership fee. Simply give the member a photocopy or extra printout from the website, send the application to Headquarters immediately and keep a copy at chapter. Do not hold applications in chapter.

A former member whose TOPS® membership has lapsed three or more years is considered a new member. Previous TOPS® history is archived.

**Renewing Memberships**

Headquarters mails current members a Membership Renewal form approximately six weeks prior to their renewal date. If the Renewal form is not received or is misplaced, the Membership Application and Substitute Renewal Form may be used.

1. To renew online 30 days before and 30 days after their renewal date, a member may use a credit card.
2. To renew by mail, a member completes and sends the renewal form with fee (including sales tax, where applicable) directly to TOPS® Headquarters with a personal check payable to TOPS® Club Inc.
3. To renew through the chapter, a member takes the renewal form and the renewal fee (including sales tax, where applicable) to the chapter. The chapter immediately submits the application with a chapter check (for the amount plus applicable taxes), made payable to TOPS® Club Inc. to TOPS® Headquarters.
If a renewal was overlooked and a member has been attending meetings, s/he may pay all back and current national membership fees to maintain continuous membership.

**How Starting or Highest Weight is Determined**

TOPS® defines a member’s highest weight as the original starting weight or the highest weight recorded at renewal, whichever is greater. This weight determines a member’s loss to goal for Royalty honors and Century Awards, according to current TOPS® Rules.

If a member submits a renewal form and payment at chapter, chapter records weight at time renewal is submitted at chapter on the renewal form before sending to TOPS headquarters. If member joins online (or renews online or mails renewal directly to TOPS headquarters), no weight on date of renewal is recorded at TOPS Headquarters. To have the starting or highest weight recorded:

1. Member prints a copy of the receipt from the member page and takes it to chapter.
2. Weight Recorder enters weight at joining for new member (or closest to date renewal was paid) as instructions state on receipt and mails to TOPS Headquarters immediately.

“...Further, what decision should be made by TOPS' Board of Directors re: the use of the pig as a symbol of eating indiscretions? The members of the board discussed this subject. While no formal resolution has been adopted, it was the unanimous opinion that we recommend abandonment of the pig symbol.” April 1969
Chapter 4 • We’re Here for You

TOPS® Field Staff consists of members, just like you. They are not experts in nutrition and fitness, and do not give medical advice. They do understand our struggles and are quick to offer a listening ear and helping hand.

A big part of our organization is support, and you can count on members of the TOPS® team to answer your questions and provide support for your chapter. Our caring Field Staff clearly understands the ongoing nature of successful weight control, and continues to work at it each day. While many have lost considerable weight and many are KOPS® (members who are at their goal weight and now Keep Off Pounds Sensibly®), that’s not why they are selected to serve as Field Staff.

Finding Local Field Staff

There are several ways to find your local Support Team:

1. Check the back cover of your TOPS® News.
2. Find contact information on www.tops.org:
   a. Go to Find-A-Meeting and enter your ZIP or postal code. You may need to scroll down to find your meeting among the listings. If you’d like, send an email just by clicking on the name of your Coordinator or Advocate.
   b. Find your Service Program Administrator on the “Our Team” page. Just type “our team” in the search bar. From there, you may email your Service Program Administrator or the confidential liaison of the Board of Directors.

Reach out to wondering@tops.org or call 414-482-4620 and leave a message. Headquarters employees are not trained to handle questions concerning TOPS® Rules and this Guide. These matters are referred to the Field Staff for answers.

Coordinators

Coordinators are selected by Service Program Administrators to aid Leaders in building and maintaining interesting, enthusiastic, successful chapters. These dedicated people have a rich history of TOPS® service in a variety of fields.

Your Coordinator has regular “business hours” when s/he is specifically available to take your call or email. Officers and members are encouraged to contact this person.

What You Should Expect from Your Coordinator

1. Coordinators help find answers to all questions that may arise in the chapter and offer options and suggestions when challenges are presented. They are happy to help clarify anything in TOPS® Rules or this Guide.
2. Coordinators are a great resource for discussing ideas to keep the chapter active, focused and supportive -- and are available to chapter officers and members, who are encouraged to contact the Coordinator whenever anything arises of which they are doubtful.
3. Coordinators provide chapter Leaders and officers with training opportunities, often called workshops, where they can learn the ins and outs of TOPS® and discuss the challenges of making your chapter more effective. These may be run by Advocates on behalf of the Coordinator.
4. Coordinators can provide a confidential, listening ear and constructive suggestions for dealing with any personal conflicts, disruptive behavior or other concerns that may arise at chapter.
5. A Coordinator submits results from the Chapter resume, ensuring full recognition of members’ success and providing TOPS® certificates for annual winners listed.

What Your Coordinator Expects from Your Chapter:

1. Notify your Coordinator of any important changes to your chapter or its membership right away:
   a. When your chapter moves meeting locations.
b. When your chapter changes the date or time of its meetings.
c. When a member dies.
d. If your chapter is considering disbanding.

2. Submit all paperwork to your Coordinator promptly. Some examples of paperwork that needs to be mailed, faxed or scanned/ emailed directly to your Coordinator include:
   a. KOPS® forms:
      New registrations, reinstatements, goal changes, lost status notices and longevity validations.
   b. Century Award validations and support documents.
   c. Event registrations with payment, if so specified.
   d. Chapter Resume:
      This is your chapter’s year-end report of how much weight you lost. Your Coordinator will return a copy of the resume to you with certificates from TOPS® to present to your chapter winners.

Advocates

Advocates receive token reimbursement for all their hard work. TOPS® does not pay travel expenses for them to visit your chapter. If your chapter is able to offer a nominal donation when s/he visits, your Advocate will appreciate it. This is especially true in very rural areas where the drive covers long distances to visit your chapter.

Headquarters Staff

Service Program Administrators (SPAs)

Service Program Administrators are partly members of TOPS® Headquarters staff who support and direct the TOPS® program for chapters in large areas. They select candidates for Field Staff positions to recommend to TOPS® President. They share information and sound methods to achieve the TOPS® Mission and Vision with Coordinators. They help provide a clear understanding of TOPS® Rules established by the Board of Directors for members and Field Staff.

Each Service Program Administrator has several states, provinces and even foreign countries to serve. They meet regularly with our TOPS® President, other Headquarters staff, and each other to share ideas and implement plans to improve member service and develop programs that will help TOPS® members Take Off and Keep Off Pounds Sensibly. Service Program Administrators relay this information to their Field Staff (Coordinators and Advocates) to pass on to all TOPS® chapters in their areas.

SPAs:

1. Handle exceptional challenges and problems referred to them by Headquarters, Field Staff and members for resolution.
2. Communicate TOPS® primary focus, provide procedural guidance and correct misinformation.
3. Oversee developing publicity, raising and distributing funds for local projects, and recognition of members.

Virtual Programming Administrator (VPA)

The Virtual Programming Administrator develops, directs and presents TOPS® programs for online weekly meetings. The VPA selects candidates as demand requires to help facilitate weekly online
meetings. The VPA maintains regular contact with online members through a weekly online member blog, discussion forums throughout the year; the VPA monitors and provides content for an Online Member Social Media group, promotes TOPS through other social media and the TOPS website, and participates in TOPS area events as requested if schedule and arrangements permit.

**VPAs:**

1. Assists new members joining online looking for a local chapter in finding Field Staff support and follow-up in this endeavor, and assists renewing members online who did not complete the process and follows up on nonrenewals.
2. Communicate TOPS® primary focus, provide procedural guidance and correct misinformation for navigating between online and local chapters and TOPS annual recognition requirements.
3. Help implement strategies to increase public awareness through social media of the TOPS program.

**Other Headquarters Staff**

All records of TOPS® membership and recognition are stored at TOPS® Headquarters in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the birthplace of our organization. This is where all TOPS® materials are designed and shipped to chapters and where www.tops.org is maintained. Most Headquarters employees are not trained to handle questions concerning TOPS® Rules and this Guide. When received at TOPS, such questions are referred to the SPA for the area concerned, who discuss the matter with that area’s Field Staff.

Chapters send all New Memberships and Renewal applications, Award Orders and payments made out to TOPS® Club Inc. directly to Headquarters for processing. Headquarters employees are not necessarily TOPS® members. In addition to the group dedicated to Field Staff support, others maintain the business functions of our nonprofit organization, and provide educational, motivational, recognition and fun materials for chapter use through TOPS News, the TOPS website and other communications throughout the year.

Headquarters is located at 4575 South Fifth St., Milwaukee, WI 53207. Mailing address is PO Box 070360, Milwaukee, WI 53207-0360.

Phone number is 414-482-4620
Fax number is 414-482-1655
Email: wondering@tops.org
Business Hours: Monday through Friday - 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Central Time.

**Retreat Directors**

Provide an additional service to adult TOPS® members by facilitating discussions during special getaways for members in different locations throughout the U.S. and Canada. Each retreat focuses on healthy eating, increasing activity levels, reducing stress, making behavioral changes, and creating healthier habits in a friendly and supportive environment. They also may facilitate online Virtual Retreat Experiences, if offered.

**Board of Directors**

Our Voting Members elect the Board to direct the ongoing activities of our organization. The Board is comprised of the sitting TOPS® President and members elected at large to serve three-year terms.

Board meetings are scheduled annually to discuss needs, challenges and opportunities; plan for the future; and review suggestions, ideas and concerns received from members.

