



**University  
of Victoria**

Human Resources

# **The Minute Taker's Guide**

Self Learning Guide

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## Introduction to the Self Learning Package Series

The Self Learning Package Series is based on a few key principles:

1. People are their own best experts.
2. People are competent in their work and enjoy improving their professional and personal skills.
3. People learn best when they are responsible for their own learning.
4. People need an opportunity to learn at their own pace and for their own reasons.
5. People need information that is flexible enough for them to adapt to incorporate their own cultural, religious, and economic beliefs and customs.

The Self Learning Package Series has very simple objectives:

1. To summarize a wealth of general and basic information into manageable resources for people to use personally and professionally;
2. To provide this information in readable and practical resources that will give people the opportunity to learn for themselves, at their own pace, some or all of the information presented;
3. To help people integrate their communication, leadership and supervision, learning and personal growth skills into one body of information;
4. To provide people with further references and ideas to continue their self-directed learning.

## Learning Objectives

No matter who you are or what you do, whether at work or in the community, you are probably involved in meetings. Meetings are costly, even if they are held in the company's boardroom. To ensure meetings are productive and worth the expense involved, three ingredients are necessary: an assurance of closure, a strong chair or leader, and accurate minutes. It has been said that if the minutes of a meeting are not accurate, then the meeting may just as well not have taken place.

If there is no accurate record on what actually occurred at a meeting, how can the group effectively track its accomplishments and decisions?

After completing this self-learning package you will:

- Understand your role as a minute taker
- Learn an approach to take effective notes during the meeting
- Be able to write minutes that are suitable for formal meetings, semi-formal meetings and action minutes.
- Develop the essential skills of an effective minute-taker.



### Personal Learning Objectives

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## Section 1: The Role of a Minute Taker



Take a few moments to think about your answers to the following questions. Compare your answers with the author's suggested responses in the appendix.

What is the purpose of minutes?

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What is your role as the minute taker i.e. what are the tasks you are expected to perform?

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Being a minute taker can:

- Keep you up to date on what is going on in the organization.
- Enable you to help the chair accomplish the goals of the meeting.
- Keep you more focused on what is being said so your comments are relevant and your interpretation of what happened is accurate.

Sometimes, accepting the role of minute taker in a meeting feels like you have been relegated to the back seat, and have a boring role. However, the minute taker plays a vital role within the meeting structure and can choose to use his or her responsibilities wisely. The minute taker has legitimate, easy access to other members of the meeting, including those in key positions.

There are people who avoid taking minutes if at all possible and who are intimidated by the idea of taking minutes because they are unsure of how to do it, and fearful of missing important details.

The minute-taker has a number of names: recording secretary, secretary, note taker, recorder. In many meetings, the chair may act as recorder but this is not recommended because it prevents the chair from devoting his/her full attention to the role of chair and may result in incomplete minutes.

According to Robert's Rules of Order, if the chair is absent and there is no vice-chair, the secretary should call the meeting to order and preside over it until the meeting elects a chair pro tem (for the time being).

## Notes and Ideas



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## Section 2: The Skills of a Minute Taker

To be an effective minute taker, you must be alert, highly organized, and focused on the group discussion, in order to restate the positions and the discussions of others accurately and objectively. These are learned skills.

A minute taker must be:

- A good listener
- A sound critical thinker
- An excellent organizer

What other skills would you add to this list?

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### *Appearances*

Appearances count for 55% of others' impression of you. This includes your body language as well as your clothes. Here are some tips to help you convey confidence about yourself and your abilities.

- Learn to develop a poker face during the meeting itself, to minimize emotion concerning the various motions or member comments.
- Learn to relax and enjoy your role.
- Dress like everyone else in the group, staying on the conservative side.
- Greet members as they come in and say a cheerful goodbye when the meeting is over.
- Always shake hands, as it is the universal opening ritual of any business transaction. Your grip should be firm but not overpowering, and remember to make eye contact.

## *Listening Skills*

Research has shown that you spend most of your day communicating. Of that communication time, half is spent listening. Research also shows that you only understand 50 percent of what you hear, and that your “active forgetting process” removes much of that within a day. This lack of understanding can be extremely costly.

The cost of not listening is staggering, but the truth is, we can all learn to listen better, if we follow some key guidelines.

## *Listening for Answers*

The ability to really listen is an important skill. Listening allows you to understand where the other person is coming from, and shows you're interested in what he/she has to say.

Unfortunately, we all experience common listening problems.

- We let our attention wander.
- We miss the real point.
- We let our emotions interfere.
- We “step on” the statements of the speaker
- We think ahead, and miss what's being said right now.

To improve your listening skills, use the **three** steps of Active Listening.

1. **Non-Verbal Messages:** Eye contact, an alert expression, head nodding, and a forward lean to the body expresses listening.
2. **Cues or Invitations:** These are the phrases like “uh-huh, O.K., Yes, go on, etc. that signal our attention and invite an individual to continue talking.
3. **Clarification of what has been said:** We can do this in one of several ways—by asking questions, summarizing what has been said, or paraphrasing the message in your own words.

## *Note-Taking Skills*

Most individuals have their own preferred style of note taking. The key to improving your note-taking style is to make your notes more effective and to help improve your comprehension and retention. The best method is the one YOU CHOOSE, YOUR BEST FIT.

The following are some tips which can easily be added to your current skills:

- leave lots of white space on the page,
- write on only one side of the page,
- keep notes in stapled groupings,
- write notes only once (versus rewriting later with fancy colored pens to highlight points -- wastes a lot of your valuable time).



