

Guide to writing meeting minutes

The following is a guide for making this task easier:

- Make sure that all of the essential elements are noted, such as type of meeting, name of the organization, date and time, name of the chairman, main topics and the time of adjournment. For formal and corporate meetings include approval of previous minutes, and all resolutions.
- Prepare an outline based on the agenda ahead of time, and leave plenty of white space for notes. By having the topics already written down, you can jump right on to a new topic without pause.
- Prepare a list of expected attendees and check off the names as people enter the room. Or, you can pass around an attendance sheet for everyone to sign as the meeting starts.
- To be sure about who said what.
- Don't make the mistake of recording every single comment, but concentrate on getting the gist of the discussion and taking enough notes to summarize it later. Remember that minutes are the official record of what happened, not what was said, at a meeting.
- Use whatever device is comfortable for you, a notepad, a laptop computer or a tape recorder. Many people routinely record important meetings as a backup to their notes.
- Be prepared! Study the issues to be discussed and ask a lot of questions ahead of time. If you have to fumble for understanding while you are making your notes, they won't make any sense to you later.
- Don't wait too long to type up the minutes, and be sure to have them approved by the chair or facilitator before distributing them to the attendees.

Taking Meeting Minutes

At some point you may ask you to take minutes at a meeting. This task isn't reserved for secretaries only. Any person who attends a meeting may be asked to do this. Since the minutes will serve as an official record of what took place during the meeting, you must be very accurate. Here are some pointers to help you master this skill:

Before the Meeting

- Choose your tool: Decide how you will take notes, i.e. pen and paper, laptop computer, or tape recorder.
- Make sure your tool of choice is in working order and have a backup just in case.
- Use the meeting agenda to formulate an outline.

During the Meeting

- Pass around an attendance sheet.
- Get a list of committee members and make sure you know who is who.
- Note the time the meeting begins.
- Don't try to write down every single comment -- just the main ideas.
- Write down motions, who made them, and the results of votes, if any; no need to write down who seconded a motion.
- Make note of any motions to be voted on at future meetings.
- Note the ending time of the meeting.

After the Meeting

- Type up the minutes as soon as possible after the meeting, while everything is still fresh in your mind.
- Include the name of organization, name of committee, type of meeting (daily, weekly, monthly, annual, or special), and purpose of meeting.
- Include the time the meeting began and ended.
- Proofread the minutes before submitting them.