



## **WAGE Club Discussion Guide**

This Discussion Guide provides some basic suggestions on getting started and a format for WAGE Club meetings. Your WAGE Club may choose to spend one meeting or several meetings on a particular topic. You may want to skip around in the sequence of topics. This is only a guide. Your WAGE Club also might want to consider inviting expert guest speakers who will talk with you about salary negotiations, wages, or career ladders. *Getting Even: Why Women's Don't Get Paid Like Men and What To Do About It* and The WAGE Project's website, [www.wageproject.org](http://www.wageproject.org) are key resources for the Discussion Guide and WAGE Club meetings.

Please send The WAGE Project feedback on your club's experience with the guide if you use it. We appreciate your thoughts on the the discussion questions, resources and research exercises and welcome your suggestions on materials that you feel we should add, delete or explain in more detail.

## **Getting a WAGE Club Started**

### **Identifying and Inviting WAGE Club Members:**

The first step to starting a WAGE Club is to identify a club of other women (5 to 10 is a good starting number) who want to participate. Consider reaching out to women from a range of sources, your co-workers, neighbors, friends, or contacts from other organizations you are a part of like unions, professional associations, book clubs, investment clubs, or PTA's. Do any of these women express or share your concerns about not being paid or treated fairly at work because they are women? These are the women you should invite to help form a WAGE Club. Personal invitations make all the difference. If you want someone to participate in your club, ask them directly. When you find someone who is interested, ask them to invite women they know who they think would be interested in working to get even at work to participate.

Set a convenient time and place for the meeting, and then Get Started *Getting Even*.

Provide copies of this Discussion Guide to everyone before the meeting. Print a hard copy from the Website or e-mail a link to the Guide.

Encourage participants to pick up or order a copy of *Getting Even: Why Women Don't Get Paid Like Men & What to Do About It*. It can be ordered through the link on the WAGE website, [www.wageproject.org](http://www.wageproject.org). Or, check out a copy from your library. The book is a terrific basis for exploring the issues and will help provide a roadmap for fruitful and discussions and effective action in the WAGE Club.

### **The First WAGE Club Meeting:**

#### Opening:

#### *Get To Know the WAGE Club*

To get to know your WAGE Club it is a good idea to do a bit more than just simple introductions. Here are a couple of other questions to get you started.

“Tell us something about your life outside of work that will help the club get a better sense of who you are.”

“Share with us a story that would help others better appreciate your interest in being here.”

### Discussion:

#### *What is a Wage Club?*

A wage club is a group of women who come together for personal support and who help each other take action personally or collectively to help close the wage gap. The WAGE Club works together to close the wage gap by exploring the problem of gender discrimination at work and helping each other develop strategies for eliminating the personal financial cost of that discrimination.

WAGE Club meetings and activities may include:

- using the *Getting Even* book and the WAGE club discussion guide as platform for exploring issues and taking action on pay discrimination
- sharing personal stories about how the wage gap and gender discrimination have personally affected each member
- discussing the overall problem of the wage gap and other forms of gender discrimination
- strategizing with club members about how each member can work to address the wage gap and discrimination she faces at work
- conducting community-based outreach to spread the word about how the wage gap effects women’s lives and what WAGE clubs can do to help women get even

Discuss the dual purposes of the WAGE Club: support and action for each and every club member. The WAGE club should play both a support and action role in helping each of the club members to *Get Even*. WAGE club participants provide a sympathetic community and personal encouragement for others seeking to achieve pay equity. In addition, WAGE club participants play an active role for each other by helping other club members plan and take tangible steps to close the wage gap at their workplace.

To help provide focus for the group, the meetings may be organized around the topics included in this discussion guide. Each topic also includes a meeting preparation section, which suggests reading, research, thinking, and/or use of WAGE Project website which will help make the WAGE club meetings effective.

#### *Establish the Basics:*

At the first meeting of your WAGE club, you should also get the basics established. Establish a format, facilitation structure and schedule for your future meetings. Lay some ground rules about confidentiality, and agree on a process for including new members in your club.

