

HOUSING BLUEPRINT

THINGS TO DO

Contracts: Room & Board

Currently Do It	Will Do It	Done...	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	All members (in- and out-of-house) sign housing contracts; out-of-house contracts outline "parlor fees" and dues.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	There is a written lease agreement between the housing corporation and the chapter and each member and the corporation.
Contracts include:			
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Parties' names; property address; duration of agreement; amount of rent and/or board; signatures of members and agent of corporation/chapter.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Co-signature of parent/guardian required.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Fines for late payments/discounts for early payments and other procedures for delinquent accounts receivable are covered in the member's contract.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Damage/rent deposit.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Methods for room alterations.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Descriptions on how to handle Disciplinary or academic termination.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	An escalator clause.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Prohibits pets, drug use, guns/firearms, and other miscellaneous guidelines regarding alcohol and chapter repairs.

Focus on the Details

The fraternity-housing contract is a written agreement prescribing legal obligations and conditions for a member living in the fraternity house. Standard housing contracts are considered lease agreements, which provide a specific term of occupancy and the conditions for termination of the agreement.

There should be a written rental agreement between the house corporation and the chapter, as well as individual rental agreements between the house corporation and each member residing within the house. If the contract between the chapter and the house corporation gives the chapter control over rental arrangements, then the contract of each resident would be with the chapter. It is best, however, to have the individual rental agreements directly with the house corporation in addition to the umbrella contract between the chapter and the corporation.

Every housing contract must include:

- the names of the parties, e.g., the member and the corporation
- the address of the property
- the duration of the agreement
- the amount of rent (and board if applicable)
- signatures of both the member and the agent for the corporation (or chapter), e.g., treasurer or president, and -- HIGHLY RECOMMENDED -- a consignor (e.g., parent or guardian).

The rent and board contracts should outline any fines for late payments and discounts for early payments and other procedures for delinquent accounts receivable. The occupancy period should be clearly stated and enforced. The more definite and specific the contract is, the less room there is for disputes over enforcement.

A contractual agreement between the house corporation and every member (in- and out-of-house) is recommended. All members use the housing facility, contributing to its "wear and tear." Thus, non-residents should be charged "parlor fees" to defray the costs of lawn care, carpet cleaning, etc.

Other conditions, which should be included within a housing contract, are:

- Damage/rent deposit – to cover the cost of any damage incurred by a resident(s). Returned if no damage incurred.
- Alterations – residents must have the express written consent of the housing corporation to make major alterations to any personal area.
- Disciplinary or academic termination – contract becomes void if member is dismissed from the college/university for failing grades or misconduct
- Escalator clause – provision for increases in rent for specific, unexpected costs (e.g., a drop below break-even capacity of the chapter house)
- Other – prohibition of pets, drug use, guns/firearms and guidelines regarding alcohol use and repairs to chapter property.

THINGS TO DO

Currently Do It	Will Do It	Done...	House Capacity
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Chapter house is at least filled to "break even" capacity (just enough to meet rent payments, operating at neither profit, nor loss).
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Chapter house is filled beyond "break even" capacity (operates at a profit).
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	House is filled to maximum capacity.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Chapter membership is at least 30 percent higher than the maximum house capacity.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Chapter officers are required to live in-house; if house is below maximum capacity, members are not permitted to have single rooms (empty rooms are kept locked).

Focus on the Details

The very survival of a chapter can depend upon its ability to fill its house. The ideal "problem" a chapter should confront is an inability to find room for every member who wants to move into the chapter house. If you have more people than space to fill, you should establish criteria to determine who may move into the house, such as: financial responsibility, academic achievement and chapter involvement -- seniority or pin number alone should not determine selection. Associate members should be included in the occupancy selection process. A balanced in-house membership creates a healthy chapter.