*The Sequential Note-Taking Method*

Taking sequential notes involves dividing a page into two columns with the left column reserved for "key words" which summarize the details in the second column.

This method allows you to record details on the right side and return later to write in the key words to summarize what you have written. With practice however you can often begin with the key word and write in the details as you go along. A good presenter follows a sequential format of information and often gives you the key words you need in the form of headings.

The purpose of this method is to cut down on the amount of notes you take. You may want to use abbreviated words and point-form notes rather than using long sentences. Recording written or verbal presentations verbatim takes a great deal of time and you rarely end up with notes that give you both the overview of the presentation and the content.

Remember that no meeting can ever be completely recorded and retained for later use, therefore begin to take notes on key points that can be helpful.

It is advisable not to write on both sides of a sheet of paper. If you need to add a lot of extra information later on you can simply put it between two pages.

*Ways to Stream-line your Note-Taking*

We spend a great deal of time writing notes and often feel compelled to write each word in full. Try reducing the length of notes by practicing the following tips:

Eliminate small connecting words such as:

Is	Was
Are	A
Were	Would
An	The
This	Of

Eliminate pronouns such as:

They	These
His	Hers
That	Them

Use symbols and abbreviate where possible:

Use	For	Use	For
+	Plus	Wd	word
&	And	Ref	reference
=	Equals	Dif	different
-	Minus	2	Two, to, too
#	Number	R	Or, our, hour
X	Times	Wz	was
>	Greater than, more, larger	Z	As, is
<	Less than, smaller, fewer	@	at
w/	With	Wrt	Write
w/o	Without	Rt	Right
w/in	Within	i.e.	That is
→	Leads to, produces, results in, means	^	therefore
←	Comes from	‡	however
/	Per	Etc.	And so on
1	One	Q	question
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Third	Wc	Which
lk	like	F	If
Ex or eg	example	vs	Versus, as opposed to
p.	page	4	For, four
\$	dollars	b/4	before
b/c	because	U	you

**Example: "The diameter of the Earth is four time greater than the diameter of the Moon" Becomes "Earth = 4x > diameter of Moon"**

**W/ prctice u cn rd & wrt lk ths 2!**

Use the sequential note-taking method and the tips you've learned in this section the next time you take notes. Try various approaches to discover which is most comfortable and compatible with your current method of taking notes.

## Notes and Ideas

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## Section 3: Meeting Agreements

Meeting agreements or guidelines can make a minute taker's job much easier, particularly if the chair or several members of the meeting team are new and not aware of their responsibilities within the group. The agreements are similar to a contract, providing each member with the opportunity to see, in print, what is expected of him or her, and by signing it, agrees to carry out certain tasks.

The agreements outlined are basic formats that can be easily customized to meet the specific needs of your organization.

### **The Chair**

To ensure that the ABC Committee conducts its business in an efficient manner, I, (person's name), the chair of the committee, hereby promises to do the following:

- Give all the meeting participants' adequate notice of an upcoming meeting.
- Prepare a detailed agenda.
- Allow all sides of an argument to be heard.
- Encourage all members to participate in a discussion.
- Restate all motions before a vote is taken and then state the outcome.
- Insist that complex motions and resolutions be submitted in writing.
- Avoid sending the minute taker out of the room during the meeting to run errands.
- Permit the minute taker to take a break when the group does.
- Be familiar with the agreed upon procedures used to govern the meeting.

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Chair

### **The Recording Secretary**

To ensure that the ABC Committee conducts its business in an efficient manner, I, (person's name), the recording secretary, hereby promise to do the following:

- Notify the chair of any unfinished business, motions, or reports that are due at the upcoming meeting.
- Send out all agendas and accompanying material promptly.
- Make arrangements for any necessary equipment or refreshments.
- Arrive at the meeting at least 20 minutes early.
- Be prepared and organized and have any required photocopying completed.
- Alert the chair when a quorum is present.
- Provide the organization with objective, accurate minutes.
- Be familiar with the agreed upon procedures used to govern the meeting.

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Recording Secretary

### **The Meeting Participant**

To ensure that the ABC Committee conducts its business in an efficient manner, I, (person's name), hereby promise to do the following:

- Read the agenda and all accompanying material, including the previous minutes, before the meeting.
- Bring all necessary reports and information to the meeting.
- Be prepared to discuss the items on the agenda.
- Avoid emotional and tactless remarks.
- Address all remarks through the chair.
- Put all complex motions and resolutions in writing.
- Listen to the remarks of others with an open mind.
- Give everyone an equal chance to speak.
- Avoid asking the recording secretary to run errands for me during the meeting.
- Be familiar with the agreed upon procedures used to govern the meeting.

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Meeting Participant

## Section 4: Minutes Styles

### *Choosing a Style*

Minutes are a permanent, formal record of what went on in a meeting. The purpose of minutes is to provide members of a group with:

- A clear, objective summary of the group's activities
- A means of conveying information to people unable to attend the meeting
- A reminder of future expected actions
- A historical background of the decisions of the group and the rationale behind them

When approved, minutes are considered legal documents and can be used in legal proceedings.

Minutes may be written in a variety of styles: formal, informal, semi-formal, or action. The choice of style is based on the nature of the meetings and the meeting bylaws.

Formal minutes support a meeting, governed by a chair according to a parliamentary code or procedure. There are a number of reference guides to parliamentary procedure, such as Robert's Rules of Order or Procedures for Meetings and Organizations.

