

NWM Guide for House Presidents

Welcome to being a House President at New World Magischola! This is a difficult and immensely rewarding position: you're a leader in-game and out-of-game. In this guide, you'll find a lot of information about the best practices of performing this job. At the beginning, we've got a very brief bullet-point list of the most important information that you'll need to know. The rest is intended as a resource, not an obligation. You can skip around, read out of order, focus on a few parts only, whatever you find most helpful.

The authors of this guide have all been House Presidents. We loved it, and we hope you'll love it too!

Table of Contents

Having trouble with the PDF? Find the Google Doc here: <https://bit.ly/2HbovDS>

[1. The Basics](#)

[2. What are the duties of a House President?](#)

[3. How to make your House a home](#)

[Building cohesion](#)

[Competing for the House Cup](#)

[Making a great Common Room and House Party](#)

[4. Welcoming, Initiation, and other rituals](#)

[5. Special notes for each semester](#)

[First Semester: Drafting and Sorting](#)

[Second Semester: Advancement and Succession](#)

[6. Care for others: player safety and emotional care](#)

[7. Self care](#)

[How to make sure you don't burn out](#)

[How to balance your own plots with others'](#)

[8. Working with the Organizers](#)

[9. Appendices](#)

[Emergencies](#)

[What happens if a player wants to change Houses after they've already been assigned or Sorted?](#)

[House Songs and Chants](#)

1. The Basics

You should be a House President if you want to:

- Be an in-character (IC) leader
- Be an out-of-character (OOC) leader: you're an experienced larper, or someone with other relevant skills, and you want to use that experience to help others
- Help shape the ideas and artistic vision of a House that you love

A House President is **a leader, a supporter, and a facilitator**. This means that you:

- Build cohesion among housemates IC and OOC
- Set the tone and values for the House
- Organize the decoration of the common room
- Write and run House rituals for initiation and advancement
- Organize the House party on Thursday night
- Oversee Drafting and Sorting in first-semester runs
- Serve as one of the IC and OOC points of contact between staff and players
- Help other players have fun

You also play a key role in player safety: you may be the first one to notice if a housemate is in distress. **Please go straight to Ops or an Organizer if any of the following things happens in your House:**

- **A physical injury that requires medical attention**
- **Severe emotional distress that requires medical attention**
- **A violation of the Code of Conduct**

Also remember to take care of yourself! Work with your co-president and staff; delegate to your housemates. Get enough sleep, food, and water. And have fun: you're a player too!

2. What are the duties of a House President?

Concretely, a House President:

- Writes and runs House rituals for initiation and advancement
- Organizes the House party on Thursday night
- Oversees Drafting and Sorting in first-semester runs
- Serves as one of the IC and OOC points of contact between staff and players

More broadly, though, a House President is **a leader, a supporter, and a facilitator**.

As a **leader**, you'll be the person that others look to for guidance, and you'll set the tone for your house. In workshops, you'll collaborate with your housemates to establish what your house will be like. Help lead the other players towards creating a cohesive theme and set of values, and use your leadership to make sure that all players' voices get heard. Remember that the members of your house will probably follow your lead; for instance, if you decide to have a public rivalry with another house president, your housemates are likely to adopt that rivalry as well, so be sure to take that into account.

It's especially important to make sure that co-presidents maintain a unified front. If presidents disagree on core House values, players will feel confused; if presidents openly argue in front of their housemates, other players may escalate the conflict or feel uncomfortable. Therefore, you have a disagreement with your co-president, try to resolve it out of the players' view, and/or take it to the counselors to help. (If you decide to have an in-character conflict between co-presidents, that's fine; just make sure that all the players understand that it's in-character only!)

As a **supporter**, you're very likely to be the person that housemates come to when they have in-game or out-of-game problems. Some of these problems, you'll be able to help them solve yourself; some you won't. If a player comes to you with a problem that's beyond your ability or outside your jurisdiction, you should direct them to the appropriate resources. Don't hesitate to call on the counselors!

Related to this is your role as a **facilitator**. You're in a unique position to help other players shape their stories. Help them find plots: connect them with other players looking for help; encourage them to play to their strengths and to stretch by trying new things. Delegate to your housemates. Encourage people to solve problems, think outside the box, and feel safe to explore.

3. How to make your House a home

Building cohesion

The House Presidents set the tone for their house. They establish the core personality and values - and this can vary widely from game to game.

Each house has a light side and a dark side, and it's a lot more fun to explore both. It's important to make it clear to people that, although characters may choose a dark path, not everyone in the house needs to (or will) identify with such choices.

