

How 2 Minute a Meeting

Introduction

Minutes are a record of what takes place at a meeting, such as the decisions that were made and what tasks (often referred to as actions) were given to different people.

This fact sheet contains information and advice on how to effectively write good minutes for your meetings.

Record of meetings

At meetings, the first item on the agenda is usually to approve the minutes from the previous meeting, with changes identified if things were wrongly recorded before being approved.

In some organisations, after the minutes have been approved, the Chairperson signs them and the Secretary, who takes the minutes, keeps the signed copy for the organisation's files.

Minutes do not need to be very long, but they should include:

- What decisions were made
- Who proposed and supported items for decision
- The result of any votes (the numbers in favour, against and any abstentions)
- What actions were agreed
- Who was given responsibility to carry out the actions and by when.

It is also a good idea to include a short summary of the opinions raised during the discussion, along with the reasons why the organisation arrived at a certain decision.

Remember to include the date of the meeting, the names of the people who attended and those people who sent their apologies. The date of the next meeting can also be included at the end.

Accuracy

Good minutes are accurate, brief, clear and should always follow the same order as the agenda. The draft minutes should be approved by the Chairperson and then circulated to members as soon as possible after the meeting.

During the meeting, if the person writing the minutes is unsure of a decision or action, they should ask the Chairperson for clarification to ensure that their notes are accurate. It is also a good idea to read through all the papers before the meeting so you know what will be discussed.

Try to establish a good relationship with the Chairperson and speak to them before the meeting to ask any questions that you may have, and to go through each of the agenda items.

Consistency

Minutes should be written in a consistent style from one meeting to the next and this is usually the Secretary's responsibility. Good minutes will help your organisation make decisions.

Example Minutes

Minutes of Anytown Youth Council Meeting 25 January 2010		
Present M Smith (Chair), A Saleem (minutes), P Carter, K Steele and H Jones		
Apologies G Rees		
	Action	By Whom
1.0 Minutes of the last meeting: The minutes from the last meeting were approved by all.	Signed	M Smith
2.0 Matters arising: In response to a question from P Carter, K Steele informed the meeting that the letter had been written to the Leader of the Council	Response needed to be chased	K Steele
3.0 Correspondence: M Smith circulated copies of correspondence received since the last meeting.		
4.0 Youth council activity: H Jones reported back on a recent consultation on a proposed Youth Mayor for Anytown.	Keep Youth Council informed	M Smith
5.0 Reports: P Carter gave an update on the last meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. M Smith gave an update on the last meeting of the Leisure and Arts Committee.		
6.0 Any other business: M Smith reminded all members to submit their reports for the newsletter by February 12th.		
Date of next meeting: 25 March 2010		

Linda Epstein, 14 from London, explains:

“Minutes are important so everyone has a written record of what they have agreed in a meeting and what they are responsible for. Minutes are also a great way of distributing information to those who were not at the meeting”.

Top Five Tips to Write Minutes

- Don't write everything down, but instead concentrate on the main points of a discussion, decisions and actions
- Produce rough notes shortly after the meeting and check them with the Chairperson
- Give each item a separate heading, ensuring the minutes follow the same order as the agenda
- Write the minutes in a consistent style
- Retain copies of the minutes in a file for future reference.

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British Youth Council

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0845 458 1489

mail@byc.org.uk