

How to Start a Conservation Club at school!

If you want to start a Conservation or Environmental Club at school, the first thing you should do is talk to a couple of schoolmates to see if they would be interested in joining. You're not likely to get permission if it's just you who wants to start one.

Now that you've got a few of you interested in starting the conservation club, you and your friends should give some thought to what you'd like the club to do. Keep it simple to start:

- Work on issues around the school, such as food waste in the lunch room or littering in the hallways or on the grounds...**OR**
- Create something positive at the school like a butterfly or vegetable garden...**OR**
- Be a club that educates the rest of school about conservation or environmental issues with such things as poster campaigns, morning announcements, or arranging for guest speakers for assemblies...**OR**
- Work on issues in the community such as helping older neighbors with yard work or partnering with a local park or environmental organization to assist with a project of theirs, such as water quality testing.
- Find a teacher willing to be your faculty advisor.
- Decide on a name of your club.
- With the support of that teacher, you may want to create a mission statement or decide to wait and do it at the first meeting. Your advisor can help you develop it if you want to do it now.

Make an appointment with the Principal to present your ideas for starting the club and what you would like to accomplish. If you have a simple, but well thought out plan, the Principal is more likely to give permission.

- Ask the principal for a meeting date and time for your first club meeting.

Once you get permission, it's time to set a meeting date, time and place with the principal and your advisor and then advertise! Write up an invitation or advertisement. Use whatever resources your school has available that you can get permission to use:

- Invite kids to your meeting on the morning announcements, especially as your first meeting nears.
- If you have a school newspaper, or parent newsletter, place an announcement in every issue.
- If your school has a Facebook page, ask to be allowed to place an announcement there.
- If allowed, place posters around the school, in the hallways, classrooms, lunch room, gym, announcing the new club and the first meeting date, time, and place.
- Be sure to talk it up with other kids, too; not just your friends!

For your first meeting:

- Decide on an agenda. Create a flier or pamphlet with the agenda in it.
- Thank everyone for coming. Explain the purpose and mission of the club
- Unless it is in the pamphlet, pass around an attendance sheet asking for each member's name, homeroom number and teacher, and school email address, but be sure to explain that you only need this information to contact them about meetings and other club business.
 - If they don't want to give out their email, or if it isn't permitted, just stick with homeroom notices or whatever other ways your school permits.
 - Collect this information and create a place, like a notebook, to keep track of attendances and contact information.
- Do you want to start with an activity right away? Before the meeting:
 - Arrange it with the principal, your advisor, and anyone else who might be involved. For example, arrange with the lunch ladies a time and date if you want to empty the garbage to measure food waste. Follow their instructions on how to clean up afterward so you don't leave a bigger mess than you started with.
 - Announce the activity, and the who, what, why, where, when at the meeting and ask who wants to participate.

- Would you rather start with a survey to find out what your new club members want to do? Survey Monkey makes it easy to create one online and it tallies the results for you. Be sure to include only ideas that you know you will be able and allowed to do.
- Do you want to create a mission statement with the new members? Explain that a mission statement is a sentence or two that describes your club's goals. Your school probably has one. You can use it as an example. You can also use the mission statement from an environmental organization like SAFE Worldwide as a model.
- Do you want the group to create a logo or mascot for the club? An activity like this would make new members feel like they are part of something new and important. You could provide paper and crayons or colored pencils for kids to create designs, and then vote on the favorite.

After the meeting:

Discuss with your founding members how you think it went. What went well? What could you do better next time?

- If you announced an activity, be sure to organize it as soon as possible if you haven't already done so. For example, for the food waste activity:
 - confirm with the lunch ladies;
 - be sure you have all the supplies you'll need, such as extra garbage bags, non-latex gloves, a scale, some kind of cleaning agent like Windex, and paper towels. (the lunch ladies should have all of these). You might want to include masks for this activity, too, because the cleaning agent could be irritating.
 - Get out parent permission slips for all volunteers so parents are aware that their children are handling others' old food and cleaning supplies.
- Publicize your efforts so the school knows what you're doing and why.
- As the time gets close, be sure to confirm with those who said they wish to participate that they will be there.
- You may want one of your members to take photos of the activity so you can start a scrapbook or put them on the school website.

If you took a survey, see what activities the group liked, rank order their ideas and plan the most popular one first to be arranged and announced at the next meeting. If it's possible, at the meeting, delegate responsibilities to new members who volunteer. For example, if they want to plant something,

- who will get permission from the principal and set a date, place, and time;
- who will get parent permission slips from the office and distribute and collect them;
- who will find supplies (this may require asking for donations of seeds, equipment for digging, etc.);
- who will arrange publicity so others can help if they want; who will remind volunteers as time comes near.

