

The Meeting

Toolbox

*This is designed to be read
in conjunction with
The Meeting Survival Kit*



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*The
Master
of
Meetings*

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This material is designed to be used during a meeting to help the chair and the participants say the right words and respond in the right way.

What the chair says when

...the meeting opens.

Once the members are present and the starting time has arrived, check that there is a quorum and then say the words in italics:

“The meeting will come to order. I declare this meeting of the XYZ Association open”

The following members have recorded their apologies, Fred Brown, Mary Smythe, Alan Goold. Are there any other apologies on behalf of absent members?

Members will give apologies. (People who are not present and have not asked for their apologies to be recorded are not apologies – they are “not present”)
Will the secretary please record those apologies.

The minutes of the previous meeting have been circulated. Will someone please move that they be accepted (or signed) as an accurate record.

Wait for someone to move the motion

Is there a seconder for the motion.

Wait for a seconder

I will put the motion that the minutes be accepted as an accurate record.

Those in favour raise one hand.

Those against raise one hand.

I believe the ayes have it, pause, the motion is carried.

The first item on the agenda is reports. I will now give the President’s report.

Give the report concisely. If there are any recommendations which require action, then they need to be put to the meeting as motions. See the section on how to deal with reports and how to put a motion.

...a main motion is moved.

Do you wish to move a motion?

Please state your motion.

I will accept your motion.

Is there a seconder to the motion?

The motion has been moved and seconded. Is there a speaker against the motion?

Is there a speaker for the motion.

Does the mover of the motion wish to exercise his/her right of reply?

I will now put the motion which reads "That" All those in favour of the motion please raise one hand (or say "aye").

All those against the motion please raise one hand (or say "no").

I believe the "ayes"(or the "no's") have it, I declare the motion carried (or lost)

...an amendment is moved.

Look at the person and say:

"Do you have an amendment?"

I will listen to your amendment.

Listen to it, decide if it is correctly worded and valid. If it is not you may assist the mover to word the amendment correctly. Once the wording is satisfactory, say:

I will accept your amendment.

Is there a seconder to the amendment?

Is there a speaker against the amendment?

I now intend to put the amendment which reads

All those in favour of the amendment please raise one hand (or say "aye").

All those against the amendment please raise one hand (or say "no").

I believe the "ayes"(or the "no's") have it, I declare the amendment carried (or lost).

If carried:

The motion has been amended and now reads as follows: That

If lost:

The motion stands as originally moved.

... a point of order is raised.

You have a point or order?

Please state your point of order.

Listen to the point of order and decide if you will accept it. If you accept the point of order, say:

I accept the point of order and then either do or don't do what the point of order raised.

If you do not accept the point of order, say:

I do not accept your point of order

Or if is not actually a point of order, say:

That is not a point of order.

...a motion disagreeing with the chair's ruling is moved.

I have a motion disagreeing with my ruling. The ruling I made which is being is challenged is

Is there a seconder.

There is no debate on this motion. I will put the motion.

All those in favour of the motion please raise one hand (or say "aye").

All those against the motion please raise one hand (or say "no").

I believe the "ayes"(or the "no's") have it, I declare the motion carried (or lost)

If the motion is carried, your ruling has been overturned and you carry on as if you had not made that ruling. If the motion is lost, you just carry on as your ruling has been upheld.

... someone bamboozles the meeting with unfamiliar procedures

Remind them that the group uses an accepted process for running the meetings and the procedures being suggested are not the custom for this group (even if they are for other groups the person attends).

You may also ask them which specific authority (book) the procedures they are referring to come from. Then advise them that your groups uses a different authority – *if you do this though, make sure you know what it is.*

...a person is waffling or raising “red herrings”.

Politely interrupt the speaker and ask them to state their point, or if it is a red herring, remind them of the issue being discussed.

“Excuse me Fred, we do have a lot to get through, would you please make your point.”

Or

“Excuse me Beryl, the issue we are discussing is xyz, please confine your comments to that issue.”

... the meeting gets off track.

Remind the meeting of the agenda item you are addressing and ask them to return to the issue being discussed.

