



# Joining an Honors Society

## What is an Honor Society?

Honor societies are selective programs that provide recognition for academic achievement and opportunities for their members. Invitations to these programs are usually highly regarded. There are many benefits and types of honor societies.

Students often get multiple invitations from multiple organizations and/or experience wariness in costs of these memberships, leaving them to wonder if they should join an organization or not. We're here to help make sense of the landscape and offer some guidance for making the right decision for you.

## Benefits

### Academic Distinction

If you would value the chance to display your good academic record on your résumé, it probably makes sense to join an honor society respected for its selectivity. The “high distinction” honor societies and some “field specific” honor societies most readily offer this benefit.

### Participation and Connections

Some honor societies can offer avenues for involvement and/or professional enrichment, especially “campus participation” and “field specific” ones. Applying to a “service honorary” group will open those doors as well.

### Scholarships

Many honor societies run scholarship competitions for members, which is a great benefit. These scholarships are competitive and may be based on your participation in the group.

### National Benefits

Honor societies sometimes support varied member benefits at the national level. These include member discounts with certain companies, online services such as a résumé bank, national conferences, travel grants, subscription to an official magazine, etc. Some students simply like the perks that the honor society offers.

Ready to join? Here are some questions you might ask yourself beforehand:

- What benefits are the most appealing to you?
- How much time do you have to commit to this organization?
- Are you willing to pay dues?

## Joining an Honor Society

So, how do you decide which ones to join? The basic guideline is to consider whether you want or need what the organization offers. Here are some types of honor societies to consider:

<p><b>High Distinction</b></p> <p>High Distinction groups are academically selective and use strong transcripts as a mark of distinction. Formal campus participation is not largely expected from members. Faculty and staff at K-State manage the membership and invitation process.</p> <p>General GPA requirements: ~3.7 Examples at K-State: Phi Beta Kappa &amp; Phi Kappa Phi.</p>	<p><b>Campus Participation</b></p> <p>Campus Participation organizations tend to have a stronger focus on campus life and student participation with an emphasis on leadership and service. These societies typically hold meetings, plan activities, and are registered as an on-campus organization.</p> <p>GPA Requirements: ~3.5-4.0 Examples at K-State: Phi Eta Sigma</p>
<p><b>Field Specific</b></p> <p>Similar in many respects to the “campus participation” category, these organizations seek to recognize academic achievement and promote professional development in a particular field of study. Activities tend to have a more professional focus, and they usually have student officers. They exist within many departments and academic colleges and can offer great opportunities to network and learn about your field.</p> <p>GPA Requirements: top 12.5% of class Examples at K-State: Tau Beta Pi</p>	<p><b>Service Honorary</b></p> <p>Service Honorary organizations are often grouped with (and even called) honor societies. However, they differ in several important aspects like having no initiation fee, restricted group sizes, and current members choosing the incoming members. Members are expected to contribute to regular service and leadership efforts undertaken by the group.</p> <p>GPA Requirements: ~3.0 or above Examples at K-State: Quest, Silver Key, Chimes, Mortar Board, Blue Key</p>

## What to look out for?

It is possible for groups to appear to be honor societies but are actually scams. If you get an email about an honor society, and you are feeling wary, check:

1. Can you easily find the criteria for joining? Selective and transparent criteria for invitations are fundamental to a legitimate honor society.
2. Does this group have a presence on campus? If they have no connection on campus, it would be hard for them to know what kind of student you are.
3. Do they list a valid address on their national website? Groups with just a PO box could be a scam.