More often, unfortunately, a chapter's recruitment problem is empty beds. A key solution is a strong recruitment program. To ensure maximum occupancy, membership should be maintained at a level sufficiently higher (preferably 50 percent or more) than the house capacity. For example, if the house capacity is 40, the total membership should be at least 80. Some members will have valid reasons for not living in the chapter house: area resident members may live at home; current lease agreements may be unable to be broken, etc. A required live-in rule should not be used as a "quick fix" solution for recruitment inadequacies. Chapter officers, however, should be required to live in-house.

If the chapter has sufficient membership but the house is not full, analyze why. Most likely, it is due to the quality of the housing environment. No one wants poor living conditions. Is the house clean? Quiet? Aesthetically appealing? Is the meal program adequate? Is the environment conducive to study? Is the heating/air conditioning system adequate (i.e., do members freeze in the winter and/or broil in the summer)? If the answer is "no" to any of these questions, then the chapter, working with its alumni house corporation officers, must take steps to remedy the situation.

If the house is not filled to capacity, DO NOT allow members to have single rooms. This will create a lack of incentive to recruit, since single rooms are a luxury members will not want to give up. Double members up and lock empty rooms. This will eliminate wear and tear on unused rooms and may reduce utility bills, as well.

THINGS TO DO

Currently Do It	Will Do It	Done...	House Appearance
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	The first floor and public areas of the chapter house are well lighted, kept thoroughly cleaned and attractively furnished.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Every member is required to participate in a house improvement project at least once each term.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Even if the physical structure is below campus standards or is generally unappealing, the house is maintained at the highest standard possible. Or, if the chapter is housed in a high-quality structure, it is maintained as new or better.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Chapter has established a policy, which ensures that house, is thoroughly cleaned and returned to proper order promptly (within 12 hours) following each social event or special activity (e.g. Homecoming floats/displays).

Focus on the Details

If members do not take pride in the chapter house, they do not take pride in the chapter. It is that simple.

Regardless of campus standards, Theta Xi should maintain a clean and attractive chapter house; just because everyone else's house is "trashed out," is no excuse for laziness. If the chapter parties too much to keep the house clean, then you've got a more serious problem with risk management and your days may well be numbered.

The first floor and commons areas should make a positive first impression on all who visit the house. What potentials, parents, and other guests see at your house, affects how they feel about Theta Xi and what they will say about it to others. Well-lighted, well-cleaned and attractively furnished public areas mean a great deal.

A well-run chapter is apparent at first glance: the membership takes pride in keeping the chapter house facilities looking their best. Regardless of the size or quality of the physical structure, the membership should take pride in its appearance. Often, when a chapter has a below standard facility, it uses that fact as an excuse for not keeping it clean and well-maintained. Not surprisingly, these chapters find recruitment difficult and have trouble keeping their houses full.

THINGS TO DO

Property Insurance & Safety

Currently Do It	Will Do It	Done...	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Chapter is protected by property insurance with "all-risk" coverage.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Chapter has established safety standards, which comply with Theta Xi's Risk Management Policy regarding fire, health, and safety (e.g., posted evacuation plans, electrical quotas, fire extinguishers, etc.).
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Chapter has written policy (which may be in the contract) that ensures that the house electrical system does not become overloaded.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	House safety standards are established in writing within the housing contracts, which all members must sign.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Each member pays damage or rent deposit, or a portion of the building fund.

Focus on the Details

Any housed chapter must obtain property insurance to protect against fire, wind damage, vandalism, theft and other risks. It is important that the policy has "all-risk" rather than "named risk" coverage. Your chapter alumni corporation may obtain property insurance through Fraternity Headquarters or through a local insurance company. If you lease your property from an independent landlord or the university, find out what type of coverage has been obtained to ensure that it is adequate.

