

Effective Meetings: Agenda and Minutes

Your group's minutes are the **legal record** of your decisions. They provide **evidence** that your group is efficiently run, that your committee is effective and responsible, and they provide a written record of what you have decided, to refer to later.

Minutes are essential to make sure your committee doesn't forget or change what it has agreed. They are also essential to show others that your organisation is running effectively. If you ever ran into any serious problems, auditors or legal advisors would look at your minutes to help you sort it all out.

It is much easier to keep your minutes if you start with a well planned meeting and a clear agenda. The minute taker should sit next to the Chair to clarify what needs to be recorded with her/him.

This information sheet offers a template of a simple agenda and a way of writing minutes that will be adequate for most groups.

Minutes will follow a sequence. The minutes of each meeting will be referred to in the next.

Keep minutes of different types of meeting separate. For example your AGM minutes should be kept together in sequence, and your management committee minutes should be kept together in sequence.

At the beginning of each meeting, check that the minutes of the last meeting are accurate, note any amendments in the minutes of this meeting "The minutes of the meeting held [date] were accepted as an accurate record subject to the following amendments..."

The chair should sign and date a copy of the last minutes, on each page of the minutes.

Signed minutes should be filed securely and photocopies made if you need to send copies to anyone. Some organisations even paste them into a book.

A copy of the minutes should be given, or otherwise made available to everyone entitled to attend the meeting, including those who were absent.

Name of group

Management Committee Meeting

To be held on [date] at [time]

At [where?]

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the last meeting (to check for accuracy, and approve and sign a copy)
3. Matters Arising from the minutes of the last meeting
4. First item for this meeting
5. The headings you write in your minutes should be the same as on your agenda
6. Any other business of an urgent nature
7. Date and time of next meeting

Close

[it's a good idea for the chair to formally declare the meeting closed when you've completed your business. That way, the minute taker knows to stop writing, members know the discussions are over and any further comments are only chat at this point. If someone has something important to say, they should have raised it during the meeting, or they will need to talk to the chair and have it on the agenda for a future meeting, or raise it under Matters Arising next time.]

Name of Group

Minutes of a Management Committee meeting held on [date] at [where?]

Present: (list all the committee members who were at the meeting. For a General Meeting, you'll need a signing in sheet for your members to sign to show they were present, which you'll then copy into your minutes.)

In attendance: (if any people who are not committee members were also there, e.g. a guest speaker, members of staff, advisors etc, they are listed as "in attendance" and do not take part in any decisions so your minutes need to show this by listing them separately.)

1. **Apologies:** (committee members should always let the chair know if they won't be able to attend, and if they do their apology is listed here. If they don't apologise for being absent, then the Chair needs to have a word about why they didn't turn up and didn't attend. Some constitutions say that if a committee member is missing from so many committee meetings without sending apologies, they are removed from the committee, so it is important to record apologies).

Action

2. Minutes of the last meeting held [date]

Start the meeting by looking at the last meeting's minutes to check that everyone agrees they are accurate. If they are, the chair should sign a copy which should be kept as the official record.

3. Matters Arising from the minutes of [date]

There might be one or two things from the last meeting that you need to follow up – e.g. just to confirm that a thing was done as agreed, or to report back on something someone did. These should be minor things. If there will be a lot to discuss, then the item really ought to be on the agenda for this meeting.

4. First item for this meeting

The minute should consist of a few notes about general points made and considered – you don't need to attribute comments to individuals, and you don't need to write down everything everyone says.

The decision needs to be clearly written down and you might make it stand out by saying "It was **agreed**"..... using bold text.

If you decide on any action – make sure you write down explicitly what will happen, who will do it and when by. It helps to highlight **names** of any people who are going to do something that has been minuted.

Or write their names and what they are supposed to

Or you can highlight the decision by writing it at the bottom of the item in larger or bold text. do in this column

These minutes were approved as a true and accurate record by the management committee at its meeting of [date of this meeting]. Signed [print name of person chairing the meeting.] Date.....

6. Any other Business of an urgent nature

This should only be very urgent matters that need to be dealt with quickly and that you genuinely couldn't put on the agenda e.g. because they cropped up at the last minute, and that genuinely won't wait till the next meeting. Don't allow discussion of key matters under Any Other Business that could be put on the next agenda – if it's important, people need to know in advance that it will be discussed so that they can make efforts to be there.

7. Date and Time of next meeting

Even if everyone knows already, still write it in the minutes to remind everyone and to prove they've all been told.

These minutes were approved as a true and accurate record by the management committee at its meeting of [date of this meeting]. Signed [print name of person chairing the meeting.] Date.....