

Taking minutes in associations

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The problems with minutes

Good minute takers need to take into account many interests. Prerequisites are that the meeting chair maintains order and there is mutual consideration for and from each of the participants. Minute takers (actuaries) must have good language skills and a fluid writing style. Language skills are vital as minute takers need to be able to clearly reflect the discussions in their own words.

Things that often cause issues:

Meeting proceedings

There is a lot of talking.



Everyone is talking at the same time.



Emotions are running high.



A lot of unimportant stuff is being said.



Some things are off topic.



Other agenda items are being discussed into account.

What this means for the minutes

They need to be short, clear and to the point.

They must depict the situation accurately.

They must be objective.

Only key things must be included.

They should only contain facts.

 The list of agenda items must be taken

Types of minutes

The type of minutes to be taken is decided by the executive committee. We differentiate between the following types of minutes:

Minutes of resolutions

These minutes only set out motions and resolutions and do not mention the process by which they were taken. This type of minutes makes sense for cases where only the results of the discussion, and not the opinion of the individual participants, matter.

Bulleted minutes

Bulleted notes serve as a reminder of what went on, with keywords used to derive a full account. However, the bulleted minutes must be relevant and clearly formulated, and the minute taker must have a good understanding of the topics.

Brief minutes

The brief minutes are minutes of resolutions that also reflect the negotiation process briefly and succinctly. All key sections are included in condensed form. The brief minutes are the most challenging and difficult type of minutes and require an extremely high level of concentration from the minute taker. In addition to strict objectivity, the minute taker will need sound expert knowledge and the ability to differentiate between important and unimportant information.

Full minutes

The full minutes reflect the negotiation process word for word, only removing any grammatically errors made by the speakers.

Mixed forms

Usually, a combination of minutes of resolutions and brief minutes makes the most sense. When it comes to discussions that are only interesting for the meeting participants, only the resolutions are recorded. For topics of general interest or that would clarify certain matters to third parties, the negotiation process is reflected in summary form.

Usually, meeting minutes in associations are a combination of forms, namely a mixture of resolution and brief minutes.

All types of minutes contain findings and measures as well as a list of open issues with corresponding deadlines and the persons responsible.

Tips for taking minutes

- Do not draft the minutes by hand. You can prepare a lot in advance with a laptop, and start to write out simple agenda items during the meeting. This will speed things up!
- Use a template with an appropriate grid for the minutes. This will make your work easier and provide readers with a good overview.
- To avoid misunderstandings, all resolutions should be reviewed by everyone at the end of the meeting and corrected if necessary.

Minutes template

The minutes template (form, Word template) consists of the following parts:

<i>Header</i>	Name of the association, committee, etc.
<i>Number</i>	Date and consecutive numbering of the minutes
<i>Date, time, place</i>	Of the meeting (including duration)
<i>Chair</i>	Name of the chair
<i>Attendees</i>	- Participants in alphabetical order (possibly with roles) - Minute taker(s) - Guests - Any experts (mention for which agenda item)
<i>Persons absent</i>	Possibly with the reason for the absence.
<i>Agenda items</i>	List of agenda items as per the invitation
<i>Signatures</i>	Minute takers and possibly the chair
<i>Date</i>	On which the minutes were drafted
<i>Distribution list</i>	Details of entities and persons that will receive a copy of the minutes
<i>Enclosures</i>	Documents enclosed with the minutes