

# How to run a Meeting

Running meetings is easy when you get the hang of it. Don't worry if it all seems intimidating at first, just refer back to this guide if you get stuck.

***Preparing for a meeting and putting together an agenda will mostly be done by the secretary, but the president is responsible for running the meeting on the day.***

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## General Tips

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Meetings don't have to be long and boring. Keep a few simple points in mind to make the most of them.

### Prepare

Make sure you're ready to go before you get to the meeting. Read everything you need to read, write everything you need to write. Ask questions and do research beforehand. Make sure everyone knows what they're doing, and what they need to make decisions about.

This also means organising the meeting well. Print agendas and sort out tech in advance, if you can, and make sure you book the venue early.

### Prioritise

You don't need to talk about everything that's even vaguely relevant at each meeting. Sometimes a committee member might need to report about the funds raised from an event or an email they received from a member, and it's okay to just accept it and move on. Unless there's something you actually want to know, asking questions for the sake of it just makes things take longer. And some things should be left for a subsequent meeting.

The chair of the meeting should also be active in keeping the meeting moving if people get too bogged down in one discussion.

### Communicate

Tell everyone when and where the meeting is and what's on the agenda as early as possible, then remind them on the day. It's not enough to just use Facebook for big meetings, either, because not everyone checks it regularly. Email is a great way of sending out formal invitations, but sometimes you might even have to call people to remind them about a meeting.

On the other hand, if you can't attend, tell the secretary so they know whether to expect you or not.

Proactive communication makes meetings more effective, and much more straightforward.

## Terms

**Agenda:** An agenda lists the reports, issues, and topics that will be raised in the meeting and looks a bit like a checklist of points to be brought to the floor. Typically it includes a welcome from the chair and any apologies from those that are unable to attend.

**Minutes:** Minutes are the formal record of a meeting. They should include the time and place of the meeting, when it started and finished, a list of who was present, and the details of all motions, amendments, decisions, and notes on discussions. After each meeting, these minutes must be typed up and circulated to all relevant members.

**Chair:** The chair (usually the president) is the person in charge of the meeting. They decide when to discuss each item and who gets to speak, but it's important they do this in a fair and objective fashion.

**Motions:** A motion is a proposal for the club to officially do something. For an ordinary committee meeting, it might not be necessary to make formal motions for everything. In most cases, the committee can reach a decision if everyone present agrees on a course of action. This is called consensus.

But if the proposal is important, controversial, or you want it to sound more formal, then it should be framed as a motion.

### *Example motions:*

- 'That the minutes of the previous meeting be accepted as a true and accurate record.'
- 'That the club spend \$500 on purchasing very fancy hats.'
- 'That an Annual General Meeting be called for the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2017.'

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## Preparing for the Meeting

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### **1. Call the meeting**

This is the easy part: choose a time, date and location well in advance, and send notification in writing. If it's a committee meeting, you may or may not want to invite the whole club, but all committee members should be invited.

It's important this is done in writing. That helps people remember the details, and it means you have a record you can refer back to if anyone says they didn't have the information they needed.

Don't rely on Facebook alone! Even if all of your members are in a group your club runs, Facebook will not notify all of them – it only shows content to a certain percentage of the people in a group. Besides, not everyone uses Facebook! So while it's fine to set up an event or make a post about a general meeting, you should also send out an email to all members.

**2. Know why the meeting is being held.**

Make sure you know what you're hoping to achieve or discuss. Otherwise, your meeting might take forever as people ask for clarification or get off-topic. Let's be honest – meetings are boring and you'd rather get them over and done with quickly.

**3. Write an agenda.**

Take a look at our Resources page for a template you can use to make your own agendas.

**4. Prepare additional materials**

Is there any information people need to make decisions on the things in the agenda? For example, if you're proposing changes to the constitution you will need to give everyone a copy of the proposed changes in advance. If you want the club to spend money on an event, you might need to include a budget. Make sure that any relevant documents are sent to everyone in advance, but also brought to the meeting.

It's usually the responsibility of the person who wants to raise an item to provide supporting information.

**5. Know your roles**

To make the most of meetings, everyone should know what's expected of them in advance. Questions to ask yourself include:

- Who's taking minutes?
- Who's chairing the meeting?
- Does anyone need to report on anything?
- Who's in charge of organising the venue and setting it up?
- Has notice been given in writing to everyone who is meant to be there?

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## At the Meeting

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Once you've done everything listed under above, the hard part is basically over. Actually meeting is easy and, if you're prepared, quick.

The structure of a meeting will usually look something like this:

**1. Record attendance**

The secretary should take a list of everyone who is at the meeting, anyone who specifically sent their apologies (said they couldn't attend), and who is chairing.

You will need a minimum number of people in attendance for the meeting to be valid and official. This is called quorum. If you do not meet quorum, the meeting cannot proceed and you will need to organise a new one. For a general meeting, quorum might be 10 members of the club. For a committee meeting, it might be half of the committee.

## 2. **Open the meeting**

This is done by the chair of the meeting. Everyone should stop chatting and pay attention, and the secretary should write down the time that the meeting was officially opened.

## 3. **Reports, debates and discussions**

These are the heart of a meeting. The chair is in charge of keeping the discussions on track. If people are being loud or inappropriate, the chair might give them a formal warning or even ask them to leave. They can also decide when to finish discussing one thing and move onto another.

Remember, not every item needs to be discussed in detail. Some things just need to be noted – that means the people at the meeting just need to have read it, they don't need to take any action or talk about it unless they have questions. You also don't need to verbally read everything out if there's written information instead!

## 4. **Voting and motions**

The decisions you make in the meeting will often take the form of motions. The secretary should record the precise wording of the motion, as well as the names of the people who moved and seconded it, and the outcome (passed/failed).

*Making motions:*

1. Someone proposes a motion. This is called 'moving' the motion.
2. Once a motion has been moved, someone must 'second' it. By doing so, they're showing that there is support for it.
3. The chair then calls for any dissent. If you disagree with a motion, this is when you should speak up!
4. If someone does dissent, there will need to be a vote on the motion. Usually, the vote will take place by show of hands. The chair will ask everyone who supports the motion to put their hands up, and then will ask who disagrees with it. Unless it's a special vote (like changing the constitution), as long as there are more supporters than people who disagree the motion will be approved ('pass').

## 5. **Actions**

An action is a task that needs to be undertaken to put a decision into effect. For instance, if the committee decided to purchase \$500 of very fancy hats, someone would need to go and buy those hats. It's always a good idea to delegate actions to people at a meeting, so that everyone knows who is responsible for making sure it gets done.

If an action is delegated to someone, it should be noted in the minutes like this:

*Action: Bob to purchase very fancy hats.*

At the next meeting, you should include a list of all previous actions. The people responsible for them will report back about whether they have completed the task.

**6. Close the meeting**

Once all agenda items have been dealt with, the chair asks if there is any other business. If there is, it will be decided whether to discuss that issue immediately or defer it for the following meeting. After this, the chair will close the meeting and the time of close should be noted in the minutes.