You may email individual Board members directly by clicking the individual’s name on the “Our Team” page of www.tops.org. The Our Team contact link is located in your Member Area with your Field Staff contact information. Mail may be sent to any Board member’s attention at the TOPS® mailing address.

**Officers of TOPS® Club Inc.**

1. TOPS® Board of Directors selects the President of TOPS® Club Inc., who remains on the Board while serving in that capacity.
2. TOPS® Board of Directors also elects other officers, who serve two-year terms and are elected at the March meeting in even-numbered years. Currently, TOPS® Club Inc. has a Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer in addition to the President.
3. Officers are listed in the masthead of each issue of TOPS® News. They assure that TOPS® Club Inc. always puts the members first and remains true to our mission.
Our Team

The link to “Our Team” is in the “We’re Here For You®” section of the member page where your local Field Staff’s contact information is listed. Mail any TOPS® Officer, Board Member, SPA or Retreat Director at the TOPS® mailing address (Mark Attention: name of person). Email each individually by clicking on their photo in Our Team. You may email any of them directly by clicking the individual’s name or photo in the “Our Team” page of www.tops.org.

Confidential Liaison

Email concerns of a sensitive nature to private@tops.org or mail to Headquarters marked “Confidential Liaison.” The email link to send a message to the Confidential Liaison is also found on the Our Team page. Messages are shared confidentially at the next scheduled meeting of the Board of Directors.

Voting Members

As a nonprofit, TOPS® has articles of incorporation and bylaws that reflect its dedication to members. Voting Members decide any issue concerning the TOPS® Articles of Incorporation. They also elect members to the Board of Directors. At least one Voting Member represents each state, province or country and online chapter.

Additional Voting members are determined by membership and chapter statistics annually.

“We want to feel better, look better, work better and we know that those inclined toward (being) overweight have no choices because overweight is not measles or appendicitis. It is like alcoholism or a chronic illness. That means it is a threat and we must have incentive and motivation to help us along.” March, 1957
Chapter 5 • Many Hands Make Light Work

Chapter officers work together for the good of the whole group, listening to and respecting each member’s point of view, and always abiding by majority rule.

TOPS® in-person chapters have a leader, an appointed weight recorder and assistant (if desired) and other officers affirmed by the members as necessary to share responsibilities. If each of us gives our time and talents, as we are able, and respects the contributions of others, our chapter will be strong.

Let your chapter know what you have to offer and your willingness to help.

Be certain every member is provided with a copy of the Member Bill of Rights and TOPS Terms, found before Chapter 1 of this Guide.

Chapter Officers

The Leader and other officers’ task is to carry out the wishes of the majority and to help the chapter focus on our mission to help members Take Off and Keep Off Pounds Sensibly.

If your chapter has four members, a chapter Leader may be enough to act as facilitator delegating participation as needed. The Leader should always appoint a weight recorder trusted by the members. If your chapter has 10, 20, 30 or more members, you may want to add other officers, such as secretary, treasurer, co-leader, and create committees to help divide the workload and to give everyone a chance to be involved. It is your chapter – choose leadership as it works for you.

Please note that “selected by affirmation” means a show of hands of those present. A written, secret ballot may be taken if the chapter desires.

Executive Committee Meetings

The Chapter Executive Committee consists of a Leader, Weight Recorder and Assistant(s), and other officers, if needed. The Executive Committee meets as frequently as needed to review chapter and member progress, plan future meetings of interest and discuss challenges and opportunities to help all who need support in weight loss. Specific agenda items for review may include:

1. Renewals due for the coming month.
2. TOPS® and KOPS® awards earned, which need to be ordered and presented. Promptly recognizing effort and achievement is most important.
3. Chapter finances, including filing an annual audit with the Coordinator.
4. Engaging educational activities and programs for meetings in the coming month.
5. Items above can sometimes be covered between meetings by phone, email, or Zoom meetings, however, planning weekly chapter programs and activities is vital.

Selecting Officers

Selection of chapter officers is held as outlined in TOPS® Rules. This includes special elections that may be called if an office is permanently vacated.

1. A leader makes an oral announcement of the coming selection the week prior to the selection. Leader presides at selection.
2. A member must be active and in good standing (annual TOPS® dues and chapter dues paid) to vote or run for office.
3. Members may submit a letter of willingness to hold a specified office or be present to accept the position for such, at the time of selection.
4. The completed, signed Officers Chart must be received by a Coordinator no later than July 31.
5. Newly selected officers assume their duties at the first meeting of August only if the Officers Chart has been sent to the Coordinator.
6. The outgoing Leader passes all chapter materials and correspondence to the new Leader.
How Long Should We Keep That?

Guidelines on records retention:

1. Chapter audits - 3 years
2. Other financial records - 7 years
   a. Bank statements
   b. Ledgers of account
   c. Receipts
3. Weight Charts
   a. For TOPS® members - 1 year
   b. For KOPS® who lost status - 1 year
   c. For KOPS® maintaining goal
      - 5 years: Charts must be retained until each KOPS® Longevity Award
        for five consecutive years of maintenance is validated and received.
4. Chapter meeting minutes - 2 years
5. EIN number (US only) - If your chapter has an EIN number, it should be kept in
   perpetuity.
6. Tax notices - If your chapter receives tax notices, keep them for 4 years.
7. Exception: If your chapter is under the TOPS® Club Inc. umbrella, you must send
   the IRS postcard (US only) when received to Headquarters immediately
   -- do not retain at chapter. This postcard comes in the mail in November and must
   be filled out and sent in a timely manner.
8. Forms -- Discard out-of-date material and forms. The current versions are
   available at www.tops.org in the Forms section and from your Coordinator
   on request.
9. Upon revision, the TOPS® Guide is sent to the Leader. Previous editions must
   be destroyed.
10. Chapter programs - TOPS® reviews these annually and discontinues
    programs with outdated information.

Installation of New Officers

The installation can be brief and informal or more elaborate. Some chapters will present awards and
certificates or invite their Field Staff. Others may incorporate a theme.

The Ceremonies chair or former officers should take charge of this meeting. See www.tops.org
for ceremonies, ideas and certificates for this and other special events.

Important Chapter Deadlines

Coordinators may have other deadlines for contests, event registrations, etc. Please note that postmark date is also the fax/email date.

- **January 8:** A Chapter Resume with weight charts must be postmarked to Coordinator.
- **July 31:** An Officers Chart must be received by a Coordinator.
- **December 31:** Headquarters must receive IRS filing postcard (only for chapters that have applied to be under the TOPS® Club Inc. umbrella).
- **December 31:** Travel Weight Charts from members must be received by Chapter.

Chapter Roles

Each chapter may wish to delegate other duties to particular officers. For example, perhaps in your chapter, the duty of the Co-Leader may include
taking minutes of the meeting in lieu of choosing a secretary. Your chapter may choose to assign
publicity to the Treasurer if s/he happens to have skills that fit that position. Affirmation (show of
hands) is sufficient, unless members prefer a secret-ballot vote. This is your chapter to customize.
The following descriptions are suggestions to use as a basis for your chapter.

The Leader’s Role

A good Leader determines the wishes of the majority and disregards any conflicting personal preference while supporting the members on their
journey to good health. The Leader carries through the wishes of the majority while adhering to the
rules and philosophies of TOPS® Club Inc.

1. Other basic Leader responsibilities could include:
   a. Presiding at all regular or special meetings of the chapter and at all
      meetings of the Executive Committee.
   b. Using “Real Life: The Hands-on Pounds-off Guide” as a resource at
      chapter and encouraging individual purchase of this valuable tool.
   c. Whenever possible, including all members in your contests.

    Competition should be fun.
and promote increased activity, healthy eating, participation and consistency. Using TOPS® Awards as incentives.

2. The Leader serves as a liaison with TOPS® Field Staff and with TOPS® Headquarters and refers to the TOPS® Rules, this Guide and chapter bylaws for answers to questions. If additional help is needed, the Leader should contact the Advocate and/or Coordinator serving the area. Encourage all other officers and members to do likewise.

3. Access the Leaders Corner on www.tops.org for helpful resources and information and appoint a Web Designate to help with this responsibility as needed.

The Weight Recorders and Assistant
Weight Recorder

To complete supportive, accurate weigh-ins in a timely manner, the Leader appoints a Weight Recorder -- and Assistant(s), as needed -- to serve until the next election.

The three most important attributes of the Weight Recorder and Assistant(s) are:
Compassion – Trustworthiness – Accuracy.

The Weight Recorder and Assistant’s duties include:

1. Weighing members and recording the result directly on the Weight Chart as the member witnesses during a private weigh-in.
2. Following all current rules that apply to weight records.
3. Maintaining duplicate copies of individual records for chapter use.
   a. Between meetings, duplicates are kept in a location separate from the official charts.
   b. Chapters should retain duplicate KOPS® weight charts until each KOPS® Longevity Award is validated and received every five consecutive years. TOPS® and lost-status KOPS® charts may be destroyed after a year.
4. Additionally, individual losses or gains and the name of each person weighing in may be kept in a weekly notebook.
5. Members do not weigh themselves for recognition purposes. Validate winners of the chapter weekly, monthly, quarterly and for consecutive awards as specified in chapter bylaws, as well as Yearly TOPS® Awards, KOPS® Longevity awards and Century awards.