A great tool that starts the conversation around this is the character spectrum, which you'll do in house workshops. Participants are asked a series of questions about their character, such as "How dedicated are you to getting good grades?" They answer these questions by physically moving to different points along a line on the floor, placing themselves along a spectrum with with the most dedicated people at one end of the room and the least dedicated at the other. This will show you very clearly what kinds of themes your players are interested in exploring.

You can also have some of these discussions in advance of the game, via your house's Facebook group or even a Google Hangout that will let you talk face-to-face.

One challenge is that while many of the players will be just meeting each other for the first time, the characters are supposed to have known each other for a while. That's especially true of games set during second semester, but it applies to all games: second-year and third-year characters would already know each other.

If you're the House President for a combination of new and returning characters, there are a few additional things that you'll need to pay attention to. Returning characters will find fun in continuity. They want to feel like they're coming back to *their* House, and telling the next chapter in *their* story. New characters (and even more so, new players!) will find fun in building something of their own. They want to feel that it's *their* House: IC, that their characters have really lived in this space; and OOC, that they're helping to build the gameworld.

Here are some ways to build cohesion and help your players feel that their characters have known each other for a long time:

- Use your House Facebook group to work out character connections between old and new players. Encourage them to interact as a group, both IC and OOC. Ask questions about IC activities that the House did together over the past year, or make up a notable IC event. For instance: "What did you do when we all got snowed in last winter in the common room?" or "Why did your character want to be in [House]?" This will help your particular group feel like a cohesive community by the time you arrive at the game.
- Make sure that returning players/characters explain gameworld history in enough detail that new people can understand what's going on and feel included.
- If you have a mix of returning players from multiple previous runs, each will have their own idea of what the House "really is" and what "really happened" in the previous semester. You may have to do some mediating if those ideas are distinctly different. Help them find a way to balance the fun of continuing their personal character histories with the need for flexibility in creating a continuity that can include everyone.
- In opening workshops when you're coming up with House customs and rituals, make sure to get a mix of old and new. Retain some from the previous run(s), but also incorporate suggestions from new players - and if new players add their own

interpretation to some old rituals, that's great too. For instance the Croatan during a first semester run, had a tradition of offering hospitality to guests in the common room: you always offer a guest food and drink right when they walk in. Later, in a second semester run, some of the new players built on the tradition of hospitality to turn it into "hospitality" in a Classical sense: a guest in the Croatan common room was under the House's protection.

- One especially effective way to build House cohesion is to have a catchphrase or a call-and-response chant. One common Dubois call-and-response is "You have wandered!" "Now you are home!" Croatan sometimes builds on their motto of "to dare is to do" by congratulating each other with "Dared and done!" Make up your own, and use it often! See the Appendices for more detail on songs and chants.

Don't forget to invite your House monitor to house events and activities!

Competing for the House Cup

One of the running themes of NWM is the House Cup competition. It works very similarly to the competition at a certain other wizard school, students earn points for their Houses, and those points are added up at the end to determine the winner of the Cup.

On Thursday evening before the parties start, you'll have a House meeting, and that's when you should discuss the Cup. This is when you should decide both IC and OOC how interested you are in winning - and if you are interested in winning, what your strategy will be.

Acts that can earn you points are:

- Academic excellence: answering questions well in class, coming up with an interesting project, creating a new spell or piece of artificery, etc.
- Personal excellence: helping a student in trouble, being kind, being brave, being generous, being ingenious, being persistent, being funny.
- House spirit: singing the House song or NWM alma mater, cheering for your Housemates, embodying the core values of your House
- Supporting other characters in solving problems
- Demonstrating leadership
- Doing favors for professors (although this will depend on the whim of the individual professor, so don't go giving too many apples to the teacher!)
- Creating amazing scenes and rituals, then talking about what happened
- Fostering the type of community New World Magischola is known for

Some things to keep in mind:

- Points can only be awarded by professors. So if you want to earn points, do your excellent things around professors, or make sure that professors know that you've done

them! Also, each professor will have different ideas about what is excellent enough to earn points: know your audience!

- Talk to your housemates ahead of time about how serious you want to be about the House Cup. Do you really want to win? Do you not care? (Once, Casa Calisaylá actively tried to lose! And they lost gloriously, coming in with a negative score.) Figure out the approach to the competition that will be the most fun for the most people in your House.
 - Relatedly: are you willing to cheat to win the Cup? If you decide that cheating is OK, make sure that you're extra careful about negotiating OOC consent with the players of the characters you're deceiving. We don't want anyone to feel hurt or betrayed OOC.
 - Even if you're being serious about the competition IC, be kind to your housemates OOC, and make sure that they're kind to each other. Make sure that nobody gives each other a hard time about losing points, or about not winning enough points.
- In first-semester runs, Unsorted first-year students earn points individually. Then, after they're Sorted, those points go to the House that claims them. You may want to think strategically about which first-years you claim for your House.
- Be a gracious winner and a gracious loser.

