

SAMPLE

MINUTE TAKING

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Minute Taking – Sample Programme

OBJECTIVES

As a result of the programme participants should be able to

- Understand the purpose of meetings and what makes them effective
- State the role and functions of the note taker and chair person
- Develop listening skills to select and précis information
- Draft concise and accurate minutes

PROGRAMME

10.00 - 10.20 Welcome. introductions, outline of programme

10.20 - 11.00 Purpose of meetings
What makes them effective?

11.00 - 11.15 **Refreshments**

11.15 - 12.30 Role of note taker
Minutes and agendas
Listening skills

12.30 - 1.15 **Lunch**

1.15 - 2.45 Minuting Meetings

2.45 - 3.00 **Refreshments**

3.00 - 4.00 Writing up minutes and review

THE PURPOSE OF MEETINGS

Meetings are used in almost every organization as a way of communicating information to other people.

Their principal functions are to:

- Inform.
- Seek ideas.
- Seek clarification.
- Resolve problems.
- Discuss proposals/ways of working.
- Take decisions.
- Settle disputes.

In general meetings are seen as effective if they:

- Have a purpose.
- Have a specific agenda.
- Have a chair who controls the proceedings.
- Have a structure and keep to the point.
- Have someone who records the proceedings.
- Keep to time.
- Make decisions if required.

SAMPLE

COMMUNICATION- HANDY HINTS

At work and in our personal lives we continually communicate with others and it is important to examine how effective our communication actually is. Misunderstandings often result when our message has not been communicated in the appropriate manner.

Remember that EFFECTIVE communication means the transfer of a thought or idea to someone else so that they have the SAME understanding of the thought or idea as you yourself do.

When preparing communication it is useful to ask the following questions:

1. WHO am I communicating with?

- Who is this person or group?
- What do I know about them?

2. WHY am I communicating?

- What is my purpose?
- What response do I want or need?
- What do I want to achieve?

3. WHAT do I want to say?

- What does the receiver already know?
- What does the receiver need to know?
- Think about the possible needs of the receiver

4. HOW best can I convey my message?

- In what order should I make my points?
- Language, tone ?

5. WHEN will the reader receive?

- When does the reader have to take action?

CLEAR THOUGHT and the answers to the above questions should lead to:

- Clear expression
- Selection of material
- Concise presentation
- Logical presentation

THE FUNCTIONS AND SKILLS OF THE NOTE TAKER

The role of the person who takes the notes/minutes of a meeting is crucial. It is he/she who may be given responsibility for:

- Gathering information for the agenda.
- Circulating the agenda with supporting papers.
- Booking the meeting room.
- Informing those involved of the date, time, venue and purpose.
- Organising refreshments.
- Taking the notes during the proceedings.
- Ensuring that the notes are typed and checked with the chair.
- Circulating the notes to all concerned.

The note takers role is not always an easy one and there are skills a note taker requires these include:

- listening
- being selective
- being methodical
- organisational
- accuracy
- literacy
- interpersonal
- presentational

NOTE TAKING AT MEETINGS - DO'S AND DON'TS FOR THE NOTE TAKER

DO

Get there early

Make sure you know who is the Chair

Sit next to the Chair

Organise seating and refreshments

Check that everyone has papers and take spare ones

Read through all the papers well before the meeting

Ask for the names of those present

Listen carefully

Write down key words and the theme

Write down decisions

Ask for clarification

Check your notes with the Chair

Arrange for the minutes to be typed

Make sure everyone who attends, receives the minutes well before the next meeting.

DON'T

Rush in at the last minute.

Forget to find out who the Chair of the meeting is.

Sit at the back, or out of view.

Forget the environmental factors

Assume everyone will bring all the papers

Ignore previous papers

Be embarrassed to ask people their names.

Go to sleep!

Try and write down every single word.

Forget that the decision is crucial

Sit there and worry because you do not understand

Circulate without seeing the Chair.

Send out hand written minutes.

Send out the minutes just before the next meeting.

SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS

1. **KNOW** why you and others are there. Check out the purpose of the meeting and what role you are expected to play.
2. **PREPARE** - make sure you have an agenda and any papers you need. Book yourself time (even if it is just 15 minutes) just before the meeting to read through again. It will help to keep your mind off other business and focus on the objective in hand.
3. **RESEARCH** - if you are presenting information make a note of the points you are going to make, to remind you to cover them all. If background papers are required make sure you pass them to the Chair and note taker.
4. **BE AWARE** of meeting behaviour, sit near allies if it makes you feel comfortable, don't hide behind anyone else as this may lead to isolation; be assertive in putting views forward, put argument forward concisely and without aggression.
5. **TAKE** your own notes for items that specifically interest you.

LISTENING

Communication is a process involving both sending and receiving information. How we receive information is as important as how we give it. Listening is far more complex than the physical process of hearing. Hearing is physically registering sounds; listening is a process which integrates the physical, emotional and intellectual messages received in a search for understanding and meaning. Active listening requires you to pick up messages behind the words and statements of the speaker.

Barriers to effective listening

Most of the barriers to effective listening can be classified under three headings:

1. Physical barriers

These are environmental factors that limit or prohibit listening, such as noise, heat, distance or even lack of time. A further constraint is that we think about four times as fast as we speak - and therefore prone to distractions.

2. Psychological barriers

These are more complex and more difficult to overcome. They arise from differences in perspective between the speaker and the listener, for example social values or prejudices. When this happens, we may - quite unconsciously - just hear what we want to hear and filter out the rest!

An inability to concentrate can be a major barrier to effective listening. Concentration may be affected by physical barriers but in addition the individual's state of alertness is significant. Under alertness can mean that too little information is absorbed.

3. Semantic barriers

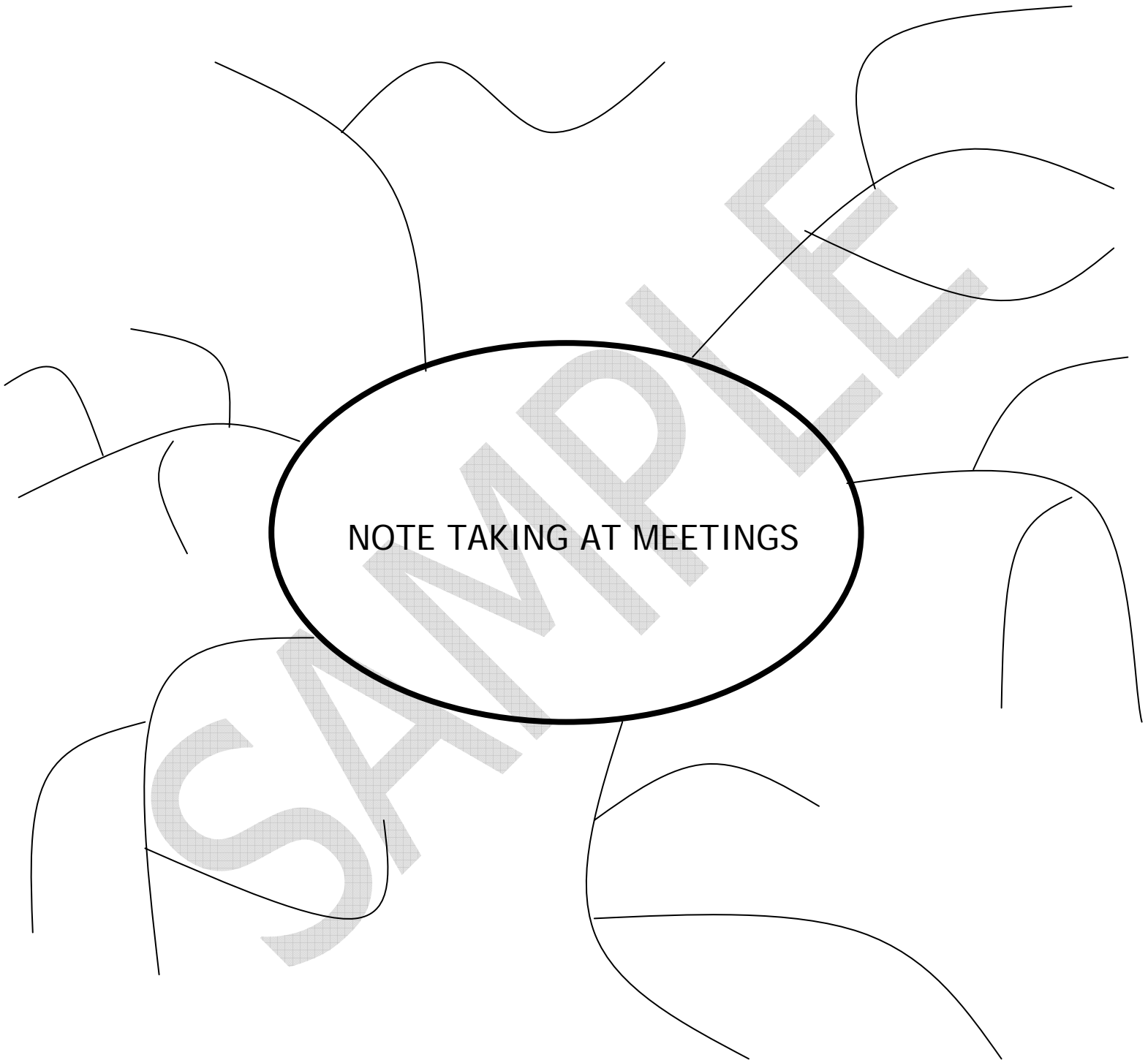
These arise because of what we say is subjective. The English language has relatively few words capable of a single meaning, and ideas and feelings are often difficult to express. In addition some speakers express themselves badly, speak too quickly or use inappropriate language.

