

# How to Conduct a Meeting

A meeting provides an opportunity for participants to discuss topics of mutual interest, reach decisions or work towards common goals. The meeting will be more efficient and productive if commonly accepted procedures are followed.

## Meeting tasks

One person can do everything, or the responsibilities can be divided between different people. The work can be delegated, or individuals can be asked to volunteer. The tasks include:

- Call and schedule the meeting
- Develop the Agenda
- Chair the meeting
- Record the Minutes

## Select the participants

People who can contribute to the purpose of the meeting should be invited to attend. For example, you may wish to invite a presenter to speak on a particular subject of interest to participants.

## Make sure everyone attends

To increase the likelihood that everyone invited will attend, consider these steps.

- Send a notice in advance. Include the purpose of the meeting, where and when it will be held, the list of participants and whom to contact if there are questions. Individuals will have other time commitments. You can therefore minimize schedule conflicts.
- Provide an agenda in advance.
- Schedule a meeting on a day and time that is convenient to participants.

## Agenda

The agenda outlines the items to be considered or accomplished. It states the overall outcome to be achieved at the meeting and lists the major topics to be discussed.

- The agenda typically consists of three categories: review of Minutes of the last meeting, business arising from previous Minutes, new business.
- Next to each major topic, include the action expected (for example, an action assigned to someone, a decision) and the time allotted for that topic.
- Meetings often do not proceed as planned, so keep the agenda as simple as possible and be willing to be flexible during the course of a meeting.
- Use terminology that will be understood by all participants. This is especially important if some individuals come from different professions, cultures etc.

## Opening the meeting

- The chair should start on time to respect those who show up on time.
- Welcome the participants and review the agenda. This provides them an opportunity to understand the major topics, change them if necessary and then accept the agenda.

## Time management

- Establish ground rules to make sure the meeting is effective: Ask attendees to actively participate, to stay focused and to look for closure on discussion whenever possible. This will help to keep the meeting from getting too long and to keep discussion on topic.
- If the allocated time for topics is being consistently exceeded, the Chair should ask the group for input as to how to resolve the problem.

## Evaluating the meeting

- The Chair should make it clear early in the first meeting that during the meeting participants can provide feedback on the process. That way, the meeting process can be improved right away.
- Leave a bit of time at the end of each meeting for all to evaluate the meeting.

## Minutes

- Minutes are a record of the agenda items discussed and any actions identified or decision made during the meeting.
- The Minutes should be provided to each participant shortly after the meeting. A good rule of thumb is to do so within a week. This not only keeps the group momentum going, but it also gives participants time to prepare for the next meeting.



## Closing the meeting

- The Chair should try to end the meeting on time and on a positive note.
- Any actions to be taken and assignments resulting from the meeting should be reviewed.
- If there is to be another meeting, the group should agree on the date and time.
- The Chair should reinforce that the Minutes will be provided to participants as soon as possible.

## Robert's Rules of Order

- This book is the ultimate guide for meeting procedures.
- It should be consulted for details such as what defines a quorum.
- The web site is [www.robertsrules.com](http://www.robertsrules.com)

*"Together, we have the power to break barriers and realize dreams. Everyone belongs."*