

Session 8

Meeting Manners and Meeting Matters

Purpose

Session 8: Meeting Manners and Meeting Matters provides information on how to plan and conduct meetings. You will learn the basics of parliamentary procedure as explained in *Robert's Rules of Order*. By following *Robert's Rules of Order*, individuals representing a wide variety of viewpoints can discuss significant matters and make decisions about how to proceed. *Robert's Rules of Order* provide structure in meetings – from setting an agenda to taking minutes, or from discussing controversial issues to electing officers of a board. Not every meeting needs to be conducted under the formal rules of parliamentary procedure, however. You will also learn how to prepare for and conduct informal planning meetings.

Agenda

1. Debrief independent learning assignment
2. About meetings and meeting problems
3. History of parliamentary procedure
4. The meeting agenda
5. Minutes
6. Motions
7. Resolutions
8. Nominations and elections
9. Committee reports
10. When *Robert's Rules of Order* may not be necessary. . .
11. Independent learning assignment
12. Participants' evaluations

Learning objectives

- Become familiar with parliamentary procedure, including motions and resolutions, nominations and elections, committee reports and minutes.
- Practice planning and conducting meetings.

1. Debrief independent learning assignment

2. About meetings and meeting problems

Meetings are a way of life in today's society. If we expect inclusion and require collaboration, there is no way around meetings. When asked, most people report they don't like meetings. Consider this quote by a respected U.S. economist and diplomat John Kenneth Galbraith: "Meetings are indispensable if you don't want to do anything." Yet, meetings are also indispensable if you want to share information, solve a problem or make a decision.

Workbook activity: Your reactions to meetings

When I hear the word "meeting" I (fill in the blank) _____

For me, what I like about meetings is _____

What I don't like is _____



When the outcome of a meeting is another meeting, it has been a lousy meeting.

— Herbert Hoover,
31st U.S. president

Between 1981 and 1995, Roger K. Mosvick and Robert B. Nelson surveyed 1,600 managers to identify the most frequently reported problems with meetings. Their results were reported in *We've Got to Stop Meeting Like This!* and include these ten problems.

Ten most frequently reported meeting problems

1. Getting off subject, rambling, repetition
2. Inconclusive – no results or follow-up
3. No purpose, goals or agenda (or very unclear)
4. Meetings are too long
5. Disorganized leadership, lack of control
6. Starts late, people tardy, time wasted
7. Poor preparation by leaders and participants
8. Information overload – unfocused, irrelevant
9. Individuals monopolized discussion
10. Interruptions

3. History of parliamentary procedure

Parliamentary procedure evolved so that participants in a meeting could discuss different and even conflicting viewpoints and still maintain order. Almost every organization, association, club and political group uses parliamentary procedure to keep order in meetings. By establishing guidelines and order for discussion and decision making, parliamentary procedure ensures both justice and courtesy. Parliamentary procedure is the cornerstone of democracy: “Majority rules; the minority has a right to be heard; partiality to none; and consideration of one subject at a time.” As valid today as ever, the origins of parliamentary procedure go back 1,000 years.

Biblical origins. In the tenth century, King Edgar of England developed some elementary rules so that people with conflicting interests could settle their differences peacefully. He based his rules on the biblical scripture “*Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.*”

English Parliament. This approach gained in popularity, and in 1295, the English Parliament, or governing body, adopted rules of order based on similar principles of common courtesy and good manners. The historical origins are founded on two principles: “What touches all should be approved by all,” and “Common dangers should be met by measures agreed upon in common.”

Workbook activity: What do these two principles mean? Are they as relevant today as they were in the year 1295?

What touches all should be approved by all. _____

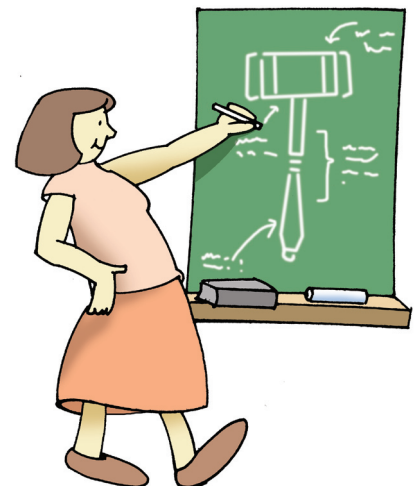
Common dangers should be met by measures agreed upon in common.

