

Introduction	The Chair of a meeting is like the conductor of an orchestra, they are responsible for getting the best from everyone. They run the meeting from start to finish and control the pace of the meeting.
Why it is important	Understanding how to chair a meeting ensures attendees are more engaged and the meeting is organised, time effective and productive.
Use to assist with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting minutes • Meeting agenda • Running a meeting

1. Know your agenda

- Read documentation from the previous meeting.
- Know what is on your agenda (if you haven't prepared it) and how long you want to spend exploring each item.
- Make sure a copy has been circulated to all participants before the meeting – 48 hours is a good time frame.

2. Follow the agenda

- Try to avoid jumping all over the place – structure your agenda in a way that makes logical sense and encourage others in the meeting to do the same.
- Other issues and topics that may arise for discussion should be noted and discussed at the end of the meeting or rolled over to a future meeting.
- It's easy to get bogged down in details – aim for completion on each item without overwhelming those attending.

3. Stay neutral

- You will have as much of an opinion as everyone else in the meeting – try to stay as neutral as possible.
- Ensure everyone has a say and an opportunity to be heard in discussions and in decision making processes.

4. Check understanding as you go

- Repeat and summarise to check understanding as you go.
- If meeting face-to-face - read the body language in the room to see if everyone is following the discussion.
- If meeting virtually – make sure to stop and check attendee understanding as you go to ensure members of the meeting are following the discussion.
- Once a decision has been made and before moving on check that you are clear on who will do what and that it has been agreed upon.
- Don't assume silence means agreement - make sure people have been able to say what they think.

5. Involve and encourage everyone in the discussion

- Draw other people's thoughts out, ask for their opinions when they haven't spoken for a while.
- Ideally you want an atmosphere where there can be genuine debate and discussion.
- People should be able to disagree with each other and listen to different opinions in a way that is constructive.

6. Keep the discussion on topic – know when to move on

- Try to restrain those who talk too much
- If the discussion goes off topic – remind attendees what it is you are discussing and the decision that needs to be made and hold off any additional ideas or points.

7. Dealing with difficult personalities

- Be firm and consistent with all members - hold everyone to the same standard.
- When two people get into a heated discussion, summarise the points made by each, then move the focus away from individuals by asking what other people think about the issues.
- When someone keeps repeating the same point, assure them that their point has been heard and then turn the discussion back to the group.
- On occasion, you may have to deal with someone who is disruptive. If this happens, try asking the group for support – e.g. do people want to spend more time on this discussion or move on to the next topic? This will make it clear to the person involved that everyone, not just the chairperson, wants to move on.

8. After the meeting

- Allow time after the meeting to talk to new people, or to follow up suggestions and contributions people made.
- Talk to other members about how the meeting went.
- Start thinking about your next meeting – was there anything from this meeting that needs to be included on the next agenda? Place any items on the agenda now so that half your meeting is already planned.

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