



CONDUCTING AN EFFECTIVE MEETING

Are you dreading meetings because they are disorganized, dull, noisy, unproductive, or too long? Meetings can be boring, unfocused and are sometimes seen as unnecessary. This does not mean meetings are inherently valueless, but indicate they are often poorly planned and conducted. A meeting is not an end in itself, but a vehicle to reach goals. Meetings help an organization plan and determine courses of action. If the facilitator starts with a careful plan and finishes with a thorough and consistent follow-up, the meeting will run smoothly and productively.

The following are some tips to help you make your meetings successful, productive, fun and engaging:

PURPOSE TO MEETING

- Gives members a chance to discuss and evaluate goals and objectives in order to develop courses of action.
- Keeps members updated on current and upcoming events.
- Provides opportunities for the group to communicate and promote organization cohesion.
- Allows the organization to pull resources together for decision making and planning implementation process.
- Ensures members are aware of their importance to the organization. (Ask for opinions and ideas.)
- Creates opportunities to find solutions and solve problems.

MEETING PREPARATION

Before student organization officers call for a meeting, officers must ask themselves whether they have to call a meeting in the first place. Sometimes a group-wide email or a few simple conversations can accomplish the same thing more easily. If you decide you need to have a meeting, then you must plan carefully. This is your most important step as a meeting leader.

- **Physical Setting:** Remember to reserve a room, arrange for any special equipment and have a plan for putting the room back in order after the meeting is finished. SHSU Re Student Organizations can reserve rooms through the Lowman Student Center. Organizations may also reserve other spaces on campus through contacting the appropriate Building Liaison.
- **Agenda:** This defines the purpose of the meeting. The agenda should not be overly ambitious, but should address all items necessary for the meeting. Agendas may include: Approval of Agenda with any additions or retractions, Correction and Approval of Minutes; Announcements; Officer Reports; Committee Reports; Unfinished Business; New Business; Special Issues/Concerns; Adjournment. Communicate with your advisor prior to the meeting to see if they have any additions to the agenda.
- **Distribution:** Distribute the agenda and any other pertinent information such as articles or relevant policies to members prior to the meeting (perhaps by email) so they can review and be prepared to discuss items. Also, make sure members know where and when the meeting is to take place.



DURING THE MEETING

Attitude

- Greet members, be jovial and make them feel welcome and happy to be attending.
- Get people excited about the meeting! Show your enthusiasm. Make it fun and enjoyable.
- As a leader, be a role model. Listen, show interest, appreciation and confidence in members.
- Respect people's feeling, opinions and acknowledge constructive contributions. Bring private conversations to a close that are irrelevant to the topic at hand.
- Be professional and courteous. Allow everyone the chance to contribute.

Atmosphere

- When possible, have light refreshments, even if it's just candy. This helps people relax and breaks the ice.
- Encourage group discussion and feedback on all discussion topics. You will have better decisions and highly motivated members that help shape the organization and the activities if they have participated in the process.
- Keep conversations focused. As gently and tactfully as possible, end discussions when they are unproductive or becoming detrimental.
- Recognize, appreciate, celebrate and congratulate members who have done something great in the organization, on campus or elsewhere. Celebrate significant holidays, birthdays, organizational accomplishments, etc. Be creative and have fun with recognizing your members.

Agenda

- Appoint someone to keep minutes of the meeting for future reference.
- Start on time and end on time. Be mindful of other people's time.
- Review the agenda, and then stick to it.
Accomplishments
- Get done what you need to get done. The average person's attention span is 23 minutes, so it's a challenge.
- Work for consensus.
- Summarize agreements reached and end the meeting on a positive note by asking members to express things they thought were good or successful.

Adjourn

- Conduct and collect a meeting assessment/evaluation (if you have one).
- Set a date, time and place for the next meeting.
- Collect any sign-in or sign-up sheets.
- Close the meeting with a strong positive statement. Thank the group and acknowledge their efforts.

AFTER THE MEETING

- Write up and distribute minutes within the next few days.
- Discuss any problems from the meeting or the assessments/evaluations with other officers and your advisor. Work on solutions and implement them at future meetings.
- Follow-up on delegated tasks and ensure members understand and fulfill their responsibilities. Give recognition and appreciation to excellent and timely progress.
- Put unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting.

