

Quick Guide: Creating an Agenda

To use valuable time effectively during a meeting it is crucial that you have a well prepared agenda. An agenda helps the chairperson to stick to time and lead the meeting successfully. It also helps participants prepare as they can see where they will be involved. And finally, it is of great benefit to the minute taker as they can see what will be discussed, the aim of each item and the priority given to it. Here are the **top ten tips** for creating an agenda so that your meetings are productive:

- 1. Know the purpose of the meeting.** Then decide the best time of day for this meeting and who should be involved.
- 2. Determine the formality of the agenda and meeting.** If it's a formal meeting include the following before the main items: apologies for absence, minutes of previous of meeting, matters arising from the previous meeting. However, if it's a more informal meeting, eg a team meeting, then item headings are enough.
- 3. Ask chairperson and participants to submit agenda items** at least two weeks before. This will help to prevent such a long AOB section at the end.
- 4. Put the items in a logical order.** Group similar items together to save repetition during discussions. Put important items early in the proceedings when participants are most alert.
- 5. Start and finish the agenda with two or three quick, less important, items.** When participants arrive, or feel it is time to go, their minds may be elsewhere! This order will get everybody involved, encourage them to participate and distract them from their own thoughts.
- 6. Vary items** so that you have a mix of less important and more challenging ones; so that you have some participants involved and then all involved. If you have several presentations intersperse these between more challenging items. For long meetings, (more than two hours) include a break for everybody.
- 7. Include a verb on each agenda item** so instead of 'Canteen' put 'Review and agree new menu for next three months'. Instead of 'Budgets' put 'Discuss and decide 5% reduction for next year'. By including a verb everybody is clear about the purpose of the item so will prepare accordingly.
- 8. Include the start time against each item** so everybody can see how long each will last. This will give an indication of its importance. Also add the person responsible for introducing the item.
- 9. The agenda, whether formal or informal, should always include the date, time and place of the meeting.**
- 10. Finally, add the details for the next meeting.**

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