“Members, we seem to have strayed from the agenda. Can I remind you that we are on item 4, the issue of security screens on the office. Let’s get back to that issue. Does anyone have a specific suggestion?”

Dealing with reports

A report should always be received in writing. If it is verbal, use your influence to suggest that reports be written at future meetings. If any recommendation has a financial implication on the organisation, (it will cost or save money) then that must be detailed.

If a report has no recommendations which require action then the following *motion should be moved:*

“That the Report be accepted.”

If a report contains recommendations which require action, then the following motions can be moved:

If you want to adopt all of the recommendations and carry out the action that is required:

“That the Report be adopted.”

If you want to adopt some of the recommendations and carry out the action for those but not others.

“That the report be accepted and that recommendations 1, 3, 4, and 6 be adopted.”

Presenting a Report

Prepare your report in bullet point form in advance and send it to everyone before the meeting or at the very least give it out at the meeting. Do not give verbal reports.

When it is your time, stand and say something like:

“Mr President I have provided my report. There are 2 points I wish to highlight. They are points 2 and 5. I am happy to answer any questions and my recommendation is included at the bottom of the report”

How to Move a motion

Attract the attention of the chair and say:

“I wish to move a motion.”

Wait for the chair to recognise you and grant you permission (this is called assigning the floor).

State your motion.

“I move that the membership fees be increased by \$10 for the next year”

Ask if the chair wishes you to speak to the motion or call for a seconder first. When given the floor, speak persuasively to your motion.

How to raise a Point of Order

Stand or raise your hand and say:

“Point of Order”

Wait until the chair recognises you and when asked, state your point of order concisely.

Make sure it is a point of order – see the section in the book.

For example: *“The information being given is not relevant to this agenda item”*

Sit down and wait for the chair to rule on your point of order.

Dealing with Difficult People

If you are in the chair:

Clarify in your own mind exactly what behaviour the person is exhibiting which is difficult. Make sure it is not **just annoying you**.

Depending on the behaviour, look at the person directly, state the behaviour which is causing a concern, and say exactly what you would like to change. For instance, here are some examples:

“Peter, when you make personal comments about other people, it takes us away from the issue on the agenda. Please address your comments to the issue, not the people.”

“Sheryl, I understand that you have a lot of knowledge in this area but we don’t need as much detail for us to make a decision. Would you please give us the summary.”

“Alistair, we have a lot of other items to consider at this meeting. Would you please make your point concisely.”

“Mary, I know that this project means a lot to your but raising your voice is unlikely to get the result you want. Please stay calm and speak courteously to the other members.”

Some chairs would prefer to say the same words but in the third person without naming the offending person. Difficult people often, however, “don’t get it” unless they are spoken to directly.

The essence of dealing with difficult people is to be **respectful**, no matter how **disrespectful** they are being. State the exact behaviour that is causing concern and then state the change in behaviour that you want.

If you are a participant in the meeting and not in the chair:

Read the information for the chair (above). You now need to do exactly the same thing as the chair, but preface your remarks with the words “Mr President” or whoever is in the chair. You look at the chair, attract their attention, then look at the person causing the difficulty and say the same words as above.

This will normally happen when you have a weak or ineffectual chair who simply does not know how to deal with the situation.

Another equally effective option but one which may appeal more to some people is to change the words slightly to be as follows:

“Mr president, when Peter, makes personal comments about other people,

it takes us away from the issue on the agenda. Could you please ask him to address his comments to the issue, not the people.”

“Madam president, I understand that Sheryl has a lot of knowledge in this area but we don’t need as much detail for us to make a decision. Would you please ask her to give us the summary.”

“Mr chairman, we have a lot of other items to consider at this meeting. Would you please ask Alistair to make his point concisely.”

“Chairman, I know that this project means a lot to Mary but raising her voice is unlikely to get the result she wants. Could you please ask her to stay calm and speak courteously to the other members.”

