



**AMERICAN
KENNEL CLUB®**

PARENT CLUB BEST PRACTICES

MEMBERSHIP

Your members are the beating hearts of your club. As a level of importance then, maintaining your current members and attracting new ones should be central to everything the club does. Having this process in place to ensure a constant stream of new members as well as having membership retention is what will secure your club's future for generations to come. The offices and the board of directors should be working for the membership of your club.

Membership Options:

- a. Open Membership- membership application is completed and submitted to the secretary. There are generally no criteria which must be met prior to application other than an interest in the breed and a willingness to subscribe to the objectives of the club. May or may not require sponsors.
- b. Semi-open Membership – An open membership with minimum criteria such as current or past ownership of the breed.
- c. Closed Membership – invited or sponsored by members due to the applicant having acquired knowledge of the breed standard. This can range in years from 1-10 years or in documented experience (such as participating in conformation events, performance events, etc.).
- d. How to choose.
 - a. Reasons for some restrictions.

- i. The membership can affect the future of the breed in many ways. One example is the standard. Some breeds have challenges from non-standard breeders to change the breed from historical criteria to current fads with no historical basis such as color, size, coat, etc. An open membership would allow these non-standard breeders to join and change the standard.
 - ii. Some parent clubs believe that novices should avail themselves of local clubs for initial mentoring before joining the parent club with more responsibilities.
 - iii. Some parent clubs find quorums are to obtain so they want members who are more likely to participate.
- b. Reasons for an open membership.
 - i. To encourage maximum involvement in the breed.

Membership classes. Club bylaws must define the club membership categories or classes. Each class should be clearly defined as to what rights and privileges these have. To make it easier to read the bylaws, divide the membership classes into those that have all the privileges of the club (including voting, serving on the board and committees) and those that have limited privileges which are defined.

- a. Some membership classes that generally have full privileges:
 - i. Individual (sometimes called Regular) – one voting member that is over 18 years of age.
 - ii. Family/Household – Open to 2 persons 18 years of age or older and who reside in the same household. Each person will have the privileges of the club including each having one vote. This was a popular category when all communications were via snail mail. This saved duplication of mailing. However, this class is not without some problems. The composition and the number of persons must be clearly defined. Individuals who join as a unit may have to rejoin (with all the application formalities) if the unit ceases to exist due to death, divorce, etc. In addition, there is a question as to whether the second individual is affected when the first is subject to discipline such as suspension or expulsion since the two are tied together into one membership.

- iii. Lifetime Membership – This is generally a regular member who has been given free or reduced dues on the occasion of obtaining certain threshold criteria such as length of membership or certain service.
- b. Examples of memberships which have limited privileges:
 - i. Junior – up to 18 years of age. Establish a lower limit such as 8, 9 or 10. Determine what happens when the junior reaches their 18th birthday. AKC’s previous model had the membership automatically convert to a regular membership. However, this automatic conversion may not be in the best interests of the club. For example, if the junior lives outside the USA, he/she could not then automatically convert to a regular membership as he/she does not qualify for that class of membership. In addition, it might be helpful to the club for a new application to be completed with up-to-date information and a signed commitment to the veracity and the agreement to the objectives of the club. The club could experience difficulty in depending on a minor’s statement.
 - ii. Youth – this was recently recommended by the AKC Delegate Junior Subcommittee as a way to bridge the gap while the youth was away at college/university or trade school.
 - iii. Associate – One person 18 years or older. Some clubs use this membership to get to know the applicant before they become a voting member. If this is the desire, this membership may have a set period such as one or two years. Other clubs use this membership to allow some participation before the applicant has obtained the time or experience required of a regular member. Other clubs find this class of membership a good fit for the people interested in the breed but not in AKC sports.
 - iv. Foreign membership – AKC’s current policy is that individuals outside of the United States may not have full privileges. After all, it is the American Kennel Club. If your current bylaws allow foreign members to have full privileges, you may have to grandfather those members as long as they maintain a continuous membership.

Membership fees

- a. When are they due? The due date is the first day of the determined fiscal year as defined in the bylaws.
- b. Setting the dues. One formula is to determine the yearly costs of doing business and then dividing this fee by the number of anticipated members. For example, the items that would be assessed include the annual corporate renewal fee, the insurance premium, accountant fees for filing taxes, and the cost of mailing publications. The committee generally sees dues range from free to \$60.
- c. Dues may differ by the class.
 - v. Items to consider when setting the dues are the costs involved in the administration of the class. For example, it might be more expensive to mail publication to foreign members so the dues might be adjusted for the increased costs.
 - vi. You might also have lower fees for non-voting members since they do not enjoy all the privileges of the club.
 - vii. You might also want to encourage certain types of membership by reducing or waiving the dues. Examples of this are junior and youth memberships.
 - viii. You might also want to reward members with length of service or outstanding service with reduced dues. An example of this is Lifetime members.
 - ix. The board should review the dues yearly during the quarter before the dues are due. This gives the board time to change all renewal notices and to inform the membership of any change.
- d. The bylaws might provide in maximum dues or maximum increases per year.
 - x. Carefully consider a maximum sum that would allow the club to cover all expenses if costs are inflated. Also consider the ability to assess additional dues if a catastrophic event occurs. On the other hand, do not make it so large that it scares the membership from passing needed bylaws revisions.

Changing class of membership. Provide a mechanism for change in membership. If a member wants to change the class of membership, what is the procedure?

Membership Chairs. Membership chairs assist the officers

- a. All membership records are Club records which are the responsibility of the secretary. However, many clubs have Membership Chairs which help the secretary in this task.
- b. Tasks may include:
 - xi. Processing the membership application by forwarding to the secretary after reviewing for completeness.
 - xii. Maintaining the membership data base,
 - xiii. Notifying successful applicants of their acceptance as a member,
- a. Maintaining the membership list. These lists are then used by the officers in sending out dues renewals, maintaining adequate records for items such as Lifetime Membership criteria, membership lists for ballots and quorums, etc.

Election of Membership – The club should determine how each applicant for membership shall be approved by the club.

- a. Generally, a vote of 2/3 of the body is required for membership.
- b. Options for election
 - a. Vote by the full membership
 - b. Vote by the board
- c. When the applicant receives a negative vote:
 - a. Applicants with negative vote – may be presented by one of the of the applicant’s endorsers at the next annual meeting of the club and members may elect such applicant by secret ballot with a favorable vote of 75% of those present.
 - b. If the applicant for membership is rejected, the Club should determine if this person can reapply and the timeframe at which this is allowed.
 - c.

Recruitment of members

Application form

- a. Should indicate the requirements of Membership
 - 1. Agree to abide by the club’s Bylaws and the Rules and Regulations of the American Kennel Club
 - 2. Applicant’s name, address, occupation and signature.

3. Determine any membership requirements that your club feels are significant concerns for your club.
4. Processing fee or a year's dues to accompany the form.

Termination of Membership – Your club should have the ways of which a membership is terminated. They can include:

- a. By resignation – written notice is provided to the Secretary, as long as the member does not owe any debt to the club.
- b. By lapsing – A member is considered as lapsed and automatically terminated if the membership dues remain unpaid. Determine the timeframe for this. (for ex. 90 days)
 1. The club may grant an additional number of days of grace (90 days) to a delinquent member in meritorious cases.
- c. By expulsion – membership may be terminated by expulsion and the process of how this can occur should be clearly outlined in the bylaws.