



SPORT **HQ**

Meeting guide

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Queensland
Government

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The information presented in this guide:

- is general in nature and does not consider your organisation's specific situation;
- is correct at time of publishing; and
- should not be considered as legal advice.

Meeting guide

Introduction

Some people can't stand meetings! What is it about meetings that makes people anxious?

- Do your meetings run too long?
- Does it feel like you never get anything achieved at meetings?
- Are there too many people at your meetings, meaning that by the time everyone has had a say, it's time to go home and you haven't made any decisions?
- Do things sometimes get out of hand, with some people having their own conversations on the side, while others are distracted checking emails or updating their Facebook status?
- Do you get to the next meeting and nothing that was discussed at the last meeting has been actioned?

Don't worry, you're not alone. These challenges are common, especially in organisations. The good news is, they're easy to fix!

Meetings are an important part of running an organisation.

They offer members an opportunity to be heard and are designed to encourage constructive debate, leading to informed decisions.

Meetings should turn good ideas into better ideas.

People on management committees often learn how to run meetings by watching other committee members run them, which is usually how they've always been run. But is this the best way to do it?

The purpose of this meeting guide is to help your management committee understand:

- Why we need meetings
- The different types of meetings
- Common terminology at meetings
- How to run great meetings

Note: This guide provides information that is relevant to most organisations. As every organisation is different, always check your constitution to confirm the rules that are specific to you.

Why we need meetings

Meetings present opportunities for people to share their ideas and have constructive debates, leading to informed decisions.

But when you get a room full of passionate, like-minded people, there's a good chance that they'll talk about the thing they love (their organisation) and talk, and talk some more. This fun, but unfocused talking can make meetings run for hours, and often means that nothing actually gets done.

Organisations are run by committees, not just one person. Because of this, organisations need to have meetings and it's at these meetings where the management committee, or members, make decisions based on the best interests of the organisation.

This is what's most important about meetings; they are for making decisions, not just for having discussions.

Meetings are for decisions, not just discussions.

Having structure to your meetings means that everyone has an opportunity to express their points of view, that your organisation's decisions are made democratically and that accurate records of your decisions are kept.

See the *Informed decision making guide* for more guidance on decisions in meetings.

Types of meetings

Every incorporated association has a constitution that sets out the 'rules' for the frequency and type of meetings you must hold.

There are a range of different types of formal meetings that you'll hold, as per your constitution, as well as other types of informal meetings you may choose to hold.

The diagram over the page shows the typical meeting rules. Check your constitution to confirm your meeting rules.

See the *Understanding your constitution* resource for more information on how to view and understand your organisation's constitution.

Management committee meeting

The management committee needs to meet regularly enough to make decisions and allocate tasks to keep your organisation running, to track progress against the organisation's plans for the year and the longer term and to make decisions on behalf of the organisation's membership.

In Queensland, an incorporated association's management committee must meet at least once every 4 months. A quorum for a management committee meeting is typically more than half of the members who are on the committee.

Even though other members may be welcome to attend management committee meetings, keep in mind that it's only those members who were elected or appointed to the committee who can actually vote at these meetings.

The management committee can decide how notice of its meetings is to be given to committee members. This could be a minimum of 7 days, or you may schedule them all at the beginning of the year on a regular frequency (e.g. the third Wednesday of the month).

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Meeting rules quick guide

Management Committee Meeting	When: Usually held once per month during season and about every two months out of season (minimum once every 4 months) Quorum: More than half of the members of the committee* Who can vote: Only members of the management committee Notice: Whatever the committee decides is reasonable (e.g. 7 days)
Annual General Meeting (AGM)	When: Once per year. Within 6 months of the end of your financial year Quorum: Usually more than the number of members on the committee* Who can vote: All eligible voting members* Notice: Usually 14 days*
Special General Meeting (SGM) – called by committee	When: As needed to seek member input for important decisions (e.g. change constitution, change organisation name, dissolve the organisation) Quorum: Usually more than the number of members on the committee* Who can vote: All eligible voting members* Notice: Usually 14 days*
Special General Meeting (SGM) – called by members	When: As needed, often to review decisions or actions of management committee (e.g. change bylaws, remove management committee members) Quorum: Usually more than the number of members on the committee* Who can vote: All eligible voting members* Notice: Usually 14 days*
Subcommittee Meeting	When: As determined by the respective subcommittee (usually a few times per year) Quorum: More than half of the members of the subcommittee Who can vote: Members of the respective subcommittee Notice: Whatever the subcommittee decides is reasonable (e.g. 7 days)
Informal Member Forum	When: A few times per year, for meaningful engagement with members (e.g. quarterly) Quorum: NA Who can vote: NA – all members can contribute to ideas, then the management committee decides how to implement them Notice: Whatever members feel is reasonable (e.g. 14 days)

'Notice' means how long before the meeting you need to let everyone know that the meeting has been scheduled.