Semiformal or action minutes are used by small groups who do not have a clearly defined operating structure.

Minutes don't have to be verbatim to be proper. The exception is motions, which should be recorded word for word. Word for word documents are too time-consuming to prepare and to read. However, groups will differ as to how much detail they require. Some groups want minutes to be an outline of everything that was discussed so they have justification for decisions. Others feel that background information is not essential providing members understand the remarks. It is important that you, as minute taker, know what type of minutes the group expects to receive and can deliver them consistently.

For example, a committee concerned with public hearings relating to changes in municipal bylaws can correctly choose one of two styles:

- Comprehensive minutes with a detailed rationale for every decision.
- Minutes that are concise, with the rationale "passed in accordance with Section 345 of the Zoning Bylaw."

## *Informal Minutes*

Small groups, perhaps because of their size, often prefer to function more informally. However, minutes are still a vital component of the meetings and can be prepared as described. Informal minutes use a modified version of parliamentary procedure. They record what occurred at the meeting for absent members, and for future reference. They summarize the action taken, the action planned, the people responsible, and the deadlines.

Minutes are written in a narrative format in complete sentences. They include some background information, keeping in mind they are written solely for the benefit of people already familiar with the group and its activities.

## **Sample**

<p>Board of Directors Meeting April 12, 200x</p> <p><b>MINUTES</b></p> <p>Present: J. Weinstien, A. McGraw, J. Carson, C. Stefanko, A. Pettus Absent: P. Hook</p> <p><b><u>Summary of Topics Discussed</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Report from Architectural Review Committee. Copy attached.</li><li>• Landscaping of centre divider on P.T.H. 59. Three options considered: hiring private landscape designer, seeking volunteers from community, assigning association custodian to complete work.</li><li>• Collection of outstanding assessments. Discussion of delinquent accounts and possible actions.</li><li>• Use of beach club by film companies. Pros: considerable income. Cons: damage to furnishings, loss of facility to homeowners.</li><li>• Nomination of directors to replace those with two-year appointments.</li></ul> <p><b><u>Decisions Reached</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hire private landscaper to renovate and plat centre divider on P.T.H. 59.</li><li>• Attach liens to homes of members with delinquent assessments.</li><li>• Submit to general membership vote the question of renting the beach club to film companies.</li></ul>		<p>Summarizes discussion.</p> <p>Summarizes decisions rather than showing motions and voting.</p>
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**Action Items**

**Item**

1. Landscaping bid
2. Attorney for liens
3. Creation of nominating committee

**Responsibility**

J. Carson  
P. Hook  
A. Pettus

**Due date**

May 1  
April 20  
May 1

Highlights items for action.

## Action Minutes

Action minutes are best suited for informal meetings where discussions lead to actions/decisions. They can be written in point form. You need to identify the person or persons responsible for future actions and set time limits.

In many informal meetings the minute taker is encouraged to participate in discussions; or the chair may act as minute taker. In some groups, members rotate the responsibility of minute taker with a different person appointed for this task at each meeting. In these circumstances, action minutes are usually easiest to use. They allow you to make notes as well as participate, and the straight forward format keeps the minutes consistent despite different authors.

### Sample 1

**Committee:** Consultants

**Date:** November 2, 200-

**Location:** Boardroom

**Participants:** Dr. Roy Brown (Chair), Barbara Bowen, Ryan Biss, Michele Baty, Jason Ho, and Wendy Zuliani (Recorder)

**Absent:** Penny Strachan

**Agenda Topic:** Management of additional nursing homes.

**Discussion:** ABC may take on the management of three more nursing homes.

Consultants are working overtime now trying to visit company's present homes and keep up with paper work.

Mr. Jason Ho is taking three-month leave of absence starting January.

When will management of new homes be assumed? Where will they be located?

**Results:** The management of the new homes could be handled if an additional consultant were hired and trained before the new homes came on board.

Preferably, the new consultant should live close to one, if not all, the homes.

**Expected Action and Deadlines:** Dr. Roy Brown should make management aware



of the need to hire an additional consultant if they proceed with the new homes.

Dr. Roy Brown will report on the discussion at the next meeting.

Secretary: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Ext: \_\_\_\_\_

## Sample 2

<p><b>Minutes for:</b> Consultants  <b>Date:</b> November 2, 200-  <b>Location:</b> Boardroom  <b>In Attendance:</b> Dr. Roy Brown , Barbara Bowen, Ryan Biss, Michele Baty, Jason Ho, and Wendy Zuliani</p>		
Activity	Responsible	Deadline
ABC is taking on the management of 3 more nursing homes. Consultants already overworked. Jason Ho taking a leave of absence. Speak to management re hiring and training a new consultant before management of new homes begins.	Dr Roy Brown	Nov. 24
New furnace is needed for Chatelaine Nursing Home – investigate size of new furnace required.	Jason Ho	Nov. 16
Discussed possibility of having identical food menus in all homes. Idea rejected.	All Consultants	N/A
All homes should switch to XYZ cleaning products – they are just as effective as others, and cheaper.	All Consultants	N/A
Next Meeting: November 24, 9:00 a.m.; Boardroom		

## *Formal Minutes*

In formal meetings, decisions are reached through motions. Motions are proposals placed before the members for debate and voting. They must be recorded verbatim.

When you are organizing the minutes of a formal meeting, they follow the same organizational pattern as the steps in a formal meeting.

