



## Effective Meeting TIPS

For most RSO's, meetings are the only times to get all members together to discuss business and inform members about upcoming events, activities and opportunities. Members' time is valuable, and you must spend time wisely.

### BEFORE THE MEETING

- Decide if you really need to meet. Never have meeting just to have a meeting.
- Decide who should be invited (All members? Special guests? Adviser?)
- Reserve a room/location.
- Create an agenda.
- Create handouts, if needed.
- Invite special guests.
- If in your budget arrange for drinks or light refreshments.
- Reserve A/V equipment, if needed.
- Make photocopies of agenda and other pertinent documents.
- Remind members of meeting (via e-mail or voice mail). This would be a good time to distribute the agenda.

### AT THE MEETING

- Arrive at the meeting early with a smile.  
You should *want* to be there!
- Start the meeting on-time.  
Waiting for others may seem to be a good idea; however, how would you feel if you were on time and had to wait 10 minutes for a few people who were late?
- Have the secretary or similar designee keep detailed minutes of who arrives at what time (for latecomers only).  
This information will be valuable as the term progresses.
- After the meeting is called to order, be sure to announce what will be the latest time you will end the meeting (i.e. establish a time limit).  
This will help ensure you will have attendees' attention for the entire time.
- Stick to the agenda.  
Once you start straying from the agenda, people will get confused, frustrated, and eventually lose interest.
- Make everyone a part of the meeting.  
If members seem to be losing interest, ask them for their input on an issue.
- After decisions have been made, restate the decision.  
This will ensure members will understand what was voted on and what the outcome was.
- Announce the time and place of the next meeting (be sure to have a meeting room reserved!).
- End the meeting by thanking everyone for attending.

## AFTER THE MEETING

- Clean up the room.
- Collect agendas/other paperwork left behind.
- Meet with anyone who needs to discuss an unresolved issue.
- Ensure that minutes are distributed within “x” hours (via e-mail is the most effective way).
- Add any unfinished business from the meeting to the next meeting's agenda.
- Meet with your adviser (or other officers) to review your effectiveness in running the meeting. Review strengths and weaknesses.

## SPECIAL SITUATIONS -- HOW TO DEAL WITH...

- **Latecomers**  
Don't insult them; let them take their seats and feel welcome (they probably have a good excuse which you don't know about). If necessary, talk to the member after the meeting in private.
- **Debate**  
Debate is healthy to an organization--it shows that people care about an issue. If not handled properly, though, these discussions can turn threatening. If you sense a heated topic will be discussed, briefly review the ground rules, for example:
  - The chair will recognize all speakers.
  - Each member may only speak on the issue... (twice).
  - Each speech/comment may not last longer than... (1 minute).
- **Out of Control Attendees**  
Every now and then, a member of the group will have a strong opinion about an issue. This is not bad. Once you get three or more of these opinions clashing in the middle of a meeting, you may have a problem. One way to handle this is to call for a five minute recess. During the recess:
  - Pull the group of debaters aside.
  - Initiate an activity (prepared in advance) for the rest of the members in attendance (ideas could include: brainstorming for a collaborative event, ice breaking activity, or just a simple five minute rest room break).
  - While you have the attention of the strong opinions, ask them if they are willing to accept the other point of view. If not, suggest to them that the issue being discussed will be tabled until a future date.

After the break, be sure to gather the group back to assembly and explain to them what has been decided.

**NOTE:** You should make every effort to allow the discussion to resolve itself. Try not to intervene and call for a recess unless absolutely necessary.

## SEVEN WAYS TO MAKE YOUR MEETING MORE EFFECTIVE

1. Have your constitution available as a reference.  
Your constitution should detail how your organization should operate--everything from the purpose of the RSO to the vote needed to approve who will be the next Pizza Party Chair.
2. Create and Use a Meeting Reference Sheet.  
Have the secretary (or whoever records minutes) use the sheet to record the business of

the meeting. The template should help guide the meeting, while also assist with note taking. See page 4 for a reference sheet.

3. After roll call, make a note of how many members are in attendance, and then compute a few fractions (for voting purposes). As you will discover, having these in front of you will make tallying and calculating votes much easier during the meeting.

4. If you will be discussing a major issue, have the key players provide a handout which describes their key points.

Generally, meeting attendees rather see business items on paper, rather than hear someone speak, take notes and interpret them all at once. Allow people to make presentations, but also provide a reference sheet which answers common questions.

5. After major decisions have been made, reiterate how important the decision is to the group, and how the group has now embraced this point as the opinion of the organization.

6. Create a set of "Meeting Ground Rules," and review them at the beginning of each meeting. Such rules could include:

- Treat others with respect.
- Value differences of opinion.
- All discussion at the meeting stays within the meeting.
- Make an effort to reach a group decision.
- All debates must begin with Active Listening (i.e. restating what the previous person stated before you present your point of view).