'Quorum' means the minimum number of members who must be present for the meeting to be formally opened and to be able to make any decisions.

* Check your constitution for rules specific to your organisation.

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Your AGM is a formal and somewhat ceremonial meeting, where you report on the financial year just passed, celebrate your successes and elect incoming management committee members. The AGM of an incorporated association must be held within six months of the end of the association's financial year.

The quorum for your AGM may be a defined number of members, but is typically set as more than the number of members on your management committee. The quorum is usually the same for all types of general meetings.

Any member who has voting rights at general meetings in your constitution can vote at the AGM, as well as any other general meeting (e.g. SGM).

Your constitution will specify how long before a general meeting you need to notify your members. This is likely to be a minimum of 14 days.

Your AGM agenda will generally include:

1. Meeting open
2. Attendance and apologies
3. Minutes of the previous annual general meeting
4. Business arising from minutes of previous annual general meeting
5. President's report: The president presents their report and the meeting votes to adopt the report
6. Treasurer's report and financial statement: The treasurer

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presents their report, as well as the annual financial statement

7. Annual financial statement and audit (or verification) report
8. Subcommittee and any other reports
9. Disclosure of remuneration: presentation of remuneration or benefits paid to management committee members (and their relatives) or senior employees of the association (and their relatives)
10. Disclosure of conflicts of interest
11. Appointment of candidates to fill other designated positions
12. Appointment of auditor (or accountant) for the present financial year
13. Election of life members
14. Special resolution/s
15. Meeting Close

Refer to the *AGM preparation resource* for more information on how to prepare for your AGM.

Special General Meeting (SGM)

Some decisions of an incorporated association must be made by members at a general meeting. These are things like changing the organisation's name, updating the constitution, dissolving the organisation or merging with another organisation.

If any of these decisions need to be made sooner than the next AGM, the management committee can call a special general meeting. As such, there's no set frequency for SGMs and organisations may run for years without needing to call one.

Additionally, there may be times when an organisation's members want to have a general meeting, but the management committee doesn't. This can be because members are dissatisfied with a decision of the management committee (like terminating someone's membership) and want to have a general meeting to overturn that decision. In these cases, members can create a petition to demand that the secretary call an SGM, including the reason that members are requesting the SGM. The constitution will spell out how many members need to sign the petition to call the meeting.

The fact that members can demand an SGM demonstrates the strength of democracy in organisations. An SGM is a mechanism for members to hold the management committee to account for their decisions and, if necessary, to remove some or all management committee members from office if they are under-performing.

Some organisations fall into the trap of holding regular (e.g. monthly) general meetings, instead of management committee meetings. This can result in inefficiencies, with too many members trying to be involved in drawn-out discussions. This practice essentially removes decision-making power from those people elected to make decisions on behalf of members - the management committee. So it's best to reserve general meetings for big decisions and your AGM, and let the management committee get on with its job.

Subcommittee meeting

Organisations sometimes appoint subcommittees to share the workload of the management committee with other teams. Subcommittees are usually established for specific tasks, such as planning for carnivals, special events or new facilities, and it may be the job of a subcommittee to design the annual budget. When the management committee appoints a subcommittee, it delegates certain levels of authority to that subcommittee.

Subcommittee meetings typically don't have the formality of management committee meetings, but they still offer an opportunity for subcommittee members to take part in informed discussion and debate and make decisions. Subcommittees will typically meet a few times per year depending on their purpose. For example, meetings of an events subcommittee will be more frequent leading up to an event.

If your constitution doesn't include much detail about the rules for subcommittee meetings, simply apply the same rules as you do for management committee meetings for things like setting a quorum, notice period and meeting procedures.

Member forum

Member forums are a great way to engage with your members and seek their input, without being too formal.

Member forums can be held on a semi-regular basis, e.g. once per quarter, as a way for the management committee to collect ideas from members, to put those ideas into action and then to report back on progress at the next forum.