6. The chapter shall make reasonable modifications to weigh-in policies, practices or procedures to enable all persons to weigh in.

7. Weigh-in rules and requirements for the Weight Recorder are further outlined in TOPS® Rules.

Contact your Coordinator if you have questions on any of these items.

If a Co-Leader is desired, duties can include:

1. Assisting the Leader in the performance of duties.
2. Presiding at all meetings in the absence of the Leader.
3. Temporarily assuming the duties of the Leader or other officer, in his/her absence or until a special selection or appointment (whichever applies), fills a permanently vacated office.
   a. If an officer knows in advance that s/he will not be able to attend, they will make every effort to get the necessary materials to the Co-Leader, so that duties may be fulfilled in their absence.
   b. The Co-Leader should become familiar with the duties of other offices, in case s/he is called upon to fulfill that position on a temporary basis.
4. If the Leader resigns, the Co-Leader will be asked to fill the vacancy. If Co-Leader declines, the chapter will select a new Leader. The new Leader signs a new Officers Chart and sends to the Coordinator immediately.
5. Fulfilling other duties as decided by the chapter and noted in the bylaws.

If a Treasurer is desired, duties can include:

1. Overseeing all receipts and disbursements.
   a. Reporting on the financial status of the chapter when requested by the Leader.
   b. Promptly forwarding any memberships received with a member’s personal check,
chapter check or money order, made payable to TOPS® Club Inc., directly to Headquarters.

c. Sending Award Orders with check or money order, made payable to TOPS® Club Inc., directly to Headquarters. If paying by credit card, order forms may also be faxed or emailed.

d. Sending voluntary contributions to the TOPS® funds using forms with check or money order made payable to TOPS® Club Inc., directly to Headquarters.

e. If your meeting place requires liability insurance, sending the annual Meeting Insurance Application with check or money order payable to TOPS® Club Inc., to Headquarters.

f. Submitting all financial records to the Executive Committee or an appointed reviewer, using the Annual Chapter Audit form.

2. In a public chapter, an audit should be done after each election, whenever the treasurer changes, or at the request of the Coordinator.

3. The Executive Committee -- not the treasurer – fills out an Audit form before submitting it to the Coordinator.

4. Remind members when their renewal is due.

Payment Vouchers/Coupons
Occasionally, a new member will present a voucher, coupon or gift membership as payment for all or part of the annual membership fee.

5. Public chapters are encouraged to open/maintain a chapter account only if they feel it is needed.

Chapter Checking Account

a. Bank account name must be Chapter Name (TOPS® WI 1234 Milwaukee). The words “TOPS® Club Inc.” may not be used on chapter accounts or any type of legal filing.

b. For the protection of all in the chapter, the bank account must have three signers who are not related. Request a one-signature account, but have two people sign checks.

c. Monthly bank statements are mailed to the chapter Leader to review with the treasurer. Online statements are acceptable also, so long as the Leader or a second officer is reviewing them.

d. TOPS® Club Inc. does not recommend that chapters open online checking accounts or use credit/debit cards.

6. Retain all financial records for seven years.

7. To keep track of chapter money, it is necessary to set up a bookkeeping system with two separate funds:

   a. General Fund: For regular chapter income and expenses (rent, memberships, and awards).

   b. Recognition Days Fund: To help members who will be honored at a recognition event to attend and to help other members as specified in bylaws. A weekly sheet may also be used to record dues/fees/renewals payments made by individual members.

Opening a Checking Account in the U.S.

To open a bank account, the chapter must obtain an EIN number from the Internal Revenue Service using IRS Form SS-4 and submitting it by phone, fax or mail.

- Get an EIN quickly by applying online at www.irs.gov.
- Faxing a completed Form SS-4 to the service center for the state is another option. The service center will respond with a return fax in about one week. If no return fax number is provided, a response by mail will take about three weeks. Mailing the completed Form SS-4 to the service center is the slowest option. The IRS will send the EIN within four to five weeks.
- TOPS® has a form to guide you through the EIN application. A copy of Instructions for IRS Form SS-4 should be with new chapter materials provided by Field Staff or may be downloaded from www.tops.org. Ask your Coordinator for help, if needed.
- If your chapter needs to change the “responsible party” or mailing address for a previously issued
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EIN number, use IRS Form 8822.

• Request a one-signature account with all three persons eligible to sign. However, have two people sign checks.

Opening a Chequing Account in Canada

To open a bank account, three officers from the chapter Executive Committee go to the bank chosen, taking with them:

• A copy of TOPS® Rules with the portion of Rule 3 highlighted that defines the chapter’s organization.
• A copy of the Officers Chart to confirm that each signer is listed as an officer and eligible to be listed on the account. Ask if the bank has a “Community Account” where the account could be held. Request a one-signature account, but have two persons sign each cheque.

If a Secretary is desired, duties can include:

1. Maintaining the minutes of every meeting and a copy of all contest rules.
2. Making minutes available for member review at each meeting.
3. Keeping a weekly attendance record.
4. Contacting members who haven’t been to chapter and encouraging them to return.
5. Retaining all minutes for two years.
6. Carrying on the necessary correspondence and mailing required by the Leader.
7. He or she may perform some publicity responsibilities:
   a. Listing chapter meeting information and the Leader’s (or chapter contact person’s) name, address, and phone number with the local newspaper, Chamber of Commerce, Welcome Wagon and library each year.
   b. Gathering information, preparing and submitting to the media chapter news releases and articles.
   c. Getting permission from all members mentioned in the article.
   d. Including a good photograph, if possible.

f. Giving a meeting place, time, day and toll-free TOPS® number (800-932-8677) and website address (www.tops.org).

Web Designate

Leader appoints only one Web Designate to assist in receiving and sending chapter email to and from Headquarters and field staff and accessing TOPS® information and materials available. Since the Leader already has access to online records and reports, s/he may not be the Web Designate.

1. Web Designate will have access to the same confidential chapter information as the Leader, including weight information for everyone in the chapter. The Co-Leader or Weight Recorder are recommended choices.
2. Web Designate access of Leader’s Corner information starts when an Officers Chart is filed at Headquarters by your Coordinator and continues until a new Web Designate is chosen.

   a. Web Designate must be listed on the Officers Chart to activate access to the Leader’s Corner. Prompt submission of an Officers Chart ensures access will be granted in a timely manner.
   b. Access begins after the signed Officers Chart is processed by the Coordinator and received at TOPS® Headquarters and entered in the TOPS® Headquarters system.
   c. If a Web Designate is not listed in July, one may be selected at a future date by sending another Officer Chart with the Designate’s name and contact information to the Coordinator.

Duties can include:

1. Working with the Leader to assure TOPS® and Field Staff messages are shared with all members.
2. Staying informed of what’s new on the website.
3. Assisting the Leader in retrieving information from the TOPS® website as requested.
4. Accessing the Leader’s Corner online for helpful resources and information.

The New Member Coach’s Role

This position was created to make new members feel welcome, included and informed from the very start, so that they can get the most out of TOPS®, enjoy their journey, reach their goals and contribute to the long-term success of the entire chapter.

1. New Member Coach is appointed by the Leader of the chapter.
2. During the first four weeks, Coach will provide personal support, which may include:
   a. Sit by new members and explain what is going on.
   b. Introduce them to other members.
   c. Check in once a week between meetings.
3. Coach will provide orientation to the TOPS® program and tools such as current chapter bylaws and a contact list of all chapter officers.

Coaching DO’s and DON’Ts:

- **DO** share what TOPS® has done for you and what has worked for you.
- **DO** help new member identify small, sustainable changes s/he wants to make.
- **DO** listen attentively.
- **DO** focus on the individual’s goals, aspirations and motivation for joining.
- **DON’T** lecture or force your point of view.
- **DON’T** overwhelm the person with everything there is to know at once.
- **DON’T** repeat what's shared in confidence.
- **DON’T** focus on rules and procedures.

If a Program Chair is appointed, duties can include:

1. Choosing/recommending chapter programs from *TOPS® News*, other TOPS® publications or the Members Area of the website.
2. Recruiting and encouraging each member to lead or participate in the presentation of programs.
3. Inviting speakers or Field Staff for special presentations, including:
   a. Annual Advocate educational program
   b. Chapter anniversaries
   c. Installation of officers
   d. Recognition of chapter yearly Royalty and Division Award Winners
   e. Recognition of new KOPS® and KOPS® milestones
   f. Inspirational talks by successful local members
   g. Presentations by speakers from healthcare, wellness and educational agencies. An excellent resource for exceptional programs are the Videos that can be found on the TOPS website under My TOPS® Resources.

Other Possible Volunteers and Committees, if the chapter desires:

Share responsibility by appointing members to these volunteer positions. Members are more likely to stay focused and engaged when they feel included and needed in the group.

1. Photographer documents the weight-loss journey of individual members and the chapter.
2. Greeter welcomes visitors and includes them in the group. A greeter should spend a few extra minutes with a new member to answer questions.
3. Publicity volunteer shares chapter information in the community.
4. Awards person organizes and orders chapter awards and incentives, prints certificates, and plans recognition as directed by the Leader.
5. Ceremonies organizer plans ceremonies as directed by the Leader.
6. Someone in contests organizes motivating challenges of interest to the members.
7. Fundraising researches and proposes appropriate fundraising ideas, if needed, and presents to an Executive Committee for discussion.
To Access Online Tools

It only takes a few moments to activate your free account using the membership number and chapter ID sent to each member by mail or email. If you joined TOPS® online, you created your own username and password at that time, and your account is activated and ready to use. Otherwise, simply follow the directions to activate your account in the online Help Center when you first sign in to www.tops.org.

