

# SPEAK GREEK

Read over this glossary of Greek terms and sorority speak to help you fit in as a Kappa Kappa at your KILLER party!

**ACTIVE:** An initiated member of a fraternity/sorority chapter.

**ADVISOR:** An alumna/ alumni member of a sorority or fraternity that serves as a mentor to a collegiate chapter officer.

**ALUMNA:** Any initiated member of a sorority who has graduated from college or left college prior to graduation.

**ALUMNAE:** The plural form of alumna.

**ALUMNUS:** Any initiated member of a fraternity who has graduated or left college prior to graduation.

**ALUMNI:** The plural form of alumnus for men or a combination of men and women.

**BADGE:** The pin of an initiated member.

**BID:** An invitation from a sorority or fraternity to pledge.

**BIG:** Each new member is given a “big” sister that has been a mentor to her throughout her new member period. The new member is called a little. This bond remains even after the new member has initiated. Fraternities also have big brothers.

**CHAPTER:** Group of collegians, officially chartered and recognized at a given college or university.

**COLLEGIANS:** An undergraduate member of a college chapter. The word collegiate is an adjective and is only used in conjunction with a noun, such as a collegiate member.

**COLONY:** A new chapter, or chapter returning to campus after an absence. A colony is not a full-fledged chapter of an organization, but is in the process of becoming a chapter and receiving their charter.

**COMMUNITY SERVICE:** Work done by members of a fraternity or sorority to support an organization or cause (i.e. Big Brothers/Big Sisters, tutoring at elementary schools, etc).

**DATE PARTY:** Like formal, but typically more casual. Most sororities do a date party one semester and formal the other.

**DUES:** Fees paid to the organization you are affiliated with. Dues must be paid to remain in “good standing” with your chapter.

**E-BOARD:** Executive Board, also referred to in some sororities as Executive Council, which includes the elected executive officers of the chapter (i.e. President, Vice Presidents, Secretary, etc).

**FORMAL:** Like prom, only better. Typically every sorority/fraternity hosts a formal once a year where each member is allowed one date, they are often themed, awards are given and fraternity formals are often out of town.

**FOUNDER:** One who originates or establishes a fraternity or sorority.

**FRATERNITY SWEETHEART/ DREAM GIRL:** A female who is elected by the members of a fraternity for her dedication and contributions to the success of the chapter over the previous year. She is usually permitted to wear the fraternity letters.

**GOOD STANDING:** The status of chapter or an individual when all responsibilities and standards have been met.

**GRADUATE MEMBER:** Term used to describe a member of an NPHC or NALFO organization who has either graduated from college, or completed the “alumni status” process with their organization. Members of Greek chapters possess an exclusive, lifetime membership to their organization.

**GREEK AMBASSADOR:** Members of IFC or Panhellenic chapters who are selected to provide information to potential students/parents. Greek Ambassadors occasionally assist with aspects of other campus visitation programs.

**GREEK:** term applied to all sororities and fraternities



**GREEK WEEK:** A week where all of the Greek organizations on campus come together for activities and friendly competitions.

**HAZING:** hazing includes any action, participated in voluntarily or involuntarily, by any member of an organization that causes, or is likely to cause, physical, mental, or emotional harm

**HOUSE:** Many schools have houses dedicated to each Greek organization. In the literal term, this would be where they live. Some schools also refer to the entire organization as a house, for example “what house are you from” meaning “what sorority/fraternity are you in”?

**HOUSE MOM:** Officially titled House Director, which refers to a person hired to manage the sorority house and supervise the home operations.

**INFRACTION:** When a sorority or a sorority member breaks a rule set forth by the Panhellenic council at her school.

**INITIATE:** A man or woman who has undergone the initiation ceremony into a sorority or fraternity.

**INITIATION:** The process by which a person becomes an active member of an organization.

**LAVALIERE:** Necklace bearing the letters of a fraternity/sorority.

**LAVALIERING:** When a fraternity man gives his letters to his girlfriend, which indicates a romantic commitment. The seriousness of this act varies from campus to campus and often ‘permits’ the woman to wear the fraternity letters.

**LEGACY:** A student whose family member (typically brother/sister, mom/dad, grandmother/grandfather but can also include aunt/uncle) is a member of a particular sorority or fraternity. The student is given special membership consideration but not guaranteed a bid.

**LETTERS:** The Greek letters of your sorority or fraternity name.

**LITTLE:** Each new member is given a “big” sister that has been a mentor to her throughout her new member period. The new member is called a little. This bond remains even after the new member has initiated. Fraternities also have big/ little brothers.

**MEMBER:** Someone who has been initiated into their chapter.

**MEMBERSHIP INTAKE:** Recruitment process used by the NPHC and NALFO organizations.

**NATIONAL PANHELLENIC CONFERENCE:** The NPC website describes themselves as, “The National Panhellenic Conference will be the premier advocacy and support organization for its members, member groups, college and alumnae panhellenics and a proponent of women’s fraternity membership.”