Normal Order of Business for a meeting

The order of business may vary in your organisation but the customary order of business is as follows:

- Call to order and open meeting
- Call for apologies
- Confirm minutes of previous meeting
- Matters arising from the minutes – this should simply be going through the action list and reporting on progress.
- Reports of officers or office bearers
- Notices of motion (if there are any)
- Specific items which have been placed on the agenda in advance
- Other business for which notice has not been given. (this should only be urgent items – it should **not** be open slather to raise anything at all) See *The Agenda* section in the book.

Procedural Motions sometimes called Formal Motions

Procedural motions act upon the procedures of the meeting and so they will normally be moved during the debate on a main motion.

Important things to know about Procedural motions

Procedural motions cannot be moved (or seconded, where required) by a person who has moved, seconded or spoken on the main motion or on an amendment to the main motion.

No right of reply is allowed for procedural motions.

How to move Procedural motions

If you wish to move a procedural motion while a person is speaking to a main motion:

Look at the person speaking and politely say:

"I have a procedural motion."

If they do not stop speaking, stand, and look at the chair and say:

"Mr chair, I have a procedural motion."

If no person is speaking when the procedural motion is moved:

I have a procedural motion.

If you wish to move a procedural motion when no person is speaking:

Stand, and look at the chair and say:

"Mr chair, I have a procedural motion."

When the chair acknowledges you, state the procedural motion.

If the chair does not acknowledge you, remain standing and repeat the same words more assertively.

What are the Procedural Motions?

Motions to close the debate

"That the question be now put"

Used to close discussion and make a decision.

- Can be moved when a person is speaking.
- The chair may reject it but this can be challenged with the disagreement motion.
- A seconder is not technically required but always wise to get one.
- There is no discussion.
- This can be moved on an amendment but if so, applies to the amendment, not the main motion (*as this is the question*).
- If carried on an amendment, the amendment is put immediately. If carried on a main motion, the right of reply is offered and then the vote is taken immediately.
- If lost, discussion continues on the main motion.
-

"That the question be NOT now put" also called "The Previous Question"

Used to kill debate. No matter what the outcome of this motion, the debate on the main motion ceases. **Use this motion with great care.**

- Cannot be moved when a person is speaking.
- The chair may reject it but this can be challenged with the disagreement motion.
- A seconder is required.
- Debate is permissible on this motion but a wise chair will limit it as much as possible.
- Cannot be moved on an amendment.
- If carried, the main motion is effectively dead with no decision made. It cannot be raised again at the same meeting but could be raised at a future meeting.
- If lost, the vote is taken on the main motion immediately after the right of reply by the mover of the main motion.

"That the meeting move to the next business"

Used when discussion is dragging on and there is either no need to make a decision at all, or it seems clear that no decision is going to be reached at this meeting. This motion is immediately voted on. If it is carried, the meeting simply moves to the next item on the agenda. If it is lost, debate continues.

- Cannot be moved when a person is speaking.
- Cannot be rejected by the chair.
- A seconder is required.
- There is no discussion.
- This can be moved on an amendment but if it is carried, the meeting moves to next item on the agenda, not back to the main motion.
- If carried, discussion on the main motion (and any amendment) ceases and no decision is made. The meeting moves to next item on the agenda.
- If lost, discussion resumes at the point of interruption. This procedural motion may be moved again after a suitable interval, determined by the chairman's discretion

"That the question lie on the table"

Used when a matter either needs more research before a decision can be made or, when a meeting does not want to make a decision now for whatever reason.

- Cannot be moved when a person is speaking.
- Cannot be rejected by the chair.
- A seconder is required.
- There is no discussion.
- This can be moved on an amendment but if it is carried, both the amendment and the main motion lie on the table.
- If carried, the question lies on the table indefinitely until a motion is moved to *“raise it from the table”*.
- If lost, discussion resumes at the point of interruption

“That debate be adjourned”

Used to stop debate on a motion but to ensure that it is considered in the future. This is different from having the matter lie on the table because this motion requires that the matter does get considered at a future time. When a matter lies on the table, there is no requirement for it (ever) to be considered again.

