



Back to Best Buddies

Best Buddies International

The winter break is an important time for members to rest, reenergize, and prepare for a strong start to the second semester. Encourage matches, officers, and associate members to stay connected to the mission during their winter break by getting together in groups, talking on the phone with their buddy, or learning more about the disability rights movement by reading and watching documentaries. When the break is over, it's important to connect with your chapter members to commit them to the mission for a new year. Here are some specific tips and tricks to help you keep everyone engaged.

You

- Utilize the winter break as both a time to relax and regain momentum to lead in the upcoming semester and as a time to plan and prepare for the exciting events to come. Be intentional about finding a balance.
- You are the leader of this club; if you aren't engaged nobody will be. Be present, focused, and organized when holding meetings at the start of the year.
- Review your personal goals, see what you have accomplished, and make changes as necessary.
- Go back and watch videos from Leadership Conference, read your notes, and connect with friends made at Conference for inspiration.
- Watch and share [Best Buddies videos](#) to showcase the mission to members, new and old.

The Chapter

- The tone of first semester has a significant impact on how willing members will be to remain involved second semester. Set aside time during first semester to recognize members who are going above and beyond. Maintain an attitude of positivity in your communication with all chapter members. Develop a consistent and effective method of communication so that all members feel included. Make Best Buddies a fun place to be. Don't wait for the second semester to start to remind members that their participation is valued.
- Reach out to members who have studied abroad in the fall as early as November or December; tell them they have been missed, and send pictures from the year.
- Send a winter postcard from the leadership team to all your members; include warm wishes, and let your members know that you're thinking of them and that you value their membership.
- Host a fundraising competition between members over break; be sure to highlight great prizes and giveaways and to celebrate the winners and anyone who reaches a goal. Remember, family and friends are in the spirit of giving during the holiday season, and your chapter may be able to raise impressive amounts during this time. This is another way to engage members over break; they will be excited to get back to see who has fundraised the most and who will win a prize.
- Host a New Year's Party or a Welcome Back Party; advertise early so that members look forward to it all break long!
- Host a viewing party for the A&E series *Born This Way* and utilize the [viewing guide](#) to learn and grow with cast members.
- Make your welcome back parties festive and well planned; decorate, drink sparkling cider, ask members to dress up, and have fun! Share New Year's Resolutions and play games.
- Review last year's chapter goals with members; discuss improvements and changes.



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- Develop new goals as a group.
- Highlight outstanding members who stayed connected over the winter; give awards and shout-outs.
- Share with members big plans for the second semester so that they know what to look forward to; host large events in January/February like a dodge ball tournament, dance, or a group outing to a sports game or movie.
- Start planning your [Spread the Word to End the Word](#) event now; share thoughts and collect ideas from members so that everyone is excited and ready for strong engagement in the initiative.

Buddy Pairs

- Before going on break, host a holiday card making session for members to make cards for their buddy. Officers can mail these to buddy pairs to receive as a surprise over the break and remind them of their commitment to their friend and the mission.
- Check in with all your buddy pairs to ensure that everything is going well; ask them when they have spoken and encourage outings or plan group outings for several matches.
- Celebrate anniversaries by giving certificates to buddy pairs who have now been matched for a year or more.
- Utilize your chapter's social media page to highlight buddy pairs who are spending the holiday together.

Associate Members

- Organize committees to start working on spring initiatives, such as Spread the Word and Best Buddies Month.
- Be sure to include associate members in any celebration or highlights you share on social media or with members to make them feel valued and included.
- Invite associate members to all events, including group outings with buddy pairs.
- If you haven't already developed some system of plugging associate members in with specific buddy pairs, second semester is as good a time as any to start. Color teams are one way of encouraging associate members to get to know other chapter members. Assign a few associate members to be grouped with a couple of buddy pairs and give this group a color name – team blue, team pink, etc. Give each team member a colored bandana the same as their team name. Encourage color teams to wear their bandanas to chapter events and meetings. At these events and meetings count up each color of bandana to determine which color team has the most members in attendance. Give the most attended team a prize. Encourage color teams to exchange phone numbers and to hang out with one another outside of events and meetings.

