

Best Practice #033, New Member Programs
Heading: Membership
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New chapter members are often hesitant to get involved due to shyness or lack of experience. Below, two chapters relate their programs for engaging new members.

Learn 2 Turn. The Northwest Woodturners of Portland, Oregon conducts a ‘Learn 2 Turn’ session after regular meetings. The sessions are free and provide an informal “hands-on” setting under the guidance of an experienced turner.

Session topics are published in the chapter’s newsletter. Typical subjects are spindle turning, bowl turning, lidded boxes, and hollow or segmented forms, but other subjects are regularly covered including safety, sharpening, tool use and photography.

Three lathes are set up for the session. Everyone is asked to bring their own tools so they can become comfortable with them. With permission they are welcome to use the tools of others to see how they work. As everyone arrives, they are asked to sign in and review the safety rules.

Most attendees remark on how much they appreciate the hands-on experience and the opportunity to get expert advice in a friendly setting.

New Member Outreach. The Bay Area (San Francisco) Woodturners offers a New Members Program designed to: 1) help new members get acquainted with the chapter and its many benefits; 2) introduce new members to other members, especially ones who live in their area or have similar turning interests; 3) help new members identify their turning needs (equipment, skills, wood and tool sources, etc.) and put them in touch with chapter members who could serve as mentors; 4) encourage new members to take a leadership role within the chapter; and, 5) join AAW.

New members are defined as individuals who have been in the chapter for less than 12 months (which could span two calendar years). They may be experienced turners, but it is expected that most new members will be beginning or intermediate skilled turners.

A coordinator contacts each new member upon their joining the chapter and periodically during their first year to solicit their needs/comments and follow up on outstanding requests. Contact may be by phone, personal contact during meetings and email.

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