

Joining a Greek Letter Organization

This article is dedicated to helping students understand the steps to joining Greek letter organizations here at Virginia Tech. As a one year active member and treasurer of a Greek letter organization I hope that my wisdom will help guide students on their path to Greek life. Overall this report is directed to college students. Some of the ideas that will be discussed in this report may deal specifically with Virginia Tech students but on a broader range the report will be able to extend to the many universities with Greek affiliation across the nation. The report is directed to undergraduate students interested in extracurricular activities outside of their academics. These are students who have a strong desire to be impactful in their communities and or desire to learn to be leaders in the Hokie community. To understand the criteria needed to become a member of a Greek letter organization, one must first understand the different umbrella councils that watch over our Greek letter organization. Therefore, I will need to define the [NPHC](#), [MGC](#), [IFC](#), and [PHC](#).



Fig. 1 - All four councils at a conference in Indianapolis

Council glossary...

IFC – *The InterFraternity Council in is a governing body dedicated to unifying fraternity chapters, strengthen the quality of brotherhood by utilizing a governance style, which enhances their approachability and ability to be a resource for chapter development. [1]*

PHC – *The Panhellenic Council is the governing body of the twelve sororities at Virginia Tech. The Council meets every Wednesday to discuss matters affecting sororities and the Greek community. The council is dedicated to effectively organize and assist in events of mutual concern to all sorority women. [2]*

NPHC – *The Virginia Tech chapter of the NPHC was chartered on April 28, 1993 and currently recognizes all nine organizations. While NPHC affiliate organizations recognize the social aspect of Greek college life, the primary purpose and focus of member organizations remains community awareness and action through educational, economic, and cultural service activities. [3]*

MGC – *The National Multicultural Greek Council (NMGC) is an umbrella council for a coalition of Multicultural Greek-letter organizations (MGLOs) established in 1998. The purpose of NMGC is to provide a forum that allows for the free exchange of ideas, programs, and services between its constituent fraternities and sororities. [4]*

Though these four councils are very similar in their goals to better the Virginia Tech community, there are very strong cultural differences between these councils, from recruiting members to their overall involvement in the community. To understand these cultural differences, we must first define terms that are used by organizations within these councils.



Fig. 2 Council leaders for Virginia Tech's Greek life.

Greek Recruitment glossary...

Bid – An open invitation to go through the membership process for a PHC or IFC organizations

Bid Day – The last day of recruitment where interested students receive open invitations to go through the membership process

Big – A member of the fraternity or sorority you are interested in that mentors you throughout your membership process

Brother – A member of a fraternity

Chapter - A local branch of a fraternity or sorority

Chapter Meeting – A formal meeting held by fraternities or sororities to discuss important matters pertaining to their chapter

Depledge – Act of relinquishing or being asked to relinquish your membership to an organization

Deferred Recruitment – Recruitment which starts the following academic year

Dues – Membership fees paid by organizations annually or semesterly depending on the chapters criteria

Formal Recruitment – The process of educating potential new members and inviting them to functions and events held by the organization

Fraternity – A brotherhood that share common interests and goals

Grip – A secret handshake that only members of an organization know

Initiate – A new member to an organization

Initiation – The process of inducting potential members into an organization

Intake – Another term for membership development process for NPHC organizations

Interest – A student who is interested in joining a specific Greek letter organization

Legacy – A student who has parent that is a member of the organization that they are also interested in

Little – A student going through the membership process who has a mentor

Line – Potential new members of an NPHC organization

Joining a fraternity/sorority

Learning how to join a Greek organization can be overwhelming and a bit stressful. Often times when you show interest in an organization you go through a series of steps before the members of that organization can see you as a potential candidate. As an interested student, you really have to participate heavily with the organization. Attending as many of their events and staying in the loop with rush events is vital to making it. Typically in attempting to join an organization, you should be as involved in attending their events as they are involved in planning them. Assuming you've already met a brother or a sister from the organization (and if you haven't met one yet, you aren't quite ready) you have interest in, here are some easy steps to help guide you along your process:

Steps to take...

1. Research Greek life and the all the different organization
 - a. *The very first step to getting your **bid** is to explore! Ask family members, close friends, and even faculty about greek life. Figure out why greek organizations exist on your campus and the vital role that it plays on your community.*
 - b. *Typically a student who is a **legacy** will already have a foot in the door, so ask your parents if they are members of a greek organization. If so, then ask them about their experience and any advice they wish to give you.*
2. Focus on a specific organization
 - a. *Once you've found the fraternity or sorority right for you, express your **interest** in joining the organizations to members of that **chapter**.*
 - b. *Typically in this stage if you have shown enough interest, and the chapter shows interest in you. A certain member of that organization will take on the responsibility of guiding you through **formal recruitment**. These members may likely become your **big** once you are in the organization.*
3. Asses the specific chapter you are interested in and compare the brothers' role in the community
 - a. *The recruitment stage is the perfect time to get to know the chapter and see if it really is meant for you. This stage saves you and the organization time and helps prevent the chance of you **depledging** at some point in your process to becoming initiated.*
 - b. *Some chapter may very well not represent any of the aims or missions of the organizations so it is perfectly fine to stop showing interest in an organization if you don't think it is right for you.*
4. Decide why you want to join
5. Figure out if your academic schedule permits it
6. Be honest, and be yourself
7. Hangout with the members of the organization
8. See if you bond with them
9. Attend their events on campus

“I got my bid!”“Now what?”



Fig. 3 Sigma Alpha Epsilon bid day.

Upon getting your bid you should prep yourself for the pledging process. Pledging is a membership development process that takes a certain amount of weeks in a semester to prepare you and teach you history of the organization. After successfully completing the pledging process, you will be **initiated** into the organization. Many organizations (mainly fraternities) have secret rituals that new initiates must go through to complete their pledging process. At the end of these rituals, you are taught the secrets of the chapter and organization as well as the **grip** of the organization.

If you follow all of these steps carefully you will hopefully be a **brother** or **sister** of the organization you aspire to join.

Being a member of a greek letter organization takes serious devotion, especially as a new **initiate**. you must be willing to serve your community in a number of ways. You must also be dedicated to your organization by paying your chapter dues.

References

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