



New Brothers Section D

BEING A BIG BROTHER

INTRODUCTION

The custom of having an older Brother or mentor act as a guide, tutor, friend and confidant is a fine tradition in fraternity life and has many similar equivalents in our society. Alpha Gamma Rho's Brotherhood Program stresses the relationship between Big and Little Brothers as the most effective method of assisting new Brothers as they join our Fraternity, are fully integrated into the Chapter and become productive contributing Brothers.

Since our Brotherhood Program relies on the Big Brother to have primary role in the development of new Brothers within the Fraternity, this Section is provided to assist Big Brothers as they assume their responsibilities.

MISSION STATEMENT (BIG BROTHER'S OATH)

“I promise that it is my personal responsibility to share with my Little Brother my friendship, advice, knowledge and dedication to the principles of Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity.

“I promise to help my Little Brother become a better Brother by being the primary vehicle of his education about, participation in, and adaption to the Fraternity. I promise to help him be a better person by not only the wisdom of my words but also the integrity of my deeds through my personal example.

“I vow that we will grow and develop together in the true spirit of Fraternity.”

PREREQUISITES OF BEING A BIG BROTHER

To qualify as a Big Brother, a Brother must maintain his own good standing in school and in the fraternity. Otherwise, he is a poor example for the new Brother to follow.

He must be able to explain the concepts and requirements of the Brotherhood Program and have a basic knowledge of all operations of the Chapter and the Fraternity or know who to ask for that information. If he is not able to do so, he will not be a proper resource for his Little Brother.

He must be available to conduct weekly one-on-one education and help sessions with his Little Brother, using the Guided Self Study Program section of this manual.

This weekly meeting with his Little Brother will include a review of fraternity education, Chapter meeting agenda items and issues, the Little Brother's academic progress and the answering of whatever questions or concerns the Little Brother has at the time.

The Big Brother must also report any problems or potential problems to the VNR-Membership Development and the Chapter Noble Ruler as quickly as he becomes aware of them.

He serves to informally remind and advise his Little Brother regarding possible deficiencies in meeting the Basic Expectations and Chapter Minimum Membership Standards and troubleshoots to avoid disciplinary action by trying to bring the Little Brother in compliance with the Basic Expectations and Chapter Minimum Standards.

The Big Brother also will write to the parents of his Little Brother to introduce them to the Fraternity. He is their resource man for questions, etc., and should be their personal guide when they visit the Chapter.

The relationship between the Big Brother and the Little Brother is not for the freshman year alone and not for the undergraduate experience alone. This is the beginning of a life-long relationship that starts at the beginning of the fraternity experience and continues through the full undergraduate term and beyond.

THE ROLE OF THE BIG BROTHER

The Big Brother serves in a variety of roles to assist and benefit both his Little Brother and his Chapter:

1. The Big Brother is a dependable connection between the new Brother and all aspects of Chapter life. He facilitates the quick adaptation of his Little Brother into every aspect of Chapter life.
2. The Big Brother monitors the overall progress of his Little Brother in the Chapter. Whether it be striving for academic success, attending and participating in Chapter meetings, progressing through the Big/Little Brother education and guided self-study programs, participating in intramurals or just getting along with the Brothers, the Big Brother makes sure the Little Brother knows, understands and is able to meet the various expectations of AΓP.
3. The Big Brother also acts as a counselor to his Little Brother, offering his experience to assist his Little Brother in making a variety of decisions to the best of his ability.
4. The Big Brother should maintain these roles even after graduation – helping his Little Brother as needed. Chapter officers should not hesitate to call upon Big Brothers as a resource should their Little Brothers have problems.

WHAT A BIG BROTHER ISN'T

A Big Brother is not:

1. A buddy to party with;
2. A social pal where that conflicts with being an older role model;
3. Undependable;
4. One who ignores the difference between being a friend and being a mentor; he knows that being a mentor means sometimes saying and doing things that may not be fun or comfortable for the Little Brother.
5. Afraid or unable to confront when his Little Brother is in error

FIRST MEETING

Immediately or as soon as possible after the Orientation Meeting, the Big Brother and his Little Brother should have a private meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to start the new Brother's formal assimilation into the Fraternity, begin the bonding between the two Brothers to set mutual expectations and to start the learning process.

