

Our Ritual

OVERVIEW

The Ritual of Sigma Alpha Iota is a strong heritage that links all who have been initiated, from Alpha Chapter to the present. It is the source of knowledge for the fraternity's founding principles. The heart of the Ritual has been carefully preserved through all editions. If our Founders were to be present at a Ritual ceremony today, they would recognize many passages that originated in their time.

The Ritual teaches us the inner meaning of the outward symbols of membership. Therefore, the ceremony of the Ritual is a task to be performed seriously. It should reawaken the spirit of the Founders and should be exemplified in the life of every member. Members should sense true meaning in the handclasp and in the password. The Ritual should open the doors of our sisterhood, and the principles of Sigma Alpha Iota should stand out until they become great objectives, not merely spoken words.

TYPES OF CEREMONIES

Closed Ceremonies

The following Ritual ceremonies may be presented only in the presence of initiated members of Sigma Alpha Iota.

Opening Ceremony
Closing Ceremony
Installation of Officers
Pledging Ceremony
College Chapter Initiation
Installation of New College and Alumnae Chapters
Patroness Initiation
Senior Commitment
Affiliation, Alumnae and College Chapters
Honorary Member Initiation
Distinguished Membership for a Member of SAI (Member Laureate)
Friend of the Arts or National Arts Associate Initiation
Reactivation Ceremony

Open Ceremonies

The following Ritual ceremonies may be presented in the presence of non-members.

Grace
Sword of Honor
Ruby Sword of Honor
Diamond Sword of Honor
Rose of Honor
Rose of Dedication
Ring of Excellence
Founders' Day Ceremony
Memorial Ceremony
Fifty-Year Membership Presentation
Chapter Anniversary Ceremony
Rededication Ceremony

The proper presentation of the Ritual in all its phases demands careful study. It is our opportunity to make an impression on our membership. That impression must be without flaw.

THE RITUAL CEREMONY – PREPARATION AND EXECUTION

All Ritual ceremonies must be memorized and thoroughly rehearsed. At **least two full rehearsals** of the College Chapter Initiation Ceremony (including music) must be held.

The password and the handclasp must be taken preceding all Formal Business Meetings and all closed Ritual ceremonies. Early each year the vice president-ritual must review the password, the handclasp, and the pledge at a chapter meeting.

The vice president-ritual must arrive at all meetings and Ritual ceremonies in sufficient time to prepare the room and take the password and handclasp from each member as she enters the room. The sergeant-at-arms may assist with this. After the ceremony/meeting has begun, the sergeant-at-arms is seated near the door, and she takes the password and handclasp from latecomers.

If it is impossible for the vice president-ritual to be at the meeting room in advance of the meeting hour, she must notify the chapter president. The responsibility passes to the sergeant-at-arms or another member appointed by the president.

- ! The vice president-ritual **must collect** ritual books from each member at the end of a ceremony and initial their return on the Ritual Check Sheet.

The “Chorale” in a Ritual Ceremony

The singing of the Sigma Alpha Iota “Chorale” is called for in some Ritual ceremonies. Whenever the “Chorale” is sung as part of a Ritual ceremony, it must be the version from the Ritual Music Book.

The four-part setting of the “Chorale” that is in *Songs of Sigma Alpha Iota* is not to be used in a Ritual ceremony.

The Electric Badge

The Sigma Alpha Iota Electric Badge is an enlarged version of the member badge with electric lights in place of the pearls. It hangs with a hook or can be rested on an easel.

The Table Badge

The Table Badge is much like the Sigma Alpha Iota badge but uses candles. It is used for chapter Installation Ceremonies, Chapter Anniversary Ceremonies, and Reactivation Ceremonies.

Collegiate and alumnae chapters may request the use of a Table Badge for a Chapter Anniversary Ceremony on the occasion of a major anniversary such as 10, 25, 50, etc., years. This request is made to National Headquarters. The following usage fees are charged:

1. Security deposit charged to a chapter’s account at NH when the Table Badge is shipped to the chapter. The fee is removed when the Table Badge is returned to NH.
2. Rental fee
3. Shipping fee

If the Table Badge is not returned to NH within two weeks of the date on which it was used, the rental fee is doubled. If the Table Badge is not returned within one month, a fee equal to the cost of replacing the Table Badge will be charged.

