

# Pledge Drives Made EASY!



## Introduction

Whether you're new to pledge drives or have been doing them for years, this guide gives you ideas to make your fundraiser the most fun and profitable you've ever had.

### What is a pledge drive?

A pledge drive is a fundraiser where your students ask for donations from family and friends to help fund programs and equipment that enrich their education.

A pledge drive can be an event like a Jog-A-Thon or Walk-A-Thon, but it can also be a Read-A-Thon or Donation Drive that doesn't occur on a specific date.

### Why host a pledge drive?

Pledge drives are the easiest way for schools to raise big money. Unlike product sales, they don't require your students to sell and distribute products, and your school can keep every dollar raised.

### How much money do pledge drives raise?

Participating students generally raise between \$50 to \$80 each. Students using PledgeStar generally raise twice as much as those who don't.

### How does PledgeStar help raise twice as much?

Grandparents, aunts, uncles and close friends would happily donate if asked, but many parents feel uncomfortable soliciting them. This deprives your school of thousands in donations.

**PledgeStar** solves this problem by making it fun and easy to ask. Parents simply enter family and friends' names and email addresses, then **PledgeStar** emails pledge requests from the children that are so cute and effective, over half result in donations. **PledgeStar** also streamlines the process with secure, online donations that go directly into the school's account.

## Suggesting a Pledge Drive as a Fundraiser to your Board

If you think you'd like to have a pledge drive, you might need to get board approval. Here are a few recommendations to help you get your board on board:

- First, finish reading this guide. If you have any unanswered questions, call **PledgeStar at (888) 598-7510**. They're happy to help, and have worked with so many schools, they probably have the answer.
- Next, find someone you trust to lead the fundraiser, then gain their support. It's a lot easier to get the board to agree if someone's already volunteered to lead the project.
- Get your group's opinion leaders (President, VP, Treasurer and Fundraising Chairperson) excited by the idea. Send them a copy of "**Pledge Drives Made Easy**" to help explain the benefits.
- During this process, you might encounter concerns or objections from your group's members. You should be able to overcome these with the information in this guide. However, if someone raises a concern or objection you don't know how to overcome, call **PledgeStar at (888) 598-7510**, and they'll make recommendations to address the issue.

## Planning Your Pledge Drive

Planning your pledge drive is simple, and only takes about an hour for your fundraising committee to complete. All the decisions you need to make appear below. At the end of this section is a [Pledge Drive Project Plan](#) for you to record your decisions.

### **Decide which type of pledge drive is right for you**

Your first decision is to determine whether or not you'd like an event based pledge drive.

Event based pledge drives, like Jog-A-Thons and Walk-A-Thons, are fun events that create excitement for students and their families. However, they require parent volunteers for setting up and tearing down the track, working the hydration stations, disc jockeying, lap counting, etc. For a complete list of tasks, see [Jog-A-Thon and Walk-A-Thon Checklist](#).

Read-A-Thons and Donation Drives are not events that occur on a specific date, so they only need two or three parent volunteers. For a complete list of Read-A-Thon and Donation Drive volunteers and requirements, see [Donation Drive and Read-A-Thon Checklist](#).

### **Select an event name and important dates**

Most schools use their pledge drive's type as its name. For example, call the event "Jog-A-Thon" if you're having a Jog-A-Thon, or call it "Walk-A-Thon" if you're having a Walk-A-Thon. Some schools get more creative. For example, if the Jog-A-Thon is in November, it might be called "Turkey Trot." If your school has a hawk as a mascot, and you're having a Walk-A-Thon, you could call it a "Hawk Walk."

Picking a date for your event can be tricky. Most schools are in session from September to June. It's usually not a good idea to hold your event at the start of the school year, because you need a month or so to ramp up, so September isn't good. Late November through January aren't ideal, because of the holiday season and the financial drain that comes with it. As a result of these limitations, Fall pledge drives usually occur between mid September to mid November, and Spring pledge drives between February and May.

Most schools choose to hold their event on a Friday during school hours, because all the students are present and faculty can help get them to and from the event. Some schools choose to have their event on a weekend, so no school time gets lost.

Other important dates to select include a pep rally date a date by which money must be received.

## **Choose whether to accept both flat and variable pledges?**

Flat (or fixed amount) pledges allow family and friends to specify exactly how much they want to donate. You should always allow flat pledges.

