

Quick Guide : Minute Taking

Minutes are a factual, impartial and balanced record of the decisions and summary of a meeting. As such they should be an Accurate, Brief and Clear snapshot of what was discussed, what was agreed, what action is to be taken, by whom and by when. So here are the **top ten tips** for minute takers:

1. **If you are not leading** the meeting yourself, sit next to or as close as possible to that person, and sit where you can see as well as hear.
2. **Listen and understand.** Even when the topic is unfamiliar or the speaker is boring or disliked! The only way you will be able to select the right things to note is to listen and concentrate to follow the conversation or discussion.
3. **Pick out key phrases.** Listen for the following: agreed, decided, approval/ed, propose/al, increase, decrease, trends, any dates/figures, urgent, deadline, immediate, important, in conclusion/summary, noted etc
4. **Shorthand, laptops and recording devices** are the enemy of minute takers. When you use these, all that happens is you have volumes of notes to transcribe.
5. **Make your minutes minute (pronounced "my newt"!)** Minutes should be just a little bit longer than an agenda, so that you take down less and therefore have less to transcribe saving time, effort and confusion.
6. **Make notes which reflect the kind of minutes needed** (narrative, resolution or action).
7. **Speak up and clarify.** If you don't understand something, or cannot hear properly, or just lose your concentration, don't be afraid to ask.
8. **It's best to establish your right to interrupt,** at a pre-meeting with the person who will be leading the meeting.
9. **Don't write war and peace!** Unless it is vital that you have a verbatim account, then produce an action list and base your fuller minutes on this.
10. **At the end of the meeting,** do one or all of the following: ask for any necessary clarification; ask meeting contributors for agenda appendices, or notes from their presentation; give yourself time to read through your own notes in the quiet of the meeting room, before you go back to your desk.

Compiled by Val Tyler