As they are informal, you don't need to achieve a quorum, you can notify members as you see fit and you can have nice, broad discussions. The best member forums are where members attend because they want to, not just to make up the numbers. So keep them interesting and engaging, and follow through on the good ideas generated.

You might even take the opportunity to host a social gathering, such as a sausage sizzle, following your member forum, to add to the positivity of the event and to create further opportunities for member engagement.

Meeting terminology

Here is a description of a range of terms used when talking about meetings.

Agenda

The agenda is like your road map, setting out each item to be dealt with at the meeting. It should not only list topics, but also a clear picture of what you intend to decide at the meeting. It is a good idea to release your agenda well in advance of the meeting, to give all attendees time to prepare.

You may wish to use agenda templates, which highlight the important components of a meeting.

Minutes

Meeting minutes are important, as they're the only record of what happens at a meeting. But this doesn't mean that they need to be a complete transcript of everything said during the meeting.

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Because the agenda outlines what you intend to decide at the meeting, the agenda should form the basis of the minutes.

Minutes should follow the order of the agenda and include:

- An accurate record of attendance and apologies
- Details of correspondence addressed during the meeting
- Full text of the decisions made at the meeting (motions and resolutions)
- Any reports received
- An action plan

Following meetings, the secretary should complete and circulate the minutes promptly, ideally within one week, as this provides information and details of the meeting to those who were absent, as well as a record of the decisions made at the meeting and who has tasks to complete.

You may wish to use the minute keeping templates, which provide further guidance to keeping effective minutes, as well as sample wording of motions during meetings. Keeping minutes electronically using meeting software will make your life even easier.

Quorum

A quorum is the minimum number of people that must be in attendance for the meeting to be able to proceed. This is to ensure that any decisions made at a meeting are considered by enough people to represent the interests of the organisation's members.

The quorum requirements for each type of meeting will be detailed in your constitution.

For management committee meetings and general meetings, if a quorum is not achieved, no decisions can be made and no votes can be held. If you don't have a quorum, or if people leave and you are left with too few people for a quorum, the meeting will need to be adjourned (which means temporarily suspended or rescheduled).

Notice

The notice period means the amount of time before a meeting that you need to notify members that the meeting is scheduled. Notice is important as it provides the management committee and your members time to prepare for a meeting, as well as the time to organise their schedule so they can attend.

A meeting notice should always clearly set out the business for which the meeting has been called.

Notice only needs to be given to those people who should attend the meeting. E.g. notice of a management committee meeting only needs to go to members of the management committee and notice of a subcommittee meeting only needs to go to members of that subcommittee, but notice of a general meeting should be available to all members who can attend and vote at general meetings.

The notice periods for each of your meetings will be set out in your constitution. To play it safe, allow an extra or day or two, in case your constitution doesn't specify if day 1 of the notice period is the day the notice goes out, or the next full day.

At any type of general meeting, only the items of business listed on the notice of the meeting can be discussed. As some of your members may decide not to attend a general meeting because they don't really mind which way the decisions go for the items on the notice, it's not fair to them if last-minute agenda items are added on the day. If those items were on the original notice of the meeting, any otherwise disinterested members may have come along to have their say on those decisions.

A notice of a meeting may be distributed to members through various means. This can include sending a hard copy, email or other electronic communication.

Recommendations for distributing a notice of meeting to members

Timely delivery: The notice should be distributed well in advance of the meeting. While the specific timeframe will be outlined in your constitution, at least 14 days' notice is standard.

Clear details: Include all essential details in the notice such as the date, time, location (or link if it's a virtual meeting), purpose of the meeting and the agenda.

Accessibility: Make sure the notice is accessible to all members. This could involve sending it in multiple formats (email, mail, organisation newsletter) or making it available on multiple platforms (organisation website, social media, member portal).

Agenda: Ideally attach the meeting agenda to the notice. If there are items requiring votes, include clear descriptions and any relevant documents for members to review beforehand.

Instructions for proxy voting: If proxy voting is allowed, provide clear instructions on how members can assign their vote to a proxy if they cannot attend the meeting. This might include attaching your standard proxy form to the notice.

Contact information: Provide contact details for a committee member (usually the secretary) who can answer any questions that members might have about the meeting.

Reminders: Consider sending a reminder notice closer to the meeting date, especially for important meetings like AGMs.

Special resolutions: If any special resolutions are to be considered at the meeting, they should be clearly specified in the notice, with enough detail that members can make an informed decision.

