

# Taking Board Meeting Minutes – Step by Step

## Step 1: Preparation for the Board Meeting

Every organisation records their minutes a little bit differently. Have a discussion with the board chair about any current or planned formats that you are expected to use. Review past meeting minutes to use as a template. Ask the chair of the board for a copy of the meeting agenda, including the names of all attendees, including guests or speakers.

- Open discussion or public participation
- Next meeting date and time
- Time of adjournment

How you detail the discussions during a board meeting is as important as making sure to include all of the information in the bullets shown above. For each agenda item, write a short statement of each action taken by the board, along with a brief explanation of the rationale for their decision. If there are extensive arguments, write a succinct summary of the major arguments.

## Step 2: Taking a Record of the Board Meeting

Unless your organisation requires you to type notes at the meeting, you can either type them out or write them longhand. The two most important things to know when taking the record of the meeting is what information to record and how to present it.

Record discussions objectively, avoiding inflammatory remarks and personal observations. A good way to do this is by avoiding adjectives and adverbs whenever possible. Check your language to be sure that it is clear, unambiguous, and complete.

### Meeting minutes should include:

- Date of the meeting
- Time the meeting was called to order
- Names of the meeting participants and absentees
- Corrections and amendments to previous meeting minutes
- Additions to the current agenda
- Whether a quorum is present
- Motions taken or rejected
- Voting—that there was a motion and second, and the outcome of the vote
- Actions taken or agreed to be taken
- Next steps
- Items to be held over
- New business

Minutes are an official and legal record of the board meeting. In a legal arena, meeting minutes are presumed to be correct and can be used as legal evidence of the facts they report. Document board discussions to accurately reflect the actions and intentions of the board directors. Boards have legal liability, so keep information basic and language simple to avoid any legal complications that place the organisation at a disadvantage in any legal proceedings. Use names only when recording motions and seconds.

After the meeting, you will want to write the formal record when everything is still fresh in your mind, so prepare the record as soon after the meeting as you possibly can.

### Step 3: Writing the official record of board meeting minutes

Review the agenda to gain the full scope of the meeting. Add notes for clarification. Review actions, motions, votes, and decisions for clarity. Edit the record so that the minutes are succinct, clear, and easy to read.

It's better to attach meeting handouts and documents that were referred to during the meeting to the final copy, rather than summarising the contents in the minutes.

### Step 4: Signing, filing, and sharing minutes

Once your meeting minutes are fully written, you are responsible for making them official by having the board secretary sign them. Your organisation may also require the chair's signature.

Follow your organisation's by-laws and protocols for storing minutes. It's a good idea to have back-up copies either in print, a hard drive, or (best case) a board portal. The secretary also has the responsibility for sharing minutes. Make sure the chairperson has approved the minutes before sharing in print or online.

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