

Keys to

Successful and Fun FRG Meetings

Tips for hosting great meetings:

- Be prepared, be prepared, be prepared!
- Provide time for mingling and socializing – one purpose of FRG meetings is to allow members to meet and connect
- Choose a comfortable, easy-to-access location: ACS and the Yellow Ribbon Room are usually well-equipped for meetings
- Consider childcare issues and arrange for care if available
- Keep the official portion of meetings to under one hour
- Make meetings fun AND informative so members will want to come (no one likes to leave an FRG meeting feeling they've wasted their time because there was no valuable information, or because they felt uncomfortable or bored)
- Keep a predictable schedule (for example, always meet on the same day in the week in the first, second, third or fourth week of the month) and choose a time that works well with most schedules
- Encourage participation by all
- Be consistent with meetings (*NEVER cancel "because we have no new information" – that is a sign that there was poor planning, because there is always a way to present topics to help spouses!*)
- Send out invitations and reminders well in advance with all the information (who, what, where, when, why)
- Place a phone call to those who don't usually attend to personally invite them to the meeting (use the phone tree)
- Send out meeting minutes and pictures after the meeting so those who missed out will be encouraged to come next time and still be informed
- Properly coordinate with guest speakers: let them know how many spouses to expect at the meeting, how much time they have, and give them a proper introduction and thank you
- Use resources for planning and generating ideas: other FRG leaders, your FRG advisor, ACS employees, the Commander, the Chaplain, <http://www.myarmyonesource.com> and www.armyfrg.org/

Meeting Planning Checklist

Pre-planning:

- ✓ Determine date, time, location, meeting purpose and theme
- ✓ Coordinate with guest speakers, if any
- ✓ Coordinate with FRG co-leaders and FRG secretary (find substitute to take notes if secretary can't attend)
- ✓ Reserve room
- ✓ Advertise meeting (date, location, time) and provide the agenda 2 weeks in advance
- ✓ Inform commander, FRSA and Senior FRG advisor of date and location
- ✓ Go to military one source (MOS) and see if there are written articles you can download and pass out on the meeting on your chosen topic (if you ordering materials, allow 7-14 days for shipping)
- ✓ Arrange childcare, if needed
- ✓ Attend community and garrison-based information sessions and Battalion-level steering committee meetings to obtain information for further distribution

The week before:

- ✓ Confirm with guest speaker
- ✓ Confirm location
- ✓ Confirm childcare arrangements
- ✓ Give handouts to FRSA for photocopying
- ✓ Gather all materials needed (gifts, prizes, packets, etc.)
- ✓ Get info from FRSA, community sessions to distribute
- ✓ Ask key callers to personally invite new members by phone, call on members who haven't recently attended meetings to remind them and issue a personal invitation
- ✓ Ask commander for an update the FRG leader can give
- ✓ Prepare name tags if you use them
- ✓ Prepare for ice breaker activity

After the meeting:

- ✓ Send out thank you notes
- ✓ Follow up on questions and issues raised
- ✓ Send out meeting summary, prepared by FRG secretary



SAMPLE AGENDA

- Welcome and introductions (*or Ice Breaker*)
- Unit update from the commander
- Special topic (*guest speaker*)
- FRG hail and farewell, volunteer recognition and family news
- Announcements, community news and updates
- Questions and discussions
- Sign up for upcoming events, volunteer opportunities
- Conclude

Following the meeting, please join us for snacks & visiting!

Meeting Management

- ★ Keep the meeting moving – don't let the group get stuck on a discussion that is off-topic
- ★ Don't be afraid to take charge – you are the FRG leader and responsible for keeping things flowing
- ★ Foster involvement by calling on FRG members for their ideas and contributions
- ★ Keep the meeting positive: if there are issues or concerns that emerge maintain a constructive, not negative, tone but ask anyone complaining to stop
- ★ If side-discussions take place turn in the direction of the people talking and wait for them to stop; or ask them to wait until after the meeting
- ★ Thank everyone for the contributions, listen carefully when others speak, maintain eye contact
- ★ Take AFTB classes, FRG training at ACS and online classes at <http://www.myarmyonesource.com> for more techniques and training