- **Heading:** One inch from the top of the page. Each heading line should be centered and typed in the style preferred by the organization (either capitals or upper case/lower case letters).
  - The heading should include the word “Minutes” and the name of the group or committee holding the meeting.
  - There is no rule about which line should come first but be consistent. Use the same style for all of an organization’s minutes and agendas.
- **The place, time and date of the meeting can be in the heading or in the introductory paragraph.**
  - If the place of the meeting is always the same, it may be omitted.
  - The minutes should also state whether the meeting is a regular (weekly, monthly, yearly) or special meeting.
- **Attendance:** Include the names of those who attended as well as the names of those invited who did not attend. These can be listed randomly or in alphabetical order. List people who are not regular members as “In Attendance.” You should also record who chaired the meeting as well as your name as the recording secretary/note taker.
- **Numbering:** Number each of the sections below for clarity.
- **Minutes of previous meeting:** At the beginning of the meeting, the chair asks the members to approve or amend the minutes of the last meeting. You can record this decision as a motion. However, it is preferable to use one of the following standard forms:
  - Minutes of the June 10, 2002 meeting were approved as read.
  - Minutes of the June 10, 2002 meeting were approved as circulated.
  - Minutes of the June 10, 2002 meeting were approved with corrections.
  - The reading of the minutes of the June 10, 2002 meeting was deferred until...
- **Reports:** This includes any reports received from any of the groups’ officers or committees. As minute taker, you must summarize any reports or other documents presented at the meeting and then either attach them to the minutes as an appendix or refer to them in the minutes as “filed.”
  - If a report was sent to the group for information purposes only, indicate the report was “received.”
  - If a report was presented orally, or accompanied the report with a verbal explanation, indicate the report was “presented.”
  - If the report contains a statement of opinion and facts, and concludes with resolutions, then you should record the report was “adopted” or “accepted.” A report could also be “considered” if the group wants to look at it further.
  - When the group decides to “adopt” a committee’s resolutions, enter the resolution in full into the minutes. With a particularly important report, the

- group may order it “to be entered into the minutes.” In that case you must include the whole report in the minutes.
- After someone moves either to accept or to adopt a report, the report is then open to amendment by the group.
  - **Finances:** Finances are usually discussed under the treasurer’s report. No action is required for this type of report. In fact, it is technically improper to approve the treasurer’s report unless it has been audited. A treasurer’s annual report is different. It will be in written form and should be audited. Then a motion and a vote are required on accepting the auditor’s report.
  - **Correspondence:** Letters/faxes/emails sent to the group are usually read by the secretary and either filed or attached to the appendix of the minutes. Telephone conversations may also be handled in this way.
  - **Unfinished business or business arising from previous meeting:** This involves motions or issues from earlier meetings, and deferred to the current meeting, details of follow-up and new actions as a result of previously handled business.
  - **New business:** This portion of the meeting is devoted to the introduction of new information. It may also include handing specific tasks to specific members of the group, and setting deadlines.
  - **Adjournment:** The chair may call for a motion to adjourn or may adjourn the meeting him/herself after ascertaining there is no further business. As minute taker, you would record:
    - The chair adjourned the meeting at 2:30 p.m.
    - There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.
  - **Next meeting:** Record the date, time, and location of the next meeting.
  - **Signatures:** Highly formal groups still prefer “Respectfully submitted” although this is usually omitted. However, the minute taker’s signature and title appear at the end of the minutes. The minute taker may also choose to include the date when the final preparation of the minutes was completed. This is optional.

In formal minutes, the chair initials all pages of the minutes and signs the last page to prevent any alterations.

## Sample

### MINUTES COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF RED OAKS

A regular monthly meeting of the Council of the Town of Red Oaks was held on May 20, 200-, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers

Present: Mayor Albert Brooks (Chair), Regional Councilors, Suzanne Watson (Recording Secretary), and Laura Cockburn, and Councilors, Adam Kodeda, Mary Saito, Bruce Green, Michael Miller, and Ryan Duchak.

Absent: Councilor Robert Seymour

Staff members in attendance: Jennifer Becevello, Clerk; W.J. Kelley, Commissioner of Planning; Joan Bowen, C.E.O., Library Board; and Peter Jansen, Secretary.

(Vanessa – I believe minutes also need to be numbered – I have added in this sample but you may want to include in preceeding instructions)

#### 1. Previous Minutes

Minutes of the April 16, 200-, meeting was approved as circulated.

#### 2. Reports

##### 2a.Red Oaks Public Library Board

Motion: It was moved by Regional Councilor Watson and seconded by Councilor Kodeda that the report of the Library Board be received.

Motion passed.

##### 2b.Red Oaks Arena Association

Motion: It was moved by Councilor Miller and seconded by Councilor Duchak that the report of the Arena Association be received.

Motion passed.

##### 2c.Red Oaks Arena Association

Motion: It was moved by Councilor Miller and seconded by Councilor Duchak that the report of the Arena Association be received.

Motion passed.

#### 3.Unfinished Business

##### 3a. Waste Management and Reduction Calendar

Motion: It was moved by Councilor Duchak and seconded by Councilor Saito:

“That Council approve the draft Waste Management and Reduction calendar as presented at this meeting;

“That the contract for printing be awarded to Town Crier Inc.; and

“That certain details be added to the historical section of the calendar.”

Amending Motion: It was moved by Councilor Watson and seconded by Councilor Miller that the motion be amended to include the words “for a fee not to exceed \$19,260.00.” The amending motion and the main motion carried.

4. New Business

4a.Reduction of Speed Limit – Avery Avenue Staff Report SRW.9X.76

Bylaw 434-9X – A Bylaw to Restrict the Speed of Motor Vehicles on Avery Avenue (To reduce the speed limit on Avery Avenue to 40 miles per hour).

