

# Decision Making in GSAs

In order to run effective meetings and get things done as a group, your Gay-Straight Alliance should designate a process for making decisions as an organization. Be sure to familiarize yourselves with school policy first; some schools require major decisions to be approved by the Student Council and/or Administration. Also, you need to decide what role your club's advisor will play in the decision-making process.

## Possible decision-making models include:

**Unanimous** -- A process called **consensus** is used to make sure everyone at the meeting agrees on the decision. See below for more info on how to reach consensus at your meetings.

**Majority or 2/3 vote** -- This model usually works best when only club members present at the meeting are given a vote. You may want to publicize the meeting agenda beforehand so people will know what is being discussed (and will be more likely to show up if they feel strongly about the issue and want to be involved in the decision-making process).

**Hierarchy** -- club officers have ultimate decision-making power. This model may include further levels of decision-making power, such as Leaders-->President/Advisor-->Administration

## More About the Consensus Process:

Consensus-based decisions are achieved through discussion and must be approved by everyone at the meeting. A particular decision might be reshaped many times before consensus is reached. Groups that choose to use the consensus process often do so because voting on issues can divide membership and leave some people feeling unheard. Reaching consensus may also raise levels of commitment by group members because everyone is agreeing on a solution. The consensus-building process, however, requires time, discipline, and patience on the part of meeting participants, as well as a careful and attentive facilitator.

If your group is having trouble reaching consensus about a particular issue or question, try these tactics:

- Reword the consensus statement.
- Ask objectors to clearly state their feelings/reasons for objecting.
- See if the statement can be modified to accommodate the objection while still remaining acceptable to everyone else.
- Try to find consensus by asking, "**Can everyone live with this decision?**" This doesn't mean that everyone needs to be getting everything they want.

Although a very useful and often effective method for decision making, consensus is not possible or even applicable in every case. If you feel that the situation is unresolvable by consensus, don't be afraid to ask the group if everyone is willing to vote on it.



For more information and resources for Gay-Straight Alliances, contact GSA Network:  
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