Making a great Common Room and House Party

Your Common room is dedicated to your house members. Think of it like your living room! You and your housemates are encouraged to bring things to decorate the space. Remember that you don't need to do this alone; you should share the responsibility. Plus, it helps build cohesion and investment if everyone cooperates on bringing decorations for the common room.

There are many ways you can decorate your Common Room. Some groups have made their rooms an easy place to hang out and relax but encouraging people to bring in pillows, and extra comfortable seating. Other houses might have a great place to study and work as a group. Try to establish an environment that reflects your house's history and current state.

Some creative ideas might include:

- Lighting
- Music
- Drapes to cover the windows
- Pillows
- House Artifacts
- Props from House Rituals
- Photos of past members
- Message boards

When decorating your room, please be respectful of the space! Find out ahead of time what the regulations are at the host university: for instance, are you allowed to put thumbtacks in the walls, or can you only stick things on with painter's tape or blue-tac? In all cases, remember that **there should never be lit candles or other open flames.**

Please be respectful of other cultures when you're decorating, too. In particular, if your House's founder is of a different race or culture than yours (eg, if you're in Calisaylá and you're not Native/indigenous/First Nations yourself), make sure that your decorations aren't appropriative of that culture.

You're also responsible for organizing a party on Thursday night. In first-semester runs this is where the first-years will get a sense of your House so that they can figure out whether it's the one they'll want to join. Again, while you're the leader, you don't have to do it alone! Ask your housemates to bring food and drink to share, ask them to bring music to play and special party decorations. You can communicate a House's character through the kinds of food, drink, and entertainment that you offer to your guests!

Make sure that you have enough food and drink options to accommodate different tastes and dietary restrictions: have vegetarian/vegan options; avoid peanuts and other common allergens, etc.

A few particular notes about alcohol:

- **Obey local laws on alcohol, and do not serve it to players who are under the legal drinking age.** In most states, the legal drinking age is 21.
- Know the host university's policy on alcohol. Are there any spaces on campus where alcohol is not permitted?
- Communicate to your players ahead of time whether you will be serving alcohol.
- Have non-alcoholic drinks available as well. Not everyone drinks alcohol: some refrain for religious or health reasons; some are just uncomfortable with it. Make sure that everyone feels comfortable and welcome at your party!
- If you do choose to serve alcohol at your party, keep an eye on people's alcohol consumption. **If someone is getting drunk in a way that threatens their own health and safety, or the health and safety of someone else, contact an organizer.**

4. Welcoming, Initiation, and other rituals

House Presidents lead several rituals over the course of a game. These generally include:

- Welcoming
- Initiation (in first-semester runs): a ritual that inducts new students into the House
- Advancement (in second-semester runs): a ritual that raises first-years to second; and second-years to third.

There may be more, though. If you've decided that your House will have additional officers, for instance, you may want to have an investiture ritual for them. Or, a plot may suggest the

possibility of a ritual, and as House President, you're likely to be in a position to lead that planning.

Here are some tips for how to craft a good House ritual:

- Keep in mind the themes and values of the House that you've established. A House that values courage, for instance, may have an Initiation ritual that requires new members to face their greatest fear. A House that values hierarchy might have a Welcoming ritual that divides up students by year; whereas a House that values equality might have a Welcoming ritual that collects all of the students in one big circle.
- Keep in mind the purpose of the ritual, and make sure that you communicate that purpose clearly to everyone participating. Focusing the ritual around a single theme will make the emotional impact that much stronger.
- Give every individual an opportunity to shine! Even in Initiation, which will focus more strongly on incoming first-years, every member of a House should get their own moment in the spotlight. Some ways to do this:
 - A responsive reading in which every member in turn gets to act as the leader
 - A ritual that requires each person to perform an action in turn
 - A ritual in which each person is given a specific task based on their own abilities, background, or knowledge

Some things to pay extra attention to, when you're crafting your House rituals:

- If you're incorporating elements of real-world cultures into your rituals, make sure that you're treating those cultures with respect. Do enough research to understand the full meaning of those cultural elements. In particular, try not to include rituals that match those practiced by any present-day real-world religions. When in doubt, ask for help!
- If possible, discuss the contents of the ritual with participants ahead of time. This is important for several reasons.
 - Accessibility: A ritual conducted in low light will be a problem for players with impaired vision; a ritual that requires players to climb stairs will be a problem for people with mobility issues. Make sure that all of your housemates will be able to participate! Plan with maximum accessibility in mind, and then tell everyone what the ritual will be like: that way, if there's still an accessibility issue that you've missed, you can have it called to your attention so that you can change it.
 - If there are elements of a ritual that might bother some people, like loud noises or sharing personal space, you need to make sure that all participants are OK with having those elements included. Informing people ahead of time allows them to opt in, or to let you know that there's a problem so that you can change the ritual.
- If your rituals need special props or NPCs (many House rituals like to summon the ghost of the House founder, for instance) make sure that you've submitted the request for those props or NPCs to Ops well in advance of the game.

