



Illinois Federation of Teachers  
*A Union of Professionals*

[ift-aft.org](http://ift-aft.org)

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# Welcome to the union!

Congratulations on your new job, and welcome to the **Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT)**! In this new member kit, you'll find helpful information about your union, how it benefits you and those you serve, and how to get involved.

Your union is not a third-party group or a service provider. It is a democratic organization run by you and your colleagues. In your local or council and across the state, IFT members come together to:

- ✓ champion strong public services and public education
- ✓ protect and promote our professions
- ✓ promote laws and programs that help students and communities thrive
- ✓ advocate for more diversity, inclusivity, equity and justice within our union and our communities
- ✓ provide all students with the opportunities and skills they need to succeed
- ✓ advocate for safe working conditions
- ✓ fight for a fair economy
- ✓ ensure access to higher education for all students

**YOUR UNION IS MOST EFFECTIVE WHEN EVERYONE GETS INVOLVED!** Here's how to start:

## 1 Introduce yourself.

Get acquainted with your union leadership team, including your worksite leader, local and council officers, and other active members. *Find out why they are proud to be IFT.* Collective action is what gives us power, so getting to know one another will help you be most effective.

## 2 Get involved.

**Attend a union meeting.** Membership meetings keep everyone informed and address important workplace and professional issues. Ask your colleagues where and when they take place.

**Participate.** Whether it's wearing a union t-shirt or marching with your colleagues in a parade, there are many fun ways to show your union pride.

**Volunteer.** Local unions and councils offer many ways to get involved, from maintaining the union's social media sites to bargaining your contract to connecting with the community. Offer your skills to help!

## 3 Understand your contract.

Read your collective bargaining agreement (contract) to learn your rights and responsibilities on the job, and find out what to do if you ever believe it's been violated. Questions? Ask your union or worksite leader.

## 4 Be informed.

Visit your local or council website and [ift-aft.org](http://ift-aft.org) to ensure you receive important news, updates, professional development opportunities, access to tons of helpful resources, and more. Like [facebook.com/iftaft](https://www.facebook.com/iftaft) and follow [@iftaft](https://twitter.com/iftaft) on Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest for additional news and information.

Look for IFT emails in your inbox and our quarterly newsletter, *Union Link*, in your mailbox to stay up-to-date with legislative actions, election information, member stories, and upcoming events and opportunities.

**ONCE AGAIN, WELCOME!** Please review the materials in this kit and get involved today!

