

From the Club Secretary's Manual Page 67, 68

Sergeant-at-Arms

The function of the sergeant-at-arms is to help maintain an orderly, dignified, and effective Rotary club meeting, one that will make the right kind of impression on club visitors and guests. You should be constantly on the alert to prevent any occurrence that might detract from the dignity and prestige associated with Rotary clubs.

Specifically, your function is to handle the physical preparations for, and the mechanical part of, a meeting and, unobtrusively, to guide its general conduct. As sergeant-at-arms, you play an important role in the overall success of each weekly meeting. Because of the duties you perform, the club president is free to concentrate on conducting the meeting. Also, what you do determines the ease with which the operational aspects are carried out. Frequently, you can give some special assistance that helps to make guests feel "more at home."

But more important is the manner in which you carry out your duties. It can directly influence your club's attendance record.

Getting started

Your first responsibility is to learn from the club president and the chairpersons of the Attendance, Fellowship Activities, and Program committees what, in general, they will expect from you each week. In coordination with them, you will take charge of the mechanics of club meetings throughout the year.

Prior to each club meeting, you should consult with the Program committee chairperson regarding any special equipment such as a podium for a speaker, a stand for a movie projector, special lighting effects, or any other props that may be needed for the program. You may wish to confer with the chairperson of the Fellowship Activities committee each week for ideas on improving the camaraderie at meetings.

And be sure to speak with the club president prior to each weekly meeting in case there are some specific requirements or suggestions.

Typical assignments

The sergeant-at-arms must follow one cardinal rule: always arrive at the meeting place at least 15 or 20 minutes ahead of time to ensure that everything is ready. Are the tables and chairs properly arranged? Are the gavel, gong, and banners on hand? Is the sound system operating at the correct level? Are the lighting, temperature, and ventilation correctly regulated?

Are you prepared for showing audiovisuals?

Here are some other assignments the sergeant-at-arms typically handles:

- *Be at the door.* Stand at the door of the meeting place five minutes before the meeting begins. Welcome visitors if no one has been assigned to do this. See that all the members are inside the room by meeting time.
- *Name badges.* Be sure that all members are wearing their name badges. These are especially helpful to visitors and new members.
- *Seating.* See that members are seated promptly and without confusion; that, if feasible, there are no vacant places between members; that no cliques are sitting together; and that all guests are taken care of properly. (Assume these duties only if they have been assigned to you rather than the Fellowship committee.)
- *The meal.* Make sure the food is served promptly.
- *Late arrivals.* Call attention, in a humorous way, to members who come in late — this usually spurs them to be on time at the next meeting. (Some clubs impose fines for tardiness; others sing a humorous song of rebuke.)
- *Songbooks.* If singing is the custom, be sure that the songbooks or sheets are distributed. If there is no song leader, do what *you* can to improve the singing.
- *Maintain order.* In a diplomatic manner, see that the members pay attention to the president's gavel and that no one annoys the speaker by talking.
- *Early departures.* Keep an eye out for eat-and-run Rotarians and, by calling their attention to the habit in a tactful way, try to discourage the practice, which can be a discourtesy to speakers.
- *Farewell to guests.* When the meeting breaks up, encourage members to speak to the guests, especially to those who took part in the meeting, and express thanks and pleasure at having them visit the club.

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In practice, there will be much more for you to do than just the performance of these routine duties. You will need to feel the pulse of the meetings, to anticipate those things that may be needed. You will not only learn much about the operation of the club, you may find ways to improve it. Most important and satisfying of all, this job will provide you with many real opportunities for friendly service to your club — its members, officers, and guests.

Your success as sergeant-at-arms will depend not only upon how well you meet your responsibilities from week to week throughout the year, but also on how well you plan your work now.

And, there's fining! Many clubs use the Sergeant At Arms position as a humorous, entertaining way to earn funds for the club. Not large amounts, but perhaps in less than \$5.00 per fine. Clubs that use the position in this way find all sorts of material, (real and imagined) and suggest that club members pay for not revealing information, pay for any publicity they might have received, pay for who they are sitting next to, and all sorts of other things. If your club uses the position in this way, be creative and have fun! Don't forget those all important "happy bucks".