

Management Committee

Responsibilities of a Management Committee

Every community organisation has a governing body, a group of people which manages its affairs. This is most commonly referred to as the management committee. However your own group may use a different name, such as executive committee or steering group. A very small and informal group may not have a separate committee and, in this case, its entire membership is the governing body. Here we use the term management committee to describe the governing body of any community group.

Broadly, the committee's job is to ensure that the group

- H does what it was set up to do
- H has enough money and does not get into debt
- H is well run

The aim of this information sheet is to look in more detail at what this entails. Not all of this sheet will apply to every group. We have tried to show which sections are most relevant to your group. Even so, you may find the list of responsibilities daunting. But don't be put off!

There are over 1,500 successful groups in Brighton & Hove, most run by people in their spare time. Committee members are not expected to be experts, and there are lots of places where you can get help if you need it.



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Management Committee

Specific responsibilities

If you are looking for ideas on running a good committee or involving people in your group, we have information sheets covering topics such as the 'The job of the chair, secretary and treasurer' and 'AGM checklist' which includes tips on making any type of meeting more interesting.

We also have a range of books in our reference library which cover all these areas in more detail. Good starting points for further information and suggestions on where to get specialist help are 'Just about managing?' and 'Voluntary but not Amateur'.

In carrying out its job, the committee has to take account of good practice and the law. In this sheet we have broken these responsibilities down into 10 sections:

1. Running the group and meetings
2. Keeping the group on track
3. Finances
4. Fundraising
5. General organisation
6. Legal liability
7. Organising events and activities (including fundraising events)
8. Members of the group and people you work with
9. Employment and volunteers
10. Premises

The management committee of every group has general responsibilities which are covered in sections 1 and 2. These sections apply to very small and informal groups, as well as to larger groups.

Sections 3-6 are most relevant to larger groups and groups which apply for grants, (although even very small groups need to keep proper accounts).

If you organise activities such as fetes, fundays, sports events for children or a social club for people with learning difficulties, sections 7 and 8 should be helpful.

If you employ someone or have a volunteer doing a regular job or you manage premises, have a look at sections 9 and 10.

Within many of the sections, we suggest ways of organising your affairs to help you keep on top of things and carry out your responsibilities.

Finally, there is an appendix which briefly describes what a management committee is, who sits on it, and what individual members do.

*See our information sheets
'The Chair's job' and
'Secretary's role'*

*See our information sheet
'AGM Checklist'*

*See our information sheet
'Taking Minutes'*

*We have an info sheet
'Constitutions: Step by step
help with writing a
constitution'*

*See our information sheet
'Monitoring and evaluation'*

Management Committee

1. Running the group and meetings

H Arrange regular committee meetings and general meetings of the group

H Organise the annual general meeting, including elections to the committee

H Take minutes, recording decisions and tasks clearly

If you have a constitution, it will set out things such as how often meetings should take place or who is entitled to attend. Although a group can run successfully without a constitution, it is advisable for every group to have some written rules. These rules can be very basic, but your group will run more smoothly if everyone is clear about the aims of the group, how it works, and who does what.

H Brief new committee members

Many newcomers are thrown in at the deep end and given no idea of how the group works or what its aims are. It is not uncommon to find individual committee members who are unaware that they are part of a management committee with responsibilities.

2. Keeping the group on track

H Review the group's activities – are you doing what the group is set up to do?

H Use your money well

Ideally, everything which your group decides to do will help it achieve its aims. However it is easy to get sidetracked. For example, raising money may become your main activity rather than the means to an end. It is a good idea for the committee to have a regular look at what the group is doing and assess whether it is achieving its aims.

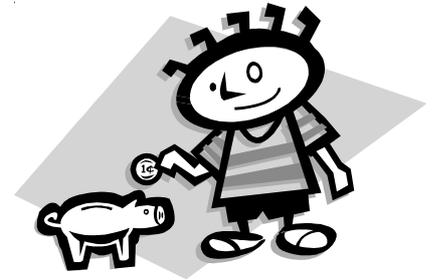
If you are a larger group, it may be useful to have a systematic way of collecting information on your activities – it will make it easier to assess whether the group is on track. You will almost certainly need to have reliable information if you have to report to a funder on how you have used your grant.

Management Committee

*See our information sheet
'The Treasurer's job'*

3. Finances

Every committee member is responsible for making sure that the group accounts for its money properly. It's not just the responsibility of the treasurer even though they deal with the money day-to-day.