Part of Theta Xi's Risk Management Policy covers areas relevant to chapter housing - in particular, fire health and safety (e.g., posting fire evacuation plans, meeting all local fire and health codes and requirements, etc.). The chapter must, therefore, have procedures to ensure that the chapter kitchen (if it has one) meets official health standards; that chimneys are swept on a regular basis and fire alarms, extinguishers and smoke detectors are installed and in working order; that fire escapes and posted evacuation plans are present; and that other measures are taken, which ensure the safety of members and guests. The electrical system should not be overloaded. The chapter should set a limit as to the number of outlets and the number of appliances members may keep in their rooms. It is suggested that items such as microwave ovens and small refrigerators not be permitted in member's rooms, but that the chapter provide adequate refrigerator space for personal storage and one or two microwave ovens for open use in the main kitchen area. Also, members should not be permitted to cook in their rooms.

THINGS TO DO

Property Inventory

Currently Do It	Will Do It	Done...	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	A complete inventory of all chapter property is taken at the beginning of the school year before members move in.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Individual inventory checklists of chapter property in member's rooms and its condition at the time of move-in and move-out are kept in file.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Property damaged or missing due to a member's negligence is repaired or replaced through his damage/rent deposit funds.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Damaged chapter property in public areas is paid for through the negligent member's damage deposit. If no member claims responsibility, the cost is taken evenly from each member's deposit.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Housing contracts contain an "alterations" clause stating that members must obtain express written consent from the housing corporation to make major alterations to chapter property.

Focus on the Details

A complete inventory of all chapter property should be taken at the beginning of the school year before members move into the house. Individual checklists should be kept on file of chapter property in each member's room. Just before the term of a member's lease agreement comes to an end, another inventory should be taken to evaluate the condition of the property. The condition at the time of move-in and move-out should be noted on the checklist. If damaged or missing property must be repaired or replaced, the cost should come out of that member's damage or rent deposit.

The cost to repair or replace damaged chapter property in commons areas should also be taken from the negligent individual's damage deposit. If no one claims responsibility for the damage, then the cost should be divided evenly among all members' deposits.

Unless stipulated otherwise within the lease agreements, property damaged due to ordinary "wear and tear," rather than negligence, should not be repaired or replaced through damage deposit funds. It is important, therefore, that fairly detailed records are maintained of the condition of the property at the start of leasing terms. An adequate budget should be allotted, perhaps from the chapter's Building Fund, for replacing worn out chapter property. Every member should be returned his full deposit if no property is damaged by him or the chapter as a result of negligence.

It is recommended that an "alterations" clause be included in chapter lease agreements. If a member wishes to make a major alteration to his room (install a ceiling fan, loft, air conditioner, paint it black, etc.), he must first receive written consent from the housing corporation. He should sign an agreement, which could be included within the housing contract itself, stating that he will return the room to its original condition before the term of his lease agreement expires, or that any improvement he makes will become permanent chapter property.

THINGS TO DO

House Care Policies

Currently Do It	Will Do It	Done...
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Chapter has established a written house care policy separate from duty rosters, cleaning sessions, chapter by-laws, etc.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	House care policy includes brothers' responsibilities as a matter of courtesy (e.g., not using commons area trash cans for personal garbage from your room, etc.).
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Policy includes a clear definition of house duties and how they are to be performed.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Policy includes a statement(s) of position regarding respect for the chapter house and its furnishings.

Focus on the Details

Above and beyond duty rosters and cleaning sessions, your chapter should establish a written house care policy. It should be developed on a philosophical, rather than legalistic plane; that is, house care should be an issue of pride, rather than duty. The general house care policy, which may be in the form of a manual or pamphlet, should outline as a gentleman's agreement or matter of courtesy, brothers' responsibilities in maintaining the chapter house (e.g., emptying personal garbage into the dumpster outside the house, rather than commons area or bathroom trash cans). It should also define specific responsibilities, such as kitchen or cleaning duties, and penalties defined by chapter by-laws for missing them. The house care policy should clearly define what is expected of members when they perform house duties (e.g., a step-by-step explanation of how to properly clean bathrooms or commons areas). It should also include a statement(s) of position regarding respect for the chapter house and its furnishings.

