

Ten Commandments for Committee Members



1. **T**hou shalt pull thy weight

Clubs are run by volunteers and the distribution of work is always uneven. A handful of members make the club function. As a committee member don't think that just turning up to meetings and voting on things is your full obligation. Volunteering for tasks and doing them well is the fast way to get the respect of your fellow members and have your opinions and ideas taken seriously.

2. **H**onour thy constitution

Reading a constitution is about as exciting as watching paint dry, but it's the rulebook that the club must follow. Any decisions made or actions taken that are not in accordance with the constitution can be annulled or cancelled later if somebody complains. Serious breaches can get the club prosecuted. Every committee member will be deemed guilty, so all should at least have a passing familiarity with their constitution.

3. **P**repare for the coming of the meeting

Nobody wants to be in a meeting that goes to midnight. Save everyone's time by:

- reading info before meeting,
- sending info of your own to the others in time for them to read it,
- letting the secretary know about an item to go on the agenda.
- arriving on time.

4. **T**hou shalt not tolerate bullies

Bullies exist in many clubs. Sometimes there can be a person who plays a crucial role, but treats others in the club badly. People put up with the bad behavior because they don't want that person to spit the dummy and walk away from their job. If that person isn't eventually called to account for their bad behaviour it is detrimental to the club in the long term. If you find your new members are leaving after a year, it could be that they are sensing a tension in the club that makes them feel uncomfortable.

5. **T**hou must declare conflicts of interest

Particularly monetary conflicts. An example might be if the committee is considering awarding work to the company you work for. If there is any possible perception that you or your family member might benefit from a decision that the committee is making, not only do you need to declare the conflict of interest at the meeting, you must leave the meeting while it is being discussed and voted on. This is a legal requirement.

6. **S**peak up

As a new committee member you may feel a bit out of your depth. You may decide the best approach is to use your ears more than your mouth until you know the ropes. Which is fair enough, but putting into practice these commandments might mean you need to make yourself heard. Your fresh eyes might see a problem that others don't. If things go pear shaped, you don't want to be the one saying "yeah I thought it sounded a bit dodgy, but I didn't think it was my place to say anything at the time".

7. **T**hou shalt rotate

We all applaud those committee members who have been in the same role for 20 years, but it's not necessarily a good thing. Is it because nobody else would volunteer? Is it because the person wants to protect tradition against new ideas? Many organisations have rules that prevent someone holding the same post for more than a certain time. The club needs to give someone a break eventually, even if they don't ask for it.

8. **H**onour thy fellow volunteers

None of you are getting paid to do this. You can create respect for each other by:

- Being open minded and aware that you could actually be wrong,
- Being honest, but in a respectful way,
- Keep your cool. If something upsets you, don't let your ego write your email or text. Write it but don't press send until you have slept on it,
- Don't use sarcasm – say it straight or don't say it,
- Don't join factions that gossip and make snide remarks about other factions. Someone has to act like a grown-up.

9. **T**hou shalt keep thy integrity

Committees can talk themselves into bad ideas, or things that aren't quite ethical. Perhaps a fellow member is getting a raw deal. It can take courage, but sometimes it only takes one person to say what the rest don't want to hear to bring about common sense. Someone has to point out the elephant.

10. **T**hou shalt not take things to heart

Conflicts are part and parcel of any club. A committee that is in full agreement all the time is not a realistic proposition. But the history of many clubs and associations is littered with embittered ex-committee members who threw in the sport entirely, never to return again. It happens when people convince themselves that winning a conflict is everything. Remind yourself every once in a while that shooting is only a game. You're not curing cancer or running a country. Perspective is important. Enjoy the sport.