VICE PRESIDENT, RITUAL

The vice president-ritual is the spearhead of the entire process. She supervises the preparations for all ceremonies for initiating members (college, patroness, Distinguished), awarding honors, installing officers, and the Memorial Ceremony.

The **collegiate vice president-ritual** supervises the preparations for collegiate, patroness, and Distinguished Member initiation ceremonies and collegiate affiliation ceremonies. The **alumnae vice president-ritual** supervises the preparations for alumnae and patroness affiliation ceremonies and patroness and Distinguished Member initiation ceremonies.

The well-organized vice president-ritual must have the following materials in her notebook:

- ❑ *Chapter Procedures Manual*
- ❑ Copies of the Ritual Inventory reported to the National Vice President-Ritual and Fraternity Education for the past three years
- ❑ Copies of the Annual Report to the chapter of the vice president-ritual for the past three years
- ❑ Copies of the Ritual Check Sheet for the past three years.

**After three years, these reports
should be placed in the permanent
chapter files.**

The vice president-ritual is also the custodian of the ritual equipment, as listed on the Ritual Inventory form, and the ritual books. The distribution of rituals is as follows:

Collegiate chapters

- ❑ Two *Master Rituals* - one for the president and one for the vice president-ritual
- ❑ Nine *Abridged Rituals*
- ❑ Three *Ritual Music Books*
- ❑ Any copies sent for visually impaired members.

Alumnae chapters

- ❑ Two *Master Rituals* - one for the president and one for the vice president-ritual
- ❑ Three *Ritual Music Books*
- ❑ One *Abridged Ritual* (available on request)
- ❑ Any copies sent for visually impaired members.

The vice president-ritual must keep a complete record of ritual books loaned to those taking part in the ceremonies, using the **Ritual Check Sheet**.

General Duties of the Vice President-Ritual

Directs and manages the Ritual Committee ([see page 9-4](#))

- ❑ Takes the password and handclasp from each member preceding all formal business meetings and Ritual ceremonies. Again, these should be reviewed at a chapter meeting early in the year.
- ❑ Conducts the opening and closing ceremonies of formal business meetings.
- ❑ Gives the “Grace” at each chapter banquet or arranges for the singing of “Grace” (see *Songs of Sigma Alpha Iota*).
- ❑ Explains the meaning of the Ritual to new initiates at the first chapter meeting following initiation.

**Maintaining the secrecy and
integrity of the Sigma Alpha
Iota Ritual must be the primary
concern for the vice president-
ritual.**

- ❑ Collects Ritual books from each member at the end of a ceremony and initials their return on the Ritual Check Sheet.
- ❑ Secures permission from the province officer to hold collegiate initiation after May 15 (if necessary) after consultation with the vice president-membership.
- ❑ Completes necessary entries in the Signature Book (see below)
- ❑ Conducts an orientation meeting with the new vice president-ritual before or soon after the installation of new officers.

The Signature Book

The vice president-ritual should write the superscription in the Signature Book for each collegiate initiation ceremony. The Signature Book should contain the signatures of all initiates: collegiate, patroness, Honorary, Member Laureate, Friend of the Arts, and National Arts Associate. The Signature Book should have the date of each initiation with the countersignature of the chapter president. Each initiation ceremony should be numbered chronologically beginning with the ceremony at the time of installation.

The Signature Book is the official record of all those initiated into the chapter. It must be cared for and stored with great concern.

The Ritual Committee

The vice president-ritual is chairman of the Ritual Committee. Other members of the committee are the sergeant-at-arms and members appointed by the vice president-ritual. The Ritual Committee’s responsibility is to organize the Ritual ceremonies. In detail, this will include:

Ritual Committee Organization Tasks	
Assign Parts	Parts must be assigned far enough ahead of the time of the ceremony for participants to memorize their respective parts. Every ceremony should be rehearsed, and the College Chapter Initiation ceremony requires at least two complete rehearsals, including music .
Arrange for Equipment	Equipment must be checked to see that it is available, clean, and in proper working order. This should be done well before the ceremony. At the close of the ceremony the Ritual Committee is responsible for checking, cleaning, and storing ritual equipment.
Room Arrangement	The Ritual Committee is in charge of <u>arranging</u> the room for the ceremony.
Badges or Membership Cards, College Initiation Ceremony	The Ritual Committee is in charge of having badges in place for the College Chapter Initiation ceremony. Membership cards and certificates will be mailed to the chapter as soon as they are available, possibly at a different time from the initiation ceremony.