The meeting should include:

Introduction –

Both should share their basic information: full name, hometown, major or intended major, campus address and phone. The Big Brother should explain any other offices or chairmanships he holds in the Chapter. Both will want to note this information in the "Brothers" section in the back of each of their Golden Crescents.

Purpose of the Big Brother Program –

Both should share their expectation about what the Big Brother's role is and what they expect of each other.

The Big Brother's Oath can be used as a guideline to discuss specifics.

Review of the Guided Self-Study Program –

Big and Little Brother should briefly review the contents and expectations of the Guided Self-Study Program.

Introduction to Chapter Membership

Using a Chapter roster or, if available, a print of the Chapter composite, the Big Brother should review with his Little Brother the name, hometown, major, Chapter and campus offices of each Brother and other important information of each Brother. While it is not expected that the Little Brother be able to recite them back verbatim, this exercise will start the learning process.

Chapter Mechanics

The Big Brother should review the Chapter's operation with his Little Brother:

- Basic Expectations & Chapter Minimum Membership Standards
- Meeting date, time, place, agenda and decorum
- Current Chapter issues (from Chapter Meeting Minutes – copies should be given to Little Brother for Guided Self-Study Program)
- Important sections of Constitution, By-laws and other rules and policies, parliamentary procedure
- Set time and place for weekly (Big/Little) Brother meetings
- Through the first semester, the Big and Little Brother should meet formally once a week. Their agenda should include:

Review of guided self-study material

Review of last meeting

Review of academic progress

Review of his assimilation into AΓP

Review goals set and goals reached – adjust as needed

Stressing of Academic Achievement

The Big Brother must make it clear to his Little Brother that academics are of primary importance and that if the Little Brother is struggling, they can seek help.

BIG BROTHER READING LIST AND RESOURCE GUIDE

At a minimum, each Big Brother should read and have a working understanding of the following materials:

Guided Study Program
The Golden Crescent
The history and traditions of your Chapter*
Alpha Gamma Rho's Constitution and policies (non-hazing, Risk Management, etc.)*
Your Chapter's Constitution and By-laws*
VNR-Membership Development Manual[†]

The Big Brother should also have readily available:

Campus emergency numbers
First Aid
Crisis Center

Contact information for:

Little Brother – campus and home/names and addresses of parents
Chapter Officers
Chapter Adviser
Alumni Corporation President
Regional Vice President
ΑΓΡ Headquarters
Campus Greek Adviser
Dean of Students

* VNR-Membership Development are encouraged to prepare a local "Big Brothers Resource Guide" with asterisked (*) information included.

[†] While each Big Brother is not expected to read and know the whole VNR-Membership Development Manual, he must have a working knowledge of the Brotherhood Program. A Brotherhood Program Overview brochure is available on request through the ΑΓΡ Headquarters.

THE BASICS OF MENTORING

A very important role of the Big Brother is that of mentor. Mentoring is usually defined as being “a trusted counselor or guide.” Being a good Big Brother (mentor) includes:

BEING A KNOWLEDGEABLE COMPANION

- Being involved in his Little Brother’s life by being understanding, kind, sincere, patient and by providing friendship and security within the Fraternity and the campus community.
- Committing himself without condition to his Little Brother, accepting the responsibility that the Little Brother may be at times unresponsive and/or get into trouble due to “growing pains”, a different values system and the natural tendency to test the Big Brother to ascertain the genuineness of the relationship.
- Allowing the Little Brother his independence in choices and judgments he makes but helping him to realize the consequences of his choices.
- Being prepared to confront the Little Brother with his errors and offering advice on remedying his mistakes.
- Not acting as a disciplinarian, chapter officer, psychologist, etc., but responding as a more experienced friend and Brother and offering options.
- Offering advice on access to resources and activities that may be beneficial for the Little Brother.

