

How to Run an Effective Meeting

Overview

The purpose of this guide is to give student organizations the tools to create and run meetings. Student organizations meetings should be purposeful and informative for members and prospective members. If a meeting does not have meaning or fails to stay on task, the student organization may lose membership. The following suggestions and examples below should give you an idea of meeting organization and behavior.

Before the Meeting

- Reserve a room for your meeting via the event application. The event application is located in OrgSync. To access it, visit your organization's portal and click on the header "Events" and then the green button "Create an Event" to get started. You can do this only if you have been given appropriate portal permissions.
- Officers should discuss the purpose of the meeting, and set the agenda for the meeting.
- Create an agenda with the purpose in mind. Leave room for members to take notes.
- Develop visual aids (like PowerPoint) that correspond with the agenda items.
- Print copies of the agenda to distribute before the meeting begins.
- Send a reminder through OrgSync to members with the meeting date, time, and location.

The Six A's of Running an Effective Meeting

Attitude

- Welcome members by greeting them as they enter the room.
- Make sure to show your enthusiasm and positive attitude about the organization to make the meeting a positive experience for members.
- Keep in mind as a leader of an organization you are also a role model for how members should conduct themselves so be sure to be professional and respectful.

Atmosphere

- You may want to consider providing light refreshments or snacks to create a welcoming atmosphere.
- Allow time for group discussion as well as for feedback on items being covered during the meeting so that members feel they are part of the decision making process for the organization.
- Do your best to keep the meetings focused on the agenda topics. You may want to consider using the parking lot method where you "park" ideas that are off topic for another time and come back to them later.
- Make sure to share accomplishments of your members, share birthdays or recognizing members for a contribution to the group.
- Keep in mind how much of an effect location can have on the atmosphere of a meeting.
- Make sure you reserve a room well in advance with plenty of space and equipped with electronic material if necessary.

Agenda

- Appoint someone or have the Secretary keep minutes of the meeting for future reference.
- Start on time and end on time. Be mindful of other people's time.
- Review the agenda, and then stick to it.
- Define the purpose of the meeting right from the start to keep on task during the meeting.
- Distribute copies of the agenda or make sure to have emailed the agenda to members prior to the meeting.
- Have the agenda focus on the big issues that need the entire organizations attention. You don't want to cover information that could have simply been sent in an email.

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Accomplishments

- Get done what you need to get done. The average person's attention span is 23 minutes, so it's a challenge.
- Work for consensus. Have a planned way to get group consensus that is always used to make sure that decision making stays fair.
- Summarize agreements reached and end the meeting on a positive note by asking members to express things they thought were good or successful.

Adjourn

- Set a date, time and place for the next meeting.
- Collect any sign in or signup sheets.
- Close the meeting with a strong positive statement. Thank the group and acknowledge their efforts.

After the Meeting

- Write up and post the meeting minutes on OrgSync within the next few days.
- Discuss any problems from the meeting with other officers and your advisor. Work on solutions and implement them at future meetings.
- Ask for feedback from members, and see if they would like to make any changes in the meeting
- Follow--up on delegated tasks and ensure members understand and fulfill their responsibilities.
- Put unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting.

Adapted from: San Diego State University <http://sll.sdsu.edu/studentorgs/dev--meetings.html>

Sample Agenda

1. Icebreaker- Let's get to know each other!
2. Welcome
3. Summary of Last Meeting Minutes
4. Talking Point 1
5. Talking Point 2
6. Talking Point 3
7. Announcements-Upcoming events, programs, officer meetings, etc.
8. Questions?
9. Meeting Adjourned- See you all next time!

Robert's Rules of Order

The following are parliamentary procedures some student organizations choose to follow during meetings. If you would like more information on Robert's Rules of Order visit <http://www.ulm.edu/staffsenate/documents/roberts-rules-of-order.pdf>

A Brief Introduction to the Theory of Robert's Rules of Order

The first step to understanding how to use Robert's Rules of Order to run a meeting is understanding a little bit about why they are the way they are, which means a basic understanding of *parliamentary*

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law. Parliamentary law is a branch of common law that governs the proceedings of deliberative assemblies. *Robert's Rules of Order* is a specific variant of parliamentary law that is both a theoretical basis and a 'how-to' guide for conducting business in democratically elected deliberative assemblies.

Why Use Robert's Rules of Order?

The theory underlying *Robert's Rules of Order* is a balance between fundamental principles of parliamentary law. It balances these 3 fundamental principles:

1. Protection of the rights of members, and those whom they represent
2. The requirement for a deliberative process of full and free discussion as a prerequisite to democratic decision making.
3. Protection against instability.

Basic Elements Used by Student Organizations

- Motion—Introduction to a new decision or action by a group member. Majority vote is required for a motion to pass.
- Postpone indefinitely—Used to stop a motion. A second is required to postpone the motion for the rest of the meeting.
- Amend—Process used to add changes to a motion (also known as a “friendly amendment”).
- Commit—Place a motion in committee. A second is required, and a majority vote must carry it.
- Question—Used to end a debate on the floor. A second is required for the vote to be held.
- Table—To lay business to the side for future consideration. A second and majority vote are required to table a discussion.
- Adjourn—Motion made to end the meeting, followed by a second and majority vote.

Adapted from University of Louisiana at Monroe.