If lots of people are handling money or the group takes in regular amounts of cash, it is a good idea to write some basic rules to ensure that everybody does the same thing and that the money is properly looked after.

- H Keep proper financial records
- H If you have grants, make sure that they are used for the specified purpose
- H Prepare financial reports for each committee meeting
- H Prepare end-of-year accounts, and have them examined if required by the constitution or charity law
- H Draw up basic financial rules

4. Fundraising

- H Work out a basic budget and decide how you will raise the funds
- H Raise the money!

Working out how much money you need and how you will raise it are not separate from the group's activities. You need to have a fairly clear idea of what your group will do in the coming year in order to work out how much you need. So, try to involve everyone on the committee or in the whole group in planning and fundraising.

5. General organisation

Insurance policies

Some insurances, such as employers' liability insurance if you have staff, are a legal requirement. Depending on your group's activities other insurances may be a good idea, some required by your landlord or funder. There are a number of brokers which specialise in arranging insurance for charities and other community organisations.

*See our information sheet
'Budgets for community
groups'*

*See our information sheets
'Raising Money' and
'Fundraising Applications'*

*For details of insurance
companies, please refer to the
Beachcomber database on our
website or phone the Centre.*

Management Committee

*See our information sheet
'Writing an equal
opportunities policy'*

*See our information sheet
'Charity Registration: is your
group a charity, and should it
register?'*

*See our information sheet
'Charity Reports and
Accounts'*

Equal Opportunities/Equality

You should look at ways of trying to ensure that your group is open and welcoming to everyone in the community who wants to get involved. It may help to write a policy for the group, but the important thing is what you do. If you are applying for grants, most funders will ask you to show that you are concerned about equal opportunities and many will ask you for a written policy.

Charity Registration

If your group's aims are charitable, you may need to register as a charity

Trustees Report

If you are a charity, check whether you need to prepare a Trustees Report & Annual Accounts for the Charity Commission

6. Legal liability

- H Take legal or other advice when in doubt
- H Consider indemnity insurance

Committee members can be held personally liable if the group gets into debt or has other legal problems. If there is no management committee, then every member of the group is liable. However, it is rare for individuals to face action and there should be no problems so long as the committee does everything it can to run the group responsibly.

It is possible to take out indemnity insurance to cover committee members if action is taken against them individually. However, this insurance will not be valid if the committee fails to run the group properly and responsibly so this type of insurance may not be good value for money. If you are a registered charity, you will need to get permission from the Charity Commission to take out trustee indemnity insurance unless your constitution already allows for this.

If you are a registered charity, the law sets what can and cannot be covered by indemnity insurance. Older constitutions may prohibit the use of such insurance; in this case you will need to get permission from the Charity Commission to take it out.

Management Committee

See our info sheets 'Planning checklist for fetes, fundays, parties and other events' and 'Licensing and Regulations'

7. Organising events and activities (including fundraising events)

- H Check the regulations on areas such as public entertainment, raffles, creches and childcare, or food and drink
- H Apply well in advance for any necessary licences
- H Look carefully at safety (carry out a risk assessment) and first aid
- H Consider insurance for accidents or cancellation of the event

8. Members of the group and people you work with

You have legal obligations towards the people who you provide services to or work with, and to members of your group. As well as general obligations, you need to take account of:

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), Race Relations Act and Sex Discrimination Act

Equality and Human Rights Commission
<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com>

Disability Helpline
FREEPOST MID02164
Stratford upon Avon CV37 9BR
Telephone: 08457 622 633

Race, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion and belief and human rights Helpline
Freepost RRLG-GHUX-CTR
Arndale Centre
Manchester M4 3EQ
Tel. 0845 604 6610

Criminal Record Bureau checks

If you work with children under 18 or vulnerable adults, you may be required by law to carry out CRB checks on staff or volunteers. Groups concerned include playschemes, after school clubs, sports activities for children, social clubs for adults with learning disabilities or advocacy projects.

See our information sheet 'Criminal Record Bureau Disclosures'

Management Committee

Data Protection Act

Information Commissioner <http://www.ico.gov.uk>
Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF
fax: 01625 524 510 Helpline telephone: 01625 545 745
email: mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk

9. Employment and volunteers

If you employ one or more person, your group has a number of legal obligations:

- H Employment laws such as the Employment Rights Act
- H Terms and Conditions of employment for each employee
- H Grievance and disciplinary procedures

Another local group may be able to help with Terms & Conditions and procedures, but you will of course have to rewrite them to suit your circumstances.