BEING A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL

- Exhibiting a standard of behavior and performance that serves as a positive model for the Little Brother by living by the tenets of the Ritual, demonstrating honesty, truth, respect for the Fraternity and for others and exceeding the Basic Expectations & Minimum Chapter Standards.
- Demonstrating higher standards by his actions not just his words.

BEING A FRIEND/LISTENER

- Maintaining open, honest communications.
- Not being judgmental of the Little Brother as a person.
- Allowing his Little Brother to express his attitudes, both positive and negative.

INSTRUCTOR

- Exposing the Little Brother to opportunities to learn and grow within the Fraternity and on campus.
- Sharing his personal skills and talents with the Little Brother.
- Working both cooperatively and competitively with the Little Brother.
- Allowing the Little Brother the opportunity to be unique which helps promote creativity.
- Using difficult situations as learning experience, to teach problem-solving techniques.

LIMIT SETTER

- Setting clear limits for acceptable behavior.
- Focusing on the behavior rather than the Little Brother as a person (condemn the act, not the person).
- Stresses and reinforces positive behavior rather than simply pointing out negative behaviors.

BEING SENSITIVE TO THE RELATIONSHIP OF LITTLE BROTHER TO THE CHAPTER AND ITS MEMBERS

- Supporting the relationship between the Little Brother and the other Brothers and in no way attempting to undermine those relationships.
- Refusing to get in the middle of conflicts between Chapter members and the Little Brother – this is the responsibility of the Chapter leadership (VNR-Membership Development, Noble Ruler); but offering advice (options) toward solution of the problem and offering advice as to where to get the help which is desired.
- Refusing to get in the middle of family problems but offering advice as to where to get help if the Little brother desires help.

KNOW WHEN AND WHERE TO GET HELP

It is important for the Big Brother to know the warning signs of problems. There are many resources available to the big Brother and to the Chapter leadership. Big Brothers can turn to the following resources for assistance in learning to identify the warning signs of problems and where to get help, if needed:

Local hospital or campus First Aid Center
 Campus Crisis Center
 Campus Academic Advising Center

These people should be able to suggest additional campus and local services available:

Campus Greek Adviser
 Dean of Students
 Chapter Adviser

CONFRONTING

Big Brothers will often find themselves in the position of having to take responsibility for the behavior and actions of their Little Brother. The following are offered to assist you in this most important and critical role.

AGP's concept of Brotherhood is based upon commitment, not just friendship. Therefore, the quality of the commitment always needs to be measured. If commitment is found to be lacking then it needs to be reinforced if Brotherhood is to survive.

While few would question this logic, many would prefer to avoid confronting the Brother who has failed in his commitment to his Brother. It's just about as tough as anything there is to do throughout life.

Social clubs don't need to do it.

Brotherhoods, which hold themselves to a higher standard, revert to mere social clubs if they fail to do it.

Like everything else in life, it helps to practice how to confront a Brother.

The key to confronting is condemning the action, not the person.

One method is the "sandwich" method.

With the sandwich method, the confronter makes certain to sandwich the condemnation of the bad act between two good statements about the Brother. The "sandwich" should also include an offer of help, and a personal statement of expectation that the negative behavior will end.

"John, I really think that you've worked hard for the Chapter this semester and I know a lot of other Brothers think so.

"That's why I can't understand why you've been missing Chapter meetings. You know that attending Chapter meetings is required. If there is some problem, I want to help you. If there isn't some problem, I expect to see you at the next Chapter meeting. What time can I pick you up?"

"By the way, Bill said he sure appreciated your helping him study for his chemistry exam."

The "sandwich" technique is a method by which to show the Brother you confront that you value him as a Brother and a Friend but will not tolerate specific behaviors which that Brother needs to address.