Motion

Any significant items of business should be listed on the agenda as motions. A motion sets out the decision that is to be made, not just a topic for discussion.

The best way to think about how to write a motion is to ask yourself, "What do I want the meeting to 'decide'?"

When the agenda includes a clear proposed decision, it is much easier for everyone to prepare beforehand and stay on-topic during the meeting.

And if everyone has read the agenda and is prepared before the meeting, a quick decision on a proposed motion can be made, and the organisation can confidently begin planning to implement that decision.

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Motions should:

- Commence with the word 'That'
- Be specific about the decision you want made
- Not be in the first person
- Contain only one sentence

Example of a good motion:

That the organisation purchase a new BBQ up to the value of \$700 from an appropriate supplier to replace the existing BBQ, which is inoperative and not cost-effective to repair. (M. JONES)

Example of a poor motion:

BBQ.

Special resolution

A special resolution is required for significant organisation decisions, like amending the constitution, changing legal name or dissolving the organisation.

A special resolution must be presented at a general meeting of members (AGM or SGM), to provide every eligible member a chance to vote on the decision.

For a special resolution to pass, it requires a 'yes' vote by at least 75% of those members present and voting on the motion.

General business

General business is a standing agenda item for most management committee meetings and it is where smaller items can be discussed.

General business is no excuse for not being prepared for a meeting. If you've got an idea that you would like the management committee to decide at the meeting, it's up to you to put that idea on the agenda as a motion.

General business should be reserved for things that are truly general in nature. This can be things that don't require a formal decision but that should be noted in the minutes (e.g. expected delivery dates for items the organisation has ordered; updates on discussions with neighbours), or purchase decisions that will cost the organisation less than \$100 (e.g. petty cash expenses to buy more stationery).

If anything significant comes up during general business, consider listing it as a motion on the agenda for the next meeting, so that everyone can take time to be prepared before making the decision.

Conflict of interest

A material personal interest (often called a conflict of interest) arises when a committee member has an opportunity to use their position, or information they obtain from being in that position, for personal gain or the personal benefit of someone else.

If a committee member has a material personal interest in any transaction or matter involving their organisation, they must declare the interest at the next management committee meeting (or in writing) as soon as they become aware of the interest. The interest must be recorded in the minutes of the meeting, entered into a register of declared interests and disclosed at the next general meeting of the organisation.

Proxy voting

It's not possible or convenient for all members to attend and vote at every meeting. This is why many constitutions allow proxy voting at general meetings.

Proxy voting is where a member who will not be at a meeting can give their right to vote to another person, who will vote at the meeting on their behalf.

The main benefit of proxy voting is that it provides an opportunity for a member who is unable to attend a meeting to still exercise their right to vote.

Importantly, unless your constitution expressly states otherwise, proxies contribute to quorum. This means that even if you don't have enough people physically present at a meeting to constitute a quorum, but some of those people are also holding proxies from members who are not present, and the total of the people present plus the legitimate proxy forms adds up to more than the number required for a quorum, the meeting may proceed. Proxies are also included in other counts conducted at meetings, for instance, the number of members demanding that a vote be conducted by secret ballot.

Some organisations don't allow proxies, as they would prefer that anyone intending to vote at a meeting is actually there to participate in the debate before the decision is made.

Others don't like the idea of one person being able to cast multiple votes and therefore influence the decision. Before you decide if you like the idea of proxy voting or not, consider:

- If people can vote by proxy, for example in a contested election, all candidates have the same opportunity to campaign for more votes by proxy. If proxies are not allowed, each candidate is still competing on the 'same playing field' and can, for example, encourage more sympathetic voters to attend the meeting to vote in their favour
- As members can now take part in and vote at meetings using technology, including hybrid meetings that allow people to either attend in person or via online meeting, there is a greater chance for people to take part in debate on a decision and cast a well-informed vote, even if they are unable to physically attend the meeting

Proxies are usually only permitted for general meetings, not management committee meetings.

Refer to the *AGM proxy* form template resource.

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Tips for great meetings

By adopting some simple procedures before, during and after your meetings, they can be quicker and get more achieved.

Before the meeting

- Choose the **right location** for the meeting and/ or set up an online meeting
- The secretary will **formally call the meeting** by giving notice to members, as per the required notice period, and call for motions to be included on the agenda

Use the *Notice of AGM* resource as a template for providing notice of the AGM to your members.

