

# Meeting Facilitation Tips

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## **Be Prepared**

Plan out your agenda and make sure notice has gone out at least one week prior to your meeting. Contact presenters to make sure they will be in attendance. Be prepared to discuss any items that were tabled from last month's meeting.

## **Introduce Yourself**

at the beginning of each meeting. Don't assume people know who you are. Also, be sure to have everyone at the meeting introduce themselves to build a sense of trust among the group. Also, consider incorporating icebreakers or appreciations of volunteers as part of their opening activity.

## **Review Agenda**

Get buy-in from the group on both items and make sure everyone understands the way the meeting will be run.

## **Be Organized**

It is often helpful to assign the role of timekeeper to another board member so that time will be better monitored and conversation can be ended more easily. Respect everyone's time and end the meeting at the time planned.

## **Direct the Discussion**

Remind the group that there will be time for new business at the end of the meeting. If people are being repetitive, recap information for the group. If a decision needs to be made, call for a motion from the group.

## **Facilitate Voting and Decision Making**

Never assume an agreement has been reached without a vote. Encourage all members to participate and minimize long-winded conversations.

## **Always Maintain your Role as Chair**

Facilitate the group's discussion, making sure all are being heard. Do not monopolize the floor.

## **Mediate Arguments**

Give each side the chance to state point of view. Remain impartial and fair.

## **Wrap-up at the End of the Meeting**

Review all discussions, decisions to be made and tasks to be assigned. Make sure there is clarity by the end of the meeting.

## **Add Follow Up After the Meeting**

Offer help to other board members as needed and contact new members.

## **Basics of Robert's Rules for Small Group Meetings**

In meetings of 12 people or less, only four motions are typically used. One person moves to (introduce, adopt, etc) a motion, and another person seconds that motion before the meeting chair calls for a vote. Basic motions are:

- To Introduce (a motion)
- To Change a Motion (amend)
- To Adopt (accept without discussion)
- To Adjourn (end the meeting)

## **Ensuring Everyone is Heard and Participates**

- Minimize cross talk and consider the needs of different personalities and cultures in your meetings.
- Have discussions that mix large and small groups when appropriate.
- Be flexible and allow time for questions to ensure understanding.
- Control the flow of discussion and guide your group to making decisions and reaching consensus.

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- Summarize the discussion, so far, so that others have a sense of conclusion, i.e. "So far, what I've heard you say is...? Is that accurate?"
- Don't allow others to take over the meeting through intimidation, anger or outrageous behavior.
- Set boundaries, but validate participants' contributions and feelings. "I see that you are frustrated that this issue is not on the agenda and that it is important to you. Perhaps a few of us would be willing to stay after the meeting and set a good time for having this discussion."
- Offer solutions and ask the group for support.

## **Plan Ahead**

- Always have an agenda for each meeting with topics and time limits. This will help to keep the meeting focused and on track.
- Have ground rules posted and refer to them both at the beginning of each meeting and as needed throughout meetings.
- Anticipate possible challenging situations. Plan ahead for how you will handle them. Practice how you would react to particular situations. Arrange for support from fellow officers.

## **Control Your Reaction to Conflict**

- People display challenging behavior because of who they are personally, not because of you.
- Really listen to the person speaking.
- Agree when possible and ask questions to help you to understand their perspective.
- Think about what you are going to say first, before speaking.
- Speak slowly and evenly, without raising your voice.
- Address the person by name, if possible and look them in the eye.
- Express your perspective firmly, but not confrontationally.

- Confront the issue at hand, not the person.
- Stay on topic and remember not to lose your temper.

- Be patient--democracy is a process!  
**Decision by Consensus**

- Work towards consensus when unanimity is essential and can be achieved.
- Understand that this is an iterative process that must continue until all agree.
- Consensus may take a long time to reach decision, or agreement may not be possible.

## **Decision by Consent**

- Unanimity should be sought but not at the expense of timely and relevant decision-making.
- Every member must manage some individual disappointment to achieve a robust and mutually supportable outcome.
- Members are expected to suggest well-reasoned alternatives to support the objectives of the decision.
- Key questions are: "What alternatives can you propose?" and "Can you live with this?"

## **Voting by Majority**

- This approach uses a simple majority voting model.
- The advantage is in quickly reaching a decision.
- A disadvantage is ending up with winners and losers.