Write thank-you notes to the Principal, the faculty advisor, and anyone else who helped make it happen (like the lunch ladies or the maintenance staff) or possibly parents who came in to help.

Once you have completed an activity, celebrate! Have a small party, with everyone bringing snacks or drinks and cups, plates, and napkins. Display the photos for everyone to see, and congratulate each other!

Further suggestions:

- Always ask permission to do anything, from the principal, your advisor, the parents of volunteers for any activity.
- Always work with your faculty advisor.
- Always make sure you have everything you need for a meeting or an activity. Making a checklist would help.
- Always include everyone who wants to help and thank them for their time.
- Keep on publicizing whatever you do and talking to other kids so you might create more interest.
- Always write **thank-you notes** to any adult who helps.

- Always look to identify the best things that happen along the way. For example after 3 months of measuring food waste, you found it decreasing in every lunch period. Your whole club should know that and be proud.

If you aren't comfortable starting your own, there are clubs you can join:

- Jane Goodall Organization: <https://rootsandshoots.org/>
- Nature Conservancy's "Nature Kids" Program:
 - Website: <https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/>
 - (Look for the "Kids" section for activities and resources.)
- The National Wildlife Federation's "Eco-Schools USA"***
 - Website: <https://www.nwf.org/Eco-Schools-USA>
 -
- Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts**
 - Boy Scouts of America**: <https://www.scouting.org/>
 - Girl Scouts of the USA**: <https://www.girlscouts.org/>
- Earth Rangers
 - Website: <https://www.earthrangers.com/>
- Junior Ranger Programs (National Parks Service)
 - Website: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/youthprograms/juniorranger.htm>
- Kids for Conservation (TNC)
 - Website: <https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/volunteer-and-advocate/>
 - (You can find specific "Kids" activities on their main website.)
- The Sierra Club's "Sierra Kids"***
 - Website: <https://www.sierraclub.org/youth>

- Conservation Kids Club (Wildlife Conservation Society)
 - Website: <https://www.wcs.org/>
 - (Search for the "Conservation Kids" section under their "Education" tab.)

These links should lead you to more information on how your child can get involved in conservation efforts!

There are also several conservation clubs and organizations in the U.S. that focus on educating and engaging kids in environmental conservation. Here are some great options:

- 1. **Nature Conservancy's "Nature Kids" Program
 - The Nature Conservancy has a kids' section on its website offering interactive activities and educational resources to engage children in conservation efforts. It also organizes local events, field trips, and volunteering opportunities that families can participate in.
- The National Wildlife Federation's "Eco-Schools USA"
 - The NWF offers Eco-Schools USA, which is a program that helps schools create more sustainable learning environments. It involves kids in hands-on environmental projects that focus on energy conservation, water use, waste reduction, and more.

Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts

- Both organizations have badges and projects related to nature, conservation, and sustainability. They provide kids with opportunities to engage in environmental conservation efforts, whether it's through camping, clean-up events, or sustainability initiatives.
- Earth Rangers (for younger kids)
 - Earth Rangers is a nonprofit organization that aims to inspire children to take action to protect the environment. They have a program called "Eco-Action" that teaches kids about conservation and provides resources and ways for them to participate in real-world conservation projects.
- Junior Ranger Programs (National Parks Service)
 - Many U.S. national parks offer Junior Ranger programs for children. These programs are designed to educate kids about the natural world, wildlife conservation, and the history of the parks. Kids can complete activities, attend programs, and earn badges after completing the tasks.

- Kids for Conservation (TNC)
 - The Nature Conservancy also has educational initiatives like Kids for Conservation, which includes online resources, activities, and local volunteer events aimed at involving kids in environmental protection and sustainable practices.
- The Sierra Club's "Sierra Kids"
 - Sierra Club offers a program called "Sierra Kids," aimed at engaging young children in environmental activism. The club provides resources, events, and campaigns for children to learn about nature and how they can help conserve it.
- Conservation Kids Club (Wildlife Conservation Society)
 - The Wildlife Conservation Society offers a Conservation Kids Club that gives kids the chance to learn about wildlife conservation and participate in hands-on activities related to protecting animals and habitats.

You can check these organizations' websites to find specific local chapters or programs. Many of these offer virtual activities, so your child can participate no matter where you are!