TOPS® Website Resources

2. Blogs
3. Email newsletters and coaching messages
4. TOPS® Store
5. Educational webinars are recorded and posted online for your convenience.

My Health Status

A personal, private, progress Dashboard to track weight, activity and other health markers of success.

Blogs, Wellness and New Features

TOPS® sends blogs and email newsletters. Links and sign-up for these are on the Member homepage of www.tops.org. These make for good discussion topics at meetings.

Email Update for Chapters

These are automatically sent to registered Leaders and Web Designates. These provide information needed for annual recognition, officers, financials insurance and other deadlines and procedures.

Breaking News and Reminders

When you sign in, be sure to read the “TOPS® News and Reminders” column, where we share website news and highlight TOPS® tools for you.

Food and Nutrition Tools

1. Among the many features are a 28-Day Meal Plan with shopping lists;
2. A Calorie Calculator;
3. Printable food diary sheets;
4. Recipes and a review of food values.

Getting Active

This area includes:
1. Fitness quiz, activity tracker
2. Heart-rate calculator
3. Workout ideas and resources for all ages and ability levels;
4. Practical fitness-related tips.

Self-Care

1. A self-paced series dealing with perception, behaviors, habits, attitudes and much more.
2. Access to Krames Health Library for trusted, easy-to-understand healthcare and medication sheets. Information is also available in Spanish!
3. Inspirational videos
4. Webinars and video programs

Encourage, Inspire, Celebrate!

A certificate to personalize, print and present, honoring member accomplishments and printable greeting cards, ideas for contests, ceremonies and activities are available.

Find a Form

All current forms are listed. A few are specific for Leader use and are marked as such.
Leaders Corner

Available only to Chapter Leaders and Web Designates. The area includes forms for annual reports, reordering supplies, other resources and chapter membership information. In addition, it provides an Email Group to send email to all chapter members at one time. (Email only goes to members whose email information is on file at Headquarters). In addition, a full year of programs and meeting ideas and hundreds of TOPS® chapter programs, contests and activities are available in this area.

Note: Immediately after election, complete and send to your Coordinator the Officers Chart. Allow at least two weeks for mailing and processing time in the U.S. and four weeks in Canada.

1. Be sure to notify Headquarters of mid-year changes in chapter Leaders so the new Leader is able to access these important resources.
2. Leader appoints a fellow member of his or her choosing as the Web Designate. Trust to maintain confidentiality of member information is essential for this appointment.
3. The Web Designate is someone with good skills in accessing information on the TOPS website and has the ability to receive and send email when requested by the Leader.
4. Information for all officers and designate must be correct and kept current.
5. Even if officers, Web Designate and location do not change, information needs to be resubmitted annually in July.
6. Contact your Coordinator or Advocate if you need help accessing and printing something off the website during the transition of leadership.

TOPS® Store

1. The TOPS® Store is available to all members after logging in at www.tops.org.
2. Items are updated on a regular basis.
3. Available in the TOPS Store: Merchandise, awards, books, trackers and journals, Exchange System materials, apparel, DVDs and CDs, exercise tools, trophies, ribbons and other special items.
4. For those without internet access, from a brochure of TOPS items, members and chapters may select and mail with payment to TOPS Club Inc. the completed order forms. The forms and brochure are to chapters and printed in TOPS News annually.

TOPS® Retreats

You may also register for Virtual and U.S. Retreats in the Store. (Contact information for Canadian retreat registration is on the Retreats web page.)

State and Local Sales Taxes Due

Being a nonprofit does not exempt TOPS® from collecting and remitting state and local taxes. Orders received without proper tax included can’t be processed.

At the time of printing, TOPS® is not required to collect Canadian taxes.

Payments Accepted

All items in the TOPS® Store are listed in U.S. dollars. Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Discover are accepted.

Exchange Rate

If a Canadian or foreign credit card is used, the U.S. value will be converted into Canadian dollars or foreign currency by the credit card issuer.

TOPS® has no control over the exchange rate at the time of the transaction or any conversion fees that may be applied by your bank or credit card issuer.

Need help with the website?
Try Our Help Center!

A link to the Help Center can be found at the bottom of each page, and is updated continually and includes specific instructions for how to:

1. Change your username and password (for your security, only you know your username and password. We cannot retrieve it for you. We can only reset it).
2. Change your address and email online.
Locked Account
For your security, your account is locked after five unsuccessful login attempts. The only way to unlock it is to contact our web support team at support@tops.org.

Using the Search Bar
After signing in, use the search bar at the top of the web page. Type what you are looking for and a list of options will be available.

Reporting Search Issues
If you cannot find your search, please email wondering@tops.org and tell us specifically what you were looking for and the words you put in Search to try to find it. Your sharing helps us make improvements quickly.

Troubleshooting On Your Own
There are some issues that may be resolved without contacting TOPS®. If the suggestions below don’t work, contact our web support team.

1. Double-check the instructions and/or click the Help link.
2. Your access is only possible if you are signed in to www.tops.org and are currently registered with Headquarters as a member, Leader or Field Staff.
3. Press the refresh button on your web browser. This will make the newest version of the page or document available.
4. If a document you are viewing is not displaying or printing properly, save the file to your computer first, then open it. You may also need to upgrade your web browser, which you can do for free.
5. Double-check that your computer and software meet the minimum technical requirements for the website as listed in the Help Center on www.tops.org. We recommend using the latest version of one of these browsers: Chrome, Firefox, Microsoft Edge or Safari. Updates for these browsers are free and available from the developers. The first two should update automatically for you.
6. Download the latest version of the free Adobe Acrobat Reader program to allow you to view PDF documents on the site. If you do not have Microsoft Office, download the free readers for Word, Excel and PowerPoint to open and use files.

Contacting Our Web Support Team
1. Web support at Headquarters is here for you Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Central Time, excluding major holidays.
2. You can reach web support by emailing support@tops.org. We will respond as quickly as possible during business hours.
3. If possible, include a screenshot and step-by-step description of your problem. Please provide your first and last name, and your membership number and chapter ID.
4. Please do not send multiple emails or email multiple people. It causes confusion and takes us longer to help you.

Reporting a Website Error
Please report any broken links, typos, outdated materials or anything that doesn’t display correctly to support@tops.org.

Suggestions
We are also happy to receive your suggestions for making our online resources better and for tools we might add. We do read and consider every submission.

Social Networking
TOPS® communicates with members, media, healthcare professionals and the public through social media sites. Members are encouraged to participate on the sites listed below and to follow the guidelines for chapter-sponsored social networking sites.

When you join the conversation, please, “like” and “follow” us. Simply click the social media icons found at the bottom of each page on www.tops.org.

Official TOPS® Club Inc.
Social Networking Sites

Facebook, Linkedin, YouTube, Pinterest, Twitter, Instagram
Weighing In

The opportunity to weigh is part of every meeting, unless there is an unforeseen circumstance making such impossible. If the chapter scale is broken, it should be fixed or replaced before the next meeting. Whether the scale is repaired or replaced, if there is a common variance in the weights of all present compared to the previous weekly meeting, it is recommended to suspend chapter awards and contests for that week. Any KOPS® recording of an out-of-leeway weight due to the common variance have one month for each two pounds out of leeway to achieve an in-leeway weight.

When a KOPS® transfers into a new chapter, this same procedure applies.

1. Weigh-in is private and confidential.
2. In the time set aside before roll call, weigh each member who chooses to be weighed.
   a. Record weight on member’s official weight chart as the member watches.
   b. Members arriving late are weighed after the chapter meeting is adjourned. They are not included in awards that week. They are weighed after the meeting closes.
3. Members may choose to weigh-in with or without shoes, but must continue in the same fashion for the calendar year. Appropriate attire is expected.
4. An official weight is not recorded for visitors, unless they are joining that meeting; or are existing TOPS® members.
5. No person weighs him/herself -- including officers.
6. The original starting date of online members, and those who paid their initial membership fee on the website, is the date the member joined online, even though the starting weight may be on a date some time later.
7. Weight-loss recognition starts at the first recorded weight at a chapter, or alternate weigh-ins. The chapter shall make reasonable modifications to weigh-in policies, practices, time(s), or procedures to enable all persons to weigh in.

When Members Decline Weigh-in

Each member must make the decision to be weighed before seeing what the weight might be. Once a member has stepped on the scale, the weight will be noted and recorded on the member’s official weight chart.

When Member is Unable to Weigh In

Several options are available if a member isn’t able to weigh in due to chapter scale capacity:

1. Use a scale outside chapter (such as at a licensed healthcare professional’s office or hospital) and bring the verified weight to meeting. See list of licensed healthcare professionals at the end of the TOPS® Rules.
2. Use two scales and add weights together.
3. If you have a balance beam scale, adapters to increase weight capacity are usually available from the manufacturer. If you are using a homemade adapter, use great care in following the steps in the chart on this page.
4. If further help is required, discuss options with the Coordinator.
Using Adapters on Balance Beam Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Directions</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Weigh self.</td>
<td>180 lb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Attach weight to end of balance rod of scales.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Weigh self again with weight attached to rod.</td>
<td>23 lb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Subtract Step 3 from Step 1.</td>
<td>157 lb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Weigh member with weight attached to rod in same position as Step 2.</td>
<td>210 lb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Add Steps 4 and 5 to figure member’s weight.</td>
<td>367 lb.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Medical Devices and Appliances, Wheelchair and Walkers

If a member is unable to safely record weight on the chapter scale, an acceptable alternative weight is available.

