

**Sixteen Helpful Hints for Gift Discussions
For Board Members and Campaign Volunteers**

Before You Ask

1. Make your own gift. Never ask someone else to do something you haven't done yourself.
2. Do your homework. Know basic information about the campaign. Rehearse it in your head so that you'll be comfortable describing it to your donor. Know basic information about the person you are visiting and consider potential areas you have in common with her. This will help you engage her in conversation quickly and easily.
3. Connect – Find common ground (not related to the purpose of the visit). Smile and relax.
4. Discuss family, work, or friends in common. Give this as much time as you and the donor need to feel comfortable. Slowly begin to look for a segue to the purpose of your visit. Usually, when the donor is comfortable, she will ask you a leading question.

As You Ask

5. Tell your story. Why is this campaign important to you? Why did you give?
6. Use the campaign itself and campaign timing as the reason for your visit. “We need your leadership to build momentum” (early in campaign). “We need your help to finish strong/make our goal” (later in campaign).
7. Show the donor the gift table. Draw a line below the level where you would like them to give. Explain that, for the campaign to be successful, we need leaders to give at the levels above the line. Ask if she could consider a leadership-level gift to the campaign.
8. Ask the donor for a specific amount. Suggest that a pledge can be paid over a period of years, making it easier to commit to a larger amount.
9. Once you have asked, remain silent. Allow the donor to consider what you have asked and to respond. Do not rush into a silence. The donor must be the next to speak.

Handling Objections Following an Ask

10. If the donor starts talking about a bad experience she had as a student: Listen to her. Ask questions and reflect understanding. If appropriate, suggest that you will relay her concerns to the school administration. Then say, “I hope that you will still want to consider supporting this campaign.”

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11. If the donor says, “I can’t afford to give at that level.” Ask her to do what she can. Suggest that this campaign is a stretch for the organization, and that her willingness to stretch in her gift will help the organization accomplish something important for current and future mission attainment.
12. If the donor says, “I don’t have any money to give right now.” Ask her, if money weren’t an issue, would she be interested in supporting this campaign? Find out what area of the campaign appeals most to her and why. Hearing herself talk about the importance of the campaign will often lead her to want to do something to help.
13. If the answer is still “no.” Say that you hope she’ll reconsider as the campaign progresses. Invite her to an event to find out more about the opportunity and importance of supporting the organization at this time.

After You Ask

14. Thank the donor, as appropriate, for her pledge, or for her willingness to consider a pledge, or for her time.
15. Ask if you can follow up. Suggest a specific course of follow up where you make the next contact and ask if it would be acceptable. “I would like to give you a call in two weeks to follow up. Would that be okay with you?”
16. Thank the donor again.

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