Variable pledges allow family and friends to base their donation amount on the child's effort in the event. In a Jog-A-Thon, for example, you could allow family and friends to pledge an amount for each lap run. In a Read-A-Thon, family and friends could pledge an amount for each hour read.

Accepting only flat donations is easier than including variable donations, because the children can request and collect the donation prior to the event.

With variable donations, children must secure a pledge before the event. After the event, they compute and collect the donation. As a result, you have to wait a couple of weeks after the event to collect all the money.

## **Decide if you want both offline and online fundraising**

### **Offline Fundraising**

Before a pledge drive, schools give each student a pledge sheet and an envelope to record pledges and collect donations. The students ask family, friends and neighbors for donations either in person, by phone, letter or email. The student uses the pledge sheet to track pledges and payments, and to follow up with unpaid pledges. All the donations collected get placed into the envelope and returned to the school by the due date.

Pledge drive volunteers record the total cash and checks received for each student for the purpose of awarding prizes. The treasurer creates one or more deposit slips detailing each check and total cash denominations.

### **Online Fundraising**

With **PledgeStar** online fundraising, schools ask parents to register and enter their family and friends' names and email addresses. **PledgeStar** then emails their family and friends pledge requests from the children with simple instructions to donate securely online.

In addition to helping schools raise 50% more, online fundraising with PledgeStar helps schools simplify the collection process, because the funds raised are automatically recorded per child and deposited directly to the school's account.

Visit [www.pledgestar.com](http://www.pledgestar.com) to learn how **PledgeStar helps** you raise more with less effort. The website has an explanation video, answers to frequently asked questions, testimonials, and pricing information.

If you aren't sure about using **PledgeStar**, call **(888) 598-7510** to address any questions or concerns you might have.

It usually best to fundraise both online and offline, because some folks will prefer to donate online, while others will prefer to donate in person. So, including both online and offline donations should yield the best results. However, offline donations require parent volunteers to record donations for each student, and an added accounting burden for the treasurer, so a school might elect to forgo offline donations if it's hard to get the extra help.

### **Pledge Drive Project Plan**

Use the form below to record the decisions you made in the previous section:

Pledge Drive Type (circle one)	Donation Drive / Read-A-Thon / Jog or Walk-A-Thon
Event Name	
Pep Rally Date	
Event Date(s)	
Money Due Date	
Pledge Types (circle all)	Flat / Variable, Variable Unit Name:
Donation Type (circle all)	Online / Offline

### **Assign Responsibilities**

Proper delegation and project management make the difference between a successful, stress-free event and a chaotic one. For that reason, it's a good idea to decide now who will be in charge of the event and who is responsible for each task. The following pages describe each task and ask you to assign a volunteer.

## Work with PledgeStar

If you decide to use PledgeStar for your online fundraising, designate someone to act as your school's liaison with PledgeStar. This volunteer will probably spend between 2-3 hours supplying information to customize your fundraising website, and receiving training for its administration.

You also need someone to complete an online application for PledgeStar's payment processor accept credit cards through your website. This is usually done by the treasurer, and takes about an hour.

## Promotion

Proper promotion is the best way to ensure your event's success. Commonly used promotion methods include pep rallies, flyers, email campaigns and robocalls. Assign a volunteer to be in charge of promoting your event.

### **Pep Rallies**

A pep rally is an assembly where you explain your pledge drive and hype the students with incentives for getting donations. When the students are excited, they help motivate their parents to help raise funds.

### **Flyers**

Make sure your students bring home a flyer explaining the event, why you're having it, and what their parents are expected to do.

### **Email Campaigns**

Most parent groups have an email list. Throughout the event timeline, email reminders and updates to parents to drum up more participation.

### **Robocalls**

Many school principals have the ability to deliver a recorded message to their student's parents via telephone. Ask your principal to promote your event during these robocalls.

## Pledge Packets

Pledge packets contain the pledge drive flyer, a pledge envelope with a pledge sheet stapled to the front, online fundraising instructions and a tax receipt. For Read-A-Thons, include a reading log. For Jog / Walk-A-Thons, include a parental permission slip. Pledge packets get sent home with the students after the pep rally. Students record their offline pledges on the pledge sheet and collect the donations in the pledge envelope. Assign one or more volunteers to design, print, assemble, personalize and distribute the pledge packets.