Types of Weight Charts

A supply of charts is provided to each new chapter, and all chapters receive a new supply each November in a mailing that goes to the Leader. Additional weight charts are available on the website or from your Coordinator.

There are three types of weight charts:

1. TOPS® Weight Chart (may also be used as a travel chart)
2. TOPS® Transfer Weight Chart (for members going to other chapters)
3. KOPS® Weight Chart (for members who reached goal weight and presented a goal slip)

Filling out Weight Charts

1. Do not fill out a weight chart for a person who has no weight during the current year unless the person is a privileged KOPS® as the new year begins.
2. Never use pencil on a weight chart.
3. Strike through incorrect information; write correct information and initial.
4. No entry is required if there is no weight to record. Check with your Coordinator for more information.
5. Record weight on the date a member chooses to weigh in.
   a. Weight can be combined with a Medical Excuse, or ME (addressed in the next section), for KOPS® on Medicals.
   b. Weight result is combined from all of a member’s charts for the year.
6. Dates with No Meeting are marked as NM.
   a. When entering weight on TOPS® Weight Chart and Transfer Weight Chart, use red ink for a gain and black ink for loss or no change.
   b. NM (no meeting held) is entered for dates when meetings are canceled.
7. ME (medical excuse) is added next to weight entries for KOPS® who weigh in regularly if a licensed healthcare professional advises them to refrain from dieting or prescribes treatment that causes weight fluctuation. Refer to current TOPS® Rules for more information. If you have questions, contact your Coordinator for clarification and support. All medical excuses must be attached to the original weight chart.
   a. If a member is pregnant, mark dates on the chart when the pregnancy slip is in effect, and write “PG” next to the weights for these dates.
   b. KOPS® who are unable to weigh-in due to health reasons do not need a Medical Excuse.
8. To be eligible to compete for yearly individual weight-loss awards, a member must sign his/her weight chart(s). Electronic signatures are acceptable.
9. The first weight of the current year is recorded in black ink on the TOPS® Weight Chart and Transfer Weight Chart by the appropriate date and on line A, at the top, even if a gain has occurred from the last weight of the previous year.

10. Regardless of the type of scale used, record the actual weight as displayed for each weigh-in, whether the result is in quarter-pound increments or it’s a digital number. Do not convert or round off the actual result.

**Pregnancy**

1. A pregnant member must obtain a pregnancy statement, also called a pregnancy slip, from her licensed healthcare professional on letterhead or prescription blank, signed and dated, indicating “no limit” or maximum weight allowed at term. Refer to current TOPS® Rules for more information. If you have questions, contact your Coordinator for clarification and support. Weights of pregnant members who stay within their licensed healthcare professional’s stated limits are recorded in black.

2. Pregnancy statements and medical excuses, if any, must be attached to the weight chart.

**TOPS® Changing Chapters**

When transferring chapters during a calendar year, the Weight Recorder in the current chapter completes a Transfer Chart (TR), that the member brings to his or her new chapter.

**KOPS® Changing Chapters**

1. When a KOPS® member transfers in:
   a. Member brings original KOPS® Weight Chart to new chapter. Enter “TR+” (transferred in) beside the date of the first weight recorded.
   b. Continue to record weekly entries on the KOPS® chart as for any KOPS® member. Contact a Coordinator for advice if the original KOPS® chart is not provided.

2. When a KOPS® member transfers out:
   a. Complete all info on KOPS® Chart.
   b. Enter “TR-” (transferred out) beside the date of last weight recorded. Member takes original KOPS® chart to the new chapter. If the original chapter keeps a copy of the chart, it is not submitted with the resume.

**Travel Weight Charts and Procedures for Visiting Members**

A member may visit any chapter(s) and request a courtesy weigh-in using a travel weight chart when circumstances prevent weighing in at their home chapter for a period of time. Members looking for additional support during the week are welcome to visit other chapters.

Here’s how it works:

1. The home chapter gives the member a blank TOPS® Weight Chart with “Travel” written across the top for use at other chapters.
2. A member may weigh in at any chapter(s).
3. If a member wishes to weigh in only -- and not participate in the meeting or contests – he or she may so do with no obligation.
4. If a member also wishes to stay for the meeting(s), take part in a program, contests, etc., then the member must pay chapter dues to the away chapter for meetings s/he attends while visiting. For other questions regarding dues, contact your Coordinator for recommendations.
5. Member submits travel chart to home Weight Recorder upon returning. If a member is still on a travel chart at the end of the year, the member must mail/email/fax the travel weight chart to the home chapter by December 31. On receipt, home Weight Recorder records travel weights on the member’s weight chart.
6. Retreat weights may be recorded as an official weight on a travel weight chart.

At the end of the year, all weight charts in the chapter are tallied on the Chapter Resume, which is used to determine yearly winners in your chapter as well as in regional and international competitions. The form and instructions for this will be mailed to the Leader and can be downloaded from www.tops.org or provided by your Coordinator. Completing this report is expanded upon in a later chapter.
Chapter 8 • Keep Off Pounds SensiblySM

How and when to get your goal slip, earn your KOPS® status and keep it.

The most challenging part of weight control is sometimes maintenance of the loss. TOPS® has a special category of recognition for members who reach a healthy goal weight and work to maintain it. This category is KOPS®, or Keep Off Pounds SensiblySM.

Goal Slip

A KOPS® is a TOPS® member who has reached the weight on a “goal slip” from his/her healthcare provider.

TOPS® provides a list of Licensed Healthcare Professionals at the end of the TOPS® Rules. Since licensing of practical nurses varies widely, a goal slip signed by an LPN must be sent to the Service Program Administrator through the Coordinator to be approved and initialed.

Goal Slip Guidelines

1. Goal slip is retained at the chapter level until it is sent with the KOPS® Registration and a copy of the current weight chart to the Coordinator.
2. If a goal slip contains more than one weight, a member shall choose a goal weight, selecting one of the two weights or entering a weight within the range and initialing.

KOPS® Registration

A dated, signed statement of target weight (goal slip) is required for a member to register as a KOPS. There are a variety of sources from whom these may be obtained, listed in TOPS Rules. Follow instructions on the KOPS Registration Form.

Validating KOPS®

KOPS® cannot be achieved prior to the date on a goal slip. The member may choose to register as a KOPS® on any meeting date (on or after the goal slip date) when s/he is at goal, but no more than seven pounds below goal.

KOPS® Lost Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Week 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RED</td>
<td>RED or NO WEIGHTRecorded</td>
<td>BLACK - KEEPS</td>
<td>BLACK - KEEPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RED</td>
<td>RED or NO WEIGHTRecorded</td>
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<td>RED or NO WEIGHTRecorded - LOST STATUS</td>
<td>RED or NO WEIGHTRecorded - LOST STATUS</td>
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* KOPS MAY PRESENT A GOAL CHANGE WHILE OUT OF LEEWAY.
* KOPS MUST BE AT OR BELOW THE NEW GOAL AT TIME OF PRESENTATION.

The date you first weigh in out of leeway counts as week one. Then you have two weeks (not weigh-ins) to get back within leeway. The chart above illustrates how status is lost.

Starting a KOPS® Weight Chart

1. Discontinue recording entries on the TOPS® Weight Chart at the point when a weight at or below the goal slip from a licensed healthcare professional filed with chapter is reached and a member chooses to register as a KOPS®.
2. Enter “KOPS” next to the entry date on the KOPS® Weight Chart (to show that the member has successfully reached goal or below). Continue recording entries on the KOPS® chart until the end of the current year, unless KOPS® status is lost.
3. Only KOPS® eligible to compete in the current year as Royalty or as a Division Winner must have a December weigh-in.

KOPS® Teens and Preteens

Teens and preteens who have submitted a growth allowance at time of KOPS registration do not need to submit a new goal slip as height increases.
KOPS® Graduation

This ceremony at any level should reinforce the new KOPS® member’s desire to maintain goal weight and inspire others to strive for a similar success.

1. If status is lost before graduation, a member may graduate at a later time after reaching goal again and reinstating as a KOPS®.
2. At chapter, the ceremony may be as simple or elaborate as the chapter desires. Fully prepared ceremonies can be found in the Members Area of www.tops.org.

A KOPS® Year

A KOPS® year is determined from the date KOPS® status is reached to a corresponding date the following year. For recognition purposes, when KOPS® status is lost, any partial KOPS® year is disregarded. If KOPS® status is regained, a new date for accumulating KOPS® years begins. When a KOPS® is reinstated, previous full KOPS® years are counted for alumni recognition, but not for longevity awards.

KOPS® Chapter Awards

Numerals indicating years as a KOPS® may be ordered through the chapter on KOPS® Awards and Chapter Tools, available online or from your Coordinator.

KOPS® Longevity Award

KOPS® Longevity awards are a gift from TOPS® Club Inc. to recognize consecutive years of KOPS® status at each consecutive five-year anniversary. KOPS® who have completed required years for a longevity award that was not ordered prior to loss of status may receive the award earned by completing and submitting the form.

