

The Difference in Membership Types

[What membership types exist?](#)

There can be as many types of membership as are created by clubs. Some popular examples are corporate, family, or younger professional membership. However, a club is free to design different membership types that attract diverse members, as long as it's documented how they differ from traditional membership in their club bylaws. The Rotary International database does not track membership types – only whether a member is active or honorary.

[What's the difference between active and honorary members?](#)

Rotary International defines active members as those who meet the requirements for membership, pay RI dues, are eligible to vote on club and district matters, are eligible to hold a club officer position and count in the club's membership numbers in Rotary's database. Honorary membership is used to recognize people who have distinguished themselves by meritorious service and embody Rotary ideals, or those considered friends of Rotary for their support of Rotary's causes. They are exempt from paying RI dues, have no vote in Rotary matters, are not eligible to hold any club office, and are not included in a club's membership numbers in Rotary's database. Active members are called Rotarians, while honorary members are called honorary Rotarians.

Honorary membership should not be confused with Rotarians whose excused absence is approved by a club's board. In order to count in a club's membership numbers in Rotary's database, one must be reported as an active, RI-dues paying member. An active member can be an honorary member of another club, but cannot be an active member of another club.

[How do corporate memberships work?](#)

Your club is free to offer alternative membership types of any kind, as long as new members are counted as individuals — corporate members in this case — rather than the corporations that sponsor their membership. If the members pay RI dues, they will be included in your club's official membership count and receive all the benefits that other active, dues-paying members enjoy.

Your club can have different policies for these members' other financial obligations (club and district dues, meal costs, etc.), attendance requirements, or service expectations, as long as these policies are reflected in the club bylaws. Learn more in our [Guide to Corporate Membership](#)

[How do family memberships work?](#)

Family membership – also called spouse or partner memberships – are similar to corporate membership, in that there is often a primary member and one or more alternate members. Often times, the alternate members are young adult children of the primary member or a partner or spouse. Clubs that offer this type of membership typically offer a reduced rate for the alternate member(s) as an incentive to join. The alternate members can attend in the primary member's place or come along with their family member Rotarian. Alternate members may be active, RI-dues paying members or not, depending on how the club chooses to structure this membership type.

2016 Rule of 85:

A member must have 20 years in Rotary. Their years in Rotary plus their Age must equal or exceed 85. The member must notify the club secretary in writing of the member's desire to be considered for "Rule of 85" to be excused from attendance and the Club board must approve.