Regular meetings will ensure that the club is able to effectively work on strategies with each member. Some WAGE Clubs will be able to meet weekly, others bi-weekly, others monthly. Whatever your club decides, try to set a convenient regular time, date and accessible location to make members’ attendance easier. It is also a good idea for your club to firmly commit to regular start and end times, to ensure that members’ participation does not intrude on other responsibilities.

The WAGE club should be a place where women can candidly discuss pay inequality without being concerned that their statements will find their way back to their employer. At the first meeting, the importance of confidentiality should be discussed and policies should be established to protect the confidentiality of participants in the WAGE Club. Since the matters discussed in the WAGE Club could potentially jeopardize women's jobs, it is essential that the club clearly establish what level of confidentiality is expected of club participants.

Confidentiality considerations may include:

Confidentiality of discussions – “What is said at WAGE club stays at WAGE club.”

Use of WAGE Club membership contact list for club business only

Use of personal contact information rather than work contact info for WAGE club communications

Confidentiality of club membership

Will your meetings be open or closed?

If you decide your club will be a closed club, with new members added by invitation only, it is essential to establish a process for adding new members to your club. This will prevent club depletion and ensure that things keep going over time which will help make your WAGE club's individual and collective efforts successful. To build your club, ask those who attend the first meeting to bring others to the next.

Who will facilitate meetings?

Select or elect a facilitator or co-facilitators for meetings or designate different members on a rotating basis.

### Wrap Up:

After the discussion of WAGE Clubs, and once you have covered the basics, consider wrapping up by inviting participants to share a bit more about their goals/reasons for participating the club. Ask participants to:

“Say more about what brought you to this meeting.” “Imagine that it is 6 months later, and you are getting what you want out of this club. How would you know that? What would be different in your life? How would the group be going?”

Establish a plan for next meeting. Choose from the topics listed below as a means to begin your club's effort to *Get Even!* Go over the preparation guide for the section you choose so that you can get started *Getting Even* at your next meeting.

## **Topics**

Topic 1. “What Does the Wage Gap Cost *Me*?”

Topic 2. “ Do Other Women’s Stories Sound Like Mine?”

Topic 3. “Isn’t It Time *I* Get Paid Fairly?”

Topic 4. “How Do I Get Even?” Part 1:My Research and Strategy

Topic 5: “How Do I Get Even?” Part 2: Evaluate your Wage Gap

Topic 6. “How Do I Get Even?” Part 3: Identify Allies

Topic 7. “How Do I Get Even?” Part 4: Practice

Topic 8. “How Do I Get Even?” Part 5: Action and More Action

## Topic 1: “What Does the Wage Gap Cost Me?”

### Preparation:

Suggested Reading -- *Getting Even* Chapters 1-3, 10

Use the *Getting Even* calculator at [www.wageproject.org](http://www.wageproject.org) to calculate your wage gap and what it costs you.

### Questions for Discussion:

What is the wage gap? Who is counted in the wage gap? Who is not? Why does the existence of the wage gap matter to me?

What types of discrimination have I faced at work? How has this affected my paycheck?

What does the wage gap cost me? (Use the *Getting Even* Calculator online at [www.wageproject.org](http://www.wageproject.org). to find out how much money you are missing. What does the loss of that income mean for me and my family? What does it mean for what I/we cannot afford today? What does it mean for me/us 10 years from now? What will it mean for my retirement years?

What are some of the signs at my workplace that women are not treated equally? Do men get promoted while women get stuck in low level jobs? How do benefit packages compare for men and women? What are the current resources at work that can help us get even? How might the activities of our WAGE club help other women to get even?

## Topic 2. “Do Other Women’s Stories Sound Like Mine?”

### Preparation:

Suggested Reading -- *Getting Even* Chapters 5-9

Review women's stories and sex discrimination cases at [www.wageproject.org](http://www.wageproject.org). When reviewing sex discrimination cases, you may want to search for cases involving women that do work similar to you or that are experiencing similar types of discrimination on the job.