Motion: It was moved by Councilor Duchak and seconded by Councilor Saito that Bylaw 434-9X be given first reading. Motion carried.

4b.Request to Remove Fence Requirements – Miller Boulevard

Mr. P. Thomas, representing the residents of Miller Boulevard, requested that the fencing requirements for properties on McCallum Drive backing onto the valley land be removed.

Motion: It was moved by Regional Councilor Cockburn and seconded by Councilor Miller that Council postpone consideration of this request until the Parks, Recreation, and Culture Committee can report on all aspects of the fencing. Motion carried.

Peter Jansen is to notify the Chair of the Parks, Recreation, and Culture Committee that a representative of that committee must be present at Council's next meeting to discuss the fencing issue.

5. The Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:45 p.m. The next meeting will be held in the Council Chambers at 7:00 p.m. on June 19, 200-.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair

## *Recording Motions and Resolutions*

### **Motions**

In formal style minute taking, all properly made motions must be included in the minutes. To be proper, a motion must be moved and seconded. Committee meetings are less formal and motions made do not need to be seconded.

It is standard practice that a motion begin with the word "That" followed by a noun and a verb, and that each motion be formed as a positive statement.

The minutes should state who made the motion and whether it was carried, defeated, or tabled (i.e. postponed). The reason for recording defeated motions is that the issue can only be raised again under special conditions.

Very formal minutes also include the name of the seconder, and if the issue is contentious, the names of those present and the side they voted on. If the vote is by secret ballot, the minutes contain the number of votes for each side.

### **Sample Motions**

- MOTION: It was MOVED, SECONDED, AND CARRIED "That the Board support the production of an educational brochure on drug and alcohol addiction."
- MOTION: It was MOVED by Jennifer Becevello and SECONDED that the unit hires three additional salespeople. MOTION DEFEATED.
- Dr. Jeff Chin made a motion that Dr. Timothy Luke be granted staff privileges. Dr. Peter Thomas seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously.
- Mrs. Georgina Dodds proposed that the Information Services Branch donate \$1,000 to the Save the Children Campaign. Motion passed by general consent.
- Mr. Roy Sconci moved, seconded by Ms. Eileen Hall that the SK Management Company takes over the operation of the Rosevale Nursing Home. Motion defeated.
- Motion No. 9X-34, moved by Cameron Ward, seconded by Paul Becevello. Moved, that the Board appoint the YMCA to be the operator of the child care facility opening at Queen and Main Streets in September 200-. This operator would also be responsible for the before-school, lunch, and after-school programs on the premises. Motion No. 9X-34 Carried.

## Sample of Series of Motions

- It was moved that we hold a picnic.
- It was moved in amendment by Ms. Nancy Beeker, seconded by Mrs. Joan Smith: That we hold a picnic and a dance.
- The chair declared the amending motion lost. The question was then put to the main motion; it was resolved in the affirmative.

Explanation: Someone on the committee moved that the group hold a picnic. Ms. Nancy Beeker amended the motion to include a dance in addition to the picnic. The chair then asked the assembly to vote on Ms. Beeker's amendment. The group voted not to have both a picnic and a dance. The chair declared the amending motion (Ms. Beeker's) lost and then called for a vote on the main motion – to hold just a picnic. The assembly voted yes. They want a picnic.

It was moved by Ms. Karen Giles that an ad hoc committee for community relations be established. It was moved in amendment by Mr. Adrian Chin that an ad hoc committee for community relations, composed of three Canadian citizens, be established. Amending motion and main motion carried.

Explanation: In this case, Karen Giles moved that an ad hoc committee for community relations be established. Adrian Chin amended the original motion to include the fact that the committee be composed of three Canadian citizens – and the group voted in favor of this. The chair then had to ask the group to vote on the main motion – the establishment of the ad hoc committee. The result of the vote showed that, yes, the group agreed to the committee.



## Resolutions

A resolution is a written motion phrased in a special style, with “whereas” followed by resolving clauses, what the group plans to do about it. You must include in the minutes a full description of any resolutions that were adopted and a simple statement of any that were rejected.

Resolutions are often lengthy so encourage people to write out their resolution before it is given to you to record in the minutes.

When typing a resolution follow these guidelines:

- Indent all lines 15 spaces.
- Type both “WHEREAS” and “BE IT RESOLVED” in capital letters.
- Single space between the lines and double space between sections.
- Use capital letters and bold type if a person's name is included.
- Any reference to money should be written out, followed by the numerals in parentheses. For example, “two hundred dollars (\$200).”

## Sample Resolution

The Cobden City Council moved the adoption of the following resolution:

WHEREAS, for a number of years MARGARET BOUDREAU has served as president of the local Cancer Society,

and,

WHEREAS, she has chaired this city's Literary Guild for two years;

and

WHEREAS, she has been highly involved in the establishment and operation of our food bank, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that MARGARET BOUDREAU be named “Citizen of the Year,” and

BE IT RESOLVED, that a donation of two hundred dollars (\$200) be made in her name to the Cancer Society, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a banquet be held in her honor on Tuesday, the 22nd day of May, 200-.

## *What to Record*

Whether you use shorthand, longhand, or a computer, remember that only the motions and resolutions are taken down verbatim. (It is a wise idea to ask the members to put all complicated motions in writing.) The rest of the minutes are an objective summation of what actually occurred.