17 Must-Try Informational Meeting Themes

- Making “cents” of financial readiness:** Invite the Financial Readiness person from ACS to speak, pass out “PayDay” candy bars and booklets on investing, debt management, etc. available for free from USAA
- “Desserts” is “Stressed” spelled backwards:** Invite a health care / counseling professional to discuss stress management, while you enjoy sweets! Pass out stress management booklets or 60 Seconds to a Better You CD¹
- Deal or No Deal:** Everyone discusses their favorite way to cut costs, tips for saving money on and off post...the person with the best idea wins a “100 Grand” candy bar or other prize, pass out free Taking Charge of Your Money CD¹
- Mission Paid or Volunteer Position:** When you have new spouses or many looking for jobs or worthwhile things to do (i.e. during deployment) invite the employment readiness or volunteer corps coordinator to discuss opportunities
- It’s Your Move:** Provide or discuss information on preparing for a PCS move (a good spring topic, before summer PCS season)...pass out PCS guides available from USAA, ACS or MOS
- Separation Preparation or Dating from a distance:** Share tips on how to stay close and connected to your Soldier during periods of separation, pass out Staying Strong as a Couple CD¹
- Mission and tradition:** Provide an overview of unit history and mission, make it interesting to spouses and help them understand their Soldier’s role in the unit, pass out a small token or keepsake (a coin, poem, words to a unit song on scrapbook paper, pin, etc.) as a small gift for the spouse to recognize his / her role in supporting the Soldier
- File in Style:** go over paperwork that every spouse should have in the event of emergency or mobilization (POAs, wills, birth certificates, etc.) but make it a “fancy” affair and serve frilly appetizers
- Supporting your Sweetie:** Discuss ways to support your Soldier during redeployment transition
- The Power to Prepare:** Go over emergency preparedness; pass out Red Cross info (magnets or brochures)
- Health care fair:** *Version 1:* Invite a health care professional to come give some tips for taking care of yourself (especially prior to cold and flu season), *Version 2:* Set up a time to meet at the clinic for flu shots and to pick up free over the counter meds from a nurse, *Version 3:* Meet at the gym for physical fitness assessments and make goals for physical conditioning (*Ask at the clinic ahead of time if they have guides or booklets you can pass out*)
- Talk then walk:** Convene the meeting outdoors (at your post’s recreational area or even at a group of park benches) and then take a group walk together for fitness, pass out Walking CD¹
- Army Strong:** Show the “Army Family Strong” video at the beginning of your meeting (available for download at www.army.mil), pass out These Boots: A spouse's guide to stepping up and standing tall during deployment CD¹
- Heroes at home:** Celebrate military spouse appreciation day in May discussing all the ways military spouses make a difference, pass out a poem in dollar store frames or on pretty paper or copies of Military Spouse magazine (check ACS)
- Fall into fun:** (Sept.) Provide info on opportunities on post (clubs & classes), encouraging participation
- Groovy Movie night:** Show powerpoint slideshow or movie from Soldiers downrange of their activities and environment while deployed, using 60s style invitation and pass out one daisy to each spouse to go home with
- Know your Post and Community** – Feature practical information and entertaining stories about the surrounding area; including information on local services, feature a local dish or include a guided tour

¹Available from Military One Source

Activity Ideas*

Travel Tales Told: Everyone shares an experience about traveling • **Cookie Exchange:** Everyone brings 2-3 dozen cookies to the meeting – the types of cookies are mixed up so everyone goes home with different kinds of cookies (variation: if troops are deployed, send ½ down to them) • **International Cuisine night:** Everyone brings a dish from the area of the country or world that they are from....great if you have a lot of foreign-born spouses • **Chinese New Year** (beginning of February) – eat Chinese take out, wear red for good luck or **Cinco de Mayo** – bring your favorite “fiesta” dish or **July Fourth Cookout** • **Craft night:** coordinate through your MWR craft shop • **Care packages:** create care packages for the deployed Soldiers • **Cooking lesson:** a talented spouse in your group teaches a cooking or baking lesson....yum! • **Make it, Bake it (or fake it!) and Take it:** Exchange homemade crafts or baked goods (or cleverly disguised bought ones!) • **Game night** – Bunco, bingo or card games • **Pizza:** everyone brings a different topping for pizza, make pizzas before the “official” start to the meeting....bake in the oven while you meet, and then enjoy the dinner together at the end • **Pamper and prepare:** combine any aspect of deployment or emergency preparedness with pampering activities, such as facials or manicures • **Be Ready, Eat Spaghetti:** Enjoy a simple spaghetti dinner and focus the meeting on being ready for a deployment – hand out deployment handbooks • **Book Swap:** Everyone brings books or magazines they are done reading, and goes home with new ones

*Most of these are based on food because many are more likely to come to a meeting if they can eat!

Note: take the pressure off of fundraising by asking for donations or for everyone to chip in to pay for food or craft costs – most don’t mind bringing \$5 or so for dinner if they are notified ahead of time – but do keep prices low.