EFFECTIVE LISTENING

The following are some ways of improving listening skills:

1. Listen analytically - look for central ideas, themes, links and necessary details.
2. Seek clarification or repetition of points when necessary, ask pertinent questions, and look for relevant answers. Use reflecting and summarising techniques to check that you have heard and understood accurately.
3. Try to suspend judgement - listen in a non evaluative way Only evaluate when you have understood.
4. Listen for the feelings behind what the speaker is saying. Be sensitive to what the speaker is communicating, they may be frustrated and this could be evident from the tone of the voice.
5. Give yourself time to listen - be ready to respond, but not too hastily.
7. Eliminate distractions (noise, interruptions etc) and concentrate on the speaker.
8. Develop the ability to take an overview. Hear and understand what the person is saying to you at the same time seeking where the information, ideas and thoughts fit within the overall theme of the conversation.

USING MIND MAPS



PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

Presentation of minutes is very important, if they are correctly laid out it is easy for those involved to select the items that they are either particularly interested in or need to take action on.

All minutes should contain the following:

- The title of the meeting.
- The date and time of the meeting.
- A list of all those present under the title present.
- A list of all those not present but who have sent their apologies, this list should come under the title apologies.
- Confirmation that the previous meeting's minutes have been agreed. The date of the previous meeting should be included.
- Any amendments arising from the previous meeting's minutes should be written down.
- Any matters arising from the previous minutes should be included under the title matters arising.
- Items should be listed in order as taken in the meeting.
- These can be minuted under headings, using the numerical system of the report format.
- Minutes should always follow the same order that was followed in the meeting.
- The date of the next meeting.

WRITING AGENDAS FOR MEETINGS

Agendas should always be prepared and circulated in advance of a meeting. This is to ensure that people can prepare themselves and for others to know what is going to be discussed.

How items are placed on the agenda is important. If you are asked to make an agenda consider if:

a) you need to put the small items first to ensure that they are dealt with.

OR

b) you need to put the important items first to ensure that adequate time is given to them, and that those who may have to leave early have the opportunity to contribute.

c) you need to set a time limit.

