

# MINUTE TAKING TIPS & TECHNIQUES

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# Objectives

- The Importance of Minutes
- What every minute taker needs to know
  - Your role as a minute taker
  - The definition of minutes
  - The minute takers tool box
- Organizational Tips
  - The agenda
  - Before and after the meeting
- What to include/What to ignore
  - Set up of Minutes
  - Guidelines of what to include
  - Motions and resolutions

# The Importance of Minutes

- Meetings Require:

- **A good chair** – someone who can lead the group efficiently and effectively throughout the topics
- **An accurate minute taker** – someone who can record the decisions that were made at the meeting and the actions to be taken for the future
- **Agenda-** is an important document – this is your success checker. It states whether your group is staying on track and meeting it's goals.



# What every minute taker needs to know

- The role of the minute taker
- The definition of minutes
- The impact of privacy legislation
- The Minute Taker's Toolbox
- QUIZ – What every minute taker needs to know

# What every minute taker needs to know

- The characteristics of an effective chair
  - Knowledgeable
  - Good time management skills
  - Objective
  - Good speaker
  - Good listener
  - Makes everyone feel comfortable
  - Works well with the minute taker

# What every minute taker needs to know

- The characteristics of a good minute taker
  - Knowledgeable
  - Good time management skills
  - Objective
  - Good speaker
  - Good listener
  - Makes everyone feel comfortable
  - Works well with the chair

# What every minute taker needs to know

## Privacy Legislation

Public's right  
to access  
information



Organization's right  
and need to protect  
information

# What every minute taker needs to know

- **What Records are Accessible?**
  - All emails (from desktops, laptops and Smartphones)
  - All electronic files and databases
  - Expense claims and accounts
  - Non-final drafts and working notes
  - Handwritten notes, spreadsheets, sketches
  - Agendas and meeting minutes



# What every minute taker needs to know

Minutes are a permanent,  
formal record of the policies,  
decisions, and other business  
that occur at a meeting



# What every minute taker needs to know

- Robert's Rules of Order

“In an ordinary society, unless the minutes are to be published, they should contain mainly a record of **what was done** at the meeting, **not what was said** by the members.”

# What every minute taker needs to know

- The Minute Takers Toolbox

1. Think ....



# What every minute taker needs to know

- The Minute Takers Toolbox:

- The agenda
- The chair
- Other members
- Previous minutes



# What every minute taker needs to know

- Summary

- Never think of the minutes as a separate-step process (think slinky)
- A good agenda is the basis of good minutes
- Knowing why an item is on the agenda will help you record the appropriate comments.
- Don't be afraid to check with the chair and the members as to why an item will be discussed.

# Organizational Tips

- The agenda
- Before the meeting
- At the meeting
- After the meeting

# Organizational Tips

- The Agenda
  - Meetings without Agendas are:
    - Frustrating
    - Non-productive
    - Eventually attendance falls off
    - Difficult to take minutes



# Organizational Tips

- Best Agendas should include:
- Meeting name/time/date
- Time limits for each topic on the agenda
- Names
- Items in descriptive words



# Organizational Tips

- Agendas for Formal Meetings:
  - Approval of minutes of previous meeting
  - Reports
  - Correspondence – such as email, letters
  - Business arising from previous minutes
  - New business
  - Date of the next meeting
  - Attachments
  - Time of Adjournment
  - Names and phone numbers of persons to send regrets to

# Organizational Tips

- Before the meeting:
  - Design your own template for your minutes when you first assume the task
  - As you type the agenda, do a cut and paste of the topics for discussion in the minutes
  - Discuss with the chair how members' handout materials will be handled.
  - Remember the more you get done before the meeting, the easier it will be to prepare the final minutes.