Here is a list of things you should NEVER incorporate in your rituals:

- Do not purposely embarrass, exclude, or otherwise shame someone. The ritual should feel like a welcoming space and a positive bonding experience. No hazing.
- Do not force people to touch one another. Not everyone has the same level of physical comfort.
- No touching people without their permission. Do not try to force permission in front of the group.
- Allow people the chance to opt-out of the ritual by saying. "In 10 minutes, we will all convene in the sacred space." Do not force people to participate or ask them why if they need to leave. The door is always open should be your principle.
- Do not make people disrobe or otherwise compromise their physical or emotional comfort. Again, remember that not everyone has the same comfort level.
- Do not make loud noises or sudden movements that can startle people. Do not use an intimidating tone of voice or yelling.
- Do not monologue for long period of time or lecture your House members. This ceremony is for their benefit more than yours.
- Do not make any threatening or aggressive movements during the ritual. Dispel any spells that characters might cast to be disruptive or "prank" the group.
- Avoid silliness. If an idea makes you giggle, it probably is not appropriate for a serious ritual. House members may giggle to release nervousness. Allow this, but gently remind them to remain calm and quiet in order to observe the sanctity of the ritual.
- Absolutely no hazing.

For some examples of rituals that past House Presidents have composed and offered to share, see this collection:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B3hSiwKq_vRqeERmWS1STW5GLTg

5. Special notes for each semester

First Semester: Drafting and Sorting

If you're in a first-semester run, Sorting will have a large impact on the game, so it warrants its own section.

Sorting, unlike in the movies, unfortunately does not involve a magical hat. It's a process where the Houses and first-years feel each other out to see who is a good fit for each other, and then the House Presidents meet in private to divide the first-years amongst the Houses.

The Sorting process can be broken down into a few steps: **scouting, drafting, and the ceremony**. (For Initiation, see above under Rituals.) Scouting takes place from Thursday evening through Friday afternoon; drafting takes place on Friday afternoon; and the ceremony takes place on Friday evening.

Scouting begins on Thursday as soon as the game begins. House parties on Thursday night allow first-years to get a sense of each House. Every House has a different personality in every run. That will affect the kinds of characters that you want to recruit, and the kind of characters who will be drawn to your House.

Because there is so much happening at a House party, and because scouting continues through classes on Friday, you won't be able to get quality time with each prospective first-year yourself.

Therefore, delegate! Here are some potential ways to do that:

- Assign all House members the job of meeting and screening potential recruits. Have them write the names of the first-years they would like to see join the House on a piece of paper and have one person (this can be another player or either one of the House Presidents) collect the results and hand them in. This can be negotiated at the House workshops (or just after if time is running short) or within game.
- Assign this task to second-years. This method works well if you set up a chain of mentorship that would have been an ongoing tradition in your House: if every second-year would formally mentor a first-year, then each second-year can look for a first-year that they'd especially want to mentor. This also sets up the first-year with not just one mentor but effectively two, as the second-year mentor would have had a third-year who acted in the same capacity.
- Choose a committee to oversee the scouting, and let them decide how to proceed. This can be great if you have a player who is keen (IC or OOC) to prove themselves ready to take the next step and perhaps be a president in training: choose them to head up the committee and let them organize away!

Pay attention to which first-years would be a good fit academically and personally. (Also remember that when you acquire a new student through Sorting, your House gets their points! If you care a lot about winning the House Cup, try to make a good impression on first-years who are earning a lot of points.)

Whichever method you choose, make sure to keep the lines of communication going, because when the time comes for selection, House Presidents will be the only ones making the decisions.

Drafting takes place on Friday afternoon. First-year characters receive slips of paper on which they give their first and last choice of House.

House Presidents will do the selection IC. It's best to discuss OOC ahead of time how you want the selection to go: even if you're all confrontational and divisive IC, and even if you all have fun with that kind of roleplay, you still need to make sure that the process moves quickly enough that you don't delay the game schedule OOC.

Typically, the houses are assigned an order in which do do their drafts. They proceed first in that order, and then in reverse - so, for instance, Obeah, Laveau, Calisayla, Du Bois, Croatan, Croatan, Du Bois, Calisayla, Laveau, Obeah) until all first years have been selected.

