Epsilon Sigma Omicron Handbook

Guide for GFWC's Reading Groups

This handbook is best used by members and state chairmen of newly established state ESO chapters or state chapters that do not have their own state guidelines but is also helpful to all ESO members and chapters. If your state chapter has its own rules and guidelines, please consult them. Any questions regarding the contents of this handbook should be directed to the GFWC Education and Libraries Community Service Program Chairman. —

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Introduction to ESO

Epsilon Sigma Omicron (ESO) is an honorary educational society open to all per-capita dues paying GFWC federated clubs. More than 75 years ago, the ESO program became a permanent part of the GFWC Education Community Service Program. Through ESO, clubwomen are given direction in planned reading for self-enrichment and personal growth. Over the years, many GFWC clubwomen have profited from this unique self-improvement program, seen as vital by the members it directly benefits. The purpose of ESO is to provide GFWC members with a structural reading program, which is educational and stimulates a desire for self-improvement. The following are the goals of the ESO:

- To encourage club member's pursuit of higher education
- To create an additional means to unite women in volunteerism
- To develop a support network for women returning to school
- To improve current and develop new study skills
- To stimulate systematic home reading and study with minimum supervision
- To encourage the establishment of home libraries and
- To encourage the formation of reading/study/discussion groups.

ESO can take the form of a reading group or an individual's personal reading pursuit. The program provides membership, awards/certificates, pins, reading lists, and a framework in which to pursue continued self-improvement through reading. Many clubs combine club programming with ESO related activities, such as reading awareness and book promotion.

HISTORY OF ESO

ESO was established in 1928 by the Indiana Federation of Clubs. In 1930, it was incorporated as a national sorority; the Indiana Society became the Alpha chapter. Later that same year, the Washington State chapter became the Beta chapter. Since then, approximately 46 states have followed the lead of Indiana and Washington by establishing their own state ESO chapters.

The first national convention of ESO was held at the 1932 GFWC Convention in Seattle, Washington. In 1940, ESO gave up its incorporation as a national sorority and became a Special Committee of GFWC. This relationship needed clarification. In 1945, Mrs. Fred A. Bell, then GFWC ESO chairman, appointed Mrs. W.D Keenan of the Alpha chapter as a consultant. Mrs. Keenan worked with Mrs. Bell and Mrs. Meyers, organizer and first president of ESO, to present rules and regulations to meet both ESO and GFWC requirements and to clarify the status of the organization. Their work was completed in 1950 when the rules were modified to include ESO as a division of the Education Department of GFWC. The establishment of ESO was aided by the Extension Division of the University of Indiana. The Extension Division began creating "reading courses" which gave college credit, applicable to a University degree or membership in ESO. The enrollment fee in 1935

was $1 for one course or $3 for four courses. The original ESO reading courses were compiled by the American Library Association, the United States Office of Education, Purdue University, and Indiana University. Clubwomen could choose from over 100 courses. Reading courses ranged in subject matter from American heroes to interior decoration to U.S. foreign relations.

ESO TODAY

Today ESO is part of the GFWC Education and Libraries Community Service Program with clubs across the country continuing to participate in this self-improvement reading program. Since 1928, ESO has evolved into a diverse program with state chapters personalizing their programs based on clubwomen's needs and their communities. ESO members should follow the guidelines of their state ESO chapter. If a state chapter does not exist, one must be established before members can participate. The rules and regulations included in this handbook should be used as a framework for establishing and administering state ESO chapters. Questions regarding the administration of ESO on the local and state levels should be directed to the GFWC Education and Libraries Program Chairman (who also serves as ESO chairman).

ESO Membership Information

BENEFITS OF ESO MEMBERSHIP

Unlike other GFWC programs, ESO exists specifically for the benefit of club members. GFWC programs are traditionally community improvement based. Although ESO is beneficial to the community, its main focus is directed at club members. Reading groups have become commonplace in many communities because of their unique benefits. Members who participate in reading groups are able to experience intellectual discussions on a variety of books, create new friendships, coalesce with various members of the community, and gain knowledge about life, love, family, politics, cultures, technology, the world around them, and many other topics.