Pay close attention to the discussion. You will find it helpful if you know why a topic is being discussed. Is the group's purpose simply to obtain information, or is its aim to eventually reach a decision? If this is the case, your notes should be progressive. If the purpose is to solve a controversial problem, you should have a number of pros and cons recorded. Never inject your own personal bias or give one person's comments more weight than another's. Here are some guidelines:

### **Record:**

- All pros and cons
- New information
- All motions (passed and defeated)
- Results of motions
- Expected action

### **Do not record:**

- Speaker's experience
- Old material
- Redundant information
- Withdrawn motions (Some authorities may suggest to record these)
- Personal comments
- He said/she said information



## **Notes and Ideas**

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## Section 5: Techniques for Preparing Minutes

While formal and informal meetings are conducted differently, and their minutes appear in different formats, your job remains the same: to prepare an accurate account of the decisions and actions at a meeting.

### **To be a good minute taker, you should:**

- Understand company jargon
- Have a background knowledge of the topics being discussed
- Know meeting participants or at least the spelling of their names
- Be familiar with past minutes
- Have good communication skills

### **Before the Meeting**

- Are you taking notes for someone else to transcribe or will you do it yourself?
- Are there previous minutes to examine?
- When are you expected to have the first draft prepared?
- What is the purpose of the meeting?
- Are you permitted to voice your own comments in the meeting or is your function simply to take notes?
- Will you be expected to have certain information on hand?
- What is the parliamentary authority used by the organization? How familiar should you be with it?
- Has an agenda been sent out to all the participants?
- Are you supposed to phone the participants and remind them of the meeting?
- Are you responsible for booking the room and room setup?

At the meeting, if room setup is part of your job, try to arrive early to ensure everything has been prepared. Some things you will want to prepare for include:

### **Seating**

You as minute taker should sit on the left hand side of the chair. The position to the immediate right is reserved for special guests. The minute-taker should be able to see all the members.

## Reading the minutes

If minutes are distributed ahead of time, they are not read aloud. However at a general meeting where the entire membership is invited to attend, it is common practice to read the minutes aloud. The minute taker usually reads the minutes in this case. If this is the case, have them unofficially approved by the executive group ahead of time so you don't have to worry about mistakes. You should also practice so you can read smoothly.

## Corrections

Make sure you have a system for noting corrections to past minutes.

## Computer systems

If using a computer to record minutes, make sure you have all the equipment necessary, including electrical outlets.

## After the Meeting

If you don't have time to prepare the minutes immediately after a meeting, at least reread your notes to ensure they are sufficiently detailed so you can interpret them later.

According to memory studies conducted at the University of Minnesota, immediately after you listen to somebody else talk you can only recall 50% of what was heard. After a week, this percentage drops to about 10%. As minute taker, you can't afford to depend on your memory to recall important decisions.



## Notes and Ideas

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## Section 6: Writing Minutes

### *Rough Draft*

Your drafts should be labeled “Rough Draft” and double spaced to allow for corrections and editing. Be sure that the idea you want to express is clear in your mind before you begin to write.

In formal and semiformal minutes, always write in complete sentences using the past tense and the third person. Never use abbreviations; type a person's name in full. In action minutes, point form is acceptable.

In formal minutes, words such as “Committee,” “Board,” “Department” or “Division” are capitalized, as well as titles: “Secretary,” “President.” In informal minutes, these words are not capitalized unless they are accompanied by a specific name. For example, in “the committee wishes...” use lowercase “c.” However, in “the Education Committee wishes...” use capitals.

Use a straightforward, narrative style and simple words. If the group is concerned only that the minutes be intelligible to them, you can be brief in your comments. If the minutes are a means of communicating with others, then your summaries should be in essay style.

Headings or subheadings should not be left dangling at the bottom of a page; they should be followed by at least two lines of text or moved to the next page.

Circulate the rough draft to as few people as possible or it will take forever to get the minute written (everyone will have his or her own version of what occurred).

Use subheadings for individual topics in the body of the minutes. Each item on the agenda can become a separate heading.

Double check all figures, dates, and spelling of names.

Always keep your notes of the meeting until the minutes have been formally approved by the group.

***Final Draft***

As minutes are normally filed in binders, use the bound manuscript format – 1.5 inches on the left margin and 1 inch for the right, top, and bottom.

The heading lines should begin 1 inch from the top of the paper and each heading line should be centered. The words can be typed in either upper- or lowercase letters or in capitals depending on the organization's office style.

If the minutes are brief, double space the body and triple space between items. If they are long, single space them with a double space between paragraphs. Indent paragraphs ten spaces unless you are using subheads. If you are, it is not necessary to indent. Place the subhead directly above each paragraph.

Use bold face for subheads and to highlight dates and names.



**Notes and Ideas**

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## ***Building Minutes Activity***

You are Wile E. Coyote, secretary for the Acme Company social committee. You took minutes at the last meeting, but they're completely scrambled! Your task is to put the minutes back in order – you can use the space on the next page. Compare your answers with the author's suggested responses in the appendix.

Minutes of May 20, 2008, Meeting

Report on Pie Eating Contest

MINUTES FOR SOCIAL COMMITTEE, ACME COMPANY

Next meeting: July 25, 2008, Boardroom, Acme Company Headquarters

June 26, 2008

Treasurer's Report

Letter from Pepe LePew

Follow-Up on Company Picnic planning (per motion of May 20)

Boardroom, Acme Company Headquarters, Desert City, Nevada

Discussion of summer events

In Attendance: Elmer F. Fudd, Wile E. Coyote, John F. Doe, Jane C. Smith

Absent: T. Devil, Bugs Bunny





## Section 7: Editing Minutes

### *Spelling*

How many times have you checked a word in a dictionary, only to refer to the dictionary again for the same word because you could not remember the correct spelling? Most of us have a few words that we regularly forget how to spell. However, that doesn't mean we can't produce letters, memos and reports that are word perfect.