Once the pledge packets have been assembled, they need to get personalized and distributed. If your school has a parent volunteer for each class, they can be given a class roster and write each student's name, grade and teacher name on the individual pledge sheets and distribute them. Otherwise, you will need volunteers to personalize and distribute the pledge packets.

See a sample [flyer](#), [pledge sheet](#), [reading log](#), and [tax receipt](#) in the Appendix. PledgeStar supplies its own online fundraising instructions.

## Incentives

Most successful fundraisers offer students prizes as an incentive for raising money. Prizes can be things that are free or things you purchase. Examples of free prizes include homework passes, an extra ten minutes of recess, and free items from local businesses.

Some schools offer prizes to students based on the money raised. For example, students raising \$50 get awarded a keychain, \$75 gets a flashlight and a keychain, and \$100 gets a t-shirt, a flashlight and a keychain. Prizes can be purchased once the funds have been collected and associated with the students who raised them. A good source for these prizes is <http://www.orientaltrading.com/>.

Other schools decide to obtain some high value prizes and award them to the students who raise the most. For example, the student raising the most wins an iPad mini, second place wins an electric guitar and third place wins a Razor scooter. Schools either get these items donated by local businesses, or purchase them.

Since half of the pledge requests sent using PledgeStar result in a donation, you should also offer a prize students sending ten or more pledge requests. To make awarding prizes easy, PledgeStar gives you a report showing how many pledge requests each student sent, as well as the amount each student raised both online and off.

## Sponsorships

Some schools like to get sponsors to cover the costs of their event, so they can say 100% of the money raised by the students gets spent to enrich their education. Costs may include prizes, processing fees for online pledges and pledge packet materials. Find a volunteer to ask local businesses (dentists and orthodontists, birthday party facilities, bike shops, etc.) to help cover these costs as event sponsors. As a thank you for their support, offer them special recognition in your event's promotional material.

## Accounting

Assign volunteers to record the cash and check total returned in each student's pledge envelope. You'll need this to determine prize winners. Your treasurer will need to create a deposit slip and deposit all the cash and checks received.

PledgeStar greatly simplifies the accounting work. First, a large percentage of the donations will be received online. The accounting and depositing of those happen automatically. PledgeStar also provides a data entry system for offline pledges, too. The system allows many volunteers to simultaneously enter the checks and cash from each student's pledge envelope. Deposit slip data is instantly available, as well as student fundraising totals (both online and off) for determining prize winners.

## Event Day Volunteers and Equipment

For Jog-A-Thons and Walk-A-Thons, find volunteers to help set up and tear down a track and work hydration stations. You might want to find someone with a public address system to play music and MC the event. If you're having a Jog-A-Thon and are accepting per lap pledges, you'll need volunteers to pin lap cards to students, mark laps on the cards as students pass by, then remove the card and count the laps.

If your school doesn't have them available, you might need to source equipment like tables, chairs, water coolers, track cones, etc.

## Donation Drive or Read-A-Thon Checklist

✓	Task	Volunteer	Due
	<b>4-6 Weeks prior to money due date</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	For online fundraising, <a href="#">set up a PledgeStar Account</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Design pledge packets</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Select prizes and levels</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Begin finding sponsors</a>		
	<b>3-4 weeks prior to money due date</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Buy pledge packet supplies</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Print pledge packet sheets</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Personalize pledge sheets</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Assemble pledge packets</a>		
	<b>2-3 weeks prior to money due date</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Send home pledge packets</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Have pep rally</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Follow up promotion</a>		
	<b>1 weeks prior to money due date</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Send home another Pledgestar instruction sheet</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	PledgeStar: Email pledge request reminders		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Announce classroom and leader totals each day		
	<b>Money due date</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Collect pledge packets from students</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Record pledge packet checks and cash</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Deposit money into bank account</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Determine prize winners</a>		

<input type="checkbox"/>	Order prizes		
	<b>2-4 weeks after money due date</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Announce results and distribute prizes		

## Jog-A-Thon and Walk-A-Thon Checklist

✓	Task	Volunteer	Due
	<b>4-6 Weeks prior to money due date</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	For online fundraising, <a href="#">set up a PledgeStar Account</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Design pledge packets</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Select prizes and levels</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Begin finding sponsors</a>		
	<b>3-4 weeks prior to money due date</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Buy pledge packet supplies</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Print pledge packet sheets</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Personalize pledge sheets</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Assemble pledge packets</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Source event equipment</a>		
	<b>2-3 weeks prior to money due date</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Send home pledge packets</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Have pep rally</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Follow up promotion</a>		
	<b>1 weeks prior to money due date</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Send home another Pledgestar instruction sheet</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	PledgeStar: Email pledge request reminders		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Print Lap Cards (if needed)</a>		
	<b>Money due date</b>		