HOW TO BECOME AN ESO MEMBER

Step 1: Contact your **state** ESO chairman to receive your state ESO guidelines. Many states have their own requirements regarding becoming an ESO pledge and member. If your state does not have an ESO chapter, one must be chartered (please see Establishing a State ESO Chapter).

Step 2: Interested GFWC members must first pass through the ESO pledge stage before they can become ESO members. The completion of an ESO pledge application (see page 14) is needed before a pledge can begin working towards membership status. The pledge application must be sent to the respective or **state** ESO chairman, who will begin tracking the pledge's progress. A pledge qualifies for membership at her own pace, finishing in a few weeks or working slowly throughout a longer period of time. After proper completion of 16 books, the pledge receives a certificate verifying her ESO membership from her club and/or state.

MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

ESO members are encouraged to participate in club programs such as:

- Reading
- Participating in reading/study/discussion groups
- Working to achieve higher ESO levels
- Continuing to pursue self-improvement through personal study

Reading is, of course, the main responsibility of an ESO member. Once books are completed, the member is required to complete a brief form, giving the title and brief opinion of the book read. The form is submitted to the club ESO chair to keep track of each member's ESO levels, which are based on the number of books read. Clubs without an ESO chair may submit reports to the state ESO chair. The club report form must be sent to the State ESO chair based on each state's requirements. Report forms will not be returned. State ESO chairmen will issue certificates and awards based on report forms received.

ESO LEVELS

There are many opportunities for ESO members to work their way up through the ESO levels. Members move to a new ESO level by completing a set of reading list requirements. The reading list is divided into subject categories. To complete a category, a member must read and report on four (4) books from that category. State ESO chapters may have different requirements; please consult your state guidelines.

- ESO Levels
    - **Pledge**: A Pledge has obtained an enrollment application and has started to fulfill the reading requirements.
    - **Member**: A Member has completed four books from four different categories, for a total of 16 books. They are then eligible to wear the ESO pin and receive a membership certificate.
    - **Star Level**: A Star level member has completed four books from ten different categories, for a total of 40 books. Members will then receive a Star Level membership certificate.
    - **Torch Level**: A Torch Level member has completed four books from 16 different categories, for a total of 64 books read. They are then eligible to wear the ESO Torch Guard and receive the Torch Level membership certificate.
    - **Century Award**: A Century Award member has completed 100 books. They can continue to the Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Century Award levels and will be eligible to receive the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and/or sixth century membership certificates.
    - **Diamond Award**: A Diamond Award member has completed 1,000 books. They will be eligible to receive a Diamond Award certificate.

ESO AWARDS

As members move up in ESO levels, they are eligible for a variety of pins and certificates. State ESO chairmen are responsible for tracking the ESO levels of their state members with submission by a club report for all ESO club members or by individual club member reports. Members should report to state ESO chairmen to ensure accurate ESO level records are maintained.

- ESO certificates (Member, Star, Torch, Century, Second Century, etc.) are available in the Member Portal Digital Library (need link). Certificates can be downloaded by ESO chairmen.
- ESO pins (ESO Member pin and ESO Torch pin) are available from the GFWC Marketplace https://gfwc.allegraromeoville.com/. Members are eligible to order pins once they have received the certificates that validate their ESO level.
- National ESO awards to recognize outstanding promotion of ESO and outstanding participation in ESO will be awarded annually to one State Federation in each membership category. The winners will be chosen by the GFWC Education and Libraries chairman based on ESO information found in the GFWC Statistical Forms and State Award Entries.

