

# How to Write a Volunteer Handbook

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While Google can help you find samples of volunteer handbooks, the best information for writing a volunteer handbook is in your church.

Who is your audience? Potential volunteers? New volunteers? All volunteers? Leaders? Or all of the above? They can tell you what should be included. Ask:

- What would have been most helpful to you when you started?
- What information has been most difficult to find?
- What information would most help you now?

A volunteer handbook can help staff, too. Remembering my first days on staff, I made sure my church's handbook included a map of our large, multilevel building; the name of the person to talk to about reserving a room or putting a notice in the bulletin; the location of the copiers; and so on.

Some volunteer handbooks are simply policy manuals. Be sure to include policies that affect volunteers—your policies on screening and background checks that are needed for some positions, for example. But don't stop with policies. Include everything that would help volunteers in their work and make them feel at home.

Information is the meat of your handbook, but other factors are important too. Writing style makes a difference. Your handbook paints a picture about volunteering at your church. Will it reflect a very serious, rules-oriented picture? Or that of an attractive place to get involved?

Also think about where volunteers will access your manual—in print, online, or both. To make the manual user friendly, create hyperlinks in online documents and include an index of links in print editions.

A volunteer handbook is a living document. Ours is public, but it is far from finished. We still gather input from our volunteers on the content they need and want. We also recognize that we need a team to keep it updated. One member of that team is tasked specifically with keeping an eye open for information that needs to be added or updated and holding me accountable to review the handbook in its entirety at agreed-upon times.

One of the reasons the same handful of volunteers do 90 percent of the volunteering in a church is that they're the only ones with the knowledge and background to get stuff done. A quality volunteer handbook is one great way to welcome newcomers to the family and get them up to speed as quickly as possible!