Other methods include:

Writing a letter:

What makes confrontation tough is the fear of seeing anguish and hurt in the expression of the one whom you confront and further, the fear of the unknown retort and conceivable criticism that he will heap on you.

Consequently, it's far less threatening to sit down and to write a confidential letter to he whom you would confront. The letter should, of course, be signed and should offer the opportunity for the tow of you to get together in person once the letter has been digested.

Mediation:

Find an impartial third party – chapter adviser, a campus clergyman, another Brother. Ask him to moderate or even “referee” a one-on-one discussion with you and the Brother you choose to confront. Do it in a neutral setting and be determined that you will reach some closure before you part company, e.g., the answer to the question, “Where do we go from here?”, a contract of future relations, a reiteration of mutual understanding of difference in values and attitudes, and a willingness to respect each other’s position.

Chapter Judicial or Standards Board:

Many Chapters have a Judicial or Standards Board where Brothers, either appointed by the Noble Ruler or elected by the Chapter, review allegations of violations of rules, policies and otherwise un-fraternal behavior by a Brother.

A Brother may “write up” another brother for breach of his commitment of Brotherhood through the Judicial Process.

If the accused is found to be in violation of his commitment of fraternalism, he can be directed by the Judicial/Standards Board to correct past problems, recommit himself to the principals of Brotherhood, or be given specific assignments to show his good intentions. Failure to comply with the directive of the Judicial/Standards Board might result, if it is a part of the Chapter’s desire, in the suspension or expulsion of the Brother.

The Semi-Annual Brotherhood Vote

Each semester, the Chapter reviews the performance record of each Brother and votes on whether or not that Brother continues to meet the Basic Expectations & Minimum Membership Standards of the Fraternity and that Chapter. If he does not receive more than 1/3 favorable vote, he is expelled.

There is a brochure on the Brotherhood Vote available, by request, through AFP Headquarters which outlines the process.

Feedback:

Feedback is another method of confronting. By providing feedback, one Brother provides another Brother an extremely valuable service.

Feedback involves helping a Brother to consider improving or changing his Behavior. The extent to which feedback is effective is directly related to the degree of trust and respect in the relationship between the two Brothers.

It is communication to a person which gives him information on his effects on others.

Useful feedback will:

1. Be descriptive rather than evaluative (not "...that is bad," but "...that makes me uncomfortable");
2. Be specific rather than general (not "...you are arrogant," but "you seem to be always interrupting people not listening to them");
3. Take into account the needs of both the receiver and giver of feedback. Feedback is destructive when it serves only your personal needs;
4. Be directed toward behavior which the receiver can do something about. Reminders of unchangeable shortcomings only frustrate a person;
5. Be solicited, not imposed. Feedback is most useful when the receivers have formulated in their own minds the types of questions that those observing them can answer;
6. Be well timed. The best time for feedback is at the earliest opportunity after the given behavior so that the receiver may be ready to accept it;
7. Be checked to ensure that the receiver understands the input received. The best way to do this is to have him rephrase in his own word the feedback to confirm that it was what the sender had in mind;
8. When given in a group, give both the sender and receiver an opportunity to check the accuracy of the feedback with others in the group. Is this just one individual's opinion or that of a number of others?

IMPORTANT: It is important for the receiver not only to hear and repeat the problem but also to "take ownership" of the problem and agree to do something about it. A specific plan to address the problem should be a part of this process and agreed to by all involved parties.

BIG/LITTLE BROTHER ACTIVITIES

While the Big and Little Brothers have a lot of work to do together, they should also make it a point to have some fun. The following ideas are offered as suggestions to achieve that goal:

1. Become roommates for a week;
2. Fix dinner for each other one night a week;
3. Dedicate part of one or more evenings weekly for study together;
4. Develop and keep a “family tree” of all Big/Little Brother combinations before and after you;
5. Teach your Little Brother and AΓP song;
6. Take a trip to another AΓP Chapter;
7. Have the Chapter plan a two-on-two basketball tournament for all big Brother/Little Brother teams in a given semester;
8. College bowl type game with Big/Little Brother teams with questions on AΓP, Chapter and university history.
9. Compete for the highest GPA: (Steak or Beans Dinner reward) Keep score of each other. AT the end of the semester, each Big/Little Brother team compares GPAs – the one with the higher GPA eats steaks, the other eats beans.
10. Do something together in the community – volunteer at a hospital, join the local “Big Brothers” chapter and mentor a young person, etc.