STATE ESO CHAIRMEN RESPONSIBILITIES

State ESO Chairmen should be active ESO members and are appointed by State Presidents. If necessary, pledges actively pursuing ESO membership can be appointed as state ESO chairmen. In the event the state does not have an ESO chairman, the Education and Libraries Chairman will facilitate the ESO program. Responsibilities include:

- Working closely with the state administrative agency, if chapter has an administrative agency.
- Promoting and distributing the ESO reading list to all ESO members and prospective members. If the state ESO chapter has its own reading list, the state chairman compiles, reviews, and revises that list.
- Reporting annually to the GFWC Education and Libraries Chairman.
- Keeping records of state's ESO members, including verification of ESO levels achieved and number of books completed. State ESO chairmen receive completed pledge applications and book report forms from each state member. The report forms represent each category completed. State chairmen are responsible for tracking their fellow members' progress based on these report forms. The records should be kept in a fashion that can be passed on to the next administration. A spreadsheet to easily be shared with the next administration is provided to the State Chairman by the GFWC Education and Libraries Chairman.
- Ordering ESO certificates from the GFWC Marketplace and completing and distributing to appropriate members.
- Informing members of their ESO pin eligibility.
- Encouraging members to participate in ESO, promoting ESO through state magazines, newsletters, and through materials prepared for district, state, and region meetings and conventions.
- Promoting ESO reading groups on the local and state level.

Organizing a State ESO Chapter

ESTABLISHING A STATE ESO CHAPTER

A GFWC member who is interested in becoming an ESO member must contact their State President to determine if an ESO chapter exists in their state or refer to the list on page 12. If there is no state ESO chapter, one must be established before ESO activities can begin. The following steps need to be taken to charter a new ESO state chapter:

- Interested members must contact their State President for approval to establish a state ESO chapter. Once approval is granted, the State President must appoint a state ESO chairman who is willing to take on all state ESO chairman responsibilities.
- The appointed state ESO chairman must request a state ESO charter application from the GFWC Programs Department at programs@gfwc.org. The application requires the state to uphold the goals of the ESO and participate in ESO programs. The signatures of the State President and state ESO Chairman, or Education and Libraries Chairman if a state ESO chairman is not appointed, are necessary on the application.
- Upon approval of the application, the state will receive a state ESO charter, from GFWC Headquarters, signed by the GFWC International President and the GFWC Education and Libraries Community Service Program Chairman.

REACTIVATING A STATE ESO CHAPTER

A list of established state ESO chapters can be found on page 12 of this handbook. Over time, many state ESO chapters have become inactive. If a state already has an established ESO chapter, but no state chairman or active program, that chapter needs to be reactivated. Follow these steps to reactivate an ESO state chapter:

- Consult the list of established ESO chapters to see if a state ESO chapter has already been established.
- Contact the State President to verify existence of active chapter.
- Interested members need to contact their respective State President to solicit approval to reactivate the state ESO chapter.
- Once approval is granted, the State President must appoint a state ESO chairman who is willing to take on all state ESO chairman responsibilities.
- The state ESO chairman must request a state ESO reactivation charter application from the GFWC Programs Department. The application requires the state to uphold the goals of ESO and participate in the ESO programs. The signatures of the State President and the state ESO chairman are necessary on the application.
- Upon approval of the application, the state will receive a state ESO reactivation charter from GFWC Headquarters, signed by the GFWC International President and the national GFWC Education and Libraries Community Service Program Chairman.

ESO Fact Sheet

THE CREST

Bertha J. Lacey, a well-known Indiana artist, designed the crest for ESO in the form of a shield, the ancient symbol of protection. The shield is divided into sections. The center section represents the American home, with a pathway leading into the world of achievement. In the top left section, the rising sun stands for enlightenment. The palm leaf in the upper central section of the shield is the symbol of victory through effort.



The crescent moon at the upper right denotes enlightenment pursued in the night-time hours of study. The lower left section shows the lyre which is the symbol for fine arts. The wheat in the lower right symbolizes the idea that we reap what we sow. The lower central section shows an open book which represents all knowledge. Below the crest is the torsade bearing the name Epsilon Sigma Omicron. The torsade was originally a wreath of twisted ribbon presented to a crusader when he set out upon a quest. The dove of peace, which crowns the crest, symbolizes aspiration.

