

Running an effective meeting

Meetings are a vital part of your organization. Meetings give members a chance to discuss and evaluate where the organization is going, keep members up to date on important news and events, and allow the organization an opportunity to pool brain power to come up with new ideas. Sometimes meetings get boring or way off topic. Here are a few tricks to keeping your meetings fun and on track.

During the meeting –

- Greet members and make them feel welcome.
- Serve refreshments if possible; they are good icebreakers and make members feel comfortable.
- Start on time. End on time.
- Review the agenda and set priorities for the meeting.
- Stick to the agenda.
- Encourage group discussion to get all points of view.
- Encourage feedback.
- Keep conversation focused on the topic.
- Keep minutes for future reference in case a problem or question arises.
- Be a role model by listening and showing interest, appreciation and confidence in members.
- Summarize agreements reached and end the meeting on a positive note.
- Set date, time, and place for next meeting.

Before the meeting –

- Define the purpose of the meeting. If you can't find a purpose, don't have a meeting.
- Develop an agenda with officers and advisor(s).
- Distribute the agenda, background material, and lengthy documents or articles prior to the meeting so members will be prepared and feel involved and up-to-date.
- Choose an appropriate meeting time. Set a time limit and stick to it, if possible.
- Arrange the room so members face each other (if possible), like in a circle or semi-circle.
- Use visual aids (poster, diagrams) for interest. Post a large agenda up front for members to refer to.
- Vary meeting places if possible to accommodate different members.

After the meeting –

- Write up and distribute minutes within 3 or 4 days.
- Discuss any problems during the meeting with officers and advisor(s); come up with ways to improve.
- Follow up on delegation decisions. Check to see that members understand and carry out responsibilities.
- Give recognition and appreciation to excellent and timely progress.
- Put unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting.
- Conduct a periodic evaluation of the meetings.

Adapted from Cornell College

<http://www.cornellcollege.edu/student-activities/orgs-resources/effective-meetings.shtml>
 and from the University of Kansas

<http://www.silc.ku.edu/leaderbits/meetings.pdf>