# Organizational Tips

- At the meeting:
  - Arriving early and speaking to all the participants will reduce the stress of the process
  - Short hand, long hand and tape recorders are tools that require more work after the meeting
  - Using a computer/laptop requires more work before the meeting
  - Corrections to minutes must be made on the minutes concerned and noted on the meeting minutes where the correction was identified

# Organizational Tips

- **After the Meeting:**
  - Re-read your notes as soon as possible after the meeting
  - As you prepare the minutes, begin work on the agenda for the next meeting
  - The minute only become the official minutes after they have been approved by the meeting members at the next meeting
  - File the minutes in a spot they can be easily retried in the future
  - Have a system for the disposal of notes, tapes, etc

# What to include/What to ignore

- Set up of Minutes
- Guidelines for What to include
- Motions and Resolutions
- EXERCISE –What to Include
- QUIZ – What to include

# What to Include/What to Ignore Set Up of Minutes

- Headers of Minutes Should Include...
  - The name and type of the meeting
  - Date, start time, and location
  - Names of meeting members (present or absent)
  - Identification of the chair and the minute taker
  - Names of those present who are not official members: *in attendance or guest*
  - Whether the minutes of previous meeting were approved

# What to Include/What to Ignore Set Up of Minutes

- Bodies of the Minutes should include...
  - Separate sections for each topic (multiple paragraphs can be used)
  - Motions and names of movers of the motions (formal minutes)
  - Any action for follow up (including names and dates)
  - Brief discussion of information
  - Last paragraph should state hour of adjournment and date of next meeting

# What to Include/What to Ignore Set Up of Minutes

- **Additional Roberts' Rules**
  - The name of the seconder of a motion – unless ordered by the assembly – need not be recorded
  - The name and subject of a guest speaker can be given but no effort should be made to summarize his marks
  - When a committee report is of great importance to show the legislative history of a measure, the assembly can order it “to be entered in the minutes,” in which case the secretary copies it in full in the minutes.



# What to Include/What to Ignore Set Up of Minutes

- More Robert's Rules

- A vote is not needed to adjourn a meeting. The chair can ask if there is any further business – pause – and then if there is not further business state that the meeting is adjourned.

Minutes would read: There being no further business, the chair adjourned the meeting at 9:15pm

# Guidelines for What to Include

- You Should Record
  - Key points only once
  - Issue Debate – only include the pros and cons
  - New information
  - All motions and their results
  - Expected actions, who is responsible and deadlines

# Guidelines for What to Include

- What should not be recorded
  - Housekeeping information
  - Speaker's experiences
  - Old Material
  - Personal comments
  - He said/she said dialogue

# Guidelines for What to Include

- When are names needed...
  - To provide an attendance list
  - To show the mover of a motion
  - To assign actions/tasks
  - To identify a presenter
  - To fulfill the wishes of someone who asks that his or her name be recorded in the minutes (because of an objection)

# Guidelines for What to Include

- Suggested Phrases:
  - It was discussed
  - It was pointed out
  - It was reviewed
  - It was decided
  - It was agreed
  - It was suggested
  - After discussion, the following points arose

# Guidelines for What to Include

- Success Checker:  
5 Questions
  - Does it add **new information** the group needs?
  - Does it give **absent members necessary information**?
  - Will it provide **history**?
  - Does it assign **responsibility and deadlines**?
  - Does it “**close the loop**”?

# Motions and Resolutions

- A Motion is ...
  - A proposal put before a group for discussion and a vote
  - Motions state what action the group will take or what views it intends to uphold.
  
- The format of your Motions should be same for all meetings

# Motions and Resolutions

- A Resolution is...
  - Is a motion phrased in a special style.
  - It involves conditions or background information starting with the word WHEREAS follow by clauses starting with the word BE IN RESOLVED.



# Motions and Resolutions

- Recording
- Make sure you include:
  - Whether the motion/resolution was carried or defeated
  - Motions must be seconded before the chair can open the discussion/call for a vote.  
Name of the seconder – depends on your parliamentary authority as to whether its included or not
- Do Not Record
  - Final minutes should **not** show the process of how a motion was “wordsmithed”. Only put in the final motion or resolution.

# Listening Skills

- Hearing is physiological
- Listening is a learned activity
- Active listening is an acquired skill
  
- You can listen twice as fast as the average person can speak

# Listening Skills

- Seven Important Steps
  - Try to stay relaxed (reducing stress levels will help)
  - Do your homework before the meeting
  - Listen carefully to how the words fit with the agenda's goal
  - Lay aside your biases
  - Stay in the room mentally
  - Be confident (in your ability)
  - Watch your posture