

Tips for a Great Agenda

Leading a meeting will require an agenda whether it's a printed copy handed out to all attendees or a set of notes that only the leader can reference. Creating an agenda forces you to consider why you're having a meeting, what you hope it will accomplish, who needs to attend and how long it might take. Having an agenda also makes it much easier to keep a record of what decisions were made at the meeting, and what is important for follow up.

Preparing an agenda:

Topics:

- Be specific, otherwise the meeting will waste time defining them.
- Limit the number of topics so that they can be covered.
- Allocate responsibility for each item on the agenda to an individual.
- Ensure large topics are structured logically and flow from giving information to discussion to a

Sequence:

- Progress from the easy to the difficult.
- Ensure large topics are structured logically and flow from giving information to discussion to a decision.
- Arrange topics logically in order to avoid duplication.

Purpose:

- Be certain you purpose for each topic in the meeting is clear.
- On the agenda, list the desired outcome: decision, clear next step, etc.
- If there is a method to the discussion (such as brainstorming – make that clear to the attendees).

Time:

- Set a start and finish time for the meeting
- Set a time for each item on the agenda according to its importance
- Consider allowing a break if the meeting will last longer than an hour

Notification:

- Ensure all those who will be affected are notified that the meeting is taking place, even if they themselves are not invited.
- Send the agenda out a few days (or as long as time will allow) before the meeting. Avoid sending it out too far in advance, however, things may change in the interim causing the agenda to be altered. If this happens ensure that everyone receives an updated copy before the meeting.

Follow-through:

- Be certain to review the tasks given in the meeting and who is responsible.
- Be sure the date and time of the next meeting is clear.
- A few days after the meeting send a reminder of tasks to be done for the next meeting.

Source: The Comprehensive Meeting Guide: <http://www.meetings.org/meeting1.htm>