Try to accommodate players' first choice for their House! That may not always be possible, though, for several reasons. Once in a while, there's a huge discrepancy between their character's personality and that of the House. More often, there's just a difference in numbers: some Houses will have more players interested in joining than others, but the division of first years needs to be relatively even across all five house, so not everyone can get their first choice. **However, a player absolutely *can't* be given their *last* choice.**

Therefore, you may need to do some negotiation with your counterpart presidents from other houses to figure things out. (Again, make sure that the IC fun of haggling doesn't drag on too long!)

If you know that a first-year very strongly wanted to join a particular House, especially if it's an OOC preference, try to accommodate that preference over someone who was much less invested in the choice. If you want to simply state that OOC; sometimes that's fine. Or, you could make an IC reason for the stronger preference: a family tie, a promise, a prophecy or dream-vision, a geas, etc. Shuffling around first-years after selections have been made is common and negotiating with your fellow house presidents is more than likely to happen to balance out the distribution of first years.

Be aware that sometimes for reasons beyond anyone's control, the player base may just have a less positive view of one particular house or another. But from experience, most players end up finding themselves liking the house they ended up in. As House President, you can help foster house unity and create a welcoming community that will soothe any disappointment they may have at not getting their first choice. (See below, in the Appendix, for what to do in the rare case that a player wants to switch Houses.)

The Sorting process culminates in the **ceremony**. At the Sorting Ceremony, the whole university gathers in a formal space. Each first-year gets their moment to shine as they are called up, receive their tie from their House Presidents, and then join the ranks, being welcomed by their housemates.

(Greeting a new member is a great time for your House to use their call-and-response chant! Or make a new one up just for this special occasion! However, make sure that you do this only if your call-and-response is short; we need to keep the ceremony moving! Likewise, if you want to offer your new Housemates another token in addition to the tie, that's great, but it's better suited to the House initiation rituals)

Make sure to keep your housemates together after Sorting; this is usually when formal House photos are taken.

Then, you'll go off to Initiation.

It's important to help the new first-years feel that they're full members of the House they've just joined. Remember to delegate tasks to them, consult their opinion, and include them in major House decisions and plots just as much as you do with your old members. You may even want to create a few new House customs with the new members just after Initiation - see above in the House Cohesion section for more ideas on this.

Second Semester: Advancement and Succession

If you're in a second-semester run, you won't be acquiring new members midway through the game. Instead, you'll be heading towards graduation. That means that you'll need to think about end-of-the-year rituals: advancing your Housemates into the next year, and choosing your own successors as House Presidents.

On Thursday evening, you'll have a House meeting before the parties start. It should include:

- A welcoming/House Unity/pre-finals ritual: something to mark the beginning of the game, and to establish the spirit of the House
- A discussion of the House Cup (see above in the House Cup section for more specifics on what should be discussed)
- A discussion of the selection of next year's House Presidents.

The House Presidents that you'll choose are **IC only**. The people you choose are not under any obligation to act as House Presidents the following NWM, or even to apply for the position. Of course they're welcome to apply if they want, but they will still have to go through the OOC application process just like everyone else. The incoming Presidents' only duty at this game will be to make a brief speech at graduation. (Make sure that they know about this!)

The candidates for next year's House President should ideally be second-years, but if no second-years are interested, you can start talking to first-years.

You get to decide how next year's Presidents get chosen. Some potential ways to do this could be:

- Delegating to all first-years: asking them to interview all the second-years to see who the best candidates are, and reporting back
- Having potential Presidents declare their candidacy, and all House members vote on Friday evening
- Appointing a selection committee whose job it is to vet candidates

In all cases, the goal is for the selection process to express the spirit and values of your House, and to involve as many people as possible in fun roleplay. In all cases, you should also talk to the candidates OOC: make sure that the nominees actually want to be chosen/elected; and if a player really wants to be House President as the conclusion of their character arc, try to make that happen.

Also, while you may choose to have some IC corruption in the process of choosing the House Presidents, **make sure that the process is fair and transparent OOC**. We recommend against having IC corruption or election-rigging too, but we can't stop you.

On Friday night, you'll have another House meeting. If you've decided to choose the next House President by election, this is when you'll elect them. If you're appointing them, this is when you'll announce your choice and invest them in their new office. Make this special! Create House President regalia that you pass on; summon the Founder's ghost to pass approval; give the new Presidents an initiation challenge to pass - again, it should be an expression of the personality and values of your House. See above, under Rituals, for good ways to make a ritual feel important.

This Friday night meeting is also when you have the Advancement ritual. Make this as solemn and momentous as Initiation would be! We want players to feel that they've participated in a truly important event, and that first-years and second-years are getting a mini-graduation of their own.

