


Free time, associations and activities!



A guide for anyone recently  arrived in Sweden on how to find activities for you or your family.

Introduction

If you've only recently arrived in Sweden, you may have found the streets and squares of your town a little empty in the evenings. Especially in the winter and once the shops have closed. It can be difficult to know where people socialise and how to meet new people.

You'd like to make friends and practice your Swedish, but how?

This guide gathers information about different ways for you or your family to find activities to do in your spare time.

In many other countries, social interaction is more spontaneous. In Sweden, it's often quite organised. People meet at a particular time in a particular place. Many people go to associations, clubs, study circles and courses in their free time, to meet people and enjoy themselves.

You can most likely find something that interests you, that you find fun and important, whether that means birds, basketball or politics. The municipality also has activities that you can participate in, for adults and children. A common interest can be a good way to get to know people, to practice your Swedish and to make friends!



What are you interested in doing in your spare time?



Glossary

Swedish	Somali	Persian	Arabic	English	Tigrinya
Förening	Xarunta	انجمن	جمعية	Non-profit Association	ማኾበር
Intresse/ Hobby	Xiisaha/ hiwaarad	علاقه/ سرگرمی	اهتمام/ هواية	Interest/ hobby	ዝንባሌ፣ ተገዳስነት
Ideell	Doon ahayn	غير انتفاعی	غير ربحي	Non-profit	መኻሰብ ዘይብሉ
Frivilligt	Iskaa wax u qabso	داوطلبانه	طوعي	Volunta- rily	ወለንታዊ, ብድሌት
Fritid	Firaaqada ah	وقت آزاد	وقت الفراغ	Free time/ Spare time	ናጻ ጊዜ
Medlem	Xubin	عضو	عضو	Member	አባል, ማኾበርተኛ
Avgift/ kostnad	kharajka	هزینه/خرج	رسوم/ تكاليف	Fee	ክፍሊት/ ወጻኢ
Ledare/ tränare	tababare	رهبر/مربی	قائد/مدرب	Instructor/ Coach	መራሒ/ አሰልጣኒ
Demokrati	dimqraa- diyad	دموکراسی	ديمقراطية	Democracy	ደሞክራሲ

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Associations have a long history in Sweden, and they've been very important for our democracy. At the beginning of the 1900s, a few important popular movements emerged. People gathered in associations to change society. Thanks to the labour, women's and other movements, today all Swedish citizens are entitled to vote. Thanks to the free church movement, we can follow any religion we choose.



Associations in Sweden



Associations are important in Sweden. There are more than 200,000 associations with more than 31 million members in Sweden. This means that on average every Swede is a member of three associations.



Five things you need to know:

1. COMMON INTEREST

An association is a group of people with a common interest. That interest could be gardening, dance, photography, football, karate ... almost anything! An association can organise activities for children, adults or both.



2. ASSOCIATIONS ARE NON-PROFIT

Most associations are non-profit. This means that they're not profit-making, and that everyone involved in the association as an instructor or coach does so voluntarily, in their spare time. Everyone owns the association together, unlike with a company where there are just a few owners. It's not a job, and they don't get paid, instead they do it because they think it's important and fun.



**An
association
is a meeting
place and an
opportunity!**



3. MEMBERSHIP AND DEMOCRACY

Associations are democratic, every member has a vote. All associations have an annual meeting each year. This provides an opportunity to decide on different matters together. They also elect a board. Try to attend the association's annual meeting. As a member, you're free to voice your opinions and make suggestions!

4. FEES

You can join an association by registering and paying a membership fee. Every member pays. Since the association is non-profit, the money only goes to paying the association's costs, not any person or company. These costs can include rent for premises, training clothes, coffee and biscuits, or excursions for the members. The cost of different activities can vary. Some are more expensive, others are less expensive, and some are free.



5. EVERYONE HELPS OUT

Since the association is non-profit, every member is important and usually helps out in some way. No money or special skills are needed, your time is usually enough.

If it's an activity for children, then the parents are very important! An association is not like preschool where you can hand your child over to the staff. As their mum or dad, you're responsible for taking your child to the association, and sometimes staying with them.

Examples of things parents help out with:

- Assisting during activities, such as running the food and drink stand
- Washing the team's kit after activities
- If you have a car, helping to drive the team to competitions or away matches



Most associations accept and are happy to gain new members! Dare to ask!