TIPS FOR BEING A BETTER BIG BROTHER

1. avoid getting caught in the middle of situations where your Little Brother is being disciplined by Chapter leadership. It is too easy to take sides or to be seen as taking sides. Doing so will weaken the relationship. You should, however, always be prepared to explain (in a non-judgmental fashion) why an action was wrong and how it can be remedied in the future.
2. Always be supportive of the Chapter leadership even when you disagree with their actions. It is alright to correct misbehavior within the context of your relationship but leave disciplinary process to the Chapter’s process. You are not the Chapter disciplinarian.

3. The Big Brother should make certain to spend “quality time” with his Little Brother, outside of weekly meetings. Try to avoid letting other Brothers interrupt that time, since it may cause resentment on the part of the Little Brother who values the special attention he gets from his Big Brother.
4. Big Brothers should not shower his Little Brother with gifts in order to win his friendship. By being a “mentor” and showing genuine fraternal caring, the relationship will grow strong.
5. Remember that it is not your responsibility to change your Little Brother’s behavior or to make him “be like me”. Your responsibility is to provide him with sound advice and knowledge, moral support and an open ear.
6. Do not leave the Little Brother “up in the air”. If you schedule a meeting, be there. If there is a change, let him know as soon as possible.
7. Don’t allow your personal mood or attitude affect your friendly and fraternal demeanor around your Little Brother. Always exhibit a positive mood.
8. Do not make promises you cannot keep.
9. The Big Brother should not expect the Little Brother to heap accolades on him for the Big Brother’s work. Such recognition is often shown through enthusiasm for their time together, striving to reach goals, emulating your positive attributes, going out of his way to attend events and functions with you, etc.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY

The National Fraternity looks to the Big Brother as the primary vehicle for teaching new Brothers how to be good Brothers. Mentoring, or one-to-one teaching and example setting, is proven to be a very successful and effective method for achieving the goal of creating “good Brothers”.

While other methods (lecture, self-study, etc.) are helpful too, the Big Brother program provides an excellent vehicle for learning while promoting true fraternalism through helping a Brother.

SAMPLE LETTER FROM BIG BROTHER TO THE NEW MEMBER'S PARENTS

Often parents are concerned when their son is joining a fraternity because of their misunderstanding of fraternities. Parents frequently believe that fraternities are elitist and expensive organizations that are involved in secret rituals and detract from scholastic endeavors.

It is suggested that the Big Brothers address these concerns and assure the parents that fraternity is indeed a positive experience. Often times, a letter to the parents will win the support of the questioning parent. With the blessing and understanding of his parents, the new Brother will be much more secure, determined and enthusiastic about his decision to join Alpha Gamma Rho.

A simple letter can go a long way in promoting good relations with the parents. A sample letter follows which is designed to serve as a guide for correspondence.

NOTE: The following letter should be handwritten by the Big Brother unless his penmanship dictates typing. Appearance and legibility is critical! The VNR-Membership Development should collect all of the letters and mail them himself. This permits him to be sure the letters are written and mailed.

Sample Letter to Parents

Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity

The National Agricultural Fraternity

Dear Mr. and Mrs. _____:

As a member of the _____ Chapter of Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity and as _____'s recently appointed Big Brother, I am pleased to introduce you to the fraternity your son has joined.

Your son, by joining Alpha Gamma Rho, has taken the first step toward an experience that will last a lifetime. _____ is following in the footsteps of Secretaries of Agriculture, Senators, Congressmen and leaders in the Agriculture Industry.

