

RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE MEETING

Effective face-to-face communications at meetings are essential to build and maintain successful organisations. Everyone wants productive meetings which are well managed. There are two types of meetings:

- Formal
- Informal

1. Formal Meetings

Pre-meeting

The Chairperson always calls for, or decides on, the agenda items liaising with the Secretary/Administrator to finalise arrangements.

The following should be circulated prior to the meeting:

- Minutes of the previous meeting
- Inward and outward correspondence
- Committee reports
- Major topics for discussion beyond the standard agenda topics and committee reports

TOP TIP – If it is a committee meeting, it is useful to remind members of any tasks that should have been completed prior to the meeting.

During the meeting

The meeting is conducted in the order of business set out in the agenda.

1. The Chairperson welcomes and thanks all members for being present, makes a few introductory comments and **declares the meeting open**.
2. **Apologies** are called for and read out. A record of those present and absent is kept. The Chairperson puts a formal motion that the apologies are accepted. A vote can be taken and the result recorded.
3. The accuracy of the **previous meeting's minutes** is confirmed by those present at the meeting. The motion of acceptance has to be nominated and seconded.
4. **Matters arising** from the previous minutes are discussed (unless they appear on the agenda). This discussion should be brief. If the topic develops, try to transfer this to general business.
5. **Correspondence** (inward and outward) may be tabled. Important correspondence should be dealt with as separate agenda items. Many clubs no longer spend meeting time on approving all items of correspondence.
6. **Financial statements** may include Accounts for Payment and a Monthly Statement of Accounts. An indication of the club's financial position should be given. Note: financial reports, as well as other reports discussed at the meeting, require formal motions of acceptance.
7. Discussion of **Committee reports** should be confined to recommendations and to those matters requiring approval for further action.
8. **Other reports** are dealt with next. These should be brief and on specific topics.

9. **General business** is the time for minor items to be raised (major items should be submitted prior to the meeting). The Chairperson has the right to decide whether the matter should be discussed.
10. **Action items** – confirmation of delegated tasks and timeframes.
11. **Next meeting** – date, time and venue given to all members.
12. Close of meeting – Chairperson thanks members for participation and formally closes the meeting.

Post-Meeting

The Chairperson will liaise with the Secretary to:

- Confirm action plans and follow-up procedures.
- Discuss meeting minutes' timeframe and circulation date.
- Discuss any special items.
- Make arrangements for the next meeting.

2. Informal Meetings

Informal meetings encourage members to relax and participate, but still need to be managed.

Reasons to hold an informal meeting:

- Brainstorm, discuss and sell ideas
- Solve problems
- Gather opinions
- Build morale

The meeting needs a chairperson, and possibly a facilitator/recorder. Ground rules need to be set at the beginning of the meeting. These would include:

- Establishing the **purpose** and desired **outcomes** of the meeting.
- Checking that **everyone understands** the topics to be discussed.
- Ensuring everyone listens to each other carefully and is **not judgmental**.
- Encouraging everyone to be **objective** and keep discussion focused on the topic.
- **Examining each option individually and objectively** and reaching a conclusion for that option (which should be recorded for later reference).

3. Meeting Procedures

Understanding Motions

A **motion** is a formal recommendation put to a meeting for debate and consideration. The motion then has to be supported by another person (seconded) before it is open for discussion.

The process:

1. The Chairperson asks the proposer to speak to the motion.
2. Other committee members can also add to the discussion. If there is no discussion the motion is then put to the meeting for a decision.
 1. Members vote on whether they agree or disagree with the motion.
 2. All motions carried or otherwise must be minuted. If passed the motion becomes a resolution.

Voting at Meetings

The Chairperson must have a clear understanding of the voting rights of members, which should be stated in the organisation's constitution. It is useful to have a copy of the constitution at every meeting.

There are different ways of voting at meetings. The Chairperson must decide which is the most appropriate for the decision being reached.

1. Show of hands

The Chairperson must say "Will all those in favour of this motion raise their hands?" followed by "Will all those who are not in favour raise their hands?" (Hands are counted)

2. Verbal Vote

The Chairperson must say "Will all those in favour say 'Aye'?" followed by "Those against say 'No'".

3. A Ballot Vote

This is most often used when electing officers. Two scrutineers are appointed. A slip of paper is given to each member with the list of candidates outlined. The Chairperson may ask that the members cross off the names of those they do not support. Slips are collected by the scrutineers and a count is made outside the meeting room. The Chair then asks for a motion to destroy ballot papers. In the event of a tied vote, the Chairperson has the final or casting vote.

Chairing Techniques

The Chairperson is responsible for the following during meetings:

- Indicating when a person may speak.
- Keeping the discussion targeted to the topic.
- Deciding when the discussion should be brought to an end.
- Not getting involved in discussion unless the group seek an opinion or requires guidance.
- Summarising the discussion points to aid in the decision making. Sometimes a facilitator is appointed to record key points which are visible to the entire group. If a decision cannot be reached, refer the matter to a working party for a report at the next meeting.