



Starting a Group

Welcome aboard! It is great to hear that you are interested in starting a The Life You Can Save group. Remember that for every five people you encourage to take the The Life You Can Save pledge for just one year and give to the most effective charities, you save a life!¹

Please come and meet others running local groups on Facebook [here](#) and explore [this folder](#) for ideas and resources for activities and events (though we also invite you to come up with your own).

Enjoy!

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[“This is an amazing opportunity - I’d start the group myself but I’m too busy / not a student at the university etc.”](#)

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¹ Based on average US lifetime earnings of [\\$1.6million](#) and working for 40 years and donating 1%, each person would donate \$400. From five people that is \$2000, enough to [save a child's life](#) through the [Against Malaria Foundation](#).

1. Find (co-)organizers

There are several good reasons for finding co-organizers. Running a group is so much easier and more enjoyable when there is more than just you organizing events. If you are starting a student group, we, like most universities, require there to be at least two people running it. Finally, you may not have time to run the group yourself but want to help get a group off of the ground.

Quality over quantity is a good rule of thumb - it is probably preferable to have 2-3 very dedicated people rather than 10 who can “help out”. And while having any kind of support is great, consider the qualities important for starting a group: leadership, good organizational and communication skills...maybe you know someone who’s already involved in activism or organizing volunteer groups. Talk to your friends, family and colleagues, but also try reaching beyond your immediate network. Ask the people you know to ask the people *they* know. If you are on Facebook, post about your starting a group on your timeline and have your friends do the same. For meetup groups, buying an account with [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com/) could help you to find a team as well as advertise your events to a wider audience in the future. Student groups can email people and groups around campus that might have similar interests. See our [sample pitches](#) below.

If you are willing to put in a bit more effort, student groups can try some of the following:

- If the university has volunteering services, see if they can advertise for a place on your committee.
- Ask people with access to email lists - professors, student society leaders, and so on - to email the pitch to their lists.
- Give announcements at the beginning/end of classes or events of other societies. Get permission for a short 3-5 minute presentation. Target large relevant (e.g. politics and philosophy) classes and societies. (For more advice see the [Guide to Activism](#) p.6-7.)
- Put up posters. You can adapt [this poster template](#).
- Leave some [leaflets](#) around campus, with your contact details on the back.
- Try tabling - standing at a stall with the aim of getting people to sign up to hear more about the development of the group. This is really useful if you can get to student activity/freshers/volunteering fairs. Ideally have a spreadsheet, in order to prevent illegible handwriting! Make sure there is a section for “Interested in volunteering”. See [here](#) for more advice on tabling.

Finally, if none of these methods work and you have the time, try throwing an event to see if it generates any interest in starting a group. See the [rest of our folder](#) for some event ideas.

2. Have your first team meeting

[Example agenda](#) for a first team meeting

Tips for running a committee meeting

- Have an agenda before the meeting:
 - GoogleDocs is excellent for agendas as it can be edited during the meeting and everyone

can view edits as they are made. The 'Outline' format (with indented numbered points) is helpful.

- Circulate the agenda beforehand if possible so people can get a chance to think about it.
 - People can pre-add points nested under agenda items (with their names or initials)
- Meetings should have a Minuter and a Chair (they can be the same person if necessary):
 - The Minuter should record the minutes of the meeting as the meeting progresses, ideally to GoogleDocs so that others can see/add to/correct them. The Minuter should include Action Points (APs) in the minutes - i.e. things that need doing next; each AP should be assigned to someone (who could be a delegator).
 - The Chair is usually the person leading the group or the person who has the most familiarity with the issues being discussed. The Chair ensures that the meeting covers everything it needs to, that different parts of the meeting take appropriate amounts of time, that APs are stated and the immediate next steps are clear and that everyone gets a chance to speak.
- When discussing proposals, to avoid anchoring on one solution:
 - Describe the problem before proposing solutions.
 - List possible solutions before discussing the merits of particular answers.
 - Ensure pros & cons of each solution are covered.
 - Give everyone a couple of minutes to think about their preferred solution before you ask everyone for their opinions.
- Motivate and involve people:
 - If there are new people, have an introductions session at the start of the meeting.
 - Make sure that everyone understands what is going on.
 - Make sure everyone has something to go away and do (i.e. an AP) or at least a way to get involved in the near future.
 - Have a plan for post-meeting socialising.
 - Optional: Have drinks and snacks.
- Don't make meetings too long or too short:
 - Don't meet if there is nothing to discuss.
 - Have breaks or multiple meetings if there is a lot to discuss.