Robert’s Rules of Order. Rules of order enable people to deliberate and reach a decision about a course of action. One hundred percent agreement is practically impossible in any democratic assembly. Parliamentary procedure ensures rule by the majority, yet protects the right to express minority views.

When someone says, “We follow Robert’s Rules of Order,” that means the meeting or assembly is using parliamentary procedure as explained in a manual written in 1876 by Henry M. Robert.

Henry Robert was an engineer officer in the Army when he was asked to preside over a church meeting. He realized he did not know how to keep order. He researched parliamentary procedure, including the writings of Thomas Jefferson. After many years he wrote the definitive manual on using parliamentary procedure to conduct meetings.

Robert’s Rules of Order adapted parliamentary procedure for use in organizations. Until then, it was used primarily in legislative assemblies. It is now in



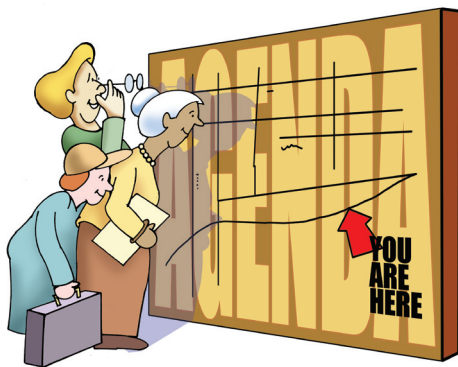
its tenth edition and used widely by organizations, clubs and associations, as well as governmental bodies.

Note: A simplified copy of *Robert's Rules of Order* is included with this manual: *The a-b-c's of Parliamentary Procedure*.

What do you think Henry Robert meant when he said, "Where there is no law, but every man does what is right in his own eyes, there is the least of real liberty." _____

4. The meeting agenda

The order of business in a meeting is referred to as the agenda. (As you learned earlier in this session, the agenda is a key consideration in preparing for the meeting.) The business will change from meeting to meeting, but under parliamentary procedure, the order or sequence of agenda items always stays the same.



Sample agenda

- Call to order
- Opening exercise (optional)
- Reading and approving the minutes
- Reports of officers, boards and standing committees
- Special committee reports
- Special orders
- Unfinished business
- New business
- Announcements
- Adjourn

What specifically does each of these agenda items mean?

- Call to order. The chair states that a quorum is present and calls the meeting to order at the designated time. (A quorum is the minimum number of people or percentage of people in attendance necessary for business to be conducted. The number of people necessary for a quorum is usually stated in the bylaws. If there is no designation, a majority constitutes a quorum.)
- Opening exercises. Typically an invocation (prayer) or pledge is used for an opening exercise. Some groups include a song for an opening exercise. Opening exercises create a common meeting culture and tradition and provide a moment when all people attending the meeting feel united.
- Reading and approval of the minutes. The secretary reads the minutes from the previous meeting and the chair asks for corrections. If there are corrections, the minutes are "approved as corrected." If there are no corrections, the minutes are "approved as read." Reading the minutes at the beginning of the meeting reminds people of what happened at the previous meeting so they can move forward with business raised at the

current meeting.

- Officers, board and standing committee reports. Reports from officers and standing committees are taken in the order they are listed in the bylaws. After each report, the body or people attending the meeting vote to adopt (or amend and adopt) the report. Note: The treasurer's report is noted as "filed" not "adopted."
- Reports of special committees. Reports from special committees are scheduled in advance so that they can be added to the standard agenda. Special committees can, but do not need to report each meeting.
- Special orders. Special orders are important matters carried over from a previous meeting and put on the agenda for consideration at the current meeting.
- Unfinished business. Any other discussion of business that was postponed at a previous meeting can be considered. The chair will know what business was postponed and needs to be addressed.
- New business. The chair will ask if there is any new business to consider. If a vote is required on new business, it cannot occur until the next meeting and must be noted on the agenda for the next meeting.
- Announcements. The chair asks if there are any announcements to be made.
- Adjournment. The chair verifies that there is no objection and no further business and declares the meeting adjourned.