Prepare a written description that answers the question; what kinds of the discrimination have I faced at work and how has this affected my paycheck? These accounts will be very useful in preparing for meetings with employers. At the meeting, accounts can be exchanged and reviewed by other WAGE Club members. WAGE Club members also may want to submit their stories to [www.wageproject.org](http://www.wageproject.org) – Tell Us Your Story, where they will serve as an important resource for other women nationwide who are working to *Get Even*.

### Questions for Discussion:

Do any stories/cases I reviewed sound like the unfair treatment I face at work? How are they similar?

How do these cases/stories help me see when employers are discriminating against me and other women in hiring? in promotions? in benefits?

Which cases help me understand better what behavior should not be tolerated at work such as sexual harassment, assigning lower paying jobs to women, and paying a man for doing work similar to mine?

How did discrimination set back those women’s paychecks? Is my paycheck clipped in the same way?

What lessons can I find from the way other women handled situations like mine? How did they find out the salary structure where they work? Can I find out what others make the way they did? What measures of unequal treatment did they use. Can I use these measures? Which cases/stories suggest strategies that might help us get promoted and earn more? How far have other women gotten without filing lawsuits?

What remedies do these cases suggest for sex discrimination in the workplace? What policies or practices have other employers implemented that I should suggest at my company?

### **Topic 3. “Isn’t It Time I Get Paid Fairly?”**

#### Preparation:

Suggested Reading -- *Getting Even* Chapters 10-12

Review your written discription from Topic 2, is there anything you would add now that you have heard/read so many other women’s stories of workplace discrimination? If you have not yet done so at [www.wageproject.org](http://www.wageproject.org) – Tell Us Your Story.

#### Questions for Discussion:

Why won’t I ever be paid fairly if I do not take the initiative with my boss?

What reasons keep me from pressing my boss for fair pay?

What do I and other WAGE Club members need to do to eliminate each reason for inaction -- build allies so we’re not alone meeting with the boss? learn to negotiate more effectively? (These goals can be incorporated in the WAGE Club’s agenda in Topics 4-7.)

Does my employer use excuses not to pay me fairly? What excuse does my boss use? What’s wrong with this excuse? What do I need to counter this excuse?

How have other women successfully pressed their employers to be paid fairly? What can we learn from the women professors at MIT? What can we learn from success stories on the WAGE website?

## **Topic 4. “How Do I Get Even?” Part 1:My Research**

### Preparation:

Suggested Reading -- *Getting Even* Chapters 13-16

Each WAGE Club Member should gather the following information for this meeting. If more than one member works for the same employer, they can collect this information together.

1. Make a list of signs at work that women are not treated equally.

Is there a wage gap between female and male employees at my company? Is it widespread?

Do we have a glass ceiling? Has my workplace/company already taken steps to eliminate sex discrimination and to close the wage gap? If yes, why haven't those steps solved the problem?

Do men have offices while women doing the same work have cubicles?

Are men on salaries while women doing the same work get paid by the hour with no benefits?

Do men get better benefits than women in similar positions?

Do men get business leads, expense accounts to entertain clients that women with similar jobs don't have?

Do men get promoted while women get stuck in low level jobs?

What practices and policies do I think would remedy sex discrimination and prevent future inequities at my company?

### Questions for Discussion:

What did you find out in your investigations and research about how women fare in your workplace? Are men given more space, more leads, more training that advances them faster, more support resources to do their jobs, or advantaged in other ways?



## Topic 5: “How Do I Get Even” Part 2: Evaluate Your Wage Gap

### Preparation:

Suggested Reading -- [www.wageproject.org](http://www.wageproject.org) – How To Get Even and Getting Even Calculator

#### 1. Determine how much you should be earning and why?

First, try to get a general sense of what your skills, experience level and responsibilities are worth on the job market in your industry and region. Then try to get a sense of what is fair within your company. Exchange information among allies about earnings--what are women making? What are men making who do similar work? How accurate is this salary information? How current is the salary information?

Obtain or make lists of job titles, entry-level wages, and numbers of women and men in each job title in order to assess inequities.