If for some reason you want to hold off on elections/appointments of new House Presidents until Saturday, you can. As long as the staff receives the names of the new House Presidents by the end of the last final exam on Saturday, it's fine. Still, it's much better to do it on Friday so that there's no chance of things getting lost in the end-of-game scramble, and so that you know you'll have time for a cool ritual.

6. Care for others: player safety and emotional care

As a House President, you're one of the first lines of defense in maintaining player safety. Because you've got so much contact with your housemates, you'll be in a good position to spot when people are struggling; and because you're both accessible and in a position of leadership, you're likely to be the person that players will come to first if they're in trouble. This section will give advice on how to help prevent distress, how to spot it early, and how to deal with it when it happens.

That said, we need to start by saying that **you are not expected to deal with everything yourself. Please go straight to Ops or an Organizer if any of the following things happens in your House:**

- **A physical injury that requires medical attention**

- **Severe emotional distress that requires medical attention**
- **A violation of the Code of Conduct**

Here are some ways to help care for your players:

- Check-in circles. At the end of mealtimes (lunch and dinner work best), convene everyone together for a 10-15-minute out-of-game check-in. Share ongoing plots, ask who wants things to do or wants someone to help them with something. Make sure that everyone is feeling included and has enough going on.
 - An easy format to use is: 1. Give their real name. (this helps a person ground themselves in reality). 2. Give their character name (this helps players remember character names). 3. State one thing that's going well. 4. State one thing that's not going well and/or that they need help with. The rest of the group can help troubleshoot the problems then, but remember to keep the discussion moving so that everyone gets a chance to speak.
 - Make sure to communicate that this is optional! While the structure of regular check-ins can be reassuring for some players, for others the extra time obligation is *more* stressful! If a player wants to opt out of the check-in circle, let them!
 - Give advance notice! Be sure to remind everyone in the house that you are taking 15 minutes of the meal break to all meet and talk about it. Make sure it is communicated every meal time.
- Buddy system. Pair up players so that they can give each other periodic check-ins: emotional OK-check-ins, making sure that they're having fun and feeling involved in plots, etc. There will be many times during the game when you're not in the same place as your housemates, so this system adds another layer of care and safety. It's especially helpful to pair new larpers with experienced ones.
- Individual check-ins. If you see a player who's struggling and/or isolated, draw them aside for an individual talk. Do an OK-check-in, and ask them if there's anything that you can do to help. Sometimes you'll need to be proactive in reaching out to players who need help.
- Tone negotiations. At the beginning of the game (and possibly also at the check-in circles), talk with your players about what kind of tone they're interested in playing. Do they want to explore dark themes? Do they want a lot of deep emotional intensity? (Which may or may not be the same thing as darkness - romance plots, for instance, can get emotionally intense without being dark.) Do they want to keep the tone lighter? Make sure that people get matched up with plots and players that fit the kind of tone that will be fun for them, and make sure that nobody feels pressured into the kind of tone that won't be fun for them.
 - In particular, make sure that nobody gets blindsided by traumatic or violent scenes. **Ask your players ahead of time if they are planning violent or traumatic scenes, especially those that could lead to character death.** Some

players may want to maintain out-of-game secrecy on these plots, but it is NWM's practice that player safety takes precedence over everything, so ask them to disclose their plans ahead of time. It may even be good to talk with them and see if the character goals can be accomplished in a less traumatic way.

- Also, encourage players **not to have major scenes at the ball, especially death scenes**. The ball should be a time when all players get to have fun and ride the last high notes of the game.

- Encourage your players to see the counselors if they're experiencing a lot of distress, or distress beyond what you feel comfortable or capable of dealing with.

- Encourage your players to get enough food, water, and sleep.

7. Self care

Because you have a lot of responsibility for others' care, it can be easy to let self-care slip.

Remember that your own well-being is important too! And also, remember that you're here to play and have fun!

How to make sure you don't burn out

1. Check in regularly with your co-president, if you have one. Being president can be very stressful, and it helps to have someone to share the burden with.
 - a. If you don't have a co-president, or are having trouble checking in with them for whatever reason, find someone else who can support you. Professors, third years, presidents of the other Houses, or prospective second-year House presidents can all potentially help if you ask them.
 - b. Use your House monitor! They are there to help you. They can act as a second or third House president. Often, the professor would love to help out more if asked.
2. Check in regularly with the presidents of the other Houses. It really helps to share tips and tricks in game, and it gives you a better sense of what plots are going on, so you can direct your respective House members in appropriate directions. While you may be in-game rivals, out-of-game, you're working together to build a great experience for the other players. Don't be afraid to collaborate. Again, being president can be stressful, but you're not alone!
3. Delegate! This is helpful IC as well as OOC. Delegating tasks to your housemates can help them feel special and included, and can bring them into plots that they might not otherwise have encountered. It also eases the burden of work on you!
4. Get enough sleep, water, and food. It is *totally okay* to tell your housemates that you're off-duty during meals. Otherwise you may not get to eat because you're so busy solving other people's problems.