KOPS® Privileged Status

1. Privileged status may be granted to KOPS® due to exceptional circumstances that prevent recording 15 weigh-ins in a year.
2. KOPS® status is not forfeited during this period, but no KOPS® awards may be earned while a privileged KOPS®. Privileged KOPS® may earn the longevity award by returning to chapter and recording an in-leeway weight.
3. KOPS® Weight Chart is marked “Privileged” in the section where dates and weekly entries are recorded. This chart is sent with Chapter Resume. No weights are recorded on KOPS® charts.

Applying for Privileged KOPS® Status

1. The member, Leader or Field Staff sends a letter to the Coordinator explaining the nature of the exceptional circumstances, making attendance impossible at this time.
2. Coordinator forwards letter to the Service Program Administrator. Coordinator will notify the chapter of the decision.
3. Privileged KOPS® continues to pay membership renewal fee through the chapter or online. Chapter dues are waived.
4. Privileged KOPS® may attend functions and chapter meetings as circumstances permit.
5. If able to resume attending chapter meetings regularly again, KOPS® privileged status ends.

Medical Excuse for KOPS®

If a KOPS® member must refrain from dieting or is taking prescribed medication that causes weight fluctuation, a medical excuse may be presented to the chapter Weight Recorder. If a licensed healthcare professional’s medical excuse states “indefinite,” this will be considered as expiring in one year.

Attach all Medical Excuses to the KOPS® Weight Chart and send with the chart at the end of the year. Make a copy of the Medical Excuse(s) to attach to next year’s KOPS® chart, if the coverage period extends into another year.

If a KOPS® submits a Medical Excuse that extends beyond one year, send to the Coordinator with a letter of exception attached immediately. This exception must always be requested before the KOPS® begins the extension period.
Chapter 9
Progress Is More Than a Number

From the moment a member joins, encouragement through awards and recognition should be offered often for nonscale victories.

All progress should be acknowledged at meetings on a regular basis. A key element that sets TOPS® apart from most other weight-loss groups is recognition. TOPS® has criteria for Annual Individual Division and Royalty winners, chapter Best Average Loss awards, Century, KOPS® and KOPS® Longevity Awards. Field Staff often offer other special awards that are presented at recognition days, rallies and inspirational meetings.

Living our healthiest lives starts now, not when we reach a particular number on the scale. A short discussion at each meeting that doesn’t just focus on numbers can be very helpful in maintaining a positive attitude. Here are some nonscale victories to keep in mind throughout the journey:

Off the rack!
- Noticing clothing fits better
- Wearing smaller sizes
- Shopping anywhere I want

Feeling fit!
- Walking farther
- Moving longer
- Having more energy
- Feeling more comfortable in my skin
- Enjoying things I couldn’t do before

Feeling social!
- Making friends at chapter
- Gaining confidence
- Getting out and about more

On the mend!
- Taking fewer medications (with my doctor’s OK)
- Hurting less from aches and pains
- Losing enough to be a candidate for surgery
- Maintaining stable blood sugar levels

Sitting pretty!
- Fitting in the seats in an airplane or movie theater or on an amusement park ride
- Meeting weight requirements for an activity I want to do

Chapter Awards Program

Your chapter is encouraged to create an incentive program to award progress toward and support of good health and gratitude for volunteer efforts on a regular basis. This can be on a weekly, monthly, quarterly, half-year or sustained basis. Determine the incentives to be given, the criteria for achieving them, the time frame for each and include these in the chapter bylaws.

Weight

Weight loss and maintenance results are one area to recognize.

Nonscale Victories Awards

Activity

An award to encourage members who are staying active and moving.

Food Tracking

An award to encourage members to eat healthily and be aware of portion size and food choices.

Journaling

An award to increase awareness of state of mind, mood, behaviors and emotions and their impact.

Support

An award to encourage members to reach out to each other, offer empathy, friendship and the gift of listening. An award for service as a New Member Coach.
Volunteering

An award to encourage members to be active participants during meetings -- doing programs, offering contests, contributing to the ongoing progress of the meeting and more.

Leadership

An award not just exclusive to the leader, but for performing other functions such as weight recorder, secretary, treasurer or co-leader, on an ongoing basis for the chapter.

Other

Awards like attendance and participation at meetings and local and area events. Awards may also be given for work done to encourage and promote the chapter’s weekly mission and awareness of its work in the community.

Chapter Award Items

At our members’ request, TOPS® offers a complete line of items available for purchase online through TOPS® Store or by mailing the order form directly to TOPS Headquarters. These are presented as each chapter sees fit throughout the year for incentives, gifts and recognition of good efforts and support. Choices include pins, charms, trophies and other items. Such items may be purchased using the Awards brochure and order form. The brochure and order forms are updated annually and sent to Leaders of all active chapters. It’s also printed annually for all members in TOPS® News and available on www.tops.org.

Directions for completing and sending the Award Order Form are on it. Contact your Coordinator if you have any questions and for ideas to celebrate success.

Chapter Award Certificates

Throughout the year, chapters are encouraged to celebrate members’ milestones such as birthdays, presenting programs, most weight loss for month/quarter, volunteerism, sunshine, KOPS® anniversary, charter members, KOPS®/TOPS® of the year, etc.

A number of fillable templates for award certificates are available to all members at www.tops.org.

Incentives from your Field Staff

Advocates, Coordinators and SPAs may offer special incentives to their chapters from time to time to recognize accomplishments. These vary by area, so please contact your Coordinator for details regarding incentives that may be earned and details for participating.

TOPS® Century Award

A special medallion is awarded in recognition of a loss of 100 or more pounds from the highest weight recorded at TOPS® Club Inc. A minimum 100-pound loss must be maintained for 52 consecutive weeks. A member may earn other medallions for additional losses in 100-pound increments.

KOPS® Longevity Award

Longevity awards are a gift from TOPS® Club Inc. to recognize consecutive years of KOPS® status at each consecutive five-year anniversary. Chapters request this award by submitting the KOPS® Longevity Validation form to their Coordinator. Follow instructions carefully and provide all information requested so the KOPS® will receive an award and be recognized in TOPS News. KOPS® must register an in-leeway weight on or after the date the award is achieved, and membership must be current. The award may not be ordered in advance. This form is available online or through your Coordinator.

TOPS® Annual Weight Loss Certificates

Annually, chapter members compete for recognition in several divisions and as new KOPS®. Refer to current TOPS Rules for more information. Levels honored are chapter, area, state, provincial and international. TOPS® provides annual certificates at each level for these winners. Schedule Chapter recognition as soon as certificates are sent by the Coordinator to the Leader.

Best Average Loss per Chapter

A winning chapter is determined from all chapters in a state or province based on Best Average Weight Loss per Member. The chapter must have at least four active members.
Annual regional events taking place between March and June are known generically as Recognition Days events, and specifically as:

SRD: State Recognition Days
PRD: Provincial Recognition Days
ARD: Area Recognition Days (sometimes held in very large states or provinces)

These inspiring events feature speakers and workshops in addition to recognition of successful members. Events are open to all members and guests, including those who belong to an online or virtual chapter. Preregistration and participation fees may apply. Contact your Coordinator for more information or search upcoming event listings on www.tops.org.

TOPS® Annual International Awards

In addition to competition for the annual individual weight loss and new KOPS® loss to goal, each chapter competes for the David Fox Memorial Award, which is an international award for Best Average Loss per Member for the year presented by TOPS® Club Inc. The late David Fox was a good friend of TOPS Club Inc., whose sound financial and legal advice was invaluable during the early days of the organization and corporation. TOPS® Club Inc. provides this award.

1. Awards earned by members who are International Royalty, Division Winners, and David Fox Memorial Award Winners are announced at the honored members’ Recognition Days.
2. TOPS® provides all awards free of charge for all of the winners.
3. Winners are featured in TOPS® News unless they decline.

“The funds derived from the project must be used for the enhancement of TOPS. That is, you may use them to send one or more of your members to a TOPS gathering, or you pay the expenses of an area or county captain to visit your chapter. Your fund can be used as a contribution to TOPS Headquarters or research or (the) building fund, which in turn are pledged to serve the members.” April 1967
Chapter 10 • Determining Annual Winners

Many members honored at Recognition Days say it’s one of the most meaningful experiences of their life. Accurate tracking and reporting make it possible.

The Chapter Resume is the essential part of the TOPS® Annual Recognition program. It summarizes how we have done for the year as individuals, chapters, and as an organization. You will be sent a resume with instructions from TOPS® Headquarters prior to the last December meeting. These materials are also available online. Refer to TOPS® Rules that apply to the year entered on the weight charts.

Chapter Average Loss Per Member

This reflects the success of the entire chapter during the past year. Refer to TOPS® Rules that apply to the year entered on the weight charts.

Division Winners and Royalty

TOPS® uses two distinctly different methods of tabulating weight loss for determining Division Winners and for determining Royalty. Refer to TOPS® Rules that apply to the year entered on the weight charts.

Pregnant TOPS® members

You may also be able to compete for annual weight loss recognition. Refer to current TOPS® Rules that apply to the year entered on the weight chart.

Division 9: Surgery for Weight Loss

You may also be able to compete for annual weight loss recognition. Refer to current TOPS® Rules that apply to the year entered on the weight chart.