- H Health & Safety at Work Act
- H Tax and national insurance

HM Revenue and Customs (includes the former Inland Revenue) gives information and advice. New employers should go to <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/newemployers/index.shtml> or call the Employer Helpline 0845 7143 143

In addition to your legal responsibilities, you will have to make arrangements to manage and supervise staff and volunteers. It is also good practice to have a written agreement with each volunteer setting out their terms and conditions.

- H Volunteers' agreements
- H Co-ordinating and training staff and volunteers

We have a CD-ROM 'Good Practice Guide' written by Brighton & Hove Working Together Project for the Volunteer Bureau. You can also see the contents of this at <http://www.brightonhovevolunteers.org.uk/goodpractice/index.htm>. See also the publications which we refer to at the end of this sheet.

You can download information from the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform website <http://www.dti.gov.uk/> or contact the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) <http://www.acas.org.uk> Acas Helpline 08457 47 47 47

See Premises section for details of help on health & safety

Management Committee

10. Premises

Health & Safety Executive
[http://www.hse.gov.uk/
index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/index.htm)

HSE Infoline 0845 345 0055

For Health & Safety
publications, including a guide
to drawing up a Safety Policy
and Accident Report forms,
contact

HSE Books [http://
www.hsebooks.com/Books/](http://www.hsebooks.com/Books/)
PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk
CO10 2WA. Tel: 01787
881165

UNISON, the public sector
trade union has information
sheets which you can
download from its website
[http://www.unison.org.uk/
safety/infosheets.asp](http://www.unison.org.uk/safety/infosheets.asp)

See contact details for DDA
above to find out access
requirements

If you own or lease premises you will need to consider a range of issues:

- H Health & Safety legislation
- H Fire safety
- H Public health and hygiene

Brighton & Hove City Council is responsible for monitoring and advising on health & safety legislation in work premises. The Health & Safety team also issues licences, to some businesses, including taxis, where high levels of safety and hygiene are required. If food is prepared or sold, you must register with the Food Safety Team 28 days before opening.

Contact the Health & Safety Licensing Team, Bartholomew Square,
Brighton, BN1 1JP

<http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=c1106421>

Phone: (01273) 294429

Typetalk: 18001 01273 290000

E-mail: ehl.safety@brighton-hove.gov.uk

- H Lease or tenancy agreements
- H Security of premises and contents
- H Maintenance and general repairs
- H Access for disabled people

Make sure that it is clear whether the landlord or your group is responsible for things such as security, maintenance and access. If you rent part of a building, check whether you are responsible for full maintenance of the rooms which you rent. If in doubt, get legal advice on this and any other aspect of a lease.

- H Letting and booking arrangements

If you hire rooms for meetings or other events, make sure you have good booking arrangements and 'agreement forms' to make the conditions of room hire clear to the hirer.



Management Committee

Appendix

What is a management committee?

A typical community group ranges in size from a handful of members to a membership of a hundred or more. Legally it is an unincorporated association and it may also be a charity. Its governing body, the group of people which runs its affairs, is commonly referred to the management committee.

Most community groups have a constitution (or set of rules). A section of this defines the management committee, including its size and how often it should meet.

Who sits on the Management Committee?

The committee is drawn from members of the group and is elected by them, usually at an annual general meeting (AGM).

Groups often have officers, such as chair, secretary and treasurer, and they too are part of the management committee. They may be elected by the full membership at the AGM or by the committee at its first meeting, according to the constitution. Although the officers carry out particular jobs in the group, they have no more legal or financial responsibilities than other committee members.

The committee may also invite other people to serve on the committee (known as co-opting). They may be members of the group but can come from outside, and are generally co-opted because they have particular skills or knowledge.

A very small group may meet informally and have no elected committee. Many groups with modest aims and activities run very successfully like this. In this instance, the entire group is the 'management committee' and everyone is responsible for the group's affairs.

What do individual members do?

Although every committee member shares responsibility, this does not mean that each member has to do everything. The job of members is to ensure that someone does each task and reports back to the committee. The tasks may be done by committee members, members of the group or people from outside. The most important thing is that the committee should work together and take joint responsibility.

