

Running a Meeting:

Once your group has formed and the officers have been elected, you will want to begin having regular meetings. It all sounds simple enough, but the manner in which you conduct your meeting will probably be the deciding factor in whether or not your group will be successful. You might assume that everybody within a group has the same agenda as to what they want to accomplish. This is not necessarily the case.

To run a successful meeting, one must do some planning. Meetings with no structure tend to be long and fruitless. Remember that every group has a set of conditions under which it will best operate. Be sensitive to the climate of the meeting, and keep in mind that there may be times to change or bend the rules to best accommodate the goals of your group.

Presiding Over the Meeting:

As President or chairperson of your group, you have certain responsibilities to ensure the success of your meeting. As you read through the following outline, keep in mind that you, as leader of your group, need to set the mood and direction of your meetings.

Prior to the meeting, make sure everyone involved knows when and where the meeting is to be held. Pick a room that is physically comfortable to the number of people you are expecting and remind everyone to be prompt.

Agenda:

One of the best tools for successful meetings is an agenda. There are four very good reasons for learning and using the art of agenda development:

- An agenda lets people know what to expect at the meeting.
- An agenda provides an order for dealing with issues at a meeting.
- An agenda can be used to teach people how to prepare for a meeting.
- An agenda also spreads the responsibility for accomplishing the tasks in the meeting around to all the people attending.

There are four basic methods of developing an agenda. Each has an appropriate time and place. The more methods you feel comfortable using as a leader, the greater your effectiveness will be in accomplishing the goals of your organization.

- One person determines the agenda for the next meeting.
- The executive committee of the organization meets prior to the general body meeting and discusses and develops the items to be placed on the agenda.
- At the conclusion of the general body meeting, the entire group develops the agenda for the following meeting. The President or Chairperson sets aside five or ten minutes at the end of each meeting to solicit items for the next meeting's agenda.
- The total group develops the agenda at the beginning of the meeting.

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The following is an example of a typical agenda:

- I. Call to order
- II. Attendance and opening announcements
- III. Approval of the last meeting's minutes
- IV. Treasurer's Report
- V. Officers' Reports
- VI. Committee Reports
- VII. Old Business
- VIII. New Business
- IX. Announcements
- X. Adjournment

Minutes:

A proper recording system enabling you to refresh your memory concerning decisions made and postponed will save you a lot of time. Rehashing old material, through sometimes necessary, can drag a group down. Repeated arguments and discussions can be short-circuited with a simple point of information taken from the minutes of a previous meeting. Also, the recording, publication, and distribution of minutes is a good tool to use for follow-up.

Note: Quorum is defined as: The number of members who must be present for business to be conducted legally. The actual number is usually stated in the organization's bylaws.

Discussion:

Time is a precious commodity for students involved in extracurricular activities, and for organization presidents it is especially important to know when it is being wasted. The way you allocate time to a give topic will assist you in making each meeting more productive. In general, topics that deal with policies will take more time than operational issues. Policies involve how people feel about an issue; operations involve how people accomplish a given task.

Follow-up:

Follow-up is important to ensure that people aren't floundering. Many times individuals will assume responsibilities but then forget, or they will run into unforeseen obstacles and give up. If you politely check with people to ask how things are going or if they need help, you can find for them, if necessary, avoid embarrassing them at the next meeting, ensure that the job is done, or simply remind them of their responsibilities. Follow-up is important and necessary because many times a person's tasks depend on another individual getting his/her job done first. You can avoid a potential organizational conflict by touching base with people after a meeting.

Good Meeting Manners: Proper etiquette can help ensure that goals are met according to schedule.

- Arrive on time. Latecomers may delay the meeting, create confusion, or break the flow of progress.
- Avoid unnecessary interruptions. In most cases, phone calls, messages, etc., can wait until the meeting is over.
- Observe specified time limits. This will allow others a chance to speak and ensure that all issues on the agenda are covered.
- Refrain from distractions. This includes whispering to your neighbor, doodling, shuffling papers, etc.
- Stay until the end. Important follow-up plans are often made during the final minutes of a meeting.

Running a successful meeting is more complex than it first appears. To have your group operate at peak efficiency, you will need to adopt some of the above guidelines. Remember, if your meetings are dull, not accomplishing their objectives and, in general, faltering; refer back to this sheet to see if you may be missing an important ingredient.