Use the WAGE calculator at [www.wageproject.org](http://www.wageproject.org) and explore other salary comparison resources on the internet. Check with your local librarian about other resources. Are you being paid fairly? If not, how long should you have been earning more? How much more? Why? Are you comparing your salary to a male co-worker? Have you looked at what other people with your job in your area earn? Get your allies to determine how much each should be making and why.

#### 2. Look at the Northeastern Law School’s analysis of consent decrees at [www.wageproject.org](http://www.wageproject.org) to get suggestions about changes in practices and policies at work to stop the particular kinds of discrimination that have resulted in you and your allies being paid unfairly.

#### 3. Identify any additional information you would like to obtain to give you a more complete picture of how women are paid in comparison to men in your workplace, and along with your allies, create a plan for requesting or obtaining that information.

#### 4. Sketch out a plan with your work allies – men as well as women – about whether, when, and how you will talk to your top boss about getting paid fairly and changing the practices at work so that you and other women won’t get treated unfairly in the future. Going to the top is an important element of the *Getting Even* strategy since it is the top boss who really has the ability and authority to change your workplace, but it is important to take this step only once you are prepared.

### Questions for Discussion:

Using the three questions below, each WAGE Club member helps the others test, reinforce, and refine their specific case for unfair pay, their suggestions for change in company practices, and their strategies for getting even.

Here’s what I should be paid and why. Do you agree with my calculation and my explanation for how this is unfair pay? WAGE Club members can each present the research on how they concluded that their pay is less than it should be because of discriminatory treatment.

Here are the changes in practices and policies we believe, if made by our boss, will mean that we and other women will not see our paychecks clipped the same way in the future. Do you agree? Are there other changes we should consider?

Here’s the strategy my allies and I have sketched out about how and when to discuss this with our boss. How can we make this more effective?

## Topic 6. “How Do I Get Even?” Part 3: Identify Allies

Identify & Reach Out to Your Allies: Find other women at work who believe they, too, are not paid fairly.

1. How many other women at your workplace/company do you believe are underpaid and/or have been or are being discriminated against on the basis of their sex?
2. Make these women your allies in getting all of you paid fairly.

Initially, it may be helpful to be somewhat selective in approaching allies, remember that discussions about pay inequality are somewhat sensitive, so start by finding a WAGE buddy or colleague you know pretty well, and whom you feel you can trust. Once you find your WAGE buddy, you can practice with each other and decide on a group of potential allies to approach. As you and your WAGE buddy expand your group of allies, be creative. Remember to ask your potential allies for their discretion.

You and your WAGE buddy can approach friends, colleagues and fellow employees inside your area and outside of it as potential allies. If you are in a unionized workplace, check your contract and consider approaching other women union members to make them your allies. If your workplace has other employee groups or associations, this may also be a good place to start seeking allies.

You can start by telling potential allies that you just read *Getting Even*, and are interested in determining if women are paid fairly in your workplace.

Consider entering into a discussion outside of work with potential allies about how you just learned that over a lifetime, women lose hundreds of thousands of dollars because of the wage gap. Use these statistics from *Getting Even*:

- A high school graduate loses \$700,000.
- A college graduate loses \$1.2 million.
- A professional school graduate loses \$2 million.

You may want to mention that these losses are personal, they amount to real financial losses in your budget. Explain that you have recently learned that some women have been successfully obtained equal pay and treatment in their workplaces, without lawsuits, by bringing the unfair pay practices to the attention of their bosses and asking for them to make adjustments. Ask them if they think there is pay inequality in your workplace. If they agree there is, ask them if they would be interested in an effort to eliminate it in your workplace.

You may want to urge them to pick up or order a copy of the *Getting Even* book from the bookstore or library, and/or send them a link (using personal email addresses) to the WAGE Project website [www.wageproject.org](http://www.wageproject.org). Once you have gathered at a group of allies, schedule meetings outside of working hours to begin to discuss your plan.

3. Ask the following as you craft your strategy with your allies: Do we have the information we need to make our case for fair pay and equal treatment? What information do we still need to collect? Have you gathered enough allies? What areas do we plan to address? Do we feel comfortable meeting with the top boss to raise this issue? Is it safe for us to do so—or do we worry we’ll lose our jobs? Should I/we consult an attorney first to better understand our legal rights?

