

The Meeting Agenda

There are many reasons why meetings are unproductive and frustrating. One common cause is the lack of an agenda. An agenda is an outline of the issues that a group will discuss during its meeting.

PREPARATION

The officers of the organization prepare the agenda with assistance from the organization advisor. An agenda starts with a list of general business items. Specific topics that are to be discussed at the meeting are placed under the proper agenda item in an outline format. The agenda (along with any supporting documents) is then printed and distributed to members at least one day before the meeting. This allows members to come to a meeting prepared to discuss their ideas, exchange information, and make decisions.

AGENDA ITEMS

The following agenda items are standard in most groups. You can adapt them to meet the needs of your organization, but be consistent.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair (usually the President or other designated officer) calls the meeting to order by standing, tapping the gavel once, and saying “The meeting will come to order.”

- The Call to Order may be followed by any opening ceremony the organization may have (e.g., Pledge of Allegiance, invocation).

2. ROLL CALL

The Chair says, “The secretary (or other officer) will call the roll.”

- If attendance is taken, it should be done with the aid of a prepared list of members’ names. The list can include spaces for recording whether a member is present, absent, or tardy.

3. READING AND APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Chair Says, “The Secretary will read the minutes.”

- After the minutes are read, the Chair asks:

“Are there any corrections to the minutes?”

- After corrections are made, the Chair says, “If there are no (further) corrections, the minutes stand approved as read (or as corrected).”

4. REPORTS OF THE OFFICERS

The Chair recognizes each officer in turn. For example: “May we have the treasurer’s report?”

- Officers may give reports of their current activities and administrative duties. Reports usually are for informational purposes. However, if a report involves a recommendation for action, the group may discuss the recommendation as soon as the report is finished.

5. ***REPORTS OF COMMITTEES***

- The Chair calls for reports of permanents (or “standing”) committees first, followed by reports of special (or “ad hoc”) committees. As each report is requested, the committee chair (or other member) rises and presents the report. If a recommendation is made in the report, it may be discussed as soon as the report is finished.

6. ***UNFINISHED BUSINESS***

- This category includes all business left over from previous meetings. The chair works from a prepared list unfinished business topics, announcing each one in turn for discussion and action.

7. ***NEW BUSINESS***

The Chair asks, “Is there any new business?”

- Members can introduce new topics at this time.

8. ***ANNOUNCEMENTS***

- The chair may make or call upon other members of the organization to make any announcements of interest to the group.

9. ***PROGRAM***

- Some organizations have a speaker, film, or other educational or cultural program. This is usually presented before the meeting is adjourned as the program may require action to be taken by the organization.

10. ***ADJOURNMENT***

When the agenda is completed, the Chair says, “If there is no further business, the meeting is adjourned.”

Remember that specific topics should be written in the agenda before it is distributed. For example, your agenda might look like the one below:

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Reading and Approval of Minutes
4. Reports of the Officers
 - a) President's Report
 - b) Secretary's Report
 - I. Correspondence
 - c) Treasurer's Report
 - I. Financial Report
5. Reports of Committees
 - a) Standing Committee on Rules
 - b) Talent Show Committee
6. Unfinished Business
 - a) Proposal service project
 - b) Election of New Officers
7. New Business
 - a) Proposal for Fall service project
 - b) Election of New Officers
8. Announcements
9. Program
 - a) Laura Johnson, City Mayor's Office
10. Adjournment

USING THE AGENDA

Of course, simply putting topics on a list will not make your meetings more productive. Keep these points in mind as you draw up and use an agenda:

- 1) Be realistic about the amount of time each topic will take. Avoid an overcrowded agenda. If choices must be made, leave more time for the important issues.
- 2) Take up the less complicated topics first, leaving time at the end for the more complex issues.
- 3) Stick to the agenda. During the meeting, the agenda is followed unless two-thirds of those at the meeting wish to change it.
- 4) Introduce each agenda topic with a word about why it is on the agenda (e.g., information only, discussion, a vote). If appropriate, suggest a time limit for the topic.
- 5) Allow a full discussion of each topic. People have the right to continue to debate an issue until they are finished or until two-thirds of those present agree to move on.
- 6) Close the discussion of each topic with plans for future action.

Using an agenda at your meeting may not solve all of your problems, but it does give a meeting direction and purpose. You may choose to be less structured than the format presented here, but some structure is critical in seeing that your organization “takes care of business”. Members are then able to leave a meeting feeling that they have accomplished their work and have contributed to the welfare of the organization.