

# QUICK TIPS

## Constitution vs. By-Laws

What's the Difference?

### Constitution

- Concise
- Clarifies group's purpose
- Explains fundamental principles of group
- Provides basic framework for group's processes
- Provides historical perspective
- Rarely revised

### By-Laws

- Outlines specific procedures for group's functioning
- Helps group conduct business in an orderly manner
- Provides further definition to Constitution
- Revised regularly as procedures change

### LEADER BITS

are available on the following topics:

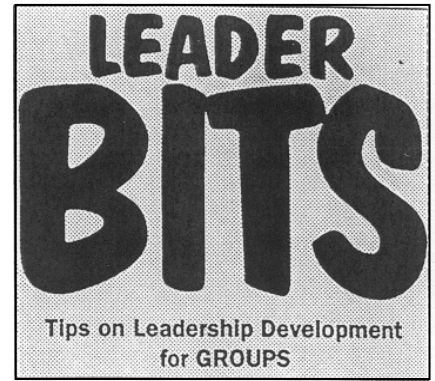
- Advising Groups
- Agendas
- Assertiveness
- Brainstorming
- Co-Sponsorship with Other Groups
- Communication
- Community Service
- Conflict Resolution
- Constitution/Bylaws
- Delegation
- Difficult Members
- Elections
- Ethics
- Evaluation Series
  - Group Performance*
  - Individual Performance*
  - Meeting Evaluation*
  - Program/Event Evaluation*
- Financial Series
  - Budgeting Organization Money*
  - Corporate Sponsorship*
  - Fundraising*
- Getting Involved
- Goal Setting
- Group Dynamics
- Icebreakers
- Marketing Your Leadership Skills
- Meetings
- Minutes from Meetings
- Motivation
- Newsletters
- Officer Transition
- Parliamentary Procedure
- Program Planning
- Public Speaking
- Publicizing Events
- Recognition
- Recruiting Volunteers
- Retreats
- Starting an Organization
- Stress Management
- Team Building
- Time Management
- University Events

### LEADER BITS

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SILC staff offers programs and consultation in these and other areas of personal and organizational leadership.

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We the people of the United States in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense [sic], promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty, to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

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## What should be covered by a Constitution?

Constitutions should be concise, yet contain the important framework of an organization. They should be about two to four pages in length, leaving the detailed procedures of a group's daily functions to the By-Laws. Below is an outline of the kinds of information that should be included in a Constitution:

Article I:	Name of the organization
Article II:	Affiliation with other groups (local, state, national)
Article III:	Purpose of the organization
Article IV:	Membership requirements and limitations
Article V:	Officers (titles, terms of office, how and when elected)
Article VI:	Adviser (term, how and when selected)
Article VII:	Meetings (frequency, special meetings and how called)
Article VIII:	Quorum (number of members required to conduct business - fraction 2/3 )
Article IX:	Referendum and Recall (procedures for legislation and recalling officers)
Article X:	Amendments (proposal form, notice required, voting procedures)
Article XI:	Ratification (voting requirements for approval of this document)

## What should be covered in By-Laws?

By-Laws are the daily working procedures of an organization. They contain the detailed processes of a group. They are usually easier to change, requiring only a simple majority, rather than Constitutions, which require 2/3 vote of membership. Below is an outline of the kinds of information that are normally covered in By-Laws:

- A. Membership (selection requirements, resignations, expulsion, rights and duties)
- B. Dues (amount and collection procedures, special fee, when payable)
- C. Executive Board (structure, members, powers, duties)
- D. Duties of Officers (powers, responsibilities, specific job descriptions)
- E. Committees (standing, special, how formed, chairpersons, meetings, powers, duties)
- F. Duties of Adviser (powers, responsibilities, specific job description)
- G. Elections (time of year, winning vote margin, voter eligibility, procedures for filling unexpired or unfilled terms of office, removal from office, appeal process)
- H. Order of Business (standard agenda for conducting meetings)
- I. Parliamentary Authority (provisions for rules of order - President's rules or Roberts Rules of Order - Newly Revised)
- J. Amendments (proposal form, notice required, voting procedures)
- K. Other specific policies and procedures unique to your organization

- All but the most informal groups should put their purpose and procedures in writing.
- Review the documents regularly to keep them up to date to reflect the current functions of the group.
- Give everyone in your group a copy.
- Check out the Constitution Notebook in the O&L office for samples of group Constitutions and By-Laws.