Questions for Discussion:

How successful were your efforts to gather allies? What strategies did others use in seeking allies that were effective? How can you expand your base of allies at work?

## Topic 7. “How Do I Get Even?” Part 4: Practice

### Preparation:

Suggested Reading -- *Getting Even* Chapters 14-16

Go to the library and take out books on negotiation and persuasion to find a style that fits you. Pass the books around to other WAGE Club members. Consider the following possibilities:

*A Woman’s Guide to Successful Negotiating: How to Convince, Collaborate, and Create Your Way to Agreement* by Lee Miller and Jessica Miller

*The Shadow Negotiation: How Women Can Master the Hidden Agendas that Determine Bargaining Success* by Deborah Kolb, Judith Williams, and Carol Frohlinger

*Get Paid What You’re Worth: The Expert Negotiator’s Guide to Salary and Compensation* by Robin L. Pinkley and Gregory B. Northcraft

*Are You Paid What You’re Worth”? The Complete Guide to Calculating and Negotiating the Salary, Benefits, Bonus and Raise You Deserve* by Michael O’Malley

*The Smart Women’s Guide to Interviewing and Salary Negotiating* by Julie Adair King

Consider inviting a presenter who conducts workshops or trains women in negotiation skills to speak to your WAGE Club.

### Workshop:

Hold a negotiation workshop meeting, where you take turns role playing with one member making her presentation and another member pretending to be her boss. Practice everything. What you say to your boss when you request the meeting, how you introduce yourself and your allies when you meet, how you discuss your pay expectations, how to suggest changes in company practices and policies. Test your language, your style, the sequence of topics you raise, how you react to your boss’s questions, his/her rejection of your points, or his/her silence.

After each presentation, the group should discuss the interaction (use the Questions for Discussion below) and make constructive suggestions on everything from content, to responses to questions, to body language.

Everyone should have a turn giving her presentation and also pretending to be the boss. In this way, everyone can practice their pitch and see how a boss thinks, too.

Practice sessions are important. If your WAGE Club is not a group of your allies at work, you may want to have a practice session with them also after you’ve learned some pointers from your WAGE Club.

### Questions for Discussion:

What were the positive aspects of the employee’s presentation? How could the presentation be strengthened? Are there any points to be added to or eliminated from the presentation? What were the best elements of the employees response to the boss’ questions? What could be done better?

## Topic 8. “How Do I Get Even?” Part 5: Action and More Action

### Preparation:

Suggested Reading -- *Getting Even* Chapters 14-16  
[www.wageproject.org](http://www.wageproject.org) – How To Get Even

Practice with your work allies what information will be presented to the boss and by whom. Practice with your work allies who will ask for what changes in pay, practices, and policies. Practice with your work allies how you will address these issues with the boss. Who will say what during that meeting, what will the “ask” of the boss be, and what your response will be depending on his/her response. Practice keeping the focus of the meeting on facts and information you’ve gathered to make your points of unequal treatment, on keeping the tone thoughtful, informed, and directly to the point of what he/she can do to treat women employees fairly.

Now that you’re almost ready to approach the top boss, think whether men where you work could be allies too. Think whether these men would go along to meet the top boss with you. If you can, find those men, show them the materials you’ve developed about how unfairly you’re treated and paid, and build them into your group of allies.

Then you and your allies at work request and attend a meeting with your boss.

### Questions for Discussion:

This meeting is a debriefing of meetings you and other WAGE Club members have had with their bosses.

How did the boss respond to your request? What went well? Why? What did he/she reject? Why?

What are your next steps? Should I gather more information to strengthen our case? How can we monitor to see that we get promised raises and changes in company practices? Should I find more allies inside the company? Who are these possible inside allies? Should I approach outside activists, for advice and help? Who are these possible allies?

Now that we’re experienced in getting women -- ourselves -- even, what is our WAGE Club agenda to *keep* ourselves paid fairly and to help other working women get even?