THE PIN



The ESO pin was also designed by Bertha J. Lacey. The pin is shaped like a kite and is gold, symbolizing the desire to increase cultural knowledge. On a blue field which denotes truth, is a half-risen sun bearing the Greek Letters ESO—Epsilon Sigma Omicron. The ESO pin may be worn by any member who has met the membership qualifications.

THE MOTTO

The motto of Epsilon Sigma Omicron is "Enlighten Your Own Pathway," which was chosen by Mrs. Quincey A. Myers and translated from Greek at the Indiana University. ESO are the initial letters for the Greek phrase, "Epsilon ten sautou hoden" which translates literally into "Enlighten the pathway of yourself."

THE SONG

Tune "On the Banks of the Wabash"
Words by Constance Hais, ESO Beta Chapter

Of times mem'ry takes us back to happy schooldays
When the world of knowledge widened to our view
All the past was ours- the future rich in promise
And each year the goal for us was set anew

Commencement sent us out to make our own goals

If we would win success and forward go;
The way we trod was often dull and aimless,
Till at last we found the torch of ESO

Now the light is shining fair along the pathway
Gleaming clear and bright the way our feet must go;
And the torch we carry will continue burning
All the years we're faithful to ESO

THE LITANY

Written by Rose Katterhenry, ESO Alpha Chapter

Light thine own pathway, and by each beaming ray,
May we see reflected, each passing hour of the day
Some arduous task accomplished, some valiant deed well done,
Renew some high endeavor, record the victory won.

THE GRACE

Tune "Old Hundred"
Written by ES Alpha Chapter

Dear Lord, to Thee our thanks we give,
For life and love and daily bread
In sisterhood, O may we live
And by Thy spirit, ever be led. Amen

THE FLOWERS AND COLORS

Flower: Gardenia
Colors: Blue, signifying fidelity to purpose. White, signifying light.

THE ESO CONSTITUTION

The following is a copy of the original ESO Constitution taken from the Indiana University archives/State ESO chapters are encouraged to use it as a model when writing their state ESO Constitution. The Constitution may be adapted to best suit the state's needs.

Article I Name

The name of this organization shall be Epsilon Sigma Omicron "enlighten your own pathway", sponsored by the Indiana Federation of Clubs.

Article II Object

The Object of this organization shall be to foster and encourage literary spirit among clubwomen of Indiana.

Article III Membership

The membership of this organization shall be composed of women who are members of clubs affiliated with the Indiana State Federation, and of young girls who are members of Junior clubs affiliated with the Indiana state Federation, as provided in the by-laws.

Article IV Officers

The officers of the Association shall be president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer, who shall be elected at an annual meeting and who shall hold office for one year, or until their successors are elected and qualified.

Article V Annual Meeting

There shall be an annual meeting of the organization to be held at the time and place of the annual convention of the Indiana Federation of Clubs.

Article VI Amendments

This constitution shall be amended at any regular meeting of the organization by two-thirds vote of the members present, provided notice of the proposed amendment has been given in the official call to the annual meeting.

LIST OF ESTABLISHED STATE ESO CHAPTERS

The following list of state ESO chapters represents all chapters charted throughout ESO history. Some of these state chapters may not be active at this date.

