

# Thinking of Joining a Group?

Joining a fraternity, sorority, performing group, athletic team, club, or other organization can be one of the best parts of the Cornell experience; but doing so should never put someone in harm's way.

If you are thinking about joining a group, consider whether or not doing so might involve some type of initiation.

## Initiation

Initiation into a group can be a single event or an extended process. And, while most groups at Cornell don't haze, whenever new members join a group, there is the potential for hazing to occur. Therefore, it is important to gather as much information as you can about the experience for which you are signing up.

As stated in Cornell's Student Code of Conduct, activities can be hazing regardless of a person's willingness to participate. The responsibility for hazing lies with the perpetrators, not those who are hazed. While the suggested questions below *do not guarantee* that the group you're joining doesn't haze, they may help you learn more and assess your risk.

## Ask current members

- What kinds of things do you have to do to join the group?
- What is the group's position on hazing?
- Has the group ever been in trouble for hazing?
- How long does the pledging and/or new member process last?
- Does the group have a policy of transparency or do they keep their activities a secret?
- How much time will be involved?
- Does the group have a "hell week"?
- If the group initiates members after an intake or recruitment process, do you pledge "underground"?

If the group members cannot give thorough descriptions of what new membership involves



*What do you know about the group you hope to join?*

(e.g., service projects, pro-social group-building activities) or if they seem evasive, put your guard up. Even if they say they do not haze, be cautious if they are unable to describe what it is that they do.

## Ask other students

- What do you know about this group?
- What kind of a reputation does it have?
- Have you heard about how it treats new members?

## Check other sources

- Review posted campus hazing violations involving Cornell groups, teams, and organizations: [hazing.cornell.edu/violations](http://hazing.cornell.edu/violations)
- Search the *Cornell Daily Sun* for articles about the group you are considering joining.
- Speak with staff who work with student groups (e.g., Sorority & Fraternity Life, Department of Athletics and Physical Education, and Campus Activities).

*This information is provided by the Skorton Center for Health Initiatives at Cornell Health. [health.cornell.edu/skortoncenter](http://health.cornell.edu/skortoncenter), 607-255-4782.*