Tips for running a committee

- Ask others to do things. Tell them it will look good on their resume and how it will help develop new skills. Don't worry about asking for help - people are often looking for ways to help.
- Try to assign tasks to a specific person with specific due dates...otherwise they never get done! Send out reminders before the deadline if you can.
- Give specific instructions to people OR a clear end goal with the encouragement to come up with their own ways to go about it. Which you choose will often depend on the person you are asking - some people want easy tasks, some people want responsibility.
 - For example, instead of saying "contact press office for media coverage", you may want to request of a volunteer: "First, create a rough pitch for your story; second, call our university's press office, and deliver the pitch; and third, request an appointment with a press officer" OR "I want this story in at least one local paper by this time next week, but the more the merrier - can you try to make that happen?"
- Bundle unglamorous tasks with glamorous tasks - e.g. picking up material from the printing shop but then designing the posters to be printed.
- Pair someone up with a more experienced member on a large task (like planning an event), so

that they can learn the ropes first-hand.

- Consider creating and assigning official positions within the group, like Advertising and Media Relations Specialist, or Research Assistant. This makes their role more concrete (they have a clearer idea of what they are responsible for) and impressive-sounding (they can put the title on their resume, for example).
- Be a considerate communicator. **Thank people.** Deliver tasks as requests rather than instructions. Give constructive feedback and encouragement. Announce successes and jobs well done at meetings.
- Help people work their way up to doing bigger and bigger things. Give them increasing responsibility for tasks.
- Try to have someone who is willing to take over the role of running the group if you leave. The above tips will help you to create a competent team.

Example committee structure

- President (*the person with overall responsibility for the group*) - the public face of the group (e.g. introduces speakers at talks, represents the group in the press etc.); calls and chairs committee meetings; ensures that the group organises regular, successful events and activities; meets with the central TLYCS team twice monthly; ensures a smooth handover to the next committee
- Treasurer (*responsible for the group's finances*) - updates the committee on past income and expenditure and shares projections of future income and expenditure; manages the group's bank account if they have one
- Vice President (*assists the president*) - shares some of the president's workload when the president is particularly busy; represents the group (e.g. at meetings, events, interviews) when the president is otherwise engaged; helps the president with strategy and decision-making
- Secretary (*general dogsbody!*) - takes minutes at meetings and distributes to participants afterwards; arranges locations for committee meetings; other administrative tasks as they arise (e.g. typing up email addresses)
- Publicity Officer (*publicises events and activities*) - designs publicity materials (e.g. posters); ensures that events and activities are well publicised through a variety of avenues
- Communications Officer (*responsible for the group's public-facing image*) - manages the group's space on thelifecycleyoucansave.com; manages the group's presence on social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter); emails the group's mailing list; liaises with the press
- Events Officers (*organise event logistics*) - arrange the logistics of events such as booking rooms, buying refreshments, bringing leaflets and questionnaires etc.

(For more advice see the [Guide to Activism](#) p14-15.)

3. [Optional] Register as an official (student) group

Universities usually encourage student groups to register as official university groups and offer advice, publicity (e.g. space on web pages, on notice boards on mail-outs and at fairs), resources (e.g. rooms and AV equipment for events, free printing/copying, a university email address) and funding in return. Your university should have a webpage or handbook with all the information you'll need to establish a new group and make the most of the services on offer. There may be central committees that it would be useful for members of your group to stand for election for (such as Campaigns, Student Activities, Clubs

and Societies, Raise And Give) and you should also try to get in touch with like-minded groups in order to tell their members about The Life You Can Save, team up with them for an event and/or avoid clashing with their events.

From The Life You Can Save's perspective, it is by no means necessary for your group to draw up and abide by a constitution; in fact, it is probably a hindrance more than a help. However, most universities require this from student groups seeking recognition (in order to use the university name, receive funding, etc.); it is meant to give long-term structure to the group by formally specifying its purpose, leadership, scope and decision-making process. Universities usually publish their own unique list of requirements that submitted constitutions must fulfil; this can usually be found online on the website of the "Office of Student Life" (the fastest way is generally to Google "[university name] student group constitution"). The requirements list will generally specify some of the following:

- A required format. For example, Article 1: Name, Article 2: Statement of Purpose, etc.
- Information that is required to be in these articles. We've tried to make our sample article below fairly inclusive; however, there will inevitably be requirements our example does not cover. Go ahead and write these out yourself; if you have any questions, feel free to [ask Josh](#).
- Required passages. For example, UC Berkeley requires all groups to state that "We will not haze according to California State Law." Required passages can be copied and pasted from the requirements list onto the constitution in the appropriate place.

