



Handbook

The Bike House is a community-based bicycle repair co-op in Washington, DC. Since 2009, our mission has been to build a place where **all people** can learn about, work on, and enjoy bikes. We do this by providing bicycle maintenance resources and education through our weekend clinics, mobile bike clinic, and beginner and advanced mechanics classes. This handbook provides information for Bike House volunteers on how to run a clinic, tips on teaching the “Bike House way”, communication tools, organizational structure, and Bike House History.

1. Volunteering

Volunteering with Bike House is simple. You do not need any bike repair experience - that will come with spending time with us. But Bike House does require you understand and model the following:

1. **Don't be a jerk.** Volunteers are here to make a safe place for all persons to learn and try. Discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated.
2. **Shed your biases.** Do not make assumptions about anyone's ability. Always ask first to understand knowledge and comfort level.
3. **Don't take over.** Bike House is not a repair shop. Guests should be the ones using the tools and making the repairs. Volunteers may demonstrate, but don't take away the experience from the guest.
4. **Seek consent.** Always ask before assisting someone with tools or repairs and continue asking.
5. **Be honest.** Be honest with guests and other volunteers about your skill level, what you know, what you don't know, and what you are comfortable with. Volunteers have a wide range of experience and expertise and should work with where they are at.
6. **Welcome all people and all bikes.** Bike House is not just for people who identify as “cyclists,” but for anyone who wants to ride and learn about bikes.
7. **Bring new people into the fold of the “bike community.”** Actively welcome new guests and volunteers, with a special focus on knowledge-sharing and empowerment for people who are not well-represented in our organization and the larger bike community.

If observed not modeling, volunteers should expect to be reminded of these requirements.

2. Bike House Clinics

At our clinics, we provide access to professional tools and repair stands to fix one's own bike. We don't charge for use of our equipment but encourage guests to donate what they can to help us replenish our

tools and supplies. Our clinics are run entirely by dedicated volunteers, who come with varying skill levels but share a desire to help.

2.1 Clinic Roles

Lead Volunteer - The Lead Volunteer ensures each clinic is opened and closed successfully. They take on the following tasks:

- Signs up as lead volunteer on the volunteer sign-up
- Monitors volunteer sign-up list to ensure the clinic will be sufficiently staffed
- Conducts volunteer outreach through email reminders if more volunteers are needed to run an upcoming clinic
- If a clinic is insufficiently staffed and must be canceled
 - Inform Bike House Volunteers
 - Inform staff at clinic location
- Arrives 15min before the start to do the following:
 - (If clinic is at a staffed location such as Petworth Hardware) Notifies staff that they are there for Bike House and going to access the tools
 - Set up stands
 - Set up tents (if needed)
 - Set out trash
 - Set up tables
 - Lay out Bike House outreach material, donation box, and sign-in sheets
 - Lay out commonly used tools
- Check-in with volunteers and guests throughout the clinic
- Ensures tools and materials are properly stored and secured at the close of the clinic
- Count all the received donations, have another volunteer double-check the count. Assign a volunteer to take the cash and PayPal the donated amount to thebikehouse@gmail.com.
- Initiate after-clinic events - can include happy hour, going to the pool, local bike ride - whatever people are down for.
- Write the Shoutback (clinic report) and send to the Bike House google group. Including the following:
 - Date
 - Location
 - Number and names of volunteers
 - Number of guests
 - Total cash donation amounts and who sent it in
 - Tool and supply needs
 - Any good stories or insights from the day, including pictures

Host Volunteer (optional) - the Host is an optional role depending on the size of the clinic. For small, slower paced clinics, volunteers may share these tasks. For larger, busier clinics a specific person should be assigned to the role. The following tasks should be covered during a clinic:

- Greets guests
 - Ask if they have been to Bike House before, and if not, explain that Bike House is a volunteer-run, donation-based organization that helps people learn how to fix their bikes. Bike House is not a repair shop
 - Make sure they feel welcome
 - Point out the donation box and electronic donation options
 - Have the guest sign in on the guest sign in sheet
 - If there are more guests than volunteers, let the guest know there will be a wait before they are matched with a volunteer.
- Match guests with volunteers based on the repair they want to learn, in the order they arrive at

the clinic

- If very busy, group guests with similar repair issues so that one volunteer can work with multiple guests
- Watch the clock and provide 30-min and 15min warnings as it gets closer to closing time

Lead Mechanic Volunteer (optional) - some clinics may choose to have a Lead Mechanic. These are ninja skill mechanics who have deep bicycle repair knowledge and can problem-solve all types of repairs. Lead mechanics will often jump around, working on multiple projects at one time.

