

How to Take Effective Minutes

Every time your auxiliary meets, there should be a written record of what was decided, corresponding dates and a record of who will take responsibility for implementation. Your meeting minutes are the official and legal evidence of your auxiliary's activity.

1. Every organization records their minutes a little bit differently. Have your president confirm the format that you should use. Review past meeting minutes to use as a template. Ask the president for a copy of the meeting agenda, including the names of all attendees, including guests or speakers. The meeting agenda is your note-taking guide to record your minutes.
2. Meeting minutes should include:
 - Date of the meeting
 - Time the meeting was called to order
 - Names of the meeting participants and absentees
 - Corrections and amendments to previous meeting minutes
 - Additions to the current agenda
 - Whether a quorum is present
 - Motions taken or rejected
 - Voting—who made a motion and who seconded that motion, and the outcome of the vote
 - Actions taken or agreed to be taken
 - Next steps
 - Items to be held over
 - New business
 - Open discussion or public participation
 - Next meeting date and time
 - Time of adjournment
3. Review the agenda to confirm you've captured all of the vital aspects of the meeting. Add notes for clarification. Review actions, motions, votes, and decisions for clarity. Edit so that the minutes are succinct, clear and easy to read. Attach meeting handouts and documents that were referred to during the meeting to the final copy, rather than summarizing the contents in the minutes.

4. Once your meeting minutes are written, they are made official by having the secretary sign them.
5. Follow your organization's by-laws and protocols for storing minutes. It's a good idea to have back-up copies either in print, on a hard drive or a cloud-based portal.
6. The secretary also has the responsibility for sharing minutes (in print, by email or online) once approved by the president.

Helpful Tips for Taking Meeting Minutes:

1. Use a template
2. Check off attendees as they arrive
3. Do introductions or circulate an attendance list
4. Record motions, actions, and decisions as they occur
5. Ask for clarification as necessary
6. Write clear, brief notes-not full sentences or verbatim wording
7. Maintain the same verb tense

Common Mistakes in Taking Board Meeting Minutes:

1. Failure to document a quorum
2. Ambiguous description of auxiliary actions
3. Including information that could harm the auxiliary in a legal sense
4. Lengthy delays in providing minutes after a meeting
5. Delays in approving minutes from past meetings-missing mistakes
6. Failing to file and manage documents
7. Failing to get documents signed so they serve as an official and legal record
8. Always be mindful that the purpose of taking meeting minutes is to reflect the true intentions of the auxiliary and that they are an official and legal record. Given the breadth of detail and complexity of process associated with proper documentation of meeting minutes, many organizations find using a tool, such as cloud-based portal, helps to make this work easier and more efficient, and can elevate organizational performance. As serious as the job is, the task of taking and preparing minutes can be a rewarding experience.