



Starting a JGS: HOLDING THE FIRST MEETING

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The purpose of the first meeting is to measure interest in forming a JGS. There is time to organize the group later in terms of bylaws, a name for the organization, and elections.

- Ask your interim board members (or people who are interested in the success of this venture) to help you with the first meeting. You will need individuals to:
 - Meet and greet all the attendees.
 - Obtain email and snail mail and other contact information.
 - Create name tags.
 - Set up a coffee and/or snack table (optional but desirable).
 - Encourage attendees to put their names on committee sign-up sheets.
 - Hand out membership brochures (see next step).
 - Take minutes (optional, but desirable).
 - Take checks or other forms of payment (using Venmo, PayPal or other online resources), if you are planning on signing people up (optional, but desirable).

At the meeting,

- Start and end on time.
- Introduce yourself briefly with an observation about what you hope to accomplish and why. Briefly introduce the interim board members.
- Depending on your turnout, ask individuals to *briefly* introduce themselves by stating their names and what they are searching for. Have an egg timer so that no one goes over their allotted time (about 1.5 minutes). If you have a big turnout, have people turn to their neighbors and introduce themselves the same way—small groups of three—no more than a few minutes each. Another good meet-and-greet exercise is to have everyone write down the surnames and towns that they are researching and put them on the whiteboard and have them group by country and mingle.
- Have a 30-minute dynamic program so that the attendees have an idea of how exciting Jewish genealogy can be. You can bring someone in or use Zoom (or other meeting platforms. A general program on the basics of using JewishGen or on Jewish names is a good first topic.
- Take questions and ask for observations and thoughts about organizing. For example, what day of the week and what time is the best to meet? Who has a suggestion on meeting places?
- Hand out a simple membership brochure. For examples, go [here](#). Make sure you obtain the meeting attendees' email addresses and/or phone numbers for follow-up.
- Ask individuals to sign up for various functions, such as refreshments; room clean up; membership development; publicity, finance/treasury; recordkeeping; library, etc.
- If possible, ask for commitments to join by asking for dues. Have an individual handle the money so that you are free to do other things during the meeting. Keep in mind that members want to know what they are getting for dues. You may not know the answer fully at the first meeting, but typical expenses often include speaker honorariums, website expenses, Zoom accounts and printing. State the date of the next meeting, four weeks or later from the first meeting.
- Thank everyone for showing up and remember to thank all the volunteers.