Weight Division Winners

Check weight charts of all members who had a TOPS® Weight Chart or transfer weight chart for the year (include those who became KOPS® or lost status during the year). Verify that each weight chart lists a member in the correct division. Refer to the Divisions chart on this page.

Royalty

The term “Royalty” is reserved for the annual King and Queen and Runners-Up at any level of competition (chapter, area, state, provincial or international). All Royalty are selected from first-time registered KOPS® in the current calendar year. Refer to TOPS® Rules that apply to the year entered on the weight charts.

Submitting the Chapter Resume

1. After the chapter’s last December weigh-in, but before January 8, prepare and send the Chapter Resume and charts to the Coordinator following the instructions sent with the form.
2. Make and keep a copy of the completed Resume and all member weight charts before mailing.
3. A copy of your Chapter Resume will be returned with chapter certificates by the Coordinator. Honor chapter winners after Chapter Resume and certificates are received.
Chapter 11 • TOPS® News Magazine

As a member, you are encouraged to share your success, struggles, feedback, questions, photos and stories ideas to share@tops.org.

First published in 1949, TOPS® News is produced by a team of professional writers, editors and designers at Headquarters.

Unless noted, all material in TOPS® News is the intellectual property of TOPS® Club Inc. and is protected by United States and international copyright laws. TOPS® does give limited permission for chapters and members to make photocopies for chapter or personal use.

The Purpose of TOPS® News is to ...

1. Inspire, educate and motivate each member on his or her personal weight-loss journey.
2. Provide sensible weight-loss information members can apply in their everyday lives.
3. Recognize member achievements and contributions.
4. Share the TOPS® message with healthcare professionals, workplaces, friends, family, colleagues, neighbors and all who want to live a healthier, happier life at any age.

Professional Articles

TOPS® encourages members to submit articles, nutritional questions and article suggestions to share@tops.org for comments and ideas for regular features written or reviewed by accredited professionals. These include:

1. Focus on Nutrition and Nutrition Q&A
2. Focus on Fitness and Fitness Q&A
3. Medical Feature and Medical Q&A
4. Chapter programs covering nutrition, fitness, medical issues and behavior modification
5. Recipes, which include exchanges and serving information

Member Submissions

TOPS® does not pay for member submissions. Articles published as the result of a member submission become the property of TOPS® Club Inc. Due to the volume of submissions, materials cannot be returned. Articles by both experts and members are edited for space and style.

Publication Timeline

If accepted, TOPS® News submissions usually take at least three months to appear in an issue.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Approximate in-home date</th>
<th>Last date to submit</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jan/Feb</td>
<td>late December</td>
<td>October 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>March/Apr</td>
<td>late February</td>
<td>December 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May/June</td>
<td>late April</td>
<td>February 1</td>
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<td>July/Aug</td>
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<td>April 1</td>
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<td>Sept/Oct</td>
<td>late August</td>
<td>June 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov/Dec</td>
<td>late October</td>
<td>August 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Deadlines

Early submission is highly recommended. Seasonal items of future interest to members may be held until the following year. Alternatively, we may share them on our website, Facebook page or other platforms.

Choosing Articles

Send stories that feature members engaged in activities that reflect the core values of TOPS®:

1. Working toward losing weight
2. Being active
3. Making healthy choices
4. Supporting one another in TOPS®

Action shots that show members moving are of great interest. If your chapter has tried a workout featured in the magazine, snap photos and send them to us. If you have felt inspired by any article in the magazine or had fun with a chapter program, please share those photos, as well.
Special consideration is given to submissions that focus on weight-loss and healthy living and are helpful * unusual * colorful * motivational * inspiring * outstanding.

Celebrate Success

We want to hear your story! If you know of a successful member with an engaging story, ask him or her to send the details, and we will likely contact that member to follow up, if the story is planned to be used in a future issue.

Resources for Members and Meetings

This pullout section in the center appears in each issue of TOPS® News. Send new, successful chapter programs, contests, installation ceremonies, KOPS® ceremonies and tips for recruiting, recognizing and motivating members. Originality and helpfulness to other chapters is key. Interactive programs that are brief and require few props or supplies are best.

Recipes

Members are encouraged to send original recipes. A few things to keep in mind:

1. We do not reprint copyrighted recipes from cookbooks, other magazines, etc., without their permission.
2. Please include the approximate serving size (in cups, tablespoons, etc.) and how many servings the recipe makes. This enables our consulting dietitian to calculate calorie counts, exchanges and other nutrition information. Note: We cannot provide this service to anyone who is curious about a favorite recipe.
3. In keeping with our mission to help members Take Off and Keep Off Pounds Sensibly, TOPS® reserves the right to edit recipes.

Members Voice (Letters to the Editor) and How We Use Your Comments

Members Voice includes comments and suggestions from members. Comments may pertain to a magazine article, a TOPS® event, a personal triumph or challenge, or anything else other members may find relatable or helpful. Unless confidentiality is requested, the full name and chapter number of the member who wrote it will be included.

Scrapbook

Scrapbook is a section that highlights photographs submitted by members and chapters. Photos should be accompanied by a list of everyone pictured. Please list in order from left to right, by row, etc. Poems, songs and sayings may also be considered.

Photo Requirements

Quality photos help bring TOPS® News articles to life.

Photos should be sharp and clear. Scanned, printed copies of electronic photos do not often work. It is better to send the original electronic image. The photo should show something of interest to more than one chapter or member. Action shots are ideal.

For the Record: Member Achievements

In each issue of TOPS® News, “For the Record” recognizes:

1. New chapters
2. KOPS® consecutive year, milestone anniversaries (in five-year increments)
3. New Century Award winners
4. “For the Record” lists are generated automatically from Headquarters records only after verification by your Coordinator. It can take several months for these to appear.

For the Record: Contributions

TOPS® Club appreciates and recognizes gifts of all sizes. Once received at Headquarters, contributions are included in “For the Record.”

The appropriate Contribution Form must accompany all donations, or click the “Donate” button on the TOPS website. Specific forms are available online. Contact your Coordinator for assistance.
Appendix

The Fine Print
Key Messages
Sample Meeting Minutes and Notes
Sample Bylaws
Waivers
Sample Chapter Audit
Chapter Audit Instructions
This guide is for chapter use only and should be available at every meeting for any member to review. It has been loaned to the chapter and must be returned to the Coordinator upon request. It is the responsibility of the Leader to keep the book in good condition and turn it over, intact, to newly elected officers. Additional booklets, for chapter and member use only, may be purchased using form KOPS Awards and Chapter Tools, or on www.tops.org in the TOPS Store. The TOPS® Guide for Members and Chapters is available for all members to view and download, free in the Members Area of www.tops.org.

Copyright 2022 by TOPS Club Inc. U.S. and international copyright laws protect this material. TOPS Club Inc. members and chapters have a limited right to print copies of this material for their personal use and use in TOPS Club Inc. chapter meetings. No material may be copied, modified, downloaded or redistributed for any other purpose without the expressed written permission of TOPS Club Inc. TOPS Club Inc. retains all other rights. TOPS® and KOPS® are service marks of TOPS® Club Inc.

TOPS® Club Inc. (Headquarters) is incorporated in the state of Wisconsin. TOPS® chapters are separate legal entities. Depending on the law of the jurisdiction in which a chapter is located, most of the TOPS® chapters would be classified as unincorporated associations. “TOPS® Club Inc.” may not be used on chapter accounts or any type of legal filing.

The primary purpose of TOPS® Club Inc. is to help our members as they Take Off and Keep Off Pounds Sensibly. Therefore, TOPS® never accepts compensation for mentioning any product or service and never gives permission to anyone engaged in the sale of products or services to contact TOPS® chapters or members.

A chapter shall not agree to indemnify, defend and hold harmless the owner of its meeting place from liabilities and expenses on account of personal injury of a member attending a chapter meeting. A Chapter has no power or authority to enter into any agreement on behalf of TOPS® or which would legally bind TOPS®, nor to waive any legal rights on behalf of TOPS®.

Federal Nonprofit Status TOPS Club Inc. is an exempt organization under section 501 (c)((3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue code. This nonprofit status does not apply to chapters unless they file an application with TOPS Club Inc. for coverage under the TOPS Group Exemption. The application is currently available for U.S. chapters only. Please contact the Coordinator for the application, or the Leader may download forms L-046A, L-046B and L-046C from www.tops.org.

The information below only applies to your chapter if you have applied for nonprofit status using the guidelines stated above.

The Chapter Articles of Association is the organizing document of the chapter. The Chapter Articles of Association defines the general purposes, activities and operations of the chapter. Chapter Articles of Association are executed by members who are founding a new chapter, or by the members of an existing chapter that does not have Chapter Articles of Association. TOPS and the chapter should retain a copy of their Chapter Articles of Association. The Chapter Association Agreement with TOPS Club Inc. is the agreement between TOPS Club Inc. and each chapter. The Chapter Association Agreement establishes and verifies the relationship between TOPS and its chapters. The Chapter Affiliation Agreement establishes that TOPS has the necessary supervision and control of its chapters for purposes of maintaining its nonprofit status. The officers of the chapter and TOPS sign the Chapter Affiliation Agreement. TOPS and the chapter retain copies of the Chapter Affiliation Agreement. Chapter bylaws for nonprofits include the following statement prior to the numbered bylaws: The Chapter Association and the Chapter Agreement with TOPS Club Inc. govern all chapter and member activities. All official TOPS Rules supersede any chapter bylaws and therefore do not need to be included as bylaws.