Chapter	State	Date	Administrative Agency
Alpha	Indiana	1928	Extension Division, Bureau of Public Discussion, Indiana University
Beta	Washington	1930	Washington State University. Extensions Service
Gamma	Minnesota	1933	General Extension Division, University of Minnesota, Correspondence Study Department, Library Division, Minnesota State Department of Education
Delta	Oklahoma	1934	College of Continuing Education, University of Oklahoma and Sate Library
Epsilon	Nebraska	1944	Extension Division, University of Nebraska
Zeta	Kansas	1946	Extension Division, University of Kansas
Eta	Missouri	1946	Missouri State Library Commission
Theta	North Dakota	1946	Extension Division, University of North Dakota
Iota	Wisconsin	1950	Wisconsin Free Library Commission
Kappa	Pennsylvania	1950	Pennsylvania State University, Free Library of Philadelphia and American Library Association
Lambda	Wyoming	1950	Wyoming State Library
Mu	Tennessee	1950	Extension Division, University of Tennessee
Nu	Maine	1951	Extension Division, University of Maine
Xi	Illinois	1952	Illinois State Library
Omicron	South Carolina	1952	Extension Division, University of South Carolina
Pi	Mississippi	1952	Extension Division, University of Mississippi
Rho	Colorado	1953	Extension Service, University of Colorado Libraries
Sigma	Florida	1953	Extension Division, Florida State University, Florida State Library

Chapter	State	Date	Administrative Agency
Tau	Massachusetts	1953	Division of Library Extension, Massachusetts Department of Education
Upsilon	California	1954	California State Library Commission
Phi	Texas	1954	Extension Division, University of Texas
Chi	Oregon	1954	Extension Division, Oregon State System Higher Education
Psi	Iowa	1954	Extension Division, University of Iowa
Omega	Georgia	1954	Extension Division, University of Georgia, Center for Continuing Education
Alpha Alpha	New Mexico	1954	Library State Commission
Alpha Beta	West Virginia	1954	Extension Division, University of West Virginia
Alpha Gamma	Arkansas	1958	State Library Commission and University of Arkansas
Alpha Delta	Ohio	1958	Center for Adult Education, Ohio State University and Ohio University at Athens
Alpha Epsilon	Michigan	1958	University of Michigan and State Library
Alpha Zeta	Alabama	1961	Correspondence Study Department, Extension Division Alabama University
Alpha Eta	North Carolina	1961	Bureau of Community Adult Education, Extension Division, University of Alabama
Alpha Theta	Virginia	1962	Home Study Department, Extension Division, University of Virginia
Alpha Iota	Louisiana	1964	Louisiana State University
Alpha Kappa	Arizona	1965	University of Arizona
Alpha Lambda	Kentucky	1967	Kentucky Department of Libraries
Alpha Mu	South Dakota	1969	
Alpha Nu	Utah	1969	State Library
Alpha Xi	Montana	1970	
Alpha Omicron	New Jersey	1978	Douglas Colleges
Alpha Tau	Maryland	1978	Extension Services, University of Maryland
Alpha Upsilon	Delaware	2000	
Alpha Phi	Connecticut	2001	
Alpha Chi	New York	2001	
Alpha Psi	Idaho	2007	
Alpha Omega	Alaska	2013	
Beta Alpha	New Hampshire	2020	

ESO PLEDGE APPLICATION

Please copy and complete the following application and send it to your state ESO chairman. This form will be used to track your progress as an ESO member through the ESO Levels. Note: states may choose to use a different format and requirements. Various web-based documents such as Google Docs are acceptable.

Date		
Member Name		
GFWC Club		
State Federation		
Address		
City	State	Zip Code
Phone	E-mail	

I hereby agree to pursue the goals of ESO and to participate in ESO programs.

_____

Signature

ESO Book Report Form

Please copy and complete the following report form and send it to your club/state ESO chairman. This form will be used to track your progress through the ESO levels. Clubs may compile one list to send to the state ESO or Education and Libraries Chairman, if the state approves this process. The State Chairman will forward a compiled list to the GFWC Education and Libraries Chairman. *Note: states may choose to use a different format and requirements. Various web-based documents such as google docs are acceptable.*

Date:		
Member Name:		
GFWC Club:		
Address:		
City:	State:	Zip Code:
Phone:	E-mail Address:	
Current ESO Level	☐Pledge ☐Member ☐Star ☐Torch ☐Century	
The following book reports mark the completion of the _____category.		

For each book, include the following information:

Book Title:
Author:
What was your opinion of the book?