The vice president-ritual is responsible for the presentation of the Ritual and the care of the Ritual books and equipment.

Ritual Inventory

At the time of the province officer’s official visit, the province officer and the vice president-ritual of the collegiate chapter will complete the Ritual Inventory. This inventory will document whether or not the chapter has all of its ritual books, robes and equipment as well the condition of the equipment. Four copies of this inventory are completed. One copy stays with the chapter, one copy belongs to the province officer, one copy is sent to the National Vice President-Ritual and Fraternity Education, and one copy is sent to the National Vice President-College Chapters .

The National Vice President-Ritual and Fraternity Education, will make every effort to help a chapter obtain all the robes and equipment it should have. She will automatically replace missing ritual books, charging the appropriate fine for lost rituals and the appropriate postage and handling charges.

At the time of the official visit of the province officer, the vice president-ritual should collect all Ritual books from those to whom they have been signed out.

The vice president-ritual of an alumnae chapter should complete three copies of the **Ritual Report** form and send one copy to the National Vice President-Ritual and Fraternity Education and one to the province officer by the published due date. One copy should be placed in the chapter files.

The vice president-ritual must keep the **Ritual Check Sheet**. On this sheet, a member signs out the ritual book she needs to learn her part. At the end of each ceremony, the member must return the ritual book to the vice president-ritual, who signs in the book on the Ritual Check Sheet. An example of a Ritual Check Sheet is in the **Forms** section of this book. By the announced due date, the vice president-ritual should send a copy of the Ritual Check Sheet to the province officer. One copy should be kept for the chapter files.

Copies of the Ritual Inventory and the alumnae chapter Ritual Report are in the **Forms** section of this book. The Ritual Inventory for collegiate chapters is sent by NH to province officers. The Ritual Check Sheet and alumnae chapter Ritual Report is sent to chapters from NH and is also available on the fraternity website.

See [page 9-7](#) for an at-a-glance list of general duties for the vice president-ritual.



**Losing rituals shows carelessness and lack of responsibility.
It is also expensive!
Be conscientious about the care of rituals.**

Replacing Rituals

If a ritual book(s) has been lost, the National Vice President-Ritual and Fraternity Education should be notified immediately, giving the number of the book(s) that has been lost. She will automatically replace rituals that show up as missing on the Ritual Inventory. The fines for lost rituals are assessed by the National Vice President-Ritual and Fraternity Education each year.

Badly worn rituals may be replaced. No fines are assessed for replacing worn rituals as long as the worn rituals are returned to the National Vice President-Ritual and Fraternity Education. Postage and handling charges do apply. Send the worn ritual(s) to the National Vice President-Ritual and Fraternity Education by a secure way and require signature confirmation of receipt.

Security/Maintenance for Ritual Equipment

All ritual books and equipment should be securely kept in a locked compartment, safety box, or cabinet. The vice president-ritual, president, and advisor should have keys for the locked storage areas.

The vice president-ritual should make recommendations to the chapter for needed repair or replacement of ritual equipment. This information should be part of her Annual Report to the chapter.

All other instructions concerning the Ritual are in the Master Ritual book. Read it carefully and follow the instructions diligently and thoroughly.

INITIATION PREPARATION: CHECK-LIST FOR VICE PRESIDENT-RITUAL

One month before initiation, at a chapter meeting:

- ❑ Assign parts. Conduct a complete read-through.
- ❑ Reserve rooms for initiation and rehearsals and check the reservations each week.
- ❑ Check all equipment and replace or repair missing or broken equipment. Assign members to clean and press robes.
- ❑ Insist on memorization of the Ritual. Have members check out the ritual books, using the Ritual Check Sheet.
- ❑ Learn the songs sung by all initiation participants.
- ❑ Give the members-in-training specific instructions about dress and time and place of arrival.
- ❑ Arrange for an advisor or alumnae member to sit with the members-in-training for the meditation period one-half hour before initiation.