There are other forms of community organisations - charitable companies (incorporated organisations) and charitable trusts. Their governing bodies have similar responsibilities to the management committee of a community group, but they have additional legal obligations.

For more information on forms of community organisations, see our info sheet 'Community & Voluntary Organisations: Finding a legal structure to suit your group'.



ICU Skills Guide 2005– 2006

You are in: [Resource Book](#) >>> [Skills](#) >>> [Effective Meeting Member](#)

How to be an effective member of a meeting

Why have Meetings?

Meetings can have several different purposes, which include

- Informing people of what is happening/has happened
- Reviewing what is happening/has happened
- Generating new ideas
- Solving problems
- Allocating responsibilities
- Decision making
- Planning activities

Before a Meeting

- Circulation of minutes of previous meeting (if any) and material for discussion by the Secretary and Chair.
- Booking of a location and informing those attending where it is being held, preparing notices for guidance if required

Preparing for a Meeting

- Ensuring any matters you have to report on or actions to undertake are done.
- Reading of minutes of any previous meeting.
- Reading of the material provided, perhaps taking notes or preparing points you want to discuss.
- Prepare what you want to say
- If you have a large number of points or have found additional information, type them out and either circulate to other members or bring paper copies with you to the meeting.

Taking an Active Role in a Meeting

Meetings can be daunting, especially if it is with a group of individuals you don't meet often if this is the first time you have met them. It is important that a meeting runs effectively and swiftly but at the same time everything is discussed thoroughly.

Sticking to the agenda is important. If there is deviation from it, it could be because of

- Lack of purpose for the meeting
- Weak/badly designed agenda
- Weak chair of the meeting

Things not to do

- Wander off the agenda
- Interrupt others when they are speaking. *If you want to/need to contradict what they are saying or disagree with what they have said, you can easily do this when they have finished.*

Concluding points

If you are unable to attend, send apologies. *Thus the Chair knows you will not be attending and will not spend ages waiting for to turn up*

Turn up before the start time, thus allowing the meeting to being on time

 [BACK TO SKILLS INDEX](#)

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You are here:

Toolbox >> Building an organisation >> Meeting skills

Meeting Skills

What is in this guide

1. What do we use meetings for?
 2. Important things to know about meetings
 - a. Purpose of meetings
 - b. Different types of meetings
 3. How to plan a meeting
 - a. Notification
 - b. Preparing the agenda
 4. How to run a meeting
 - a. The agenda
 - b. Meeting procedures
 - c. How to take decisions in meetings
 - d. How to chair the meeting
 - e. How to write minutes
-

1. What do we use meetings for?

Meetings are very important for the work of any organisation. Good meetings are important for collective decision-making, planning and follow-up, accountability, democracy, and other practices that will help you to build a good organisation. If meetings are used in the correct way, they can help an organisation to be efficient. However, like all organising tools, meetings can be used badly and end up not serving the purpose that they are supposed to. Sometimes we seem to attend too many long meetings, which discuss the same thing over and over again without seeming to move forward. Meetings can become places where conflict is played out. Some people can also see attending meetings as working for the organisation instead of seeing it as a tool for getting work done. We should try to make our meetings places where we get democratic and constructive participation and involvement from our members.

2. Important things to know about meetings

The purpose of meetings

Most people do not like attending meetings – especially if they are not sure what the purpose of the meeting is, or if it goes on too long and achieves too little. Meetings must not be too frequent or held just for the sake of it. There must be a need for a meeting. There should be decisions

about the different types of meetings needed. For example, some meetings could be to discuss policy and others to discuss organisation (practical work).

Wherever possible the members must know what type of meeting they are going to and what the meeting is for – in other words, the PURPOSE of the meeting. Sometimes an organisation might call a special or extraordinary meeting.

There are different types of meetings and planning and it should take account of this.