If you want to try an activity:

- Most associations allow you to visit or try their activities a few times for free. You can then decide whether you, or your child, wants to join.
- If you want to try an activity, contact the association first and ask when you can come. It can also be a good idea to ask for the name and phone number of the instructor or coach. Sometimes an association is hard to find, perhaps there are no signs or the doors are locked. You can also ask whether someone from the association can meet you outside.
- If you're going to try an activity or are taking part for the first time, either yourself or with your child, find out what footwear or clothing is needed. If it's a sport, it's often a good idea to take comfortable clothing and a water bottle with you.
- Don't be afraid to ask!
- Certain activities and associations can be very popular and there might be a queue. This can include, for example, swimming or gymnastics. In that case, you or your child might not be able to join straight away, you might have to join a queue. Then you will often be contacted once there's a place available or a new course is starting. This is common at music and culture schools.
- Keep in mind that different associations and activities cost different amounts. If a particular activity is too expensive, maybe there are other associations that might be of interest? Later, we offer advice for anyone who can't afford an activity.
- If you or your child lack the necessary equipment (such as special clothing or footwear), you can ask whether anyone in the association has spare equipment they aren't using any more. The instructor or coach can help you with this.

Checklist

Here are a few questions it can be a good idea to ask when you visit or join an association:

- How do I pay the membership fee and/or the training fee?
- How do I get information and news about the activity? Is there a mailing list or a Facebook group? Some associations publish information on their websites. Ask the instructor/coach what they usually do.
- What do members or parents usually help out with in the association? What's expected of me as a member?
- If you have trouble with the language, maybe you have a friend or someone else in the family who the instructor/coach can call? So that you don't miss out on any important information. Otherwise, keep asking until you understand!

Learn something new! About non-formal adult education

Would you like to learn something new? Or are you good at something that you could teach others? Study a language? Cook food? Sew and knit? Play an instrument? Discuss an important issue?

In that case, you can join a study circle. A study circle is a course that you attend in your spare time, and where you learn things together with others.

Sweden has 11 study associations (see below). These study associations offer a special type of adult education. It's free and voluntary. It boils down to everyone's right to learn and develop. This can be a study circle or a course. Sometimes there's a fee, sometimes not.

If you'd like to start a study circle, you can contact a local study association where you live. They can often help out with premises or any materials you need, for example.

You can read more about the study associations at www.studieforbunden.se.



Municipal activities

Now you've learned about associations and study associations and how to find activities for you or your family to do in your spare time.

The municipality also has different activities for children and adults. Here are a few examples:

Libraries

You can borrow books at the library, but they often organise many other activities. Common examples include:

- Groups for children and families. Drawing, painting, crafting.
- Story time for children
- Language cafés
- Book circles
- Performances, such as theatre
- Advice



Visit your local library and ask for a programme!



Music and culture schools

If you have a child who wants to play music, this is most often not done in an association but through their school. It's often called music school or culture school. This can also include courses in dance or theatre. You often apply using a form or online. Certain popular instruments or courses might have a queue, in which case your child might have to wait one or two terms. You can find information on the municipal website, or you can ask at your child's school. All children attending school can apply.



Other activities

Of course there are more! The available activities can vary between municipalities. A few examples are after-school clubs for younger and older children, cultural centres for music and theatre, meeting places and nature areas. Many municipalities have a swimming pool. They can offer swimming classes for children, and sometimes even for adults. Sometimes there's an association with swimming classes. The staff at the swimming pool can tell you more. The next section looks at how to find information!



Find an association

You now know a little about how associations work. But where can you find relevant information? You might need to know: Which associations are there in my town? When and where do they meet? What do they cost? Can I try their activities?



There are different ways to find information. It's most often available online, although it can be a bit difficult to find.

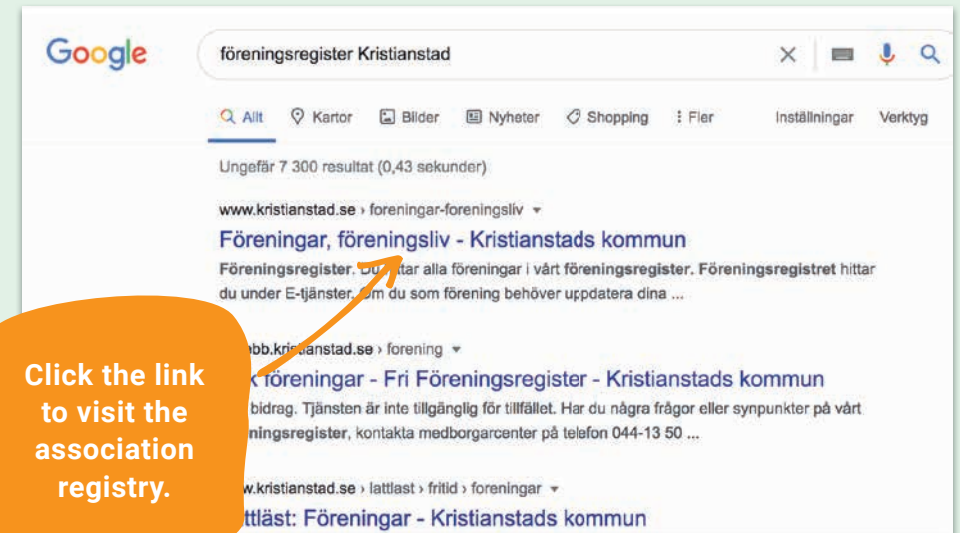
Here are a few examples:

