



## Tips for Taking Notes

- Minutes are legal documents and the official and historical record of the actions of the organization. They are permanent records and should be kept in an official binder.
- Minutes should be brief and factual.
- Just take notes on actions – minutes should state what is done, not what is said.
- They should never include the secretary's opinion or judgment. They should not include details or flowery language.
- Accuracy is important, so if you are in doubt at all about a name, spelling, or the exact wording of a motion, stop the discussion and ask for clarification or read back what you wrote down to ensure that it is correct.
- Use a separate paragraph for each subject matter
- Work off of the agenda. Before the meeting, create a template for the minutes from the agenda so you don't have to take the time to type/write agenda items during the meeting.
- Have the agenda for the meeting and all background information pertaining to the meeting so you can refer back to this information during the meeting. The whole process can flow much more smoothly if the recording secretary has some knowledge of the subjects to be discussed.
- Sit as close as possible to the presiding officer. This makes it easier for the presiding officer to clarify any points that might have been made.
- Have a complete list of all attendees of the meeting. If this is not possible, have a sign in sheet or pass around a piece of paper for everyone to print his or her name.
- Do not deviate from the agenda. It is best to stick to the agenda as much as possible in order to keep all information on record.
- Number the pages as you go so you aren't confused later. Remember, though, that the minute-taker is responsible for providing good flow. Don't force yourself to write the minutes in the actual chronological order of the discussion - it may not work.
- Record motions properly. **A motion is a formal suggestion made by an attendee at the meeting that has been seconded by another attendee, and then passed by a vote.** If

the motion is not presented in writing, the recording secretary may need to restate a motion after a lengthy discussion. It is therefore very important to record these motions exactly as they have been stated. Record the person who made the original motion, the exact wording of the final motion, and whether the motion was approved or defeated. There is no need to record discussion, amendments, or the people who seconded the motion or suggested amendments. An example of how to document a motion is as follows: *John Olson moved "that all meetings be held in Room 141." The motion was adopted (or defeated). Or A motion by John Olson "that all meetings be held in room 141" was adopted (or defeated).*

- Some PTA's use motion sheets so all motions are written down; this is a best practice that is highly encouraged.
- Record final, amended motions. There is no need to include the discussion or amendments that don't pass.
- Motions that are withdrawn do not need to be recorded.
- If there is a program, record the program topic, type of presentation, names of participants, important points covered.
- Record announcements.
- Record the time of adjournment.
- Minutes should be signed by the secretary and dated.
- Prepare the minutes in the proper order as soon as possible following the meeting; forward a copy to the president for review.
- Present the minutes of the previous meeting at the following meeting. Minutes need to be approved before they are official. Once approved – even with amendments - record this at the bottom of the minutes, along with the date and your signature.
- Read Robert's Rules of Order. This is an excellent tool to assist anyone taking minutes. It will help to familiarize you with the format for making, seconding and amending motions.

#### **Minutes should include:**

- The kind of meeting (regular, special, adjourned regular or adjourned special)
- Name of the association or assembly (general, board of directors, etc.)
- Date, time, and place of meeting
- Time the meeting was called to order
- Whether the regular presiding officer and secretary were present and the names of those who substituted in their absence.

- Quorum established
- Approval of the minutes of previous meeting - either approved, or approved as corrected (a special meeting does not approve minutes)
- Summarized reports of officers and chairmen (important reports such as the budget or monthly treasurer's reports should be attached to the minutes and included in the official book)
- All motions and the name of the person who made each motion (except those withdrawn)
- Unfinished business
- New business
- Announcements
- Program information – just brief mention. Attach handouts if useful
- Time of adjournment.
- Signature of the secretary