Different types of meetings

Most organisations will hold the following types of meetings:

1. **The general members meeting:**
This is the most common meeting, which usually happens once a month or once every two weeks. The general members meeting should be the place where members are informed of developments, involved in decisions and given education and information that will help them to become more active in the organisation. General meetings are usually the places where decisions are made and where the executive reports on work they and other sub-committees have done.
2. **Special meetings:**
These can be called to discuss specific issues, for example preparing for a national conference or work on planning activities for the year. Any members who are interested should be invited to attend special meetings. They should not be run like general members meetings (with minutes, reports etc) but should only focus on the issues they've been called to discuss.
3. **Executive meetings:**
The executive should meet more regularly than the general members, and executive meetings should have a more business-like focus. The executive has to plan implementation for the organisation, monitor the work that has been done, deal with problems, and often (if you're part of a larger organisation) relate to other levels of the organisation. They should discuss correspondence in detail and address problems as they come up. The executive should also keep an eye on the finances of the organisation and monitor income and expenditure. Every executive meeting should have an item on the agenda that plans for the next general members meeting. They should provide both leadership and administration to the organisation.
4. **Annual General Meeting:**
Most organisations have an Annual General Meeting laid down in their constitution. The AGM is the place where the executive accounts to all members about the activities of the year as well as the finances of the organisation. The AGM is also the place where new leaders are elected and are given a mandate to run the organisation for another year. Most AGM's need at least the following two detailed reports to the members:
 - The secretary's report that lists plans of the organisation, the actual activities that took place that year, the achievements of the year, and the problems experienced.
 - The treasurer's report: a detailed financial report that lists all income from subscriptions, grants, donations, fundraising; and all expenditure. This report should also clearly state what the balance is and where that balance is held. It is important to have a written financial report at your AGM but very often members find financial reports difficult to understand and you should try and make it simpler by putting the main headings on news-prints and explaining it to people in less financial language.

3. Planning a meeting

Planning should improve participation by ensuring that discussion is on a single topic and that

the members are well prepared for the meeting. This is the responsibility of the Chairperson, Secretary and Executive, depending on the type of organisation.

Planning does not mean controlling and directing the meeting in such a way that it restricts participation

Planning should include the following:

Notification: It is the executive's responsibility to ensure that everyone has been notified of the date, time and venue of the meeting, as well as the main issues to be discussed. For many organisations it is a useful practice to always have their meetings on the same day at the same time in the same place – for example on the first Saturday of every month at the local church hall. If you do not have money to always inform your members of meetings then over time this will help you to cut costs, and to make sure that everyone knows where they can find the meeting.

Preparing the agenda: The agenda is a list of the most important issues for the members to discuss. It is drawn from the Matters Arising from the previous meeting and from the discussions of the Executive or Secretariat.

The agenda is the responsibility of the Chairperson and the Secretary. The chairperson should read the minutes of the previous meeting to familiarise him/herself with the issues. This will form the basis of a list of matters arising from these minutes.

Matters arising include:

Tasks – a report back must be given
Matters for which further information was required for discussion
Matters that were deferred to this meeting

There are standard items for any agenda. These items should be arranged in order of priority and time should be allocated for each discussion. Where possible, try to familiarise yourself with each area of discussion.

An agenda should include a last item known as General or Any Other Business to allow individuals to raise short items not included on the agenda.

4. How to run a meeting

a. The agenda

Open the meeting and welcome everyone. Then go through the agenda step by step.

Those present and apologies: The apologies of those members not able to attend the meeting are recorded as part of the minutes. Send round an attendance register if there are too many people to just record it in the minutes. Ask if there are any apologies from people who are not there.

Minutes: Minutes are accurate notes of what is discussed and decided on at meetings. Make sure that the minutes of the previous meeting are circulated to everyone or at least read at the beginning of the meeting. (See section on writing minutes) Minutes must be adopted at the beginning of a meeting. Give people a chance to read the minutes or read them out aloud. Everyone must agree that they are an accurate record of the last meeting. Members must be given the chance to add where items/points might have been left out.

Matters arising from the minutes: This covers points that were discussed at the last meeting, when perhaps someone was asked to do some work or there have been subsequent developments, which now need discussion. A list of these points is drawn from the previous meeting's minutes.

Correspondence: This means all the letters that have been received by the organisation since the last meeting. They can be dealt with in different ways. If your group does not receive many letters, they could be read out and then discussed. Another way is for the secretary to list them with a brief explanation. The chairperson then goes through the list and suggests action. If the issue raised in the letter needs decisive action it can be more fully discussed.

Other items on the agenda: Someone must introduce each item on the agenda. The item introduced could be either a discussion or a report.

If it is a discussion someone is given the job of leading the discussion and making proposals on that particular item.

