

How to Write Agendas and Meeting Minutes

Introduction

Agendas and Meeting Minutes are usually written in the following contexts:

1. Before a meeting – agendas
2. During a meeting – using agendas
3. After a meeting – minutes
4. Hold a small group meeting
5. Homework - meeting minutes

Meeting - A meeting takes place when people come together (whether for work, clubs, sports, school, volunteer organizations, etc.) for a purpose.

- Meetings are already a common element of your school/work/leisure routines.
- Meeting effectiveness can be weakened by not planning, not preparing a good agenda, not following the prepared agenda, not recording the decisions made, and not following up on decisions and plans.
- Meetings are structured through writing before, during, and after the event.

Procedures:

Step 1: Before a Meeting: How to Write Good Agenda Items

- Before a meeting takes place, an agenda should be written out and distributed. Agendas are a powerful form of writing because they help groups *structure* communication activity by
 - helping people stay focused and on task.
 - provides a checklist of what exactly needs to be accomplished.
 - ensures that meeting activities run according to time constraints.
 - generally, make meetings more organized and productive.
- Good agenda items are
 - specific.
 - results-oriented.
 - timed.
 - realistic.

[SAMPLE] Good agenda items that are specific, goal-oriented, timed, and realistic

Brainstorm *news items* for bulletin (10 min)
 Choose *the logo* for the website (15 min)
 Identify *pros and cons* of using Twitter (12 min)
 Update team members on *budget* (6 min)

Step 2: How To Write Good Agenda Items

- The following are bad agenda items that do not follow our criteria.

[SAMPLE] Bad agenda items that are NOT specific, goal-oriented, timed, or realistic

Grad school applications
Talk about financial aid
Discuss marketing
Create political campaign

Step 3: How to use an Agenda

- During a meeting the agenda should be used and followed as closely as possible.
- When using an agenda, the meeting participants will need to select three people to act as the meeting chair, the meeting note-taker, and the meeting time-keeper. Each of these people will also participate in the discussion.

Step 4: How to Write Meeting Minutes

Meeting minutes are written and distributed shortly after a meeting takes place. The speed with which they are finalized and distributed depends on the norms of the organization.

The required components of meeting minutes are:

- *Agenda* – an exact copy of the meeting agenda, including allotted times
- *Names of Attendees* – who attended, who was absent, who came as a guest.
- *Summaries of each agenda item discussed* – detailed enough so that anyone who was not present would get the gist by reading the minutes
- *Action items* – the next steps agreed upon during the meeting, including what needs to be done by who and by when

Step 5: Writing Effective Meeting Minutes

- The following are the aspects of effective meeting minutes:
 - *Level of detail.* Provides enough details in the minutes to make them comprehensible to someone who was not there. As time goes on participants will forget the details, so having them in writing is will provide organizational memory.
 - *Formatting.* Formatting should be clean, appealing, and enhance (rather than detract from) readability. Clear headers help the reader locate different types of information. Sufficient spacing helps delineate where sections begin/end.
 - *Structure/ordering.* Meeting minutes have an expected structure. The components discussed earlier (agenda, attendees, topics discussed, decisions made, and agreed-upon next steps i.e. action items) should all be included, and ordered in the same sequence.

STEP Leadership Team
Meeting Minutes

Date/time: July 18, 2011, 6:30 – 8:30 P.M.

Attendees: Willie Good, Chilton Rogers, Margie Labadie, Michele Vine, Deb Smith

Absent: Johnny Roberts

Guests: Bob Schaumleffel

AGENDA

- 1) Welcome and Announcements (15 minutes)
- 2) Share drafts of strategy statements for each committee (30 minutes)
- 3) Discuss and improve drafts (75 minutes)
 - a. Does each draft have a clear “issue for implementation”?
 - b. Does each draft explain its expected impact?
 - c. What additional information is needed in each draft?

MINUTES

Agenda item #1 -- Welcome and Announcements

- The new Town Manager, Bob Schaumleffel, was introduced.
- A blog has been created for the STEP Project.
- Chilton offered to help each of us organize our draft presentations for the September board meeting.

Action items

- Everyone should look at the new blog. Send news items to Deb for posting.

