

## Quick Guide: Chairing Meetings

Every meeting needs a chairperson to direct the proceedings and to ensure its smooth running. If you are asked to chair a meeting it can be a daunting task to undertake. However, with careful preparation and using techniques to guide the meeting you will chair a successful meeting. So here are the **top ten tips** to help you chair your next meeting:

1. **Plan and prepare for your meeting.** Know the objective of the meeting and what needs to be achieved. Prepare the agenda.
2. **Have a pre-meeting** with the minute taker. Discuss the agenda items, what each item will cover and any technical language. Agree the type of minutes required. Explain that you will summarise each item clarifying decisions made before moving onto the next one.
3. **Think about who will be at the meeting** and what they may contribute or ask. Prepare your own contribution, including an introduction to the meeting.
4. **Start on time** and manage the time throughout the meeting. Introduce the minute taker and attendees if necessary. Introduce the meeting, its purpose and objectives. Approve and sign the previous minutes.
5. **Introduce each item**, its objective and how it will be managed. For example, 'we need to agree the training plan for next year so I'd like to hear everybody's thoughts on this and then we will agree what we will be able to do'. Manage any discussions using techniques such as brainstorming before discussing pros and cons and coming to a conclusion.
6. **Stimulate discussion** by asking who wishes to contribute and take each person in turn. Encourage the shy and control the garrulous. Keep contributions on track, be assertive, listen but carefully decline waffle and any irrelevancies whilst still maintaining the self-esteem of the contributor.
7. **Ensure that decisions are reached.** Agree action points making sure that a person or people are nominated to implement it and that there is a deadline for this implementation.
8. **Summarise after each item** so everyone is clear about what happened. This will also help the minute taker to check what has been recorded.
9. **Guide the meeting** rather than impose your own opinions.
10. **Close the meeting** remembering to thank everyone for their contributions.

**Compiled by Judith Di-Castri**