If it is a report, the person who is reporting should comment on the following:

Was it a task that was completed, what were the problems and what still needs to be done? (issue, facts, options, proposal – see guide on inputs and verbal reports)

Discussion should be to examine a problem or discuss an issue in more detail – get everyone's ideas and points of view on it, arrive at a decision, delegate responsibility for the completion of the task, and follow-up to ensure that it is completed.

b. **Meeting Procedures**

All members should know meeting procedures. There are a number of points that people use in meetings to ensure that the meetings run smoothly. Often members use these points to assist the chairperson.

The following are procedural points most used in meetings:

Point of Order:

It should be used when a member feels that the meeting procedure is not being stuck to and s/he wants the meeting to return to the correct procedure or order. For example, when an individual is speaking totally off the point, another member might ask on a point of order for the speaker to stick to the agenda.

Point of Information:

A member may raise their hand and ask to make point of information (or request information) when it is not his or her turn to speak. This can enable a member to speak (by putting up his/her hand and asking to speak) when it is not his/her turn to request more information on the matter being discussed, or to give more information on a point being discussed.

Out of Order:

When an individual is not sticking to meeting procedure, being rude, interjecting or misbehaving in some way, the chairperson might rule him/her out of order.

Protection:

A speaker who is being harassed when he/she is speaking can ask for the protection of the Chairperson.

Quorums:

This is the minimum number of people who must be present for the meeting to conduct business and take decisions. This minimum number is stated in the organisations constitution. The meeting cannot start until there is a quorum. Always ensure that you have this minimum number of people at a meeting, especially when decisions must be taken. If you do not, and decisions are taken, members who were not present can request that it is re-discussed, meaning that time was wasted.

All these points are called meeting rules or procedures, which are there to try to

make meetings more efficient and effective. They should not be over-used just for the sake of it.

c. **How to take decisions in meetings**

Decisions are usually reached through two main ways:

- **Consensus**

This means reaching decisions by discussion and general agreement.

- **Voting**

People vote for a particular proposal. Usually one person will put forward a proposal, someone else will second it and then people will vote. If the majority of people accept the proposal, it then becomes binding on the organisation.

Voting can either be done by a show of hands or secret ballot.

Show of hand

The Chairperson would call for a show of hand when there is a difference of opinion amongst members when a decision needs to be reached. S/he will call on members to raise their hands to show their support for or against a proposal.

These votes are then counted – majority would then ensure that the proposal stands or falls away.

Secret ballot

Each person would be given a piece of paper where s/he would write whether s/he supports a particular proposal or not. The votes would be counted and the majority would ensure that the proposal stands or falls away.

It is usually better to reach consensus than to vote. Reaching consensus often means that there are compromises from everyone but it ensures that most people feel part of the decision. Sometimes a vote does need to be taken, for example in elections or when the meeting cannot reach a decision through consensus.

Resolutions

These are formal proposals put forward to the meeting, for people to agree or disagree with. If some disagree, they are voted on. If passed, they become resolutions and therefore policy of the organisation. There should be a proposer and seconder of each resolution.

Resolutions are a clear way to set out the policies and decisions of an organisation. Usually a resolution has three parts to it:

We start the resolution by saying that, eg: "*The AGM of the Natalspruit Women's Organisation, meeting on (give date) notes that:* and then you list the main issues that you are concerned about, for example:

Noting:

1. *the rapid increase in crime in this area,*
2. *the devastating effects it has on the lives of people in this area,*

3. *etc.*

The second part of the resolution will then list the points that show your understanding of the issue and its causes, for example:

Believing:

1. *that the increase in crime is due to the failure of police to effectively service our community*
2. *that the high unemployment rate is forcing many of our young people to take up crime as a way of life*
3. *etc*

The third part lists exactly what your organisation has decided to do or what its policy should be on the issue, for example:

Therefore resolves:

1. *to actively participate in the community police forum*
2. *to use all means possible to pressurise the police to perform their duty*
3. *to work with the local council to ensure that facilities and clubs are supplied to keep our youth off the street*
4. *etc*

Amendments may need to be made to resolutions, and these should be accepted by everyone present. If there is not total agreement on an amendment, a vote should be held and the chairperson should record the votes of those for, and those against, the amendment, as well as those abstaining. If the majority support the amendment it stands and the original section of the resolution falls away.