5. Minutes

Minutes are the legal record of business transacted by the organization at its meetings. They provide an official record of the organization's business and its history. They report facts or what was done in the meetings, not discussion or opinions.

Write minutes on one side only and use wide margins. Corrections are noted in the margins. The portion of the minutes that is corrected is never erased. It is circled. Each subject and each motion is a separate paragraph.

The minutes should include the following items:

- Name or kind of meeting and the name of the organization or assembly
- Date, place and time of meeting
- Who called the meeting to order and at what time
- Whether or not there is a quorum (Listing of those present and absent is optional.)
- Approval or corrections of previous minutes
- Record of all main motions, points of order and appeals and whether or not sustained
- Record of the name of the person making the motion but not the person who seconds the motion
- Record of the number of votes in favor or against in a counted vote and the full tally of votes in an election
- Signature of the board secretary

Reminder: Bylaws frequently require the agenda, minutes from the previous meetings, reports that will be made in the upcoming meeting including financial reports to be sent to members in advance. Having these documents before the board meeting allows members to read and make notes about

questions to ask. Preparation and asking questions are key responsibilities of board members.

Parliamentary procedure should be used as a tool to promote democracy, not an intimidation tactic. Become familiar with the terms and ways to raise matters, and then have confidence that practice is the only way to really learn how it works.

6. Motions

Members of the body introduce ideas, initiate discussion, give opinions, debate and make decisions through motions. There are five general types of motions.

Main motions introduce new topics for consideration. Main motions cannot be made when any other motion is before the assembly.

Subsidiary motions are introduced to help handle the main motion, and need to be voted on before returning to the main motion. For example, subsidiary motions might be made to postpone, amend, refer to a committee, to limit debate on the main motion, or to lay the question of the main motion on the table.

Privileged motions relate to matters of special or immediate importance, not the pending business. They take precedence over all other motions and are not debatable. Privileged motions relate to the safety or comfort of the assembly or to the order of business if there is an obvious and unnecessary deviation in the agenda. They may also be motions to take a recess or break, to adjourn, or to set a time to adjourn.

Incidental motions raise procedural questions relating to the pending business or another motion, and include asking to use a certain method of voting, dividing a question into two parts and voting on each separately, verifying a voice vote, withdrawing a motion, or raising a point of order.

Motions that bring a question again before the assembly are made when no other business is pending and refer to amendments, rescinding, reconsidering, taking a matter from the table and discharging a committee.

More about motions . . .

- A motion must be germane, or relate to the business at hand.
- A motion cannot be made for the purpose of obstructing business or for some unworthy or frivolous reason.
- A motion cannot be made that is contrary to the bylaws.
- Most motions require another person in the assembly to state, “I second the motion.” A second indicates that another member supports the motion and prevents spending time on a question that concerns only one person. (For exceptions see booklet *The a-b-c’s of Parliamentary Procedure*, pages 8 and 9.)
- Motions are subject to debate, amendment and reconsideration (though there are exceptions).
- There is an “order of precedence” for motions. The order of precedence establishes whether a subsequent motion is in order or out of order, and whether the motion can be debated, amended or reconsidered.

Eight steps to making a motion

1. Member stands and waits to be recognized.
2. Chairman recognizes the member.
3. The member presents the motion by stating, "I move . . ."
4. The motion is seconded by another member. This shows that more than one person is interested in bringing the business before the group for discussion.
5. The chairman restates the motion. This ensures all members understand what is to be discussed.
6. Discussion is held on the motion. During discussion, all members participate fully.
7. The chairman puts the motion to a vote by stating, "All those in favor say aye." (Pause for the vote.) "Those opposed say no."
8. The chairman announces the result of the vote to be sure all members know whether the motion carried or failed.

Amend a motion

An amendment is a way to change a motion already on the floor before the vote is taken. Amendments may be made by

- Inserting or adding words.
- Striking out words.
- Striking out words and inserting others.
- Substituting one paragraph or resolution for another.