Most importantly, in accordance with Theta Xi philosophies and ideals, the house care policy should include the stipulation that all members, initiated and associate, live-in and live-out, participate equally in house duties. Otherwise, the chapter becomes divided, as associate members become second-class members doing the chapter's "dirty work" and cease contributing once they are initiated. House duties MUST be a shared responsibility.

Specific procedures for dealing with members who are delinquent in their house duties should be clearly outlined within chapter By-Laws, which may be referenced or reprinted as they apply within the house care policy.

THINGS TO DO

Employees

Currently Do It	Will Do It	Done...
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Chapter or alumni corporation has consulted local tax authorities to ensure that all necessary tax forms are filed.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	All necessary tax forms for employees are filed on time (the chapter has not incurred fines for late filing).
Chapter employees sign contracts that include:		
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Clearly defined duties.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Terms of employment and grounds for early dismissal.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Salary conditions.

Focus on the Details

Every chapter with employees, such as a housemother, cook, hashers, etc., must be aware of federal and local tax requirements, which usually include the following:

F.I.C.A. (Social Security Taxes), Form 940 and 941: Generally, chapters are not required to pay Social Security taxes on wages paid for services performed by enrolled students, but must collect and pay taxes on domestic services performed by non-students where wages paid are \$50 or more in any calendar quarter. Payment of house officers, whether by reduction in room or board costs or in cash, is generally subject to Social Security taxes.

Any chapter, that employs a cook or a housemother on a full-time or part-time basis, must file the 940 annually and 941 quarterly. The Form 941's are due on or before the last day of January, April, July and October. The year-end Form 940 is due by January 31, and is merely a combination of the information collected in the quarterly 941's.

Withholding income tax: Generally federal income taxes do not have to be deducted and withheld for domestic service performed by employees of the chapter, including cooks, waiters, butlers, janitors and housemothers. If this is the only kind of service paid for by the chapter, no income taxes are withheld and no withholding forms need be filed, unless a mutual decision to do so is made between the chapter and the employee(s).

If other salaries are paid, to a house officer for example, a certain percent may need to be withheld. If a report must be filed, it is done on the Form 941. Withholding of state and local income taxes may be required in certain circumstances. Consult your local tax authorities.

W-2, W-3, W4-A, Federal Unemployment tax: A W-2 Form (a summary of an employee's total wages and taxes withheld over the year) must be completed for each employee at the end of the calendar year. A W-3 form must be filed with all copy A's of W-2 forms sent to the federal government. Each year every employee should complete a W4-A form (decides income tax withholding status) as soon as they begin work. The active chapter may be responsible for paying unemployment taxes for wages paid in cash for domestic services. Again, consult your local tax authorities.

THINGS TO DO

Work Sessions/Duty Rosters

Currently Do It	Will Do It	Done...	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Chapter has established a duty roster system.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Work is evenly distributed among the entire membership, including out-of-house and associate members.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	General work sessions are scheduled at least monthly.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Chapter has established a "job jar" as an alternative to fines for missing house duties.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Chapter schedules a 1 – 2 day "all-chapter" cleaning session at least once each year.

Focus on the Details

To maintain a clean house, your chapter must establish a duty roster system. Such systems vary from chapter to chapter depending on the size of the house and the effort needed to keep it clean. Generally, it is most effective to spread the work evenly throughout the membership so that tasks are simple and consume little time. Each member should be assigned specific tasks (vacuum the upstairs hallway, dust the sills, etc.) to complete each week. One effective system is to list and number every task necessary for house maintenance and assign numbers to each member each week. A member can cross-reference his assigned number(s) with the task list. Numbers might be rotated so that members don't perform the same task each week. Out-of-house and/or associate members might be assigned tasks in commons areas and grounds. The house manager and/or one or more of his committee members should check at least weekly to see that every task has been completed, and confront those members who have been lax in their duties. Members who must miss a duty for some reason should find a replacement and promptly inform the house manager. One alternative to fines for missing house duties is a "job jar." Special projects, such as replacing a window or fixing a door, could be written on cards in the job jar. When members miss their assignments, they may take a task from the jar in lieu of a fine.