Group Exemption postcard: Each November, TOPS will send to the chapters covered under the TOPS Group Exemption [Form 990-N (e-Postcard)] to fill out and return to Headquarters. This postcard must be returned to Headquarters before December 31 in order to file the required IRS “postcard” for your chapter. Failure to meet the deadline may affect your chapter’s status under the TOPS Group Exemption.
Key Messages

There are many tools available from your Field Staff or on www.tops.org to help generate the best possible quality of publicity. All of these, combined with enthusiasm and knowledge of TOPS®, emphasize the following key messages about us:

**TOPS® Club Inc. (Take Off Pounds Sensibly®) is the original, nonprofit, weight-loss support and wellness education organization.** We have nearly 70,000 members—male and female, ages 7 and older; in thousands of chapters throughout the United States and Canada.

**The TOPS mission** is to support our members as they Take Off and Keep Off Pounds Sensibly.

**The TOPS philosophy** is that the desire to change comes from within the individual, and the most effective way to sustain change is to provide a supportive environment. TOPS provides a caring, friendly environment for members. Founded more than 75 years ago, TOPS is the only nonprofit, noncommercial weight-loss organization of its kind.

**TOPS promotes successful weight management** with a “Real People. Real Weight Loss” philosophy that combines accountability and support from others at weekly chapter meetings, healthy eating, portion control, regular exercise and wellness information.

**TOPS advocates three healthy eating plans:** MyPlate, the Food Exchange System and Canada’s Food Guide—and provides members with a wealth of information prepared by experts in the areas of nutrition, fitness and motivation.

**TOPS advocates for involvement by members’ physicians** or a licensed healthcare provider, and has sound ties to the medical community. Members are encouraged to work with their personal physician or other licensed healthcare provider to find the combination of diet and exercise that is right for them. Members have their personal physician or licensed healthcare provider determine a realistic goal weight and timetable for them.

**Researchers found that the TOPS program is effective against obesity.** In a study from the University of Colorado, weight loss results using TOPS’ peer-mentoring approach showed that results are similar to pricier commercial programs.

Other researchers also found that people who joined TOPS and stayed in the program for seven years were able to take off and keep off statistically significant amounts of weight.

**TOPS is a leading supporter of obesity research.** We have donated more than $9.2 million to fund this support through the Medical College of Wisconsin. TOPS members are involved in ground-breaking studies at TOPS Center for Obesity and Metabolic Research at MCW and are participating in the TOPS Genome Registry run through the TOPS® Nutrition and Obesity Research Center, located at Wake Forest University.

**TOPS is affordable, with low annual fees and weekly chapter dues.** It is easy and risk-free to find out more about TOPS. Interested individuals are welcome to attend a free in-person meeting before joining. Information is available online at www.tops.org or by calling 800-932-8677. Visit a nearby chapter once with no charge or obligation.
Sample Meeting Minutes and Notes

TOPS ___________________________ Notes for ___________________________ (State/Province)(Number) (City) (date)

Called to order by _____________________________________________ Time __________________

Roll Call: # attending # weighing

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Program Notes:
________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________
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When requested by leader
Treasury Report by __________________________ Recognition Days Fund $ _____________
__________________________ General Fund $ _____________
Total $ __________________

When requested by leader
Minutes for Dates __________________________ read by __________________________
Corrections __________________________ Approved __________________________

Old Business __________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________

New business __________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Correspondence ______________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Adjourned by __________________________ Time __________________

Enriching Our Chapter Experiences (rev. 2023)
Sample Bylaws

Below is a sample of what you may wish to include in your bylaws. All Official TOPS® and KOPS® rules supersede any chapter bylaws and therefore do not need to be included as bylaws.

Chapter: TOPS _____________________ Established: _______________ Revision Date: _________
(State/Province (Number) (City)

1. Meeting shall be held once a week on ____________________________, at ____________________.
   (Day) (Time - AM or PM)

2. Official weigh-in period starts at _______________________________ and ends at ___________________________.
   (Time - AM or PM) (Time - AM or PM)

3. Location of meeting place: ___________________________________________________________________________
   (Building and street address)

4. Dues are $ ______________________ per ___________________________________.
   (Specify WEEK or MONTH)

5. The chapter votes upon and approves any weekly, monthly or annual contests and/or incentives.

6. The chapter votes upon, approves and specifies in these bylaws a list of any rewards or fees for weight gain, food charts, etc. State all that the Chapter approves.

7. The chapter votes upon, approves and specifies in these bylaws a list of any special awards or gifts (i.e. end of an officer’s term, weight loss awards, KOPS® awards, graduate awards, gifts/cards for ill members, etc.) State all that the Chapter approves.

8. The chapter votes upon, approves and specifies in these bylaws a list of any special recognition event monetary provisions. State all that the Chapter approves.

9. The chapter votes upon, approves and specifies in these bylaws a list of any other items that would benefit future issues of discussion. State all that the Chapter approves.

If your chapter has paid the fee to register as a nonprofit associate of TOPS® Club Inc., include the following statement before the numbered bylaws:

The Chapter Association and the Chapter Affiliation Agreement with TOPS® Club, Inc. govern all chapter and member activities. All official TOPS® and KOPS® Rules supersede any chapter bylaws and therefore do not need to be included as bylaws.
TOPS® Club, Inc. - Walk/Activity Waiver

This document must be signed by each individual participating in a walk or physical activity hosted or sponsored by a local chapter of TOPS Club, Inc. Under no circumstances is anyone to be permitted to participate in the walk or activity unless they have signed this waiver in advance of its start time.

Walk/Activity Name or Description: ________________________________
Location of Walk/Activity: ________________________________
Date of Walk/Activity: ________________________________

I know that participating in an exercise event is a potentially hazardous activity and should not be undertaken unless I have consulted my physician. I represent that I am medically able and properly trained to participate in this event. I assume all risks associated with exercise in this event, including but not limited to falls, muscle pulls, muscle cramps, muscle strains, shortness of breath, light headedness, dizziness, or contact with any other participants, or people at the event location, the effect of the climate including high heat and/or humidity, and the condition of the event location, all such risks being known and appreciated by me.

Having read this waiver and knowing these facts, I, for myself, and for my heirs, executors, and assigns, waive and release TOPS Club, Inc., all agents, producers, employees, volunteers, and sponsors of this exercise event and their representatives and successors from all claims or liabilities of any kind arising out of my participation in this event, though liability may arise out of negligence or carelessness on the part of the persons named in this waiver. I grant permission, without compensation, to all of the foregoing to use any photographs, motion picture, or record of this event for any legitimate purpose.

Waiver must be signed before walking or exercising!

Print Name: ________________________________
Signature: ________________________________ Date: ________________________________
### Sample Chapter Audit

**TOPS Chapter ID:** __________________________ for year ________________ thru ________________

**Bank Name** ________________________________________________  
**Account #** ________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Fund</th>
<th>Recognition DaysFund (If Used)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Balance Forwarded</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Add Income</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Membership Fees</td>
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<td>Membership Fees</td>
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<td>Dues and Other Fees</td>
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<td>Fundraisers</td>
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<td>Donations</td>
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<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Income</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtract Expenses</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership Fees</td>
<td>Membership Fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prizes/Awards</td>
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<td>Supplies</td>
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<td>Workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Expenses</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ending Balance</strong></td>
<td>$0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total General Fund and Recognition Days Funds:** $0.00

Equals
Balance of last bank statement
Plus cash on hand
Minus outstanding checks

**Bank Total:** $0.00

**Signature of all officers as of __________________________ (Audit End Date)**

- **Leader** __________________________ date ________________
- **Co-Leader** __________________________ date ________________
- **Secretary** __________________________ date ________________
- **Weight Recorder** __________________________ date ________________
- **Treasurer** __________________________ date ________________

Forward completed form with copy of bank statement to your Coordinator.

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Chapter Audit Instructions

1. Each chapter must complete a Yearly Audit after the last meeting in July. All outgoing officers except the Treasurer do this before new officers take over at first August meeting. This audit process protects the chapter Treasurer.

2. Make one copy of enclosed blank audit form when completed.

3. All outgoing officers sign the audit, report results to chapter, and record the clearing the record of their terms of office.

4. Send a copy of the audit with July bank statement to Coordinator.

5. Treasurer turns over all records at last meeting of July for audit to the Leader:
   a. Bank statements, canceled checks, deposit slips
   b. Check book and transaction log
   c. Treasury ledger
   d. receipts for bills paid
   e. Cash on hand
   f. Copy of previous year’s audit form
   g. Blank audit form

6. Start audit with BALANCE ON HAND in GENERAL and in RECOGNITION DAYS (if used) from previous year audit.

7. Add Income to each Fund Balance, total income.

8. Subtract Expenses from each Fund Balance, total expenses.

9. Result is Ending Balance in each Fund.

10. ADD ENDING BALANCES in each fund together. This TOTAL must EQUAL total of BALANCE IN BANK plus CASH ON HAND after outstanding checks are subtracted.

   After audit is done, officers give all records and materials to current Treasurer.
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QUESTIONS?
WE HAVE ANSWERS

What are my rights and responsibilities as a TOPS® member?

What are the key parts of a good TOPS® meetings?

Does TOPS® have a diet?

What is your question?
Find answers easily using the index!

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