Example: The *main motion* is: "I move we have Mayberry in Bloom Day to plant flowers in the park." A *motion to amend* can be made to insert or strike aspects about the proposal:

- "I move we have Mayberry in Bloom Day to plant flowers in the park on April 20 (amend by inserting the date)."
- "I move we have Mayberry in Bloom Day to plant flowers on April 20" (amend by striking "in the park").
- There can be a motion to amend by substituting a new proposal: "I move we have a spring cleanup day on April 20" (amend by substituting a new suggestion).

It is important to allow full discussion after a motion is made and before the vote is taken.

Workbook activity

Bob makes a motion to open a 24-hour day care center. Most people recognize the day care is badly needed and most members favor the idea. If the chairperson immediately puts the motion to a vote, can you think of some issues that should have been discussed but weren't?



Because discussion or deliberation is so important to reaching a good decision, parliamentary procedure, if carried out correctly, requires that matters be dealt with one at a time. Order of precedence helps to ensure that discussion and consideration takes place. Remember: Parliamentary procedure ensures that minority voices are heard. Its purpose is to encourage lots of discussion before a vote is taken.

Order of precedence

Order of precedence tells you when a motion is out of order. The motions listed below appear in “order of precedence,” showing which motion has priority over another motion.

Privileged motions (undebatable motions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fix the time to adjourn • Adjourn • Recess • Raise a question of privilege • Call for the orders of the day
Subsidiary motions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lay the question on the table • Previous question
Debatable motions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit or extend limits of debate • Postpone to a certain time • Commit or refer to a committee • Amend the main motion • Postpone indefinitely
Main motion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main motion

Example: If someone has made a main motion, and another member makes a motion to take a recess, the motion to take a recess is in order and must be decided before the main motion (it has precedence or priority). If someone moves to postpone temporarily or to “table” a motion, and another member moves to amend the motion, the motion to amend is out of order. The motion to postpone must be considered first because it has precedence over the motion to amend. The order of precedence ensures that one matter is considered and decided before another one is raised for consideration. The order of precedence also cuts down on making unnecessary decisions. If, for example, the body considered amending the motion before it considered tabling the motion and it was decided to table it, the time spent in amending it would have been wasted.

Table a motion

To table a motion, or to “lay the motion on the table,” is done for the purpose of suspending (not eliminating) consideration of a motion because the person making the motion thinks there is a more urgent matter. The person moving to lay the motion on the table should also state the reason. The motion can be reconsidered when someone moves to take the matter off the table and a majority of the members approve. A motion to remove from the table must be made before the end of the next meeting, or it dies. The motion can be made again, however.

Vote on a motion

- “Putting the question” means taking a vote.
- Voting is usually by voice when the chair asks, “All those in favor say aye, and those opposed say nay.”
- If a member would like to verify a vote, a motion is made to “Call for a division” or a motion to “Count the vote.”
- Votes can also be by ballot for motions as well as elections. (Members write “yes” or “no” on a piece of paper, or if the question is known in advance, it can be written on the paper ballot.)
- The chair (if a member of the assembly) votes only when that vote will affect the outcome – to break a tie, create a two-thirds majority or prevent a two-thirds majority.
- A member may decide to vote against his or her own motion, but cannot speak against it.
- A member may abstain from voting, that is not vote. Abstaining votes do not count.

The mathematics of parliamentary procedure

- Majority vote – more than half the votes cast
- Plurality vote – the largest number of votes cast
- Two-thirds vote – at least two-thirds of the votes cast
- Unanimous vote – no dissenting votes
- Tie vote – the same number of affirmative and negative votes

Questions anyone?

There are two ways to ask for clarification in a meeting. One way raises questions about the procedure being used (parliamentary inquiry); the other allows clarification about the topic or subject matter under discussion (point of information).

Parliamentary inquiry. A member may rise to ask a question on parliamentary procedure relating to the business of the assembly. “I rise to a parliamentary inquiry, Mr. President. Would it be in order to . . .” The president will answer the question, or refer the question to the parliamentarian. A parliamentarian is an expert on parliamentary procedure and may be elected or appointed to provide advice on the correctness of the way business is conducted.

Point of information. A member rises to ask a question relating to the business of the assembly or a pending motion. “Madame Chair, I rise for information about . . .” The chair will answer the question or direct the question to another knowledgeable member.



Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect.
— Mark Twain
(1835-1910)
U.S. humorist, novelist, short story author, and wit

Remember: It's okay to ask questions. Do not be afraid to make an occasional mistake . . . A new member of the House of Commons once asked a senior member, "How can I learn the rules?" He was told, "By breaking them." (Robert Luce) It is also permissible for the chair to ask for *general consent* to dispense with formal parliamentary procedure, so long as it is followed in spirit.

Rescind a motion

Any member has the right to ask the membership to rescind (repeal or annul) a motion that has already been adopted, provided no action has been taken as the result of the original vote. A motion to rescind has no deadline and may be made at any time. (Refer back to the order of precedence to understand that if there has been a motion to reconsider the vote, that motion has priority and must be decided before there can be a motion to rescind.) If prior notice has been given, the motion to rescind may pass with a majority of votes. If there has been no previous notice of the motion on the agenda, then it requires a two-thirds majority to pass. Note: Seldom done, but useful to know, a member can question the chair's ruling. Members may move to overturn the decision of the chair. A motion to overturn the chair's decision requires a second and a two-thirds majority vote.



Workbook activity: Practice making motions

1. It is getting late and one of the members of the assembly is raising issues not on the agenda. _____

2. There is a main motion under consideration and you have just thought of a better idea. _____

3. You know that the state's legislature is about to enact legislation that is relevant to the motion currently under consideration. _____

4. You would like to nominate someone as the parliamentarian. _____

7. Resolutions

Motions that are important or complicated need to be in writing. Written motions can be brought to the assembly in the form of a resolution. Resolutions usually include two parts:

- (1) The resolution itself, or the proposal itself (what the assembly votes on)
- (2) The preamble, or the significance of bringing the matter to the attention of the assembly.

Preamble statements always begin with “Whereas.” In elaborate resolutions, there may be many preamble clauses (significance) and several resolving clauses (proposal of what is to happen if the resolution is passed). Resolving clauses are separated from preamble clauses with the word “therefore” or “therefore be it resolved . . .”

Mound City League Resolution

Resolved that Mound City League hold a yard sale for the purpose of raising money to pay for team uniforms.

* * *

Whereas, uniforms are important for team spirit; and
Whereas, yard sales have been successful fundraisers; therefore be it
Resolved to hold a yard sale on October 15, 2005.



Resolution

**Preamble
statements**

8. Nominations and elections

Bylaws usually describe how officers and directors are to be nominated and elected. If there are no bylaws specifying procedures for nominations, nominations are made through a committee or from the floor. Nominations from the floor are still allowed after the nominating committee reads its report. A member rises and states, “I nominate Maria Greene.” No second is needed.

Other rules to remember are:

- A person may be nominated for more than one office. If the person is elected to more than one office, the person may choose which office to accept. If the person is not present, the assembly votes on which office, and then elects a different person to fill the other position.)
- Just as with voting on a motion, voting in elections can be by voice or by ballot.
- When the election is by voice and there is more than one nominee for an office, the nominees are voted upon in the order they were nominated. The first nominee to receive a majority vote is elected and no votes are taken on the remaining nominees.
- New officers take office immediately after election unless the bylaws specify otherwise.

9. Committee reports

Committees are set up in bylaws or a committee can be established to consider certain matters. Committees generally are established to consider, investigate and make recommendations on certain matters to the entire board.

- Standing committees continue because they have a purpose as long as the body exists.

- Special committees are temporary and cease to exist when they have fulfilled their mandate and submit a final report.

Standing committee reports generally are included on the order of business (agenda) as a matter of course. A special committee report is included in the order of business by letting the chair know in advance that it is ready to report. The report should be in writing. It is written as if coming from the mouth of the committee (“The committee reports that . . .”). The committee chair reads the report and moves for the adoption of any action recommended in the report.

Reports must be clear and to the point. There is no need to repeat what committee members said at the committee meeting. The report should include the name of the committee, meeting date(s), who attended or signatures of those concurring with the report, pertinent facts and recommendations.

Safety committee report

The Safety Committee met on November 14, 2003, to develop a plan to get more people to participate in National Night Out.

Facts

- Many people did not know about National Night Out.
- There was not a clear plan or schedule of how to participate.
- Six o’clock is a difficult time for families to participate because of schoolwork and meals.
- Funds are available to provide dinner beforehand.