Volunteer - Most persons will fill the role of regular volunteer. As a volunteer, one must make sure to abide by the requirements outlined in the volunteer overview. Volunteering can also be different if new or seasoned.

- All volunteers
 - Introduce yourself and make sure you know everyone volunteering that day
 - Wear a Bike House apron so you are easily identified
 - Wear a nametag
 - Serve as role-models for other volunteers
 - Recruit new volunteers - ask guests if they would be interested in coming back to assist other people
 - Improve what Bike House does - Bike House is always looking for new ideas, especially from people who want to take the initiative
- New volunteers - get involved
 - Shadow another, more experienced volunteer
 - Ask another volunteer for help when needed
 - Keep learning - ask another volunteer if you can observe or help with repairs that you have not done before

2.2 Tools and materials

The tools and materials differ by clinic location. In almost all cases, Bike House requires that guests bring their own parts for their bike. In limited cases, Bike House can provide small part items like cables and housing for people in need. The following provides an overview of what is available at each location.

Petworth Ace Hardware:

- Basic tools such as wrenches, screw drivers, wire cutters, files, etc.
- Some part supplies such as spokes, cable ends, ferrules
- Bike- specific tools like chain whips and crank-pullers.
- Bicycle stands and truing stands
- High-end bike-specific tools such as frame bending tools, headset presses, bottom bracket presses
- Cleaning supplies
- The hardware store also has a bicycle section that stocks and sells a range of tubes, cables, and housing (in the electrical section) as well as some basic replacements for skewers, pedals, and handlebar tape. For other parts, people will need to bring their own.

Annie's Ace Hardware - Brookland

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2.2.1 Storage

Bike House tools and parts are stored at private businesses either at or near the site locations of weekly clinics.

- Petworth Ace Hardware - tools are stored in a storage area next to the store loading dock.
- Annie's Ace Hardware - Brookland - tools are stored in a storage area next to the store loading dock.

2.2.2 Access

During clinics, both volunteers and guests should feel welcome to get the tools they need for their repair. Bike House does not require that guests be escorted or that volunteers must be the ones to collect a tool for a guest. Guests should feel that Bike House is their resource and open to them.

Access to tools is restricted to open clinic times. Since tools are stored at private businesses, volunteers are not allowed to access tools outside of clinic times.

2.2.3 Operating Times and Capacity

Clinic operations change with the seasons and daily weather. Below is an outline of current clinics and their operating timelines.

- Petworth Ace Hardware: 1240 Upshur St. NW, Washington D.C. 20011
 - Saturdays from 12 – 3 pm
 - late March through November
 - Can typically serve 10-12 guests at a time, depending on volunteer capacity
- Annie's Ace Hardware - Brookland: 3405 8th St NE, Washington, DC 20017
 - Every Sunday from 11-1 pm
 - April through November
 - Can typically serve 3-4 guests at a time, depending on volunteer capacity

2.2.4 Parts/tools ordering for volunteers

The Bike House has access to a JBI account to purchase the tools and parts necessary for the operation of classes and clinics. As a benefit to our Volunteers, the Bike House extends our access to JBI for parts and tools of personal use. Parts and tools are sometimes available at a significant discount, but orders are not returnable.

Generally, orders are collected once a month. To order parts or tools through The Bike House, contact the Parts Clerk or email thebikehouse@gmail.com.

2.2.5 Borrowing Tools

We currently do not have a system for borrowing tools/stands outside of our clinics and classes. Since we often have events and classes during the week, we need all tools/stands to stay on-site.