<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Collect pledge packets from students</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Record pledge packet checks and cash</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Deposit money into bank account</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Determine prize winners</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Order prizes		
	<b>Event date</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Setup</a>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Tear down</a>		
	<b>2-4 weeks after money due date</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Announce results and distribute prizes		

## Sample Flyer

### (Name of Fundraiser)

#### (Date of Fundraiser)

#### What is the (Name of Fundraiser)?

The (Name of Fundraiser) will be our largest Fundraiser of the year. Participants earn money by (Insert action ie. Running laps, reading books etc.). Participants will have (20 minutes to run as many laps as possible around a 1/10<sup>th</sup> of a mile track or 4 weeks to read as much as possible). Participants get pledges from family, friends, neighbors or businesses to support their efforts. Donors can either pledge a certain amount of money per (Insert action ie. Running laps, reading time etc.), or make a flat donation in support of our school.

#### How do I get Pledges?

**Ask friends and family!** Register your child at (Insert pledgestar link here) and follow the simple registration steps. It takes just minutes to set-up your child's own fundraising page to request pledges or use the form on the front of the pledge envelope (more forms are available online). **When participants request pledges from least 10 people online, they will be eligible for a special prize.**

#### **Prizes will be given out for requesting donations and raising money!**

#### (Insert your prize schedule here)

(Sample prize levels:)

#### **PledgeStar Participation Prize:**

- Enter 10 names into the PledgeStar System and you will earn a homework pass.

#### **Individual Prizes:**

Prize levels up to the \$100 level are cumulative. If you raise at least \$100 you will earn the \$100, \$50, and \$35 prize as well as the PledgeStar prize if you qualify.

- \$35 raised earns you a keychain that matches our theme
- \$50 raised earns a water bottle that matches our theme
- \$100 raised earns a T-shirt
- \$200 raised earns a \$10 Target gift card
- \$300 raised earns a \$20 Target gift card

#### **Individual Grand Prizes:**

- The top money earner for each grade will earn a special lunch with the principal.
- Top 5 individual Money earners win their choice of an iPad, Disneyland Tickets, bicycle, skateboard or Razor Scooter. Top money earner will get first choice followed by next highest money earner getting their choice of remaining prizes.

**Class Prizes:**

- The teacher of the top 10 earning classes will be treated to a special lunch.
- If everyone in your class raises at least \$10 each your entire class will receive a special treat at lunch.

**Why are we raising money?**

Your support allows the PTA to continue to fund many of the great programs and events at our school. This year any funds collected above (\$ \_\_\_\_\_) (the amount needed to operate the PTA's regular programs), will go toward ( \_\_\_\_\_) for our (School Name). With your help every child will benefit.

**What is the Goal?**

This year we would like to raise (\$ \_\_\_\_\_). If every participant can raise (total/number of students) we can achieve our goal! **If we reach our goal and raise (\$ \_\_\_\_\_) the school will enjoy a special assembly for all the student body to enjoy!**

**When do we run? (Enter your schedule here)**

**SAMPLE WALK-A-THON SCHEDULE**

**DAY, DATE**

(All times and groupings should be modified for your school)

7:45	Parents and Students are invited to arrive for the Day's Festivities
8:00-8:15	Flag Salute, National Anthem and Choir Performance
8:15-9:00	All Kindergarten, all 1st grade classes
9:00-9:45	All 2nd and 3rd grades
9:45-10:30	All 4th and part of 5th grades
10:30-11:15	All 6th Grade classes





	<b>Total:</b>	

\*Minutes or hours.

## Tax Receipt

(Name Of the School or Non-Profit Group)

(Address)

(Phone Number)

(email)

(Tax ID#)

**Thank you for your contribution. Your donation is tax deductible.**

Date Contributed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of contributor: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Contributed: \_\_\_\_\_

Items contributed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(please attach list/receipt)

## Lap Card

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher Name: \_\_\_\_\_

(Check a box each time a lap is completed)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60