

DEVELOPING A CONSTITUTION

What is a Constitution?

A constitution is a basic set of rules for the daily running of your club. It details your name, objects, methods of management and other conditions under which your club or group operates and states the reasons for its existence.

Why Do You Need a Constitution?

Constitutions:

1. Explain to members and non-members what your club is about.
2. Provide guidelines for the daily running of your club.
3. Help resolve internal problems.
4. Are a legal necessity if your group wishes to become incorporated.
5. Can help in seeking resources from other organisations, such as a government agency.

What Level of Detail Should You Include?

A constitution can be extremely simple, containing only the basic outline explaining who you are, what you are set up for and detailing fundamental management procedures. The extent to what detail you include in the rules depends on the needs or formality at the time of your clubs formation and on your thoughts about the projected needs of the club as it grows. Many details relating to minor management matters are best included within bylaws or regulations thus keeping your constitution flexible and easy to operate within.

What to Avoid?

A constitution can be made up of two parts: the rules, which include the basic principles of the group and can be changed only by a General Meeting; and the regulations or by-laws, which can be changed by the committee. You can place almost anything within a constitution. However many aspects of your club's operation are more easily handled outside the formality of the rules. For instance, you would not include the membership charges or club colours in the rules. The rules in your constitution should relate to the administration of the club.

If you choose to use this document as the basis for your constitution it is important to make sure it will meet all of your needs. If there are provisions you are unclear about or feel are not covered, seek advice from other groups, consultants or lawyers as to appropriate wording or look at other constitutions by taking the following steps:

1. Go to the Companies Office website (www.societies.govt.nz)
2. Click on Name Search.
3. Type in the first word of a name of an incorporated society you know of or a keyword that will help you find a similar group (eg Youth).
4. Click on the name of a group whose constitution you want to look at.
5. Click on *Documents* and you will see a list of the most recent registered versions of the group's rules as well as recent annual accounts.