

## 10. Practice Your Own League Story

The League’s programmatic work covers a wide range of issues and activities, which can be overwhelming to individuals who are not familiar with them. To be welcoming to potential new members, each of us must act as a “membership ambassador” for the League, using straightforward language to describe what we do and why we love doing it. It’s not about “dumbing down” the explanation of our work—it’s about opening it up so that others can understand it, find it relevant and interesting, and join us.

We have heard consistently from Leagues that while making “The ASK” may be difficult at first, it becomes easier with practice. More importantly, Leagues have also reported that **IT WORKS!** It sounds very simplistic, but we need to ASK people to join to bring in new members.

The worksheets provided in this section give you an opportunity to practice your personal story as well as “The ASK.” It will help you to speak in an intentional, focused and confident way about the value of being part of the League. We also encourage you to think about one of your own stories (such as Why did you join the League? What your League membership means to you? What impact have you had on your community through the League?) and how you can utilize it. Remember there is no marketing tool as powerful as your own personal passion for LWV!

### Helpful Tips to Create YOUR League Story:

**Keep it brief.** You should be able to say what you need to say in about a minute. Focus on what’s most important and cut away the rest. **What does your audience value? What is important to them? Write these down and prioritize them.**

**Avoid jargon.** Nonprofits are notorious abusers of acronyms, buzzwords and “insider speak”. Avoid these, or you’ll see the listener’s eye glaze over.

**Speak to Values.** What value does your organization provide? **What does your audience value, and how does your organization’s values intersect with them?** Values can be tangible (i.e., people living longer, healthier lives) or emotional (i.e., making people feel good about providing opportunity). Don’t just list your services or ideology—focus on outcomes, not process.

**Show Your Passion!** Perhaps the most important part of a good membership ask is the gusto, enthusiasm and commitment to the work it expresses. Don’t be afraid to demonstrate the passion and drive you feel for the work.

**Get to the Action Point.** Remember to ask them to join or get involved.

Sharing your personal story about what the League means to YOU and the impact the League has had in your life and on your community is the best way to convey the value of membership in the League. Stories are:

- ✓ Relatable
- ✓ Memorable
- ✓ Passionate
- ✓ Compelling
- ✓ Motivational

**Very simply, when combined with an invitation to join the League, your story is your best direct outreach tool!**

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## Step 1: Choose a Practice Scenario.

Choose one of the scenarios below to practice combining a personal League story with an ASK to join the League, come to a meeting, or donate money to the League.

1. **At a candidates’ forum:** Imagine that you are a “membership ambassador” mingling with attendees. Engage an attendee in conversation and ask him/her to join.
2. **At a candidates’ forum:** You are the moderator. Use the opportunity to issue an invitation to join the League to those gathered at the forum – as well as those who might be watching/listening to it remotely (such as on cable access, on a web site, or on the radio).
3. **At a neighborhood social event:** Talk with a neighbor that has recently retired. Discuss your involvement with League and ask him/her to join.
4. **At a city council meeting:** You are a member of your League’s observer corps. Issue an invitation to join to an individual that you regularly see at the city council meetings.
5. **At a Sunshine Week event:** Your League is hosting a “viewing party” of a panel of national experts convened in Washington DC to discuss government transparency issues. Use this opportunity to invite those who are gathered locally to get involved and to join the League.
6. **At a coalition meeting on affordable housing:** Talk with one or more of the representatives of the other groups present. Explain to them the unique value of membership in the League and ask them to join.
7. **At a breakfast honoring retiring teachers:** Offer some remarks to thank them for their service to the community. Talk about the League’s mission and the value of League membership. Ask them to join.

- 8. **At a speaking engagement:** As part of your League’s speakers’ bureau, you are asked to provide an explanation of the upcoming ballot questions to an organization comprised of local women business owners. In addition to providing them with the necessary information about the election, ask them to join.
- 9. **A local radio interview about the county’s preparedness for an upcoming election:** Explain the League’s work in this area. Remind listeners that the League is a volunteer-lead, grassroots organization. Stress that membership is open to the public, and explain how citizens can be engaged in the “process” and League.
- 10. **Someone stops to ask you about the League pin on your jacket:** Explain what the League is and why being a member is important to you. Try to explain why the League would be of value to him/her. Assess the interest level and offer an action step, such as joining the League or coming to a meeting.

### Step 2: Tell your story.

Briefly and without using League jargon, relate a story that would be interesting and moving to the audience in your practice scenario

Consider one of the following topics:

- What motivated me to join the League of Women Voters?
- What does being a League of Women Voters member mean to me?
- How has my work with the League impacted my community?
- How has being a member given me skills and knowledge that has enhanced my career and life?

Remember that a personal story can be very powerful. You do not have to demonstrate some big achievement or “give your resume.” Instead, let your passion for League showcase itself!

#### My Personal League Story:

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The many projects the League sponsors are something you can wrap yourself around. And, it gives me a chance to do something positive. So I guess you can say being an active League member is a win-win situation.  
~Maxine Anderson, LWV San Francisco, CA

### Step 3: Make the Ask.

After telling your story, you need to give your listener some follow-up action. In other words, you want to leave them with some way to get involved or engaged. How can he/she have the same kind of wonderful experience with the League? This might be asking them to join or some interim step leading to membership, such as coming with you to a meeting or helping out at a voter registration booth. **The key is to provide the opportunity.**

Pick one of the scenarios listed on the next page to craft an ASK you can use with your story. As you present your story and your follow-up opportunity, think about your audience. What do they care about? How does their story intersect with yours? What is the right next step *for them*?

**My League ASK:**

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