5. Don't be afraid to go to the counselors! They're there to help. You can draw on their resources for your own emotional self-care as well as to help you sort out in-house disputes or other difficulties. It's easy to think that because you're in a leadership role, that you are beyond the help of the counselors. This is not true! You're a player and a person who needs care as well. Please remember that this is a tool for you as well.
6. Drink water. Seriously, do it.
7. Also, sleep. Seriously.

How to balance your own plots with others'

While you are acting as an IC leader and plot-facilitator, you're not an NPC. You can and should have your own plots! Finding the right balance between personal plot and helping your House isn't easy, but you will probably have a better game if you do at least a couple things for your character. However, personal plot shouldn't overwhelm your responsibilities as president. Don't plan too many personal things, as you probably won't get to them.

Generally, one or two personal plots will be enough; in particular, schedule some personal scenes near the beginning of the game, when you're more likely to have free time.

If you find your own plots getting overwhelming, you're in a good position to delegate plot to others. This will both relieve your own stress and increase other people's fun. For instance, if you need to help everyone in your House find dates for the ball, ask some second-years to form a matchmaking committee. Or, let's say that you've planned a personal plot where you're tracking down the person who stole a precious family artifact: if you find yourself getting too stressed to follow up on that plot yourself, ask your housemates to help you.

And, above all, **do what is fun for you**. If skipping a class to take a nap is what you need to do, do it! Or, if going to class to connect with your IC best friend is what will help you feel refreshed and happy, do it! You're here to have fun too.

8. Working with the Organizers

There are a few very important areas of communication between House Presidents and organizers. Here are some tips on that.

Before the game:

- Communicate often! The organizers will need information from you, especially about props and decorations for the House common rooms. They want to help you make your space awesome, so definitely ask for what you need within the boundaries of the budget you're given.

- Meet your deadlines! Handing information in late will hold up the organizational process and put undue stress on organizers and staff.

During the game:

- Running workshops: You may need to step in to run the house workshops. If so, you'll be given all the information you need. Pay close attention to your written instructions, especially about safety mechanics, and make sure to stick to the schedule so that you don't run over time.
- Emergencies: Contact organizers as early as possible and provide as much information as possible. Keep a calm head as much as possible so you can make clear decisions and mitigate panic in other players. See the Appendix for more details on what to do in a specific kinds of emergencies.

9. Appendices

Emergencies

Situational emergencies can come in various forms and require different action. However in all cases remember to remain calm. Keeping a clear state of mind means you'll make better decisions, more quickly and articulately.

- Physical medical emergencies: You never know when something will happen - someone could hurt themselves, or have an adverse reaction to something, have a medical condition triggered or even go a little too overboard on the partying.
 - Keep people clear of the affected individual. This keeps the situation less chaotic and can help keep the affected person calmer. Delegate someone to do this, so that you can focus your attention on the person who needs care.
 - See if anyone present has medical training - doctor, nurse, EMT, etc. If so, have them take point on caring for the affected person, and send a runner to Ops to tell them of the situation. If not, send a runner to Ops as quickly as possible so that they can find someone with first aid training.
- Emotional and mental health emergencies: These happen too. A player may have a panic attack, or encounter a trauma trigger that they weren't prepared for, or some other mental health problem may escalate during the game. The same procedures apply: keep others from crowding the affected individual, and try to find someone with the necessary medical expertise to help, either on the scene or at Ops. **Just as with physical health emergencies, it is very important that only people with the proper training intervene in a mental health crisis.**
- Out of character disagreement that has escalated: In most cases it's best to separate the individuals involved. If it's gotten to the point of a physical altercation, unless you have experience breaking this sort of thing up, get someone to ops/organizers ASAP. You

need to be present to ensure the chaos doesn't spread and to provide an eyewitness account of what is going on from that point. Since you're an IC authority, players are likely to listen to you. If you can separate them, make sure none of the involved parties are left alone, and that none of them can wander off. Try to get them to talk calmly about what happened. Once staff arrive, you can either hand things off or remain to assist with the fallout and getting the now tense situation between the involved players resolved.

- OOC Emergency: Sometimes the real world comes knocking during play time. You may be the first line of contact should organizers not be able to locate the player immediately. You can call on your housemates to help find the player in question - they're likely to know where the others are.