7. Include a special segment such as "Pass the Gavel". This would be a time to pass around an object to every member in attendance. This is an opportunity for people to do one of the following: reflect on something from the meeting, reflect on a personal struggle you are experiencing, etc. Activities such as this one help build group unity.

## SAMPLE MEETING REFERENCE SHEET FOR RSO SECRETARIES

I. Call to Order by \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_ am / pm

II. Roll Call

Excused Absences: \_\_\_\_\_

Unexcused Absences: \_\_\_\_\_

Late Arriving: \_\_\_\_\_

*For Decisions...*

1/4:	1/3:	1/2:	2/3:	3/4:
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III. Reading of the Minutes

Additions/Corrections:

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_ Seconded by \_\_\_\_\_.

IV. Officer Reports

- President
- Vice President
- Treasurer
- Secretary

V. Committee Reports

VI. Special Reports

- Special Guests
- Adviser
- Others

VII. Unfinished Business

VIII. New Business

Motion	Made By	Seconded By	Vote	Notes

IX. Announcements

X. Adjournment

Motion by: \_\_\_\_\_ Seconded By: \_\_\_\_\_ Vote: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting adjourned at \_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_ am / pm by: \_\_\_\_\_

## Tips on How to Take Effective Meeting Minutes

Serving as secretary for an organization or committee is not an easy job or one to be taken lightly. **The following criteria are important when selecting someone who will best fill this role.**

- Is the person reliable; does he or she keep appointments and are they prompt?
- Is the person well organized, completing tasks in a timely way?
- Does this person demonstrate good listening skills such as being objective, hearing both sides of the discussion?
- Is this person a discerning listener, able to weed out trivial information or discussion from the important facts?

**The role of secretary is more than "just taking minutes." This individual is in effect the historian of the meeting and ultimately the organization.** Current members will refer to what is recorded, as a reminder of finished and unfinished business, including what needs follow-up, and what actions were taken. They will also be kept so that future members can reflect and gain an understanding of where the organization has been and why. Many organizations make it the secretary's responsibility to notify the membership about upcoming meetings- times, dates, location - as well as any important items to be discussed.

**The secretary should be present at all meetings. If he or she is unable to attend, a substitute needs to be appointed.** It is also necessary for the secretary to prepare him/herself before each meeting. He or she should review the minutes and agendas of previous meetings, paying close attention to style and format. If the organization has agreed upon a standard format for minutes, use the standardized form and fill in discussions, etc. as they occur.

**If your organization has structure that includes committees, be they ad hoc or standing, there always needs to a secretary present to accurately record what has transpired.** It is not necessary to take down everything unless someone requests that his or her remarks be entered for the record. It is necessary, however, to take complete notes. Motions and resolutions do need to be taken verbatim and should be read back during the meeting to make sure they have been accurately recorded.

**There are several ways to take minutes and each organization needs to choose the appropriate method for them.** A reasonable option is to record summary of debates, agreements and disagreements with a succinct explanation of the character of each. The second method is to take action minutes when decisions are reached and responsibilities are assigned. In either of these cases, make note of the following:

- The names of the people proposing any action, stating an option or making a motion
- Take down **word-for-word** any motions, resolutions, amendments, decisions or conclusions

- Who seconded the motion
- Whether the motion is approved, defeated, or withdrawn
- What assignments were made and to whom

**It is very helpful** for both minute taking and for those attending the meeting if either the chair or the secretary **restates a motion prior to a vote and then summarizes the decisions that are reached.** The summarizer should be most careful in clarifying any point of controversy.

**It is the secretary's responsibility to signal the president or chairperson to ask questions regarding the subject or discussion if he or she becomes lost or unsure.** A secretary should not wait until the meeting has been adjourned to get clarification; individuals may lose their perspective, issues may become less important, or one's memory alter what actually occurred.

Immediately after the meeting, the secretary must go over the notes while everything is still fresh, ensuring they check their notes for the following:

- Type of meeting
- Date, time, and place
- List of attendees and those absent
- Time of call to order
- Approval and/or amendments to previous meeting minutes
- Record of reports from standing and special committees
- General matters
- Record of proposals, resolutions, motions, seconding, any final disposition, and a summary of the discussion; also a record of vote
- Time of adjournment
- Nomination of submission and transcriber's name

Once the minutes have been transcribed into draft form, they should be submitted to the president or chairperson for review and/or correction. Finally, once they are returned, they need to be prepared in a formal form, preferably agreed upon before hand, for final approval at the next meeting. Minutes should be sent out to all members within 3 to 4 days of the meeting. This allows members time to read the minutes for accuracy before the next meeting and while the previous meeting is still fresh in their minds.