Recommendations

1. Proposed plan for National Night Out - 2004
 - Engage musicians
 - Coordinate with police
 - Pass out flyers one month in advance
 - Use telephone tree to remind people a week in advance
 - Organize food
 - Gather at 5:30 p.m. in the park for a barbecue dinner (see attached budget)
 - Start the parade at 6:30 p.m. at the Park and walk to City Hall (route maps to be provided)
2. Create a standing National Night Out committee to handle publicity, scheduling, activities and logistics in the future.

Signatures of Safety Committee Members:

10. When Robert's Rules of Order may not be necessary . . .

The keys to productive meetings are (1) advance preparation, (2) strong meeting leadership, and (3) follow-up on meeting assignments.

Preparing for a meeting

Prepare for meetings by using the *Five Ps of meeting preparation*.

Five Ps of meeting preparation

- Purpose
- Product
- Plan the agenda
- Participants
- Process

To prepare for a meeting, someone (usually the person elected as chair) should think through each of these key points in advance:

Purpose. Make sure the purpose for the meeting is clear. Ask, “Why are we asking people to meet?” Or “What do we expect to accomplish by holding this meeting?”

There are many reasons for convening a meeting.

- Share information (provide information *to* people, ask for input *from* people, or both). For example, a company needs to develop new security guidelines for emergencies. The director holds a meeting to explain why the security is necessary (information out to people) and ask participants in the meeting to describe problems they have had with the old system, or where there are gaps in security.
- Make decisions or solve problems. For example, a congregation may have outgrown its church, and members agree to meet to decide whether to build an addition to the current church or to build a new church.
- Plan – generate ideas and develop action plans. For example, in response to a number of recent car thefts, residents planned a neighborhood watch program to alert police to suspicious activity.
- Show support (raise awareness, make a statement). Some meetings may be held for the purpose of showing strength – a political rally for example. A demonstration or march raises awareness or demonstrates support for a cause or issue. Although not usually referred to as a “meeting,” it is important to distinguish the purpose from these types of events.
- Build relationships and empathy. For example, support groups where people meet to discuss difficult life circumstances or retreats where people have the opportunity to interact solely for the sake of getting to know one another better.
- Perform tasks. People might come together to address envelopes, make a quilt or clean out the church basement.

It is common for a meeting to have multiple purposes. Even so, the reason you are asking people to come together – the purpose or purposes for the meeting – should be clear not only to the meeting organizers but also to the people who are asked to attend. Identifying the meeting purpose(s) first is

important because it guides decisions about the people asked to attend the meeting, what is expected to come about from that particular meeting, what agenda items are to be covered, how long the meeting should last, and various other logistical decisions about the meeting.

Product. By the end of the meeting, there should be a result or product. What do you want to achieve by the end of the meeting? What results do you want from this particular meeting? The product might overlap with the purpose, but thinking about what you want people to take away with them when they leave the meeting is a cross-check for making sure you achieve what you need to and don't waste anyone's time. For example, Mayberry Neighborhood Association voted to have a spring cleanup. A subcommittee agrees to meet to plan the spring cleanup. (The purpose of the meeting is to plan.) By the end of the meeting, the subcommittee wanted to have a list and timeline of what needs to happen in order get ready for the spring cleanup day. (The list and timeline are the meeting products.) The product of a meeting doesn't necessarily have to be something tangible. For example, if the purpose of the meeting is to share information about health benefits, the product could be that people walk out with a clear understanding of how many vacation days, sick leave and holidays they have, and whom they call to access medical services.

Plan the agenda. Given the purpose for the meeting, the product you expect coming out of the meeting, what is the agenda? What topics need to be covered? How much time will each topic take? Who should present the topic? *Remember: It is more effective to complete a short agenda than to rush through a long agenda and watch people leave before the meeting concludes.*

Tips for planning the agenda

- List items to be covered and order the items in a logical sequence.
- Designate who will be involved with covering each item.
- Make realistic assessments about the time each item requires. (Hint: Making a decision takes much more time than reports or announcements.)
- Leave ample time at the end of the meeting for summarizing and clarifying "next steps."