Here are some tips to help you become better spellers:

- Use a dictionary.
- Use spell check on your computer, but don't rely on it totally.
- Proofread your work, and when possible have someone else proofread your work.
- Make up a list of your most common spelling errors and learn how to spell those words correctly. Keep that list posted so you can refer to it when you need to.
- Use a mnemonic (memory aid) device
  - Locate the trouble spot in a word (the place where you misspell it)
  - Isolate the sound
  - Underline the trouble spot
  - Emphasize it by mispronouncing it with the correct letter sound (sep-A-Rate; Fa-Ti-Gue)
  - Look for short words in the long word
    - Argument (gum)
    - Environment (iron)
    - Cemetery (met)
- Gimmicks
  - The accident occurred on the RR tracks (remember that *occurred* has two *r*'s.)
- Rhymes
  - Loose as a goose (use rhymes to remember that *loose* has two *o*'s.)
  - Use *i* before *e*
    - except after *c*
    - and when sounds like *a*
    - as in *neighbour* or *weigh*
    - Exceptions: *neither*, *weird*, *sheik*, *either*, *seize*, *leisure*
- Acronyms
  - A Rat In The House Might Eat The Ice Cream (The first letter of each word spells *arithmetic*.)

- To Double or Not to Double?
  - Look at the list below. Notice that the words in the first list do not double the last consonant before adding *ing* or *ed*, and the words in the second list do double the last consonant.
    - Offered does not double the r and referred does because you pronounce offer with the accent or stress on the first syllable. Say OFF'er. Now say refer aloud – reFER'.
    - If the accent is on the first syllable, do not double the final consonant
    - If the accent is on the second syllable, do double the final consonant

Accent on first syllable	Accent on second syllable
Layered	Occurred
Offered	Referring
Traveled	Preferred
Canceled	Remitting
Benefited	Omitted
Totaled	permitted

- Endings
  - Add *able* to a full word
    - Adapt = adaptable
    - Work = workable
    - Love = lovable (Drop the e before adding the ending.)
    - Desire = desirable (Drop the second e before the ending.)
    - Change – changeable (The e stays because it's needed to keep the g sound "soft" – as in fringe – rather than "hard" as in long.)
    - Manage = manageable
  - Add *ible* if the root word is not a word by itself
    - Credible (Cred is not a word when it stands by itself.)
    - Tangible
  - Add *ible* to words that end in x, ns, and miss
    - Flexible
    - Responsible
    - Permissible

## *Proofreading*

Proofreading carelessly can spoil a writer's best efforts. Proofreading is classic evidence that writing looks different to the writer and to the reader.

To the writer, typographical or spelling errors don't mean all that much. So your finger slipped, or you always put two *t*'s in "commitment." For the reader, an unfixed typo can transform the writer into a careless individual.

Proofreading errors are different from punctuation or spelling or usage problems, and you fix them differently.

Punctuation, spelling, and usage are knowledge problems, and you fix them by learning.

Proofreading problems are usually a matter of seeing, and you fix them by learning to look.

The better you read, the worse you'll proofread, unless you consciously are aware of what you are doing. Good readers, fast readers, guess what the words are, and they just check in now and again to see if they are right. The more they can guess, the less they have to look and the faster and better they read.

To be a good proofreader, you have to go back to being a child again, looking at every word as it comes along. Here are some principles to guide you:

- Ignore content. As soon as you start paying attention to what the text is saying, you'll start assuming and stop looking.
- Assume there's at least one typo.
- Forget what you meant. Read the memo/letter as though you never saw it before.
- Read backwards. This destroys comprehension, and your eyes can't trick you as easily.
- Don't try to do something else when you proofread.
- Take your time. When you hurry, you guess and skim, and that usually doesn't work.
- Proofread a second time, paying attention to content. This is where you find those things spell check and reading backwards did not catch, such as, "The little cap pulls off it you put enough effort into it."
- Read it aloud. It is more difficult, but still not impossible, for your eyes to skip over errors when you read aloud.
- Try to have someone else proofread your work, particularly if the document is important or going public.



## **Notes and Ideas**

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## Section 8: Taking Minutes in an Interactive Meeting

The traditional style of meeting discussed so far is not particularly suited to informal problem solving, collaboration, or for working out complex, interdependent issues. Nowadays, progressive organizations are adopting “interaction” meetings.

In conventional meetings, the chair has the most authority. The chair controls how the meeting proceeds, talks more than anyone else, and is responsible for the final decisions. This can negatively effect group participation and morale and can result in poor group decision making.

### *The Role of the Facilitator*

In the interaction-style meeting, the chair separates procedural and decision-making responsibilities and appoints someone to assume a new role – facilitator. This enables the chair to sit and listen fully to the opinions of the group.

The facilitator's job is to accomplish a specific task. The facilitator must solicit opinions from the entire group, ensure that everyone feels comfortable with the process, and keep the meeting on target.

The facilitator is assisted by the recorder, who ensures that all the members' main points are written on large sheets of paper taped to the wall in front of the group. In this way, everyone has a clear and immediate understanding of what is being said and can see that all statements are accurate. As all ideas are considered to come collectively from the group – not from individuals – the names of the originators of suggestions are not recorded.

