

Quick Guide: Preparing to Take Minutes

More and more we are being asked for courses on taking minutes. Are more meetings happening in this economic climate? One of the key aspects covered on the course is the importance of preparing to take minutes. The better prepared you are the easier it will be for you to concentrate on taking minutes during the meeting. So here are the **top ten tips** to help you focus on the meeting rather than worry about what it's about, if you've booked coffee, or if the powerpoint works.

- 1. Read the agenda, and any accompanying papers.** Consider what will be discussed for each item, the terminology used, or if you envisage any problem areas. See who is responsible for each item and how long it is estimated to last.
- 2. Know the overall purpose of the meeting.** Find this out from the chairperson. Know what each item is about and if unsure check with the chair or person responsible. Some background will definitely help you when taking minutes.
- 3. Read the previous minutes** to bring you up to speed on topics and so you recognise the language and names of companies and people when mentioned.
- 4. Arrange a pre-meeting meeting with the chair** to discuss all of the above, to agree timings for items, to ask them to sum up after each item and to establish whether it will be OK for you to interrupt if anything is unclear during the meeting.
- 5. Know the style of minutes that you will have to write up** as this will affect the notes that you take during the meeting. Plus, find out how the minutes will be used and who by as this will also affect the notes you take.
- 6. Pre-rule your pages** or print a template of agenda items for when taking notes.
- 7. Ensure you have the correct equipment:** pens, paper, spare copies of agenda and previous minutes, phone numbers of anyone you might have to call, diary, clipboard just in case there is not enough room at the table for you!
- 8. Know who will be attending the meeting;** check initials you will use for each of them and make sure there are no doubles. If you do not know certain participants ,see if you can find a photo of them so you recognise them when they arrive.
- 9. Confirm admin arrangements** and refreshments for the room. Let reception know about the meeting, especially if you have any visitors arriving for the meeting. Book and double-check any equipment that will be required for the meeting.
- 10. Arrive early** – at least 10 minutes before the start. Claim your chair next to the chairperson. Be there to greet participants and introduce yourself so you can hear the participants' voices in case you haven't spoken to them before. Do a table plan of where they sit in case you need to refer to this later.

Enjoy taking minutes at your next meeting!

Compiled by Judith Di-Castri