- Cannot be moved when a person is speaking.
- Cannot be rejected by the chair.
- A seconder is required.
- Debate is permissible on this motion but a wise chair will limit it as much as possible.
- Amendment is permitted but only allowed as to time, date and place of the future discussion.
- If carried, the meeting proceeds to next item of business on the agenda.
- If lost, discussion resumes at the point of interruption but it may be moved again after a suitable interval (as determined by the chair)

“That the meeting be adjourned”

Used when a meeting cannot effectively continue for any reason such as disruption, lack of information or any other circumstance.

- Cannot be moved when a person is speaking.
- Cannot be rejected by the chair.
- A seconder is required.
- Debate is permissible on this motion but a wise chair will limit it as much as possible.
- Amendment is permitted but only allowed as to time, date and place of the future discussion.
- If carried, the meeting immediately closes.
- If lost, discussion resumes at the point of interruption but it may be moved again after a suitable interval (as determined by the chair)

Motions to assist with the efficient running of the meeting and/or the organisation

“That the matter be referred to a committee”

Used when a matter is complex, or requires more consideration, or requires expert opinion and the meeting cannot efficiently do that as a “whole”.

- Cannot be moved when a person is speaking.
- Cannot be rejected by the chair.
- A seconder is required.
- Debate is permissible on this motion but a wise chair will limit it as much as possible.
- This can be moved on an amendment but if it is carried, both the amendment and the main motion are referred to the committee.
- This motion may be amended only as to a) make-up of the committee, b) the reporting deadline, and c) the terms of reference.
- If carried, the entire matter is referred to the committee for their consideration.
- If lost, discussion resumes at the point of interruption

“That the matter be referred back to the committee”

Used when a matter which has come from a committee has not been fully explored and more work is needed.

- Cannot be moved when a person is speaking.
- Cannot be rejected by the chair.
- A seconder is required.
- Debate is permissible on this motion but a wise chair will limit it as much as possible.
- This can be moved on an amendment but if it is carried, both the amendment and the main motion are referred back to the committee.
- This motion cannot be amended.
- If carried, the entire matter is referred back to the committee for their consideration.
- If lost, discussion resumes at the point of interruption

“That the ruling of the chair be disagreed with” or “I move disagreement with the Chair’s ruling”

This motion is not personal – it is a procedural matter where a member disagrees with a ruling made by the chair.

- Cannot be moved when a person is speaking.
- Cannot be rejected by the chair.
- A seconder is required.
- There is no discussion.
- This can be moved on an amendment but if it is carried, it applies only to the ruling which has been challenged.
- This motion cannot be amended.
- If carried, the ruling given by the chair is overturned and the meeting progresses.
- If lost, the ruling given by the chair is upheld and the meeting continues at the point of interruption.

“That a time limit for discussion (or speakers) of x minutes be applied to this item (or the whole meeting)”

This motion is useful when there is a lengthy agenda or the matter is likely to have a lot of people wishing to speak or just for good management. A good time to allow speakers is 3 minutes each, 5 minutes absolute maximum.

- Cannot be moved when a person is speaking.
- Cannot be rejected by the chair.
- A seconder is required.
- Debate is permissible on this motion but a wise chair will limit it as much as possible.
- This can be moved on an amendment but if it is carried, it applies only to the ruling which has been challenged.
- This motion can be amended but only as to the time limit.
- If carried, when moved on a main motion or amendment, the time limit applies from that point on for all speakers.
- If carried, when moved on a procedural motion, the time limit applies from that point on for all speakers on procedural motions only.
- If lost, the meeting reverts to the previous limits which may have been unspecified – that is, no limit.

Other Procedural Motions

There are some other procedural motions but their use is so rare that they have not been included here.

Be especially careful if you are attempting to remove the chairman or move a motion of no confidence in the chair as these are fraught with difficulties and full of potential legal ramifications for the person moving the motion and/or the

organisation.

They have been deliberately left out of this book for this reason.

If you need to know about them, refer to one of the books in the reference section of this book.

For up to date information and to ask any question about anything to do with meetings go to my blog at www.masterofmeetings.com where you will find categorised information on all aspects of meetings.

You can also subscribe to the RSS feed to be notified when new information is posted.

**David Julian Prices consults, coaches, speaks
and runs workshops
on all matters to do with meetings and governance.**