Both the facilitator and the recorder must remain neutral and refrain from voicing their opinions or editorializing. If either one feels the need to make a personal statement, he or she must ask the group's permission to temporarily step out of the assigned role.

An ideal situation would have all the members of the group taking turns to act as facilitator and recorder. In fact, the facilitator and recorder may even be invited from an outside department or group.

## *Members More Able To Participate*

Interaction meetings are highly creative and productive. Members feel less intimidated and have equal opportunity to participate in brainstorming and problem-solving sessions. They leave feeling heard, validated, and energized. They have specific tasks to accomplish.

If you are appointed recorder at an interaction meeting, remember that your role is always to support the facilitator and the group.

As a recorder, you must have:

- Good listening skills
- Legible hand writing
- An understanding of the group's jargon
- Confidence to ask the group to slow down if you fall behind in the recording
- A nonjudgmental expression

It is important that the recorder, not put words in the mouth of a slow-thinking participant. Be quiet. Talk as little as possible. Defer your questions to the facilitator. You are their teammate and support person.

When listing the group's comments, make the letters about 1 inch to 1½ inches high. Don't worry about spelling. You can use abbreviations, circle key words, or use arrows and signs. Use colored markers to highlight ideas. Remember to number and title all pages. Get the members to restate any points you have missed or misrepresented. The meeting members share the responsibility for accurate recording.

After the meeting, remove the pages from the wall, label and store them, or have them typed. The recorder is also responsible for preparing a summary sheet or action minutes.



## **Notes and Ideas**

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## Section 9: The Minute Book

Official copies of approved minutes are kept by the recorder in chronological order, usually a three ring binder is set up for that purpose. The cover page may indicate the period the minute book covers; i.e., "The minutes of the Birdwatchers Society, from January 1, 2000 to December 31, 2002."

The minute taker has custody of the book minutes and all official documents. However, every member has the right to inspect the minutes, and certain minutes can be turned over to a committee if they need them to perform their duties. The minute taker is also responsible for storing committee reports and documents submitted at meetings. Before filing this material, note the dates they were received and state any further action that was taken.

An index is an alphabetical listing of all the main items discussed at meetings. Along with the topic, list the date it was discussed and the page number where the information can be found in the minutes.

Groups who don't make a lot of motions may prefer to use a motions book rather than an index. The motions book contains all the motions and amendments ever made by that group, with the dates they were made.

Indexing the minutes will take a few minutes but it will go a long way toward building your professional image. As minute-taker you are also the group historian.

Computers can help you identify key words and then automatically alphabetize them and identify them by page number.

The minute taker should also have all the rules that the group use to govern itself by, such as the constitution and bylaws and procedures.

These should be combined into one book that the minute-taker brings to each meeting.

## Self-Evaluation

Whenever you finish learning new information, it is helpful to take a moment to evaluate what you have found most useful and what you would like to do with that information. This process can be very useful whether you write out the answers or just think about them.

1. What general concepts, ideas or techniques have you learned?

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2. List at least three things from this resource that you could use immediately.

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3. What other concepts, ideas or techniques do you want to learn?

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4. My minute taking skills improvement goals are as follows:

Goals	Action steps to be taken	Target date for completion

## Appendix

### *Answers to Page 4*

*What is the purpose of minutes?*

Minutes should be written to provide all the members with the following information:

- How issues were discussed and finally resolved.
- The names of those individuals who were assigned specific tasks and the dates these tasks are to be completed.
- Minutes are considered legal documents.
- Motions should be recorded word for word.

A clear summary of proceedings, a means of conveying information, a reminder for future actions and a historical background on decisions of the group.

*What is your role as the minute taker/what are the tasks you are expected to perform?*

The basic tasks for the minute-taker are:

- Informing participants
- Creating and distributing the agenda
- Preparing a template for your meeting notes
- Gathering materials for the meeting
- Taking rough notes during your meetings.
- Writing up these notes neatly or typing them out.
- Copying and distributing them to relevant people.
- Keeping all minutes together in a file for future reference.



*Answers to Page 16*

MINUTES FOR SOCIAL COMMITTEE, ACME COMPANY

June 26, 2008

Boardroom, Acme Company Headquarters, Desert City, Nevada

In Attendance: Elmer F. Fudd, Wile E. Coyote, John F. Doe, Jane C. Smith

Absent: T. Devil, Bugs Bunny

- Minutes of May 20, 2008, Meeting
- Report on Pie Eating Contest
- Treasurer's Report
- Letter from Pepe LePew
- Follow-Up on Company Picnic planning (per motion of May 20)
- Discussion of summer events (new business)
- Next meeting: July 25, 2008, Boardroom, Acme Company Headquarters

## Resources

Devries, Mary A. The New Robert's Rules of Order. Penguin Group, 1998.

Fry, Ron. (1994). Take notes. New York Career Press.

Part of the Ron Fry How to Study Program with basic tips on taking notes.

Kerr, Kaye & King, Hubert. Procedures for Meetings and Organizations. Carswell Legal Inc., 1983.

Kesselman-Turkey, Judi and Peterson, Franklin. (1982). Note taking made easy. Chicago: Contemporary Books.

Easy to read text on various note-taking strategies and techniques.

Robert, Gen. Henry. Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised. Scott Foresman Inc., 1999.

Yates, Virginia. (1979). Listening and note-taking (2nd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. 125 pages.

An easy-to-read guide filled with exercises. Part of a larger series on learning.