In our Chapter, we see the future leaders of our country. Through scholarship programs and leadership workshops, we try to impress upon the brothers the importance of their education and leadership potential. As _____'s Big Brother, I will encourage him to strive towards fulfilling his person potential.

Finances of the fraternity are worked on and developed by the treasurer and local alumni. Their objective is to keep costs to a minimum; the rest is up to the members. Everyone must be responsible for staying current with their financial obligation!

Alpha Gamma Rho is proud of its stance against hazing. WE are among the first fraternities to abolish the concept of pledging (the period where hazing once occurred). Your son is a full member in our Fraternity. If you have any questions or concerns in this or any other area of fraternity, I will gladly try to answer them for you.

Your son will learn many things his first year as an AGP. His education will include the Fraternity, the school and most importantly, living and working with others. The Fraternity is a place to grow, gain responsibility and achieve a level of self confidence that will prevail long after college is over.

Alpha Gamma Rho is proud to have your son as a Brother.

Sincerely,

And the Brothers of Alpha Gamma Rho

BIG BROTHER APPLICATION

Name: _____ Year in School: _____

Home Address: _____

_____ Telephone: _____

Offices Held: _____

Committees: _____

Number of Credit Hours this Semester: _____ Major: _____

Cumulative GPA: _____

Extracurricular Activities: _____

Have you been a Big Brother before? _____

Is your Little Brother still in the Fraternity? _____

What is (are) your Little Brother's name(s)? _____

Why do you believe you can benefit a little Brother and the Chapter as a Big Brother? _____

List reasons for wanting a Little Brother. _____

How many hours a week would you reasonable be able to devote to your Little Brother? _____

Are you able to spend two hours one evening per week in a study session with your Little Brother? _____

Have you met all of your financial obligations this term? _____

Do you attend Chapter meetings regularly? _____

Are you prepared to set limits, say "no", and confront your Little Brother when he is wrong? _____

How will you ensure that your Little Brother becomes a highly motivated, productive student, campus citizen and Chapter Member?

AUTHORIZATION TO CHARGE CREDIT CARD

Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity
10101 Ambassador Boulevard
Kansas City, MO 64153

Gentlemen:

I have submitted to the First Tennessee Bank an application for a credit card issued by First Tennessee Bank (FTB) under a program sponsored by Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity (AGP). I also enclose my processing fee payment of \$35.00*, payable to Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity.

In the event my credit card application is approved, I will immediately notify AGP, either in writing or by telephone (816) 891-9200 of my new credit card number and credit card expiration date. I hereby authorize AGP immediately to charge my credit card for the amount of my AGP Initiation Fee.

In the even my credit card application is disapproved, I agree to be bound by the terms and conditions of a separate agreement which I have executed and attached hereto.

Thank you.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State & Zip Code: _____

Chapter: _____

University: _____

* Please call National Headquarters to verify current fees.

AGREEMENT AND PROMISSORY NOTE

I, _____, acknowledge that I have applied for a credit card under a program sponsored by Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity (ΑΓΡ). I further acknowledge that in the even my application is approved, I have agreed to furnish ΑΓΡ with the information necessary to charge my credit card for my ΑΓΡ Initiation Fee.

In the event my credit card application is disapproved, I understand that the application fee will not be refunded. Further, I promise to pay my Initiation Fee to the chapter by personal check, bank check or money order not later than forty-five (45) days from the date of this note.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Witnessed by: _____
(signature)

Print Name: _____

We, the Brothers of _____ Chapter of Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity located at _____ University agree to be responsible for and do jointly and severally agree to guarantee the payment of the Initiation Fee of the maker of this agreement and note in conformity with the terms provided herein.

We have authorized the Noble Ruler and VNR-Finance of our Chapter, whose signature appear below, to make this guarantee on our behalf and agree to be bound by their action.

Date: _____

Noble Ruler: _____
(signature)

Print Name: _____

VNR Finance: _____
(signature)

Print Name: _____