If your university doesn't have any specific requirements for constitutions, that's great news! You can just copy and paste the [sample constitution](#) provided below and submit it.

4. Make use of social media

Facebook

Create a Facebook group (we are trying to have just the one The Life You Can Save page on Facebook):

- Go to Home > GROUPS (left-hand panel) > Create Group.
- (You guessed it) Create a Group.
- Post updates to the group.
- If you want a particular message to be advertised as widely as possible then 'pin' it to the top, post it on your own profile too and ask people to share it.
- Create events using the ⚙ settings button in the top right. Make sure the 'invite all members' box is ticked. Easy.

Other social media (less important)

There may also be other social media tools similar to Facebook that are specific to your country, location or college that might be useful to use. Other popular social media sites are [Google+](#), [Pinterest](#) and [Foursquare](#).

5. Put on your first event

You've laid the groundwork; now you're ready to go with your first event! This could be anything from a large public launch with a guest speaker (which could bring in more committee members) to a small

meetup of people discussing Peter Singer's ideas. See the guide to [creating an event](#) and the rest of this folder for specific event ideas. A speaker event is probably the most effective way of launching a group. If you are looking at having a guest speaker this needs to be planned well in advance (see our notes on [guest speakers](#); you can also use our pre-prepared [Event: Guest Speaker & Introduction to Global Poverty](#)).

6. Set up a mailing list

For students, we recommend using [groupspaces.com](#) which has [free plans for student groups](#). Simply sign up with your student email address and follow the instructions to create a group. These instructions should give you the option to create an email address in the format [\[name\]@groupspaces.com](#). You can use this email address to email the whole group at once. Then individually enter email addresses, upload a spreadsheet with details of your members, or ask interested members to enter their own details.

If you do not get on with groupspaces, we also recommend using [Google Groups](#) or [mailchimp.com](#) which both work in very similar ways and both offer free services.

7. Develop and maintain a community

- Get people's email addresses so that you can remind them about upcoming events. But don't spam! As a rule of thumb, don't send out more than one mass email per week.
- Memorize names. It's easier for you because you have a mailing list. Then use people's names often so other people will have reminders (trust us, even if they've been coming for months, they may well be keeping up a cunning ruse of not knowing anybody's name). Also, it makes people like you more. It's a win all around.
- Food! Everybody loves food. Bring snacks to meetings that aren't too messy and are ethical (which might just mean cheap so that you've got more money to donate!) and be careful of special diets! Fruit is usually a good bet.
- Always have a set date for restarting after a break. Send out an email the day before.
- If you're running an event, make sure that at least you and one other person say you're attending right off the bat because that will encourage people to want to come. Remind the people who come regularly to turn up and tell them every now and then about how important it is.
- Encourage communication outside of meetings. Chat to each other in other situations. Encourage people to exchange emails / IMs / Skype names. Set the precedent by starting yourself.
- Link people individually to other people in the community who you think would be up their alley. Wait til the moment's ripe, then set them up with an intro email and a topic to talk about.
- Ask people to invite their friends occasionally. Do they know anybody who'd be interested in coming?

Appendix 1: Sample Pitches to Start a Group

Please edit these pitches to suit your needs - unfortunately this is not a "one email fits all" situation. The first has a more commercial style and is for people who cannot start a group themselves, for whatever

reason. The second is more personal and is for people who are looking for friends to join their team. But you can mix and match the styles.

“This is an amazing opportunity - I’d start the group myself but I’m too busy / not a student at the university etc.”

[Subject:] Opportunity: student needed to be President of a new student group aimed at fighting extreme poverty

Fight extreme poverty - [The Life You Can Save](#) is a movement of people fighting extreme poverty. Our message is simple: you can save a life! We want to make everyone aware of how easily they can help people in developing countries by giving to the most cost-effective charities. Watch our [3-minute video](#) to find out more.

Become president of a student society - It will look great on your CV and you can learn new skills, meet like-minded people and make a difference.

Get guidance every step of the way - Wouldn’t know where to start? Don’t worry. One-on-one mentoring with our friendly team, detailed pre-planned events and our launch manual will help you through.

Since our launch in 2009 The Life You Can Save has grown to over sixteen thousand members. We are now bringing The Life You Can Save to universities around the world. By founding a student group at [college name] you would be joining a community of people like yourself who want to improve the world and save lives. You will also have the opportunity to work with the world-renowned philosopher Peter Singer.