3. Tips for teaching at Bike House

Guests come to clinics to do everything from inflating their tires to building entire bikes from scratch. Depending on what each person needs, volunteers are happy to teach a repair, lend out tools and materials, or direct them to a local bike shop for more assistance. Guests typically fall into 3 categories:

- **No assistance needed.** Some guests come to just use the tools. They know what they want to do and how to do it. No volunteer is needed to work with them.
- **Some assistance needed.** Some guests come knowing the basic ideas of what they want to do and

how to do it but may need a volunteer to check-in with from time to time to bounce ideas off of or to seek guidance.

- **Full assistance needed.** Some guests come with little to no idea on how to do the thing they want to do. They will want a volunteer to work with the entire time to help guide them through the process of the repair they want to do.

If new to the Bike House approach to teaching people how to fix their bike versus just fixing it for them, the following guidance may be useful to become a great Bike House Volunteer.

- **Describe the repair** while the person you're helping is completing the activity. As a key, try to follow the phrase "don't take the tool out of someone's hand." If you did, it probably means you got too excited and should give it back.
- **Demonstrate the repair first.** But then allow the person you're helping to repeat the activity. You can undo the repair you have just done, or if you have fixed a paired part (like a brake), allow the person to repeat the repair on the other one.
- **Be clear with guests about your limitations.** It's okay to learn alongside the person you're helping if they are aware that that is the situation. Above all, do not give advice that you do not know is accurate—just guessing is only okay if the guest understands that you're not sure.
- **Get a manual or ask another volunteer for help.** Manage expectations by saying "we'll learn this together and ask for help when we need it."
- **Work with the person before the bike.** Figuring out what someone knows or wants to learn is often much more difficult than figuring out what's wrong with a bike. Here are some tricks one can use to be a more understanding teacher:
 - **Assess prior knowledge.** Ask the guest, "tell me about your bike." You can learn a lot about a person's history, understanding, and prior experiences in bike repairs just by opening the door to let the guest talk.
 - **Check for understanding as you go.** Make sure the guest is following along with you and understands what they are doing as they do it.
- **Make the space safe for all.** Bike House strives to maintain a safe space for all people. As a volunteer, this means helping guests and other volunteers use encouraging, positive language and treating each other with respect. A few things to consider:
 - **Don't make assumptions.** People often make assumptions on how much someone knows about bikes based on arbitrary judgments such as gender, class, race, or the tightness of one's pants. Question your assumptions - they can make it hard to learn and to teach.
 - **Be professional.** Being nice is great. Being *too* nice might make people uncomfortable.
Don't flirt in the shop.
- **Use the right tool for the right job.** If you are unsure about which tool to use, ask. If you observe people using tools other than the right tool suggest they use the more appropriate or efficient tool instead. But avoid telling people that they are doing something wrong or incorrect.

4. Communication

The Bike House operates several communications tools. Role and level of involvement determine the communication tools used to connect.

4.1 Public-facing communications

These are used for both guests and volunteers. This list is used for large Bike House announcements such as fundraisers, parties, etc.

- [Bike House Website](#) - public facing website that has information about Bike House clinics, volunteering, and the Bike House Blog.
- [Bike House Facebook](#)

- [Bike House Instagram](#)
- [Bike House Twitter](#)
- **Bike House Newsletter** - Sign-up for the email list on the Bike House website.

4.2 Volunteer-only communications

These are communications that only go to volunteers and differ by level of involvement - as determined by the volunteer.

- **Bike House Volunteer Email List** - We use this list to send email blasts to all current and past volunteers. These email blasts are mostly reminders about each week's volunteer sign-up opportunities. Volunteers are added to this group after completing orientation.
- **Bike House Google Group Volunteer Listserv** - This is for volunteers that want to get more involved in the operations of Bike House. It has communications about other Bike House opportunities such as clerkships, volunteer meetings, teaching classes, etc. One must request to be added to the google group by emailing thebikehouse@gmail.com.