The Chairperson and members must study the constitution of the organisation to make sure they know and understand all these procedures.

d. **How to chair the meeting**

The chairperson is the most important person in the meeting. He or she will set the pace for the meeting, make sure that people stick to the topics, ensure that democratic decisions are taken, and that everyone is on board with these decisions. Chairing is a great skill and it is important to teach members to chair meetings and rotate the job where possible so that more people can practise this skill. However, it is always good to have an experienced chairperson for important meetings.

A good chairperson is an active chairperson; it is not the chairperson's job to simply keep a list of speakers and to let them speak one after the other. The chairperson should introduce the topic clearly and guide the discussion especially when people start repeating points. When a discussion throws up opposing views, the chairperson should also try to summarise the different positions and where possible, propose a way forward. The way forward can involve taking a vote on an issue, having a further discussion at another date, or making a compromise that most people may agree with. The chairperson should ask for agreement from the meeting on the way forward, and apologise to those who still wanted to speak.

Here are the basic steps for chairing a meeting:

- The Chairperson opens the meeting and presents the agenda.
- S/he should start a meeting by setting a cut-off time when everyone agrees that the meeting should end. This helps to encourage people to be brief.
- S/he calls on individuals to introduce or lead the discussion of points on the agenda and gives everyone a chance to speak.
- S/he also ensures that no one dominates discussion.
- S/he should try to summarise the discussion clearly restating ideas and proposals put forward. However, there is no need to repeat everything that has been said.
- S/he must be able to get agreement on what the decision is – s/he must ensure that everyone understands the decision, delegates to someone the duty of carrying out the decision, ensures that the person given the responsibility knows what s/he has to do and when it should be done and reported on.
- S/he ensures that everyone takes part in the discussions and decision-making.
- S/he ensures that the date for the next meeting is always set at the meeting.

d. **How to write minutes in the meeting**

It is essential that minutes are recorded accurately. This not only serves as a reminder of issues that need to be followed up but also prevents arguments about previous decisions. Minutes are also a guide for the secretary and chairperson when drawing up the agenda for the next meeting.

Minutes help the organisation to learn from its past failures and successes. This is done when the secretary reflects on the minutes of the past year when drawing up an annual report.

There are three aspects to taking good minutes:

1. **Listening**

This is a very important skill to develop. You must not only listen to what is being said but you have to ensure that you understand as well.

2. **Taking notes**

Write down only the main points and the decisions taken. It is impossible to write down everything that is being said.

- Always try to identify the main points

What is the main aim of the discussion?

What information is important?

Use your own words. If you do this you will find that your minutes are more accurate and complete than if you try to jot down everything a speaker says.

- Pay special attention to decisions. If necessary, ask for the decisions to be repeated.
- Ask for clarification. Do not hesitate to stop the meeting if you are not clear about any decisions or issues being discussed.

3. **Writing the minutes**

The following information should be included:

- Nature of meeting, date, time, venue
- Names of those present
- Names of visitors
- Apologies
- Summaries of decisions and discussions

This includes work to be followed up and who have taken responsibility for certain tasks. The minutes should be written neatly in a special minute book or file; avoid jotting down minutes on scraps of paper. The book or file should be kept safely and always available for consultation at any time.

Index	Meeting skills Inputs and verbal reports Executive portfolios Conflict management Planning Understanding your constituency Recruiting members Guide to Constitutions Guide to the Nonprofit Organisations Act Legal structures commonly used Education & Training guide
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ICU Skills Guide 2005– 2006

You are in: [Resource Book](#) >>> [Skills](#) >>> [Time Management](#)

Time Management

In order to gain extra time for your activities by:

- a) Reduce the time it takes you to do the task
- b) Making a more useful use of your time i.e. using time that was previously wasted
- c) Both

In practise a) can be difficult, as many tasks will require a set period of time, but think about the amount of time we waste each day and how it could be used for work or for leisure.

Time management is essentially self-management and at University with the balance of academic work, student activities such as clubs & socs, relaxation, work etc it is important to get it right.