Another successful method of motivating members to maintain high house-care standards is to establish cleanup teams, which compete based on points totaled from an evaluation of each team member's performance. The team with the most points is rewarded at the end of the term.

All-chapter general cleaning sessions should be scheduled at least once each month. During these sessions, special house cleaning and maintenance items should be taken care of, such as thoroughly scrubbing the oven, repainting a commons-area room, replacing windows, etc. Also, at the end or just prior to the beginning of each year/term, a full 1-2 day "spring cleaning" should be scheduled, during which the chapter house is cleaned thoroughly from top to bottom.

THINGS TO DO

Kitchen Maintenance

Currently Do It	Will Do It	Done...
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> A list of tasks that must be completed by every kitchen crew and instructions for maintaining health standards (e.g., the proper water temperature for the dishwasher) are mounted securely within the kitchen).
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> House manager or kitchen manager thoroughly inspects kitchen at least twice each term to ensure health standards are upheld.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> Chapter promptly implements requirements imposed during health inspections and/or promptly informs the chapter's alumni board of the inspector's findings.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> Overall kitchen-cleaning sessions are scheduled at least monthly.
Chapter enforces all of the following health standards:		
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> Wash hands before preparing or serving food.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> Never allow dirty dishes to stand for more than an hour.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> Rinse dishes before placing them in the sink or holding rack.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> Never leave standing water (puddle on floor, water in sink, etc.).
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> Immediately remove food from dirty dishes from the sink.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> Immediately remove crumbs and scraps of food from counters.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> Sweep and mop kitchen after each meal.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> Make sure food scraps or crumbs are cleaned from behind kitchen appliances/fixtures.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> Immediately cover and place leftovers in refrigerator after meals.

Focus on the Details

Members' health depends on kitchen conditions, and failure to complete kitchen duties properly, unlike most other house duties, can have disastrous results. A list of tasks that must be performed by each kitchen crew must be posted in the kitchen. It should probably be framed or covered with plastic, so that it can be cleaned and won't be damaged by water, and mounted securely in a prominent place. You might also include a list of special weekly tasks to be completed by specific crews on given days. Instructions that ensure proper health standards are maintained should also be posted (e.g., the proper water temperature at which to set the dish washer, etc.). The house manager or kitchen manager should regularly (at least twice each term) inspect the kitchen to make sure health standards are being met. When a state health inspector evaluates kitchen conditions, the chapter should promptly (within one week) implement any requirements imposed. It should also promptly inform its alumni board of the inspector's findings. An overall kitchen cleaning session should be scheduled at least monthly, perhaps as part of the general house cleaning sessions.

Some general health standards your chapter should follow include:

- Wash hands before preparing or serving food.
- Never allow dirty dishes to stand for more than an hour.
- Rinse dishes before placing them in the sink or holding rack.
- Never leave standing water (puddle on floor, water in sink, etc.).
- Immediately remove food from dirty dishes from the sink.
- Immediately remove crumbs and scraps of food from counters.
- Sweep and mop kitchen after each meal.
- Make sure food scraps or crumbs are cleaned from behind kitchen appliances/fixtures.
- Immediately cover and place leftovers in refrigerator after meals.

THINGS TO DO

Food Service & Etiquette

Currently Do It	Will Do It	Done...	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Members display their best behavior during chapter meals.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	If meals are served buffet-style, members must obtain permission from the head of the table to be excused for seconds. If the meal is not served buffet-style, chapter has designated members to act as waiters.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Chapter rules of conduct during meals are established in writing and enforced through peer pressure.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Chapter membership education program includes training in etiquette and proper table manners.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Chapter observes all of the general rules of etiquette listed below:
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Show each guest to a chair and allow them and the table heads to be seated and served first.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Uncouth remarks and horseplay have no place at the dinner table, ever.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Utensils are placed on the table in order of use, starting from the outside and working toward the plate.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Permission should be obtained when leaving the table, unless the head of the table makes a general remark that the meal is over and diners are excused.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Pass food to the left. Pass salt and pepper together.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Eat noiselessly. Do not speak with food in your mouth.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Do not reach across the table or over another person; ask to have food passed to you.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Speak only to those seated close to you.