What happens if a player wants to change Houses after they've already been assigned or Sorted?

Switching Houses is generally discouraged. **It should be very rare.** House selection and House membership are a core part of the NWM experience, and should be embraced as such IC.

Usually, requests for changes come when a character is Sorted into a House they don't want to be in and/or didn't expect. When that happens:

- Talk to the player. Try to help them make the surprise a part of their character's story and work it into their roleplay.
- Ask them to give it some time. Players cannot switch Houses immediately after the Sorting Ceremony.

Players in second-semester runs generally have more time to reconcile themselves with any disappointment they may have felt about House placement, so you as House President are less likely to have to deal with requests for switches during the run. However, it's possible that that may happen. The same advice applies: talk to the player to try to help them work through it, and to discover the reason for their request. If there's something serious going on - a conflict with another player, for instance - you may need to refer the player to the counselors or Ops.

If, after consideration and conversation, the player still feels that their House placement is going to have a huge negative effect on their game in a way that can't be worked around:

- Have a conversation with the player and the President(s) of the House they want to switch into.
- Come up with an IC reason for the switch. Ops can help you come up with one if necessary.
- Inform Ops of the change.

Remember that this decision is not about you as the House President! You've tried your best. The decision is about the player, and at the end of the day, helping the players have fun is the most important thing.

House Songs and Chants

Every House has a song! You can find sheet music for all of them, as well as the NWM alma mater, here: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B79zsbrazmgYWZLYjA1RjRZLWs>

These add a ton of flavor to the game! If you have musical players, encourage them to learn your House song. You can even have some song sessions during workshops, or on Google hangouts ahead of the game, to learn it as a group. Then, sing your song often! You can incorporate the song into your rituals. And if the right professor or chancellor hears you singing it, it can earn you House points.

More commonly used is the House chant. These get used all the time. They're great for building cohesion and communicating your House's identity. The examples given here are just a few that have been used in the past; they're not the "official" chants for any of the Houses! Definitely feel free to make up your own!

Many chants are call-and-response - for example, Dubois' "We are Just!" "Always Just!" Not all are, though: Croatan often uses "Dared and done!", and Calisaylá just says "Ah-woo!" or does a coyote howl.

A House chant can be used during House Point announcements, at Sorting, or just as a greeting to each other. It's especially powerful when used to greet new members during Sorting.

Since House chants are an expression of the tone of your House, they can be as serious or silly as you like. In one run, Dan Obeah's "Be the change, break the chains, change the world" expressed their serious commitment to social justice. In another, Dan Obeah was more lighthearted, and used a raven "ca-CAW!" as their chant. Just make sure that your chant says what you want it to say about your House.

House President Checklist:

Below is a handy checklist that you can fill out with dates appropriate for your run. This should help you keep on track with preparation so you don't have to scurry to finish everything within the last couple of weeks before game.

<u>House President Checklist</u>			
Task	Due Date	Complete	Notes

Connect with your co-president			Learn Larp organizers will make sure you know who your co-president is so you can contact them
Determine theme/feel for your House			NB: this needs to include your co-president but can also include other members of your house.
Introductory post on House FaceBook Group/Slack			So players can reach out to you before game and you can get to know your house
Introductory post on Character Connections FaceBook Group			Not all players will be in the House group, also so you can build connections outside your House
Introductory email to House members			For players who aren't on FaceBook, sending an email to introduce yourself and let them know you're available for any questions or concerns is helpful in making players feel more comfortable. Also including/PMing them with a link to the Facebook group (with the caveat of letting them know it's completely opt in) can be useful as it's easy for players to miss the link.
Submit House common room decoration/props list			You will only have a very small budget if any for this. If you want to purchase items beyond your budget it will not be reimbursed
Submit House Ritual details via scene request			Be sure to note any NPC requests, prop requests etc.
Determine your key IC (in character) backup people			This can be your co-president, professor players, other players who you feel comfortable with going to in times of stress/need or to delegate tasks to when you're feeling overwhelmed
Determine your key OOC (out of character) backup people			This can be anyone that you're comfortable with out of game, they should be able to help you when you as a player are having difficulties emotionally, physically, mentally etc.
Reminder notes on emotional/physical signs of when you may need a break			It's easy to overextend yourself. Keep this list in mind and even share with others to help you recognize when you're needing a break
Print a easy to carry list of key contacts			Good to have in case of emergencies
Make a list of things you will need to bring to the run			Often we bring items for sorting, advancement, rituals, promised items for other players, linens etc. Best to have a list to

			check against while packing
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You can find a print friendly version of the checklist here:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1VCH48NkGtDwBSXuwiE7YDgFghLXKAcaDt2Vnh3_Eq8/edit?usp=sharing