



## B

## Taking the minutes and keeping control

### Briefing

#### Taking the minutes

In a face-to-face meeting, a telephone or video-conference call, the minutes are the most important document. It is the record of the meeting and also the 'paper trail' of decisions made and action points to implement.

So what should you put in the minutes? Three things:

WHAT? What decisions were agreed

WHO? Who is responsible for implementing the action points

WHEN? When the action points should be done by

#### Who should take the minutes?

In many meetings the chair or the convenor takes the minutes. However, if it's a big meeting, as chair you need to focus on control. Ask a member of the team to take the minutes, compile them and send them to you for checking. You should then circulate the minutes as soon as possible after the meeting. When you check the minutes of the meeting, make sure they focus on the *what*, *who* and *when* for each agenda item. Make sure they are precise.

#### How to keep control in the meeting

As chair of the meeting your job is to:

- establish clear objectives
- ensure information is transmitted
- manage the discussion
- keep to time
- achieve a clear and successful outcome

**Establish clear objectives** – make it clear in the agenda what the meeting should achieve.

**Ensure information is transmitted** – send out agendas, minutes, reports in good time.

**Manage the discussion** – make sure all views are heard and avoid personal confrontation in the meeting.

**Keep to time** – stop people talking for too long, avoid general conversation at the start of the meeting, make sure the meeting ends at the time agreed. If you need to go on longer, agree it with participants.

**Achieve a successful outcome** – summarize contributions after each speaker if necessary, summarize action points (*who* and *when* after each agenda point) and emphasize priority actions at the end of the meeting.



## Listening



**1**

Listen to part of a meeting where Patricia, the Chair, Karen, Nick and Barry are discussing a motorway widening project. Answer the questions.

- 1 Who does the Chair ask to speak about the motorway widening project?
- 2 Who is surprised and angry about the 12-week delay?
- 3 Why didn't Karen know about the delay?
- 4 What is the cause of the delay?
- 5 What does Karen see as the main problem?
- 6 What does Barry suggest?
- 7 What does the Chair not want minuted?
- 8 What does the Chair want to happen?



**2**

Listen again to the meeting and complete these sentences, all spoken by the Chair.

- 1 Hold ....., Nick.
- 2 Let's ..... the facts first.
- 3 So, let me .....
- 4 So what's the main problem here as you ..... it?
- 5 I don't think that is a ..... for this meeting.
- 6 Rather than looking to blame, let's look for .....

## Business practice



**1**

Listen and repeat these sentences.

Establish clear objectives

Let's establish the facts.

Our objective must be to get the project back on schedule.

Let's be clear about what we want to achieve.

Keep to time

Can we keep to time? I have another meeting after this one.

Time's moving on. Can we go on to the next item?

We're almost out of time. Can you be brief?

Interrupt a speaker

Thanks John, you've made your point. Can we move on?

Thank you, John. I think we've all got the point.

We're short of time, John. Can you sum up very briefly?

Agree with a speaker

Good point, Tanya.

I take your point, Tanya.





Ensure information is transmitted

Could you let me have me a copy of the paperwork?  
Can you send a note to remind everybody?  
Can you circulate the report you mentioned?  
Keep me up to date with developments on a daily basis.  
Can you keep everybody posted on developments?

Manage the discussion

Rather than looking to blame, let's look for solutions.  
What is the main problem as you see it?  
What are our options?  
Let's go round the table and get suggestions.

Achieve a successful outcome

Let's set up a meeting to deal with that.  
Those are all good suggestions.  
I think we've made good progress.  
We're making excellent progress.

**2**

**Test yourself. Cover the sentences above and complete these sentences.**

- 1 What is the problem ..... you see it?
- 2 Let's go ..... the table and get suggestions.
- 3 Let's look ..... solutions.
- 4 I ..... your point.
- 5 We're short ..... time. Can you be brief?
- 6 Let's be ..... about what we want to achieve.



**3**

**You are continuing to chair the meeting in 7A with your colleagues Elena, Tom and John. Follow the instructions. Then listen to the model conversation.**

*You: Ask if there is any other business. Suggest going round the table and ask Elena to speak first.*

Elena: Just one point. I'd like to raise the question of information transfer. No one told me about this meeting. I only found out about it on the general staff intranet this morning. I think that's unsatisfactory. Tom, you're responsible for communications and, frankly, you didn't communicate.

*You: Tell Elena to hold on. Ask Tom what the problem is.*

Tom: We're trying to save time and we're trying to reduce email traffic. So we decided to put the information on the intranet.

*You: Thank Tom. Ask for suggestions to make the information flow more effective.*

John: Could I make a suggestion? It's fine to put meetings information on the intranet but you need to tell us as well.

*You: Thank John for making a useful point. Ask for other suggestions.*

Elena: Yes, I can't always access the staff intranet when I'm out of the office. It's important to send me a meetings request to make sure I get it.



You: *Thank, Elena. Ask Tom to send an email to all staff to advise them about the new meetings policy. Ask him to advise key personnel by sending a meetings request.*

Tom: *OK. I'll do that.*

You: *Ask Tom to keep you informed about developments and to report back at the next meeting. Ask if there is any more AOB and fix the time and date of the next meeting. Thank everyone for attending.*

## Business writing

### Writing task

It is often useful to take your own minutes of a meeting so you can remember the important points. Think of the last meeting you attended. How much can you remember? Look at the Minutes plan below and write your own minutes for the meeting you attended.

#### MINUTES PLAN

Meeting title (title or objectives of meeting)

Meeting date

Meeting venue (if online, write online)

Participants (who was at the meeting)

Apologies (who said they couldn't attend the meeting)

Agenda items (for each agenda item)

- Title of agenda item
- Action point
- Who was responsible for action or reporting
- When

AOB

Date of next meeting

## Key take-aways

Write down the things you will take away from Unit 7 and how you will implement them.

Topic	Take-away	Implementation strategy – How?	Implementation time frame – When?
How to prepare an agenda			
How to run a meeting			
Meetings expectations			
How to write the minutes			



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