Advisor/ School Administration

- Keep your school informed. Set up a meeting with administrators and advisors to share your goals for the coming semester.
- Showcase your accomplished goals and thank them for their support.
- Share your plans and ask them for help in planning school-wide initiatives for Spread the Word and Best Buddies Month.



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- Explain how the school can better support the mission and ensure an inclusive, integrated environment for all students.
- Share the improvements you hope the school and chapter can work on together in the coming year.
- Give a thank-you note and/or present, picture, token of appreciation, etc. to school administrators and advisors who have made a significant impact on your chapter thus far in the school year.

Sponsors

- Sponsors are extremely important and you should always be updating them on your accomplishments, goals, and how you are using their donations.
- Share pictures of how they supported you this past semester.
- Use the end-of-the-year holiday party for members to create and sign a thank-you note.
- Send them a note at the start of the year to share with them how you plan to grow this coming year and how you envision them staying involved.

Parents

- Keep parents in the know by hosting a potluck dinner for them where a presentation is given showcasing all that was accomplished in the fall semester and outlining the chapter's goals for the spring semester.
- Contact parents on the phone and talk with them one-on-one about what they would like to see happen within the chapter in the spring semester. Check with them to make sure they are successfully receiving email updates on the chapter's events. Make any changes to the email list as necessary.
- Peer buddies invite your buddy and their parents to come to dinner with you and your parents so that both sets of parents are clued in to the ideas and hopes you have as a buddy pair moving in to the upcoming semester.
- Send a survey out to parents at the beginning of second semester to gather their feedback regarding the progress made in the past semester and the goals they have for the upcoming semester.
- Have a panel of parents attend the first chapter meeting of the semester to participate in a question and answer session. This will increase excitement from chapter members for the chapter meeting. It will also help parents to know they are valued as they have a chance to talk about the difference Best Buddies has made in their son or daughter's life.

Your School

- Enter into second semester making an effort to recruit. The start of any semester, whether fall or spring, is an ideal time for recruitment because typically people are most looking to become involved at school in new ways following a long break.
- At the first chapter meeting of the semester take time to talk with chapter members about what to say when recruiting new members. Go over the Best Buddies mission and history so that all current members are ready and equipped to bring new members in.
- Set up recruitment tables in highly populated areas in your school or on your campus.
- Take any opportunity possible to participate in recruitment fairs being held by your school.



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- Hand out Best Buddies pins and stickers, giveaway candy, and find creative ways to draw people to your table. Set up colorful displays. At a recruitment fair there will be several organizations seeking to convince new members to be involved. You want your table to stand out.
- Invite buddies as well as peer buddies to be involved with the recruitment process so that potential new members will see a picture of inclusion from their first interaction with Best Buddies.
- Chapter leaders get in contact with sorority and fraternity chapter leadership to set up times to attend Greek chapter meetings and to speak to them about becoming involved.
- Talk to school administration about getting an email list of all the individuals who are returning from being abroad in the fall. It may be helpful to email these people specifically about becoming involved with Best Buddies as they were away from school first semester and may be highly interested in getting plugged in with new organizations.
- As current chapter members start new classes they will be meeting many students who could be great additions to Best Buddies. Encourage chapter members to talk about Best Buddies to the new friends they make and to invite them to events and meetings. Share with chapter members the idea of asking their teachers or professors to allow them a few minutes at the start of class to give a short presentation or speech to their classmates about Best Buddies.
- Make your presence know at your school or on campus. Attend sporting events in groups with Best Buddies props and matching t-shirts. Make announcements about Best Buddies on your school's PA system. Ask writers at your school newspaper to put out an advertisement for Best Buddies. Hang up flyers around your school encouraging students to come to your first events and meetings.