Wilton Place Neighborhood Association sample meeting agenda - May 9, 2005

6:00 p.m.	Call to order
	Pledge of allegiance
6:05	Read and approve the minutes
6:10	Reports
	Director's report
	Treasurer's report
	Membership report
	Youth program report
	National Night Out report
7:00	Old business
	Code violations on 315 Taylor Street

	Grant opportunity for crime prevention
7:15	New business
7:20	Announcements
7:30	Adjourn

Participants. Given the purpose, the product and points to cover on the agenda, who needs to participate or attend the meeting? The general rule of thumb about “who needs to attend” is to invite those who have a substantial interest or “stake” in the subject matter of the meeting or in any outcomes or decisions that happen at the meeting.

Give serious thought to who the meeting participants should be. You certainly don’t want to leave out anyone who should be there; yet, don’t waste people’s time by inviting someone who has no interest or reason to attend that meeting.

Process. Finally, turn to process considerations: Who leads the meeting? Who will take notes? Is this the type of meeting where we should post ground rules such as “three minutes for public comment.” What information will participants need in advance of the meeting? These are all process questions that the person responsible for the meeting needs to think through ahead of time.

Additional meeting process questions focus on what we refer to as *logistics*.

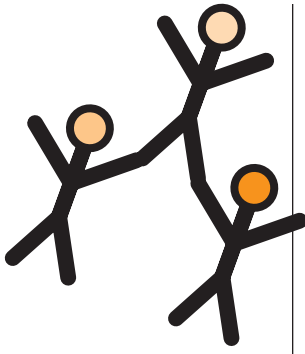
- Where shall we hold the meeting?
- What day? What’s the best time?
- How will we let people know about the meeting (and make sure they come)?
- How will the room be arranged?
- What equipment do we need?
- Will we serve refreshments?

Ground rules

The first few times a group meets, its members will need to decide on ground rules to follow in the meetings. There are no standard ground rules comparable to *Robert’s Rules of Order*. Each group decides what rules it wants to abide by. Typically, ground rules include such items as:

Sample ground rules

- The meeting will start and stop on time.
- Listen and try to understand other perspectives.
- Separate issues from people and focus on issues – no cheap shots or insults.
- Do not monopolize the “airwaves.” Make sure everyone has a chance to participate and be heard.
- Follow the agenda and stick to the topic at hand.
- Speak for yourself and your own reality. Don’t make assumptions about what others think or feel.
- Try for consensus, but recognize differences of opinion are normal. You may need to “agree to disagree.” If you can’t reach consensus, agree upon how the decision shall be made before you make it.
- Always be respectful of others and their opinions. (You can disagree without being disagreeable.)



Activity: Plan a meeting

By yourself, take about five minutes to plan a meeting. The meeting might be about your “passion,” or it could be about your graduation ceremony. Make sure to think about the reason or purpose you are calling the meeting, what product you want out of the meeting, and points or topics you want to cover on the agenda. Then, identify the people you want to attend.

Meeting summary worksheet

Name of group/committee: _____

Date of meeting: _____

Participants attending:

Key points, decisions or recommendations _____

Assignments or follow-up items

Task	Person responsible	Deadline
------	--------------------	----------

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Next meeting date: _____

Proposed agenda items for the next meeting:

11. Independent learning assignment

Attend a meeting and use the *Meeting evaluation checklist* to record what you saw.

If you did not have time in class, write the “committee report” for the meeting you had.

12. Participants’ evaluations

Meeting evaluation checklist

	YES	NO
1. Did the meeting seem like it was planned in advance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Was there a printed agenda distributed at the meeting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Were minutes from the previous meeting distributed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Was there a designated leader for the meeting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Was there a designated recorder to take minutes of the meeting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Did the meeting start on time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Did the meeting finish on time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Did people within the meeting listen to each other?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Was there time for members to get to know other members?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Did most people participate in the discussion?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Did the meeting stay on the agenda or the agreed upon goal?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Were conflicts handled well and constructively?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Would you consider that progress was made at the meetings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Were people's differences of opinions and ideas respected?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Did you feel energized at the end of the meeting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Were people staying actively involved throughout the meeting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Was there a balance between planning and action?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