One or two weeks before initiation:

- ❑ Conduct first rehearsal. It should be from memory, with an advisor acting as prompter.
- ❑ Rehearse the processional and recessional at least three times.
- ❑ Include musicians in the rehearsal.
- ❑ Remind the members that no one is excused from dress rehearsal or initiation.
- ❑ Order roses.
- ❑ Check on the arrangements for the meditation period.
- ❑ Be sure badges have arrived from National Headquarters.

The Day Before (in the same room as Initiation, if possible):

- ❑ All parts must be memorized; no one should be holding a book.
- ❑ Use the tone bar or gong, crest, pointer, trays, etc. so that participants will be comfortable using them at initiation.
- ❑ Rehearse the processional and recessional thoroughly.
- ❑ All musicians must be at this rehearsal!
- ❑ It is beneficial to have stand-ins for the initiates, so that everyone can rehearse speaking the lines to someone and look directly into the eyes of those being spoken to. The stand-ins must be SAI members.
- ❑ Prepare the Signature Book.
- ❑ Press robes, if necessary. Check all equipment again.
- ❑ Remember to bring a pen for the Signature Book and matches.
- ❑ Check again on the arrangements for the meditation period.

Day of Initiation:

- ❑ All members should be present one hour before the scheduled time of initiation to help with setup.
- ❑ The chapter president should sign the Signature Book.
- ❑ Place badges in the proper place.
- ❑ No other member-in-training activities should be scheduled for that day.
- ❑ No one is excused from initiation; it is the most rewarding experience that Sigma Alpha Iotas share.

VICE PRESIDENT-RITUAL – RESPONSIBILITIES AT-A-GLANCE:

This is a summary of the vice president-ritual's responsibilities. It is important that the vice president-ritual read the entire chapter for the details.

Have These:

- ❑ *Chapter Procedures Manual*
- ❑ Copies of the Ritual Inventory reported to the National Vice President-Ritual and Fraternity Education for the past three years
- ❑ Copies of the Annual Report of the vice president-ritual to the chapter for the past three years
- ❑ Copies of the Ritual Check Sheet for the past three years.

Maintaining the secrecy and integrity of the Sigma Alpha Iota Ritual must be the primary concern for the vice president-ritual.

The vice president-ritual is custodian of all ritual equipment (as listed on the Ritual Inventory form), robes and the ritual books. The distribution of rituals is as follows:

Collegiate chapters

- ❑ Two *Master Rituals* - one for the president and one for the vice president-ritual
- ❑ Three *Ritual Music Books*
- ❑ Nine *Abridged Rituals*

Alumnae chapters

- ❑ Two *Master Rituals* - one for the president and one for the vice president-ritual
- ❑ Three *Ritual Music Books*
- ❑ One *Abridged Ritual* (available on request)

General Duties:

- ❑ Early each year review the password, the handclasp, and the pledge at a chapter meeting.
- ❑ Explain the meaning of the ritual to new initiates at the first chapter meeting following initiation.
- ❑ Direct and manage the Ritual Committee (see page 9-4)
- ❑ Take the password and handclasp from each member preceding all formal business meetings and ritual ceremonies. Again, these should be reviewed at a chapter meeting early in the year.
- ❑ Conduct the opening and closing ceremonies of formal business meetings.
- ❑ Give the "Grace" at each chapter banquet or arrange for the singing of "Grace" (see *Songs of Sigma Alpha Iota*).
- ❑ Collect ritual books from each member at the end of a ceremony and have them initial their return on the Ritual Check Sheet.
- ❑ With the province officer, complete the Ritual Inventory
- ❑ Secure permission from the province officer to hold collegiate initiation after May 15.
- ❑ Complete necessary entries in the Signature Book
- ❑ Keep a complete record of ritual books loaned to those taking part in the ceremonies, using the Ritual Check Sheet.

Chapter 9

- ❑ Alumnae vice president-ritual complete Ritual Report form; send one copy to the National Vice President-Ritual and Fraternity Education and one copy to the province officer by the published due date.
- ❑ Collegiate and alumnae vice president-ritual send the Ritual Check Sheet to the province officer by the published due date.
- ❑ Conduct an orientation meeting with the new vice president-ritual before or soon after the installation of new officers.