



## PREPARING FOR MEETINGS & TAKING MINUTES

Ray Burniston outlines helpful procedures for meetings.

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### Preparing for a Meeting

“We have nothing much on the agenda for the meeting this evening so it should be over quickly”. How many times have you heard this and then some four hours or so later you emerge exhausted after a long and often fruitless meeting? There is a good saying, “if you fail to plan then you plan to fail”. This is very often true of golf club committee meetings so good planning and preparation are essential.

Make sure you attend to the following items as they all contribute towards a well managed meeting. Prepare the Agenda well in advance and where necessary consult with the Chairman on items that need to be discussed.

1. Make sure all the papers along with the Agenda are sent out to Committee Members well in advance. Leaving them at the clubhouse to be collected is a recipe for disaster because some members will collect them on the day of the meeting and come in totally unprepared.
2. Make sure that the Chairman is well briefed prior to the meeting and that you warn him of any controversial items that may come up.
3. Make sure you have all your papers for the meeting collated in the right order so that you can produce any documents easily.
4. If you are taking the minutes then prepare yourself a special agenda with space to put notes, and proposer and seconder of any proposals.
5. Make sure that any Chairman of Sub-Committees who may have to make reports are fully briefed and have details of what they have to report. You should have ensured that copies of their minutes of meetings have been circulated in time well before the meeting.
6. Make sure you have sufficient chairs for the meeting along with water/minerals and glasses.
7. Avoid having any alcohol at the meeting as this can lead to problems and the more consumed the longer the meeting will go on.
8. Some clubs have the meeting at around 6 pm in the evening and follow this with dinner at 8 pm. This ensures that the meeting only last for a set period.
9. Try to avoid meetings starting much after 6.30 pm in the evening. A meeting starting from about 7.30 pm onwards often means that it will not end until after 10.30 pm and could lead to unhelpful or controversial discussions or decisions. If you can get your committee into the habit of meeting around 5.30/6.30 pm or better still in the morning or afternoon they will very quickly feel the benefit.

## Taking the Minutes

If it is possible to have your assistant to take the minutes so much the better but if this falls on you then a few simple rules if followed makes the job easier. Minutes should record all decisions taken at the meeting and mention of items that were discussed which may be needed for future meetings. They are not a verbatim record of everything that is said because to do this correctly you would need a shorthand typist and a tape recorder. The report would then cover in some cases a small book and it would be difficult to discover the main points of the meeting.

It is important to number minutes possibly on a yearly basis and keep a register of this so that you can easily cross reference previous decisions. Try and avoid putting the “Mr Brown expressed his opposition to a particular point”. Once you name one member others will want the same treatment. Only record the names of proposers and seconders for motions carried. In some cases the Chairman may wish to have a draft copy to look at before you circulate them after the meeting.

Try to get in the habit of writing them out as soon after the meeting as possible hopefully the next day. The longer you leave them the more likely that you may miss something unless you have kept very detailed notes. Try and have them circulated to the committee within ten days of the meeting. This point is often one used against a secretary when the committee are dispensing with his/her services in that the minutes are often not sent out until just before the next meeting. If the club has monthly committee meetings along with sub-committee meetings then it will be difficult to keep up with events unless you have sufficient staff in the office. You will need good self discipline to ensure that things are kept up-to-date.

Well before the next meeting always run through the previous minutes to confirm that any decisions made at the meeting have been implemented and if not, the reason why. Once again good planning and organisation is the secret. Refer back to previous minutes of meetings for items that should be included on the agenda so that you do not miss them out. Invariably in a committee someone will challenge you on this matter sooner or later so make sure you can prove them wrong.

Finally one of the great advantages of computers is that you can set out a template for your minutes with the appropriate headings, thereby saving considerable time in producing the minutes after each meeting.

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