An agenda also follows a standard format. It will look something like this.

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the last meeting
3. Any matters arising
4. Budget
5. Training
6. Office Security
7. Any other business
8. Date and time of next meeting

MEETINGS - SOME GENERAL POINTS

Three main elements exist to make up the organisation and delivery of a meeting. These are as follows:

1. The procedures used in meetings.
2. The participants in meetings; the roles people take on; non verbal communication between people; relationships between individuals; speaking at a meeting.
3. The written documentation of a meeting.

Roles at meetings

Consider the last formal meeting you attended either as a participant or as the secretary, you probably observed a pattern of behaviour amongst the group which may well have affected how the meeting was conducted. There are common types of behaviour that emerge in meetings:

- There are people who do not talk at all. This may be lack of confidence or the desire to opt out.
- Some people talk too often or too long. This can be frustrating others especially if the Chair is weak.
- Some people may keep deviating from the point; again frustrating especially for the secretary who may become confused.
- Some people may appear aggressive and domineering – this could be due to having strong views and if their views are not accepted they may opt out.
- There are those people who may talk just to be noticed, yet contribute little.
- There are others who initiate private conversations, maybe because they are bored or who really feel the meeting has no relevance for them.
- Some people continually interrupt with corrections – this could be because they feel that sufficient attention to detail is not being given.
- Some individuals continually take the opposite view – maybe because they feel they have a duty to consider all the options.

TYPES OF MINUTES

Minutes are crucial to any meeting, they provide a source of reference and authority for all those involved in a meeting and can also serve to inform other interested parties. Minutes ensure that people are accountable for what they say and what they commit themselves to.

There are 3 main types of format for minutes, these are:

1. Resolution Minutes

These record the decisions taken but do not detail any discussion about the topic.

2. Narrative Minutes

These include a summary of the main points of the discussion, which oft times are quite detailed, and the decisions taken. These minutes are often difficult to write, especially if the meeting was a long one with a great deal of discussion.

3. Action Minutes

These are a compromise between resolution and narrative minutes. They briefly report proceedings and name the person delegated to undertake a course of action.

SPECIMEN MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the Training Policy Group held on the 5th November 2003 at 3pm.

Present

June Frien. (chair)
Peter Armstrong
Leroy Connors
Lena Patel.
Fiona Masters

Apologies

Grace Thomas
Dean Smith

1. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on the 6th October were agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.

2. Matters Arising

- Induction loop
Peter reported that this had now been fitted in the Conference Hall.
- Submission of budget document.
The Chair reported that this had been accepted by the Finance Committee but was also an agenda item.

3. Selection Techniques.

Fiona reported that 12 courses had been booked between March and June. However, there was a problem concerning accommodation. It was not possible to accommodate 3 of the courses (dates 14-17 May, 27-30 May, 4-7 June) within the Training Centre.

It was agreed that **Peter** would investigate whether rooms were available in the Town Hall and report back at the next meeting

4. Budget

Lena informed the group that the budget had been cut by 20%. The group expressed their concern about this decision and discussed which areas could reduce their activities. These included manual worker cover, not filling the clerical vacancy, reducing sponsorship and cutting the conference budget entirely.

It was agreed that the **Team Leaders** would discuss this further with their staff and report back to the next meeting.

5. Lunch Time Cover

Peter told the group that he had received 3 complaints during the last month concerning unanswered telephones during the lunch time period. The group agreed that this was a problem as it affected their customer expectations. It was felt that any decision made concerning this had to include staffs' views. A number of options were put forward e.g. individual rota, team rota

It was agreed that **Lena** would seek out views and prepare a report for the next meeting. In the meantime **Team Leaders** would remind staff to make sure that cover arrangements were made for the lunch time period.

6. Reception Area

Leroy informed the group that the building work would start on the 15 March '99 and should be completed by the 23 March '99.

7. Any Other Business

No further items were raised

8. Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on the 24 March at 2pm