

5 Top Tips for Chairing Meetings

Experience: It gets easier the more you do, but how do you start? It may be less onerous to gain experience chairing smaller/less formal groups with other organisations (for example school PTA, local charities, parish/town committees, etc.) Learn from your mistakes, hopefully they will become fewer.

Preparation: Read the agenda thoroughly and have briefings with officers where required. Having a good understanding of the agenda items means you can be more confident in your response to issues that arise.

Anticipate: Think through any difficulties that may arise, such as what would you do if you had to make a casting vote? There will be 'unknown unknowns' but experience and preparation should help with these.

Relax: There is a structure there to help you through the meeting. If it is a long agenda and colleagues have a lot to say, don't get up tight, go with the flow. You may need to encourage colleagues to be briefer, but sometimes this could be counterproductive. Try to inject a bit of humour if possible (be sure it is appropriate).

Impartiality: Endeavour to conduct the meeting in a fair-minded way, but not to the extent that you don't give your opinion on items. You are entitled to be heard as a member of the committee, but you should not use your position unfairly to dominate debate.

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