- Everyone should **submit well-worded motions** to the secretary to include on the agenda. It's a good idea for motions to be submitted at least a few days before the meeting, to give the secretary time to complete the agenda and circulate it well ahead of the meeting

It's not the secretary's job to interpret what people might want to discuss or decide at a meeting. If you're the secretary and you don't understand someone's proposed motion, ask for more information and make sure they give you properly worded motions!

- The secretary, usually in collaboration with the chairperson, will **set the agenda** for the meeting, including the motions submitted by members
- Refer to the *Management committee meeting agenda template* and the *AGM agenda template*.
- It's best if you **circulate the agenda**, as well as supporting documents and reports at least a couple of days before the meeting, to give everyone a chance to be prepared
 - **Supporting documents**, sometimes called board papers, usually include the minutes of the previous meeting, financials, reports from committee members and subcommittees, and quotes and information about items the organisation plans to purchase

Reading the agenda and supporting reports and documents prior to a meeting is one of the most significant efficiency improvements that most sporting organisations can implement to enhance their meetings.

Reports

Prior to the AGM, the president and treasurer can start to prepare their reports, ensuring they can be circulated at the same time as the agenda. These reports are often important topics of discussion during the AGM.

The president's report should provide an overview of the organisation's achievements, challenges and future plans, allowing members to understand the organisation's direction and offer feedback. The treasurer's report presents the organisation's financial position, ensuring transparency and accountability in managing funds. These reports foster open communication, enabling members to evaluate the organisation's performance, make informed decisions and actively contribute to its growth and success.

The treasurer and president can collaborate to ensure that both reports provide an accurate and comprehensive overview of the organisation's financial status and overall performance.

Other committee members and key organisation personnel may also prepare annual reports, to update members regarding the organisation's progress in operational areas.

Do your homework!

- It usually only takes a few minutes to read and understand the agenda and supporting documents, but this preparation can save an hour or more during the meeting
- Read the minutes of the previous meeting shortly after that meeting. Don't wait until you get to the next meeting expecting the chairperson to read them out loud.
- If you have questions on anything on the agenda or the supporting documents, it's fine to **ask questions** of people before the meeting. Remember the more preparation everyone does before a meeting, the better the meeting will run

It is expected that the agenda and supporting documents have been thoroughly reviewed prior to the meeting, with any clarification already sought or questions noted for discussion. If the report has been provided beforehand, there is no need for a verbal presentation. The meeting primarily focuses on addressing contentious issues, while routine matters can be swiftly addressed. Investing just a few minutes to read and comprehend the agenda and supporting documents beforehand can potentially save an hour or more of valuable meeting time.

Meeting location

The location of your meeting can influence its tone and productivity. Holding meetings in a café or bar can cause distractions that not only extend the length of the meeting, but also detract from the importance of the meeting.

Consider these elements when choosing a location for your meeting:

- Enough space for the number of attendees you expect
- Sufficient seating
- A location that is convenient for most people
- Somewhere that is quiet and private

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During the meeting

- **Start the meeting on time**, or as soon as you have a quorum
 - Be respectful to those that have arrived on time, rather than waiting for the stragglers before you start
- Make sure you **maintain a quorum** for the whole meeting
 - If at any time attendance drops below the number required for a quorum, you need to pause or adjourn the meeting
 - Keep a record of attendance at the meeting, including the time anyone arrived or left while the meeting was running
 - You can use the *AGM attendance register template* to help keep track of attendees and maintain quorum at the meeting
- **Be present** - All attendees should listen and be 100% committed during the meeting. Avoid distracting side conversations or activities like checking emails, sending text messages or updating your social media status. Stay focused to keep the meeting as efficient as possible. Staying engaged is especially important if you are having an online meeting
- **Stick to the agenda** and keep the meeting moving
 - If you've got a few people who tend to talk too long, especially if they keep going over the same ground, you can appoint a timekeeper to keep things on track

Remember that management committee meetings are your main opportunity to consider the important, but often overlooked, topics of governance and strategy. Avoid 'getting into the weeds' at meetings and defer the more operational discussions to when actions are being implemented. Think of your meetings as where you come up with WHAT you plan to do and WHY. If you assign actions to the right people, they are best to figure out HOW things should get done.