4.3 Communication Requirements

When using Bike House communications, volunteers are required to adhere to the following:

- Do not post or send any communications to the group that are defamatory, malicious, or disrespectful; targeting race, gender, age, class, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, physical characteristics, education, or disability.
- If unsure if something is inappropriate, do not share
- Always sign emails with your real name
- Limit reposting from other groups and sharing of issues and articles not directly related to Bike House activities
- Any email that starts as a private communication off the group should not be forwarded to the group without the permission of all parties to the original email
- Persons are responsible for all their communications and content while using the discussion group or email list
- If an issue occurs with the communications of another person in discussion groups or email, try to resolve the matter constructively by contacting that person directly, talking it through, using good judgment, and assuming the best intentions

The list moderators will contact any individual when content that person has posted is inappropriate and represents a pattern of abuse. If the abuse continues, the moderators may suspend the rights of the abuser to participate. If a suspension occurs, Bike House will notify the group so that volunteers can monitor the moderators and provide feedback, up to and including asking moderators to step down.

5. Additional Bike House Activities

The Bike House also organizes other volunteer-led initiatives. These may change as participation by volunteers changes. Upcoming public events are always listed at www.thebikehouse.org.

5.1 Volunteer Orientations

Led by our volunteer coordinators, clinic leads, or other experienced volunteers, Volunteer Orientations are short events that introduce our policies and how volunteering works. These usually take place about once a month, immediately before a clinic, so new volunteers are encouraged to stick around and start volunteering (or shadowing) the same day.

5.2 Bike Maintenance Classes

Bike House conducts several class series over the summer months. These volunteer-led classes are open to anyone, charge a nominal fee to ensure participation, and are accessible through the Bike House Website. They focus on developing specific skills. Volunteers should sign up for these classes to expand their skills, or volunteer to lead a class if they feel comfortable.

On occasion, Bike House will also run volunteer-only classes that are free and work on even more specific skills. Information on these classes is communicated through the Bike House Listserv.

5.3 Supporting DC-based activities

Bike House is occasionally invited to help support community activities such as building bicycles as gifts for children experiencing homelessness or supporting local rides or events where bicycle repair assistance would be helpful. Opportunities where volunteers are needed are communicated through the Bike House Volunteer Listserv.

5.4 Volunteer-Led Initiatives

If a volunteer has an idea, as well as the time and motivation to see it through, they shall let the organization know. Depending on the initiative, it may require Bike House Board approval. Bike House is always open to new, volunteer-led initiatives. Just be sure to put in the needed commitment to do it successfully.

5.5 Fundraising and Social Events

Bike House organizes additional events throughout the year. Some are fundraisers to help support the organization. In the past these have included happy hours and parties with prize giveaways. Fundraising events are communicated through email listservs and social media.

Bike House also organizes fun social events such as bike rides and cook outs. Communication of these events is through the Bike House google group.

6. Bike House Organization Structure

Bike house is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization run entirely by volunteers. Bike House relies on donations to fund tool purchases and organization expenses. Bike House is supported by a Board of Directors and several clerks.

6.1 Board of Directors

The Board of Directors consists of three to ten people who have been active volunteers for at least six months and/or have special knowledge that contribute to The Bike House. Board members serve 2-year terms, and elections are held once a year for any vacancies. The Board ensures that The Bike House runs smoothly and keeps the mission at the front of everything Bike House does.

6.2 Clerks and Coordinators

Bike House has several volunteers who take on specific responsibilities that are best handled by a single person or pair. The roles change as needs change, but they are currently:

- Communications Clerk(s) - operates the organization's social media
- Treasurer - oversees the organizations finances
- Classes Clerk(s) - oversee Bike House classes curriculum and operations
- Parts Clerk - keeps track of inventory and purchases new tools, supplies, or replacements
- Volunteer Coordinator(s) - runs volunteer orientation and conducts volunteer outreach

These roles are rotated as needed and are a great opportunity to take on a formal role at the Bike House. Volunteers can also develop new roles as needed.

6.3 Meetings

Bike House hosts a few different monthly, quarterly and yearly meetings. The frequency changes on the season and time of year, along with clinic operations.