Focus on the Details

Among other things, fraternities exist to prepare members for life after college. Toward this end, Theta Xi should play a key role in developing members' social skills, especially manners and etiquette, which are best exemplified by members' behavior at the dinner table. In the business world, how you conduct yourself during meals can often determine success or failure. And, in general, it can greatly affect the impression others have of you. It is important, therefore, that members show their best behavior at every chapter meal, and that the proper rules of etiquette are observed. Some general rules of etiquette include:

- Show each guest to a chair and allow them and the table heads to be seated and served first.
- Uncouth remarks and horseplay have no place at the dinner table, ever.
- Utensils are placed on the table in order of use, starting from the outside and working toward the plate.
- Permission should be obtained when leaving the table, unless a general remark is made by the head of the table that the meal is over and diners are excused
- Pass food to the left. Pass salt and pepper together.
- Eat noiselessly. Do not speak with food in your mouth.
- Don't reach across the table or over another person; ask to have food passed to you.
- Speak only with those seated close to you.

If meals are served buffet-style, members should ask permission from the head of the table to be excused for seconds. When meals are not served buffet-style, the chapter should either designate members to act as waiters (sometimes referred to as stewards or hashers) on a rotational basis or hire permanent waiters who may or may not be chapter members. It might be the responsibility of the waiters to help the cook with meal preparation; set up and remove place settings before and after the meal; and bring food to tables during the meal. Waiter's responsibilities should be in writing.

The chapter membership education program should include training in etiquette and proper table manners. A presentation by your housemother or a sorority housemother might serve this purpose well.

The chapter should establish its dining rules in writing. They should not be taken lightly and enforcement should be by peer pressure. Like house care, proper table manners should be a matter of pride, not duty.

THINGS TO DO

Meal Planning

Currently Do It	Will Do It	Done...
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> Chapter consults/consulted a campus or independent dietitian, food service company, or other dietary expert(s) to help in developing a meal plan.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> Chapter meal program reflects members' meal preferences, as determined through a formal or informal survey.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> Chapter and/or its alumni board have explored all food service options (e.g., cook, catering service, campus meal program) and have chosen a service with high quality and low cost.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> Chapter has devices, such as a suggestion box, for positive criticism or compliments regarding the meal program.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> When members do have concerns about the meal program, they are aired in a constructive manner – not grumbled behind closed doors or at the dinner table – and the kitchen or house manager responds promptly and professionally.

Focus on the Details

A number of factors, including but not limited to the following, must be considered in developing a meal program:

- Menu variety
- Nutritional value
- Spoilage
- Food cost
- Food quality
- Members' eating habits
- Number of meals served per week
- Total food service budget

In order to serve the highest quality meals with optimum nutritional value at the lowest cost, the chapter, in conjunction with its alumni board, should consult a professional dietitian, food service company or other dietary expert(s), either from the independent sector or from the campus. Your chapter definitely should contact the campus food service for ideas, especially with regard to purchasing.

Many chapters hire a cook. Other options include catering services or the campus food service program. Sometimes it is cheaper to hire a catering service, instead of a cook. Catering services often provide a greater variety and higher quality of meals, as well. Some chapters with on-campus housing receive the campus meal service, in which case, meal planning is usually unnecessary. Your chapter and alumni association should explore all food-service options to find the highest quality at the lowest cost.

In developing a meal plan, it is important to consider members' meal preferences. You may wish to have each member fill out a survey listing desired meals. You should try to serve meals requested by a majority of members. Further, the chapter should implement other devices, such as a suggestion box, for members to air positive criticism or compliments about the meal program. Other factors, however, such as balancing the diet, may take precedence over members' preferences.