Association registry

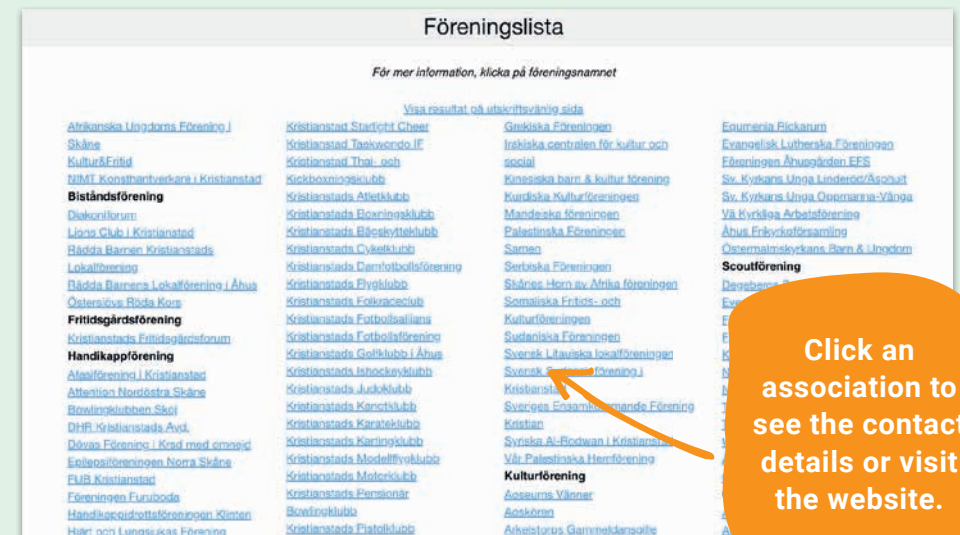
Most municipalities have a registry or a catalogue, a “föreningsregister”, on their website listing most of the local associations. You can search by category and activity, as well as find contact details.

To find the registry, simply Google:

“föreningsregister + the name of your municipality” (e.g. “föreningsregister Kristianstad”). The search results can look like this:



Click the link to visit the association registry. There you can see which different associations there are, as well as find their websites and contact details. It might look something like this:



Google and Facebook

You can also search directly for the activity you're interested in. Try searching Google and Facebook. You could, for example, search for "schack Hässleholm" or "simning Osby". That is, the activity you are interested in plus the town where you live.

Many associations have a Facebook page where they publish information and photos. There you can sometimes send a message, such as that you would like to come and try.

Ask someone!

Do you know someone who's lived in your town for a long time? A colleague or a teacher, a neighbour? Maybe you visit the language café? Ask someone there!

Are you on a civic orientation course?
Ask your teacher whether they can help you.

If it's for your child, explain to one of their teachers or the welfare officer that you want to find a hobby for your child.

Library staff can usually help as well.



Start an association?

If you like, you can start your own association. To register an association and to get help from, say, the municipality, you must meet certain requirements. You can read more about how to start an association at www.forening.se

If you can't afford it

If you want your child to participate in an activity but can't afford it, help is available.

Majblomman



Majblomman is a non-profit organisation that promotes children's rights. Here you can apply for money so that your child can participate in an activity. This could be for the membership fee, or to buy clothing or other equipment needed for the activity.

WHO CAN APPLY?

All parents can apply for money for their children. Everyone is welcome to apply, but there's no guarantee that you'll receive any money. The people who process the applications have a duty of confidentiality.

HOW DO I APPLY?

You apply to the Majblomman association in your town.

Visit the website www.majblomman.se to find your local association. There you can also download the application form that you submit. Someone who knows you child (e.g. a teacher, a welfare officer or a social worker) must also submit a certificate stating that your child needs financial help. If you need help filling in the form, you can ask someone at your child's school.



Fritidsbanken

Fritidsbanken is like a library, except that they have sport and outdoor equipment instead of books. You can borrow items such as football boots, balls and ice skates. They have items for both adults and children. You can borrow the items for free for two weeks.

Visit www.fritidsbanken.se to see whether there's a Fritidsbanken near you!

Fritids banken



Länsstyrelsen
Skåne

Now we hope that you know a little more about how to find an activity for you or your child! Good luck!

This brochure has been produced within the Section 37 project "Plats för engagemang", which was run in north-eastern Skåne during the period 2018–2020. The project worked to promote the participation of new arrivals in local associations by spreading information about and helping people to get involved in them.

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