
OPEN HOUSE MEETING GUIDE

Share the good news about your TOPS chapter with your community!

Invite others to join in the success that is TOPS membership!

Encourage healthy lifestyles!

Watch your chapter grow!

The purpose of holding an Open House meeting is to provide interested individuals with a ***first-hand look*** at how TOPS works, how to join, how affordable we are, and how to use the program. TOPS Club, Inc. Open House meetings are creative events during which members come together to showcase TOPS.

An Open House meeting can also ***invigorate current membership*** by building on each person's creative skills. It can foster team spirit. Photos taken at your event can be submitted to *TOPS News* or local media for additional recognition of the chapter's efforts.

Open House meetings should be held ***yearly***, at a minimum, but as often as possible! It is recommended that chapters hold an Open House meeting within three months of receiving this guide. It is also recommended that chapters tie in at least one Open House each year with the January TOPS International Open House efforts that will be promoted via national publicity efforts.

Open House meetings can be held during the same time/place of the regular weekly meeting, or another place/time.

Planning and publicity guidelines for the Open House meeting and a reproducible poster are provided in this guide. The TOPS website (www.tops.org) offers many helpful promotional tools—such as a generic news release template, and bulletin board/postcards and posters in color and black & white to fill in and print.



**TAKE OFF POUNDS
SENSIBLY**

All you need is enthusiasm and creativity to make your event a success!

Your doctor prescribes the diet — TOPS provides the "do it."®

Getting Started

Choose a date.

Begin to plan. Have a brainstorming session! Eight to ten weeks (or more) should be enough lead time to come up with a plan, create your publicity, and distribute it. Cross check the date with your community calendar—you don't want to plan your Open House meeting on the same day a large, local event opens.

Create a theme. Tie your meeting to TOPS, and use a meaningful theme—use the current biannual TOPS theme; play off the name of a song, book or movie; use a whimsical theme such as clowns, nautical, outer space, or futuristic; theme with a decade in mind such as fabulous 50s, sassy 60s, or psychedelic 70s; or tie in with the month of your event, such as “Time for a New Beginning at TOPS” for January, “Heart Smart TOPS for February, “March to a Healthy Beat” in March, etc. You are limited only by your own creativity.

Develop an Agenda

Sharing a brief outline or agenda of the Open House event will help keep things moving. Consider:

- How long will the meeting last? Will you have one speaker or two? Perhaps a long-time KOPS or a brand new member with an interesting story will be willing to speak.
- How long will the speaker(s) talk? Will there be a podium or will they sit in chairs? Will you serve refreshments?
- Do you have a layout planned for the room, including decorations, equipment, and a registration table with supplies and TOPS information?

Assign duties among your chapter members, utilizing their strengths and abilities. Do whatever works best for your chapter and your members—delegate, delegate, delegate. Some chapters may choose to have committees for their Open House meetings, and others do not. Some committees to consider: programming, publicity, invitations, decorations, and hospitality.

Sample TOPS Open House Meeting Agenda

First 15 minutes

Sign in (markers/pens, name tags and sign-in sheets at staffed table)

Browse information table, refreshments, mingling with chapter members

Next 30 minutes

Welcome message by chapter Leader with overview of TOPS

Talk by KOPS member or invited guest speaker

Two or three concise member presentations of testimonials (5-10 minutes)

10-minute video presentation of TOPS (contact Coordinator, if needed)

Last 15 minutes

Questions from audience

Closing remarks and invitation to join

Be sure to have your scale in a discreet location for new members



Start Spreading the News

Now that you have a theme and concrete plans for the Open House event, don't forget to let others know about it. Share the information about your chapter's meeting time, location and contact information. You might find it most efficient to complete all of your publicity pieces at the same time.

Helpful Tools

On the back cover of this document, you will find a blank black-and-white Open House poster template. You may photocopy this, insert all of the information about your event, copy it and distribute it throughout your community.

More Open House tools are available at www.tops.org. Click on "Member/Leader/Staff Area" then sign in. Click on "Forms and Documents" then on "PI-Forms." You will find logo sheets, fillable Open House postcard templates in color and black & white, fillable Open House poster templates in color and black & white, camera ready ads for Open House, TOPS Quick Facts, book-mark giveaway, TOPS News Report, and other materials that might come in handy. (Note: make sure you print postcards on 60-pound card stock for mailing.)

Take Action

Ask chapter members to supply 5, 10, 15, 20 names and addresses for *postcard invitations*. Set a mailing date.

Take flyers and posters to specific public *locations throughout the community* and post them. Try churches, schools, grocers, college campuses, community/senior centers, hospitals, medical clinics, libraries, gas stations, laundromats, busy sidewalks full of people, cars in parking lots, public restrooms, and other places you might know will provide good visibility.

Utilize local media. Tell reporters of the compelling member stories from your chapter—there are members with inspirational stories to share who can be your "hook" for pre-Open House publicity. Take advantage of free listings in community calendars. Get news releases to newspapers, radio stations, television stations, and any other media who share event information with your community. If there are specific health reporters in your area, make sure they receive information and an invitation to the Open House. When you fax, mail or email information, follow up with a phone call and offer to answer questions. Be aware of press deadline and

considerate of peak deadline times for all media. Remember to *print up a program* to share with the people attending your Open House. Include contact information plus meeting time, day, and location for future reference.

At the Open House

Assign members to greet people and talk with newcomers, and other members to staff the display and registration tables.

Display TOPS materials such as the chapter scrapbook, display of "before and after" photos of members, listing of events/contests/community or social activities, back issues of *TOPS News*, various TOPS flyers and tools such as *The Choice Is Mine* and its companion workbook.

Take action photos during the Open House and share them with *TOPS News* afterward.

Wrapping Up

Appropriate, timely follow-up is important after your event. How you follow-up can directly affect membership and future media coverage. It can motivate, inspire, and remind people of the importance of accountability.

- Clean up the Open House meeting site.
- Hold a debriefing session. Share what worked and what did not. Discuss what you might have done differently.
- Organize. Get all information—including summary of expenses and ideas for next time—and place it in a chapter file or scrapbook.
- Send thank you notes to the speakers, the volunteers, and the media who covered the event.
- Send thank you/reminder notes to visitors and new members with date/time/location of weekly meetings, including name and phone number of contact person.



OPEN HOUSE

Free to the Public!

**Take Off Pounds
Sensibly with:**



Weight-loss success

Nonprofit, low-cost program

**Ongoing support and
recognition**

Healthy lifestyle guidance

Expert Advice • Real results

**Everyone is
welcome to join us
(no obligation)!**

When:

Where:

For information call:



**TAKE OFF POUNDS
SENSIBLY**

Travel the Road to Success with TOPS!