Pointers

- Never too early to start – the best way to effectively start managing your time is to start early. From day 1 keep on top of your work and responsibilities.
- Don't be a perfectionist – trying to be at all times can easily set yourself up for a defeat. No-one is perfect, no-one can be. Set achievable goals that are challenging. Don't set Mission Impossible's
- Learn to say 'NO!' – you can't do everything you want to do or everything you have the chance to. Don't take on more than you can take, learn you may have to disappoint friends on occasions.
- Learn to prioritise your responsibilities and engagements – this is very important. Some people can not do this and end up procrastinating. One method it is to list the items in order of priority with sections for things which have to be done a) today, b) this week and c) this month. Items on a) are dealt with first and then when these are done moving on to b) items. As items on lower priority lists become more important they are moved up to the next list
- Planners – weekly or monthly planners coupled with a to-do lists, possibly based on a priority list can help you chart your path and goals.
- Balance – it is important to have various aspects to your life. You can't work constantly on your academic interests, or constantly take part in student activities, with out other parts of your life which are essential. At the same time it is important not to take on too much and 'Learn to say 'NO!'
- Combining activities – thus using the same time for more than one thing. If you travel in by

bus or tube, use the time for reading of academic notes, material for meetings, etc, thus making more effective use of the same period

- Developing a system further – once you have a basic time management system that works for your needs.



[BACK TO SKILLS INDEX](#)

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You are in: [Resource Book](#) >>> [Skills](#) >>> [Stress Management](#)

Stress Management

Stress as a result of a variety of pressures or problems associated with study/research, personal life or work can have a profound effect on your well being. Virtually everyone at Imperial like all academic institutions will have been stressed at some point.

SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

1. Behavioural

- Irritable behaviour
- Over react
- Aggressive
- Passive
- Apathetic
- Being accident prone
- Drinking large amounts of stimulants such as coffee
- Use of tobacco, drugs, etc to relax
- Over eating
- Loss of sex drive

2. Mental

- Difficulties concentrating
- Indecisive
- Difficulty in solving problems
- Memory failing
- Feeling of being overwhelmed

DEALING WITH STRESS

1. Learn how to relax

– attend a course or use a relaxation tape. Try meditation or perhaps Yoga. Ensure that in your week you set times for doing something you enjoy that is not related to work, and make sure you do it.

2. Work off tension

– try a physical activity such as playing a sport, gardening, walking, running etc.

3. Try something creative

– express yourself. Play an instrument, if you can't perhaps learn something. Cook, decorate, write to a friend, paint, draw etc.

4. Like yourself

– recognise your needs and forgive your errors.

5. Don't get over tired

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6. Ensure you get enough sleep –

establish a pattern of sleep and follow it every night. Avoid taking stimulants like coffee in the evening, and spend the later part of the it doing something undemanding. Relax.

7. Work on only one project at a time

– set priorities, being careful not to set expectations that are too high. If you have several things to do, prioritise and deal with one thing at a time.

8. Learn to say 'NO'

– if you already have too much to do and can avoid additional pressures, say no.

9. Improve your diet and eating habits

– enjoy eating and relax while you are doing it. If you require additional vitamins and minerals take supplements

10. Talk to someone

– talk with friends, family, tutors or the College Counsellors. Others maybe able to help you see your problem(s)/pressure(s) in a new light or help you plan to reduce them. If you are allowing pressures or problems to affect your life in an adverse way, talking can often help to relieve them in some way.

EXERCISES

1. Learn a Relaxation Technique

Progressive Relaxation

– Begin with by sitting/lying in a comfortable position and close you eyes taking 4 or 5 deep breaths in and out slowly. Starting with your right foot, stretch and tense it as you breathe in, and relax as you breathe out. Work up your right leg doing the same with your calf and the thigh in turn. Imagine your right leg is heavy and warm.

Repeat with you left leg and then proceed up your body (truck, bottom, abdomen, chest) and then to you neck, mouth, nose and forehead.

Lie still and with your body floppy enjoy the feeling

After trying this several times speed the process up slightly and work both legs together with the arms as well.

Emergency Stop Technique

– Say ‘Stop’ to yourself. Breathe in and out slowly and as doing so drop your shoulders and relax your hands. Take two small quiet breathes

2. Enjoyment List

Make a list of about ten or so things you enjoy doing being quite specific about them. Then read through them and tick off those you have enjoyed recently (say within the last 7 or 10 days. The fewer ticks you have the more free time you need to arrange so you can do some of the activities you enjoy

3. Value List

Make a list of things you value in yourself – abilities, talents, achievements, etc. Remind yourself of what you are effective at especially during moments when you are thinking ‘I’m no good at this’ or feeling things aren’t going well with work.



[BACK TO SKILLS INDEX](#)

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