Volunteer Meetings

Volunteer meetings are open to all current Bike House volunteers. Generally, they have a balance of clinic updates, problem solving around issues, and brainstorming new ideas and projects. Most of the “behind the scenes” work of the Bike House takes place at these meetings, and attending is a great way to get more involved in the organization. Meetings typically last about 2 hours and are announced in advance via the Google Group volunteer listserv.

Board Meetings

The Board meets at least once a year (as required by our Bylaws) and as needed to address administrative items like our organizational finances, authorize new spending, address any sensitive issues, and appoint clerks.

7. Community Safety Policy

The Bike House stands firmly against non-consensual behavior, discrimination, disrespect, harassment or harm of any kind. The Bike House supports volunteers, guests and the community in which it works, and that support includes trying to maintain a safe space for all persons. The Bike House accepts the service of all volunteers and supports all guests with the understanding that such services are at the sole discretion of the organization.

Example Violations

- Unwanted attention or physical contact of a persistent or offensive nature made by the person who knows, or reasonably should know, that such attention is unwanted.
- Unwelcome verbal or physical acts such as: offensive physical actions, e.g. obscene hand or finger gestures
- Written or spoken graphic communication such as slurs or jokes
- Harassment, discrimination, or disrespect due to an individual's race, color, gender identity, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation

Reporting Issues

Volunteers and guests that experience non-consensual behavior, discrimination, disrespect, harassment or harm of any kind are strongly encouraged to notify the Bike House Board. Reporting can be done via email at bikehouseboard@gmail.com, or by contacting a board member directly.

Response to Violations of the Community Safety Policy

The Bike House strives to create a community that supports all volunteers and welcomes all guests. Responses to violations of the Community Safety Policy can vary depending on the severity of the violation

and are at the discretion of the Bike House Board. Responses to violations can include, but are not limited to:

- Verbal warning
- Written warning
- Arranged meeting
- Restorative circle discussion
- Dismissal from volunteer role
- Removal from all Bike House activities

8. Bike House History

The Bike House came together in the spring of 2009. At the time, DC hadn't had community-based bike space for several years and a few different groups were working separately to build one. When these groups caught wind of each other, all it took was a few ads on craigslist, some phone calls and emails, and a few weeks of exciting discussion to plant the Bike House seed.

We held our first clinic at a fish fry behind the People's Media Center on the first hot day in June 2009. Of the eight volunteers that day, only one of us would admit to knowing anything about bikes. The rest of us fuddled with air pumps and marveled at the strange machines before us. We all need to start somewhere. We learned though, and by the time we moved to the alley behind Qualia a few months later, we had a core of about 15 volunteers with a growing knowledge of bike maintenance and teaching tools.

Then, in 2012, Annie's Ace Hardware opened in Petworth and graciously invited us to host our clinics at the loading dock. Since that time, we've built a solid presence in the community and now frequently help 30-50 guests each Saturday afternoon (with particularly high numbers of guests on nice, sunny days). An outdoor clinic, it runs from late March through November and closes over the winter. This remains our largest clinic.

Since 2009, we also hosted a seasonal Sunday clinic at Bloomingdale Farmers Market. This clinic was moved to Annie's Ace Hardware – Brookland, in 2021. This clinic is slightly smaller than the clinic in Petworth, helping 10-20 people each week.

In 2013, we also began holding summer clinics at Anacostia Library. In partnership with DC Public Libraries, WABA, Gearin' Up, Phoenix Bikes, and other organizations, we open up shop on select Saturdays and help dozens of people fix their bikes at these huge clinics. Gearin' Up has since taken over coordination of these clinics, while we still send volunteers to assist.

To date, we've helped thousands of guests fix their bikes throughout Washington, DC. In 2019, for example, we held 103 clinics and classes throughout the city, serving 900+ people. Although volunteers come and go, relocating to other cities and even starting new bike clinics in those cities, we're proud that there are always a group of volunteers who step up, allowing the clinic to continue each year. We hope that you'll be a part of that tradition and offer suggestions for how to make the clinics better.