Apply now: [Either your email address or bit.ly/OW5BST]. Together we will save lives!
Any questions? Email [either your email address or information@thelifyoucansave.com].

I look forward to hearing from you,

[signature]

“Found a group with me, woo!”

[Greeting]

[Personal introduction]

I am looking for interested students to start a [The Life You Can Save](#) group at [university name] - we are a movement of people fighting extreme poverty. Our message is simple: *you can save a life!* You can do so easily and without sacrifice, by supporting effective organizations that fight global poverty. Check out our 3-minute clip here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onsldBanynY>.

Since our launch in 2009 we have grown to over sixteen thousand members. Now, around the world people are starting up The Life You Can Save groups at their universities and in their local communities. Are you interested in helping me found the student group at [university name]?

Our group will:

- Educate people about global poverty and the suffering it causes and how each day people around the world watch their loved ones die from easily preventable causes.
- Teach people how they can act with us to fight this suffering - how to identify the best charities and how each one of us can save real human lives and enhance our own lives in the process.
- Hold a range of events on campus from talks to film screenings, from discussions to tabling.

We want to build a supportive and welcoming community of people on campus who want to make the world a better place and fight poverty. We want to save lives.

If you'd like to get involved, [how to contact you]

[signature]

Appendix 2: Sample Constitution

We've written a sample constitution as an example of the style and substance most colleges desire. It should require only a bit of editing to bring into line with your own institution's requirements and your own preferences.

Article 1: Name

The Life You Can Save at [university name] (TLYCS@[university abbreviation])

Article 2: Statement of Purpose

- 1: To spread and make practical the central ideas in Peter Singer's book 'The Life You Can Save'.
- 2: To aim to get as many resources as possible put towards reducing extreme poverty in as effective a way as possible.
- 3: To promote the idea that each one of us who is comfortably off has a responsibility to act to reduce extreme poverty.
- 4: To encourage pledges on www.thelifeyoucansave.com.
- 5: To recognize that not all aid is successful and support the idea that it is important for individuals to think carefully about where they give and to give to proven highly effective charities.
- 6: To aim to provide an active, supportive, friendly community for individuals interested in the issues surrounding international aid and development, charity, philanthropy and effective giving.
- 7: To aim to create a more positive culture of giving.
- 8: To endeavor to achieve this by holding relevant talks, social events, discussions, workshops, campaigns and/or fundraising events.

Article 3: Criteria for Membership

- 1: All registered [university name] students are eligible for membership.

2: Community members and students from other universities are always welcome at the group's events, unless otherwise specified.

3: Members of the group will be considered for expulsion if they create a disruptive environment for other members. Prior to expulsion, the member will receive an explicit verbal warning, and an additional explicit electronic or written warning. The individual in question will have one final opportunity to appeal to the Committee before expulsion.

Article 4: Structure and Duties of the Committee

1: The Committee shall include the following officers: President, Treasurer, and Secretary.

2: The President will represent the organization, conduct Committee and general meetings, assign duties to and supervise officers, schedule and plan elections and chart a vision for the organization.

3: The Treasurer will maintain the account of the organization, work with the Committee and membership to determine budgets, apply for available funding and coordinate other fundraising activities, pay bills of the organization when receipts for expenditures are turned in, submit quarterly reports to the membership, and disburse monies as the organization may direct.

4: The Secretary will maintain a yearly calendar of activities and goals, keep minutes of meetings, give written notice to all members of meetings and the agenda to be covered, issue press releases when deemed appropriate by the Committee, maintain the group's email list and tally votes during any voting procedure.

Article 5: Election and Removal of Officers

1: Any members of the organization who show demonstrated commitment are eligible for candidacy.

2: Officers may only hold one position at a time. There is no term limit.

3: All officers shall serve for at least one semester. Elections for the officers of the forthcoming semester will take place before the final week of the current semester.

4: The candidate for each office receiving a simple majority of votes cast at the election will be considered the victor. In the event that no candidate receives a simple majority, the current President has discretion as to which candidate with the most votes shall hold the office.

Article 6: Dissolution

1: Dissolution of the group shall be decided by consensus of the committee.

2: In case of dissolution, all funds shall be given to one of The Life You Can Save's recommended charities.

Article 7: Amendment

1: Amendments can be proposed by any member of the Committee.

2: At least one week prior to a vote, the Secretary must distribute the proposal to the Committee.

3: A majority vote shall be required to amend this Constitution.

If your institution requires contact information for the international organization The Life You Can Save, please use:

info@thelifeyoucansave.org

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