**NATIONALS:** Every chapter is a member of a national organization which sets policies for the entire sorority or fraternity.

**NEOPHYTE:** A newly initiated fraternity or sorority member, though this term is not used by all organizations.

**NEW MEMBER/ASSOCIATE MEMBER:** The term used to describe a first year, uninitiated member of an IFC or Panhellenic chapter. Previously referred to as “a pledge.”

**NEW MEMBER PERIOD:** The time between pledging and initiation where the new member learns about the sorority before becoming a collegiate member. It is typically 8-10 weeks long.

**PANHELLENIC ASSOCIATION:** An organization consisting of 14 nationally recognized sororities established to promote the Greek system and maintain relations among Greek groups.

**PADDLE:** This is seen as a gift in the Greek world. It is often given from chapter to chapter as a thank you or an honor. It is also given from bigs to littles in their pledge class.

**PHILANTHROPY:** Put simply, community service. Typically each sorority has a nationally and/or locally recognized non-profit agency that they donate time and money to; they refer to this as “their philanthropy”.

**PLEDGE:** Refers to the men or women that have accepted a bid to a particular fraternity or sorority chapter but are not yet initiated.



**PLEDGE/NEW MEMBER PIN:** The pin of a pledge/new member, which indicates their commitment to the organization from the time of pledging until initiation. Some fraternities require their pledges wear this pin at all times during this period.

**PLEDGING CEREMONY:** This is the ceremony to recognize the official commitment to become a new member of the sorority or fraternity.

**PNM: POTENTIAL NEW MEMBER.** It refers to all incoming women going through the recruitment process before they accept a sorority bid.

**PREFERENCE PARTY (PREF):** The last party of formal sorority recruitment. This is typically more serious than the previous nights, and it is a glimpse into the ritual of the sorority. This is the last party before PNM's and chapters make their final decisions about membership.

**PROBATION:** A member of a sorority or fraternity is put on probation if they have not fulfilled part of their membership, such as GPA requirement, financial obligations, or social standards. Typically members on probation cannot vote in chapter elections while on probation among other restrictions.

**RECRUITMENT:** Generally refers to the 4-day mutual selection process in which those seeking membership in an IFC or Panhellenic chapter participate. Also known as "Formal Recruitment". Formal Recruitment "week" takes place the week before the academic year begins in August. Formerly referred to as "rush."

**RECRUITMENT BOOKLET:** The primary promotion and information source for incoming students about fraternities and sororities.

**RITUAL:** The ceremonies celebrated and conducted by every chapter; the secret rites to membership.

**TRIBUNAL:** The disciplinary board for fraternities.

#### OTHER CEREMONIES AND RITUALS:

**"BIG"** – Assigned to the elders of a Greek organization. Becoming a "big brother" or "big sister" in a Greek organization denotes that you get to become a role model to a "New Member" or "Pledge." As a big, you essentially become their advisor throughout initiation and during their time in college. The bond between big and little is very special, and often times a lifetime bond is forged.

**"LITTLE"** – In order to become a "big brother" or "big sister," you have to become a "little brother" or "little sister" first, and pledge to join a fraternity or sorority. While this position isn't an enviable one, especially when rushing, you get an older friend who can help you navigate the entire process of pledging. Some organizations allow you to choose your big or little. Other times it's randomly assigned. And sometimes, it's a little bit of both.

**PLEDGESHIP** – The process of pledging is typically a six to nine month process, though it depends on the organization you're pledging. This is where you'll go through the process of becoming a brother or sister of an organization, including being paired with a big brother or big sister. You must complete this period of time in order to join the fraternity or sorority and become an official member.

**PADDLES** – Paddles are traditionally an integral part of sorority and fraternity life, and are made by a "big brother or sister" and given to a "little brother or sister" within the organization. These wooden paddles are hand-painted and often contain the names of the big and little, along with the organization's crest, chapter, and colors. It's symbolic of the relationship between fraternity and sorority siblings, and is a cherished keepsake.

**LAVALIERE** – A necklace or charm of a fraternity that is given from a fraternity brother to his girlfriend, symbolizing his commitment to her. It also symbolizes the acceptance of the chapter. It is considered a very special, sentimental gesture by both the fraternity and the girlfriend if she is in a sorority.

**PINNING** -This is where a fraternity brother "pins" his girlfriend with the badge of the fraternity, symbolizing his long-term commitment to this person, and most likely a precursor marriage. This is a time-honored tradition and symbolizes that a brother views his girlfriend in the same, if not higher regard, than his fraternity brothers. At times, this isn't always met with acceptance by the brothers of the fraternity but it also denotes the sacrifice and commitment a brother makes to his chapter.