- **Reports**, including the treasurer's report, don't need to be read out loud at the meeting
 - It's best if reports are written before the meeting, submitted to the secretary and circulated with the agenda. If reports are only given verbally, you may forget to include important things that have happened or questions you need people to consider
 - It's more important to spend time during meetings using the information in the written reports to set actions for *who* will do *what* after the meeting, rather than going over old ground for the one or two people who didn't read it beforehand
- **Take minutes** as the meeting happens to record clear and specific actions
 - It's easier to take minutes as the meeting progresses than trying to remember what everyone said afterwards
 - While you may record your meeting on your phone as a backup, it's actually more time-consuming to listen back later to try to construct the minutes from the recording
 - If your agenda is well constructed with good motions and has all supporting documents and reports attached, creating great minutes is really quick and easy. It's simply a matter of recording who moved and seconded each motion, the result of the vote and, most importantly, how that decision will now be put into action.

- Refer to the *Management committee meeting minutes template* and the *AGM minutes template* for a useful guide to use during your meetings.
- **Set a date** for the next meeting – If you can coordinate everyone's calendars to arrange the date for the next meeting while they are all together, it can save time trying to find a suitable date over endless emails
- **Finish on time**
 - A typical, well-run meeting should run for no longer than one hour. Obviously some will take more time, like if you are considering major decisions or contentious matters, but with good preparation and a chairperson who can keep things on track, most meetings can be quick. Remember that the most important reason for meetings is to make decisions, so that those decisions can be put into action!

Online meetings

Now that everyone is used to having online meetings, you may choose to offer this as a regular option for your management committee and members.

Here are some tips to making the most of online meeting platforms:

- Use a headset with a microphone if you can, as the sound quality is usually much better for others in the meeting
- Turn on your camera. It makes a big difference to a sense of connectedness if everyone can see who is in the online meeting. It also makes it easier to see who may be trying to have a say
- When you're not speaking, mute your microphone so that background noise is kept to a minimum. This is particularly important when there are lots of people in the meeting
- Follow the usual meeting procedures, even though you are meeting remotely. This includes being well prepared for the meeting and starting and finishing on time
- Summarise regularly during the meeting to make sure everyone understands what decisions are being made

Tips for the chairperson

The president will usually fill the role of chairperson at meetings. The chairperson runs the meeting, ensures that the agenda is followed and keeps discussion on topic. Sometimes this needs the chairperson to be assertive. This doesn't mean being rude or dictatorial. It simply means that you can use authority as the chairperson and a well-planned agenda to help make decisions and prepare action plans as quickly as possible.

Five things to remember as the chairperson:

1. **Be prepared**
2. **Be on time**
3. **Start on time**
4. **Stick to the agenda**
5. **Finish on time**

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Moving motions

When the appropriate time in the meeting arrives, the person who asked to put a particular motion on the agenda moves that motion. Moving the motion is the official way to introduce it to the meeting. The mover of the motion then speaks to the motion, by explaining their reasons for wanting that decision made.

After the motion is moved, it is seconded by someone else. The purpose of seconding a motion is to confirm that there is enough support to warrant the meeting debating the motion. If there is no seconder for a motion, that is usually an indication that it is only one person's idea, so the motion lapses. This can prevent a waste of time in lengthy discussions during meetings over motions that will eventually be lost anyway.

Once a motion has been moved and seconded, it is opened for further debate. If necessary, amendments to the motion may be debated until the meeting is satisfied with the wording of the motion and it can then be put to a vote.

Voting

Decisions at meetings are made by a vote of the eligible members present and voting, with each person being entitled to one vote on each matter.

Except when a special resolution is required, votes are carried by a simple majority, which means more than half of the members present and voting vote in favour of the motion. So when a motion is put to the vote, if more people vote Yes than No, the motion is carried, and it is then called a resolution. If there are more No votes, the motion is lost.

Some constitutions provide that if there is an equal number of Yes and No votes, the chairperson may have a casting vote.

Elections at the AGM

Members of your organisation have both the right and the responsibility to elect committee members through a voting process. While elections are typically conducted during the annual general meeting (AGM), some organisations are opting to conduct their elections prior to the AGM, for example through a secure online voting platform, and then announce the results during the meeting.

Check your constitution for election provisions specific to your organisation.

Some important considerations for conducting your elections are included below.

1. It is recommended to announce the call for nominations at least 21 or 28 days prior to the AGM. This provides members sufficient time to submit their written nominations no later than 14 days prior to the AGM

Use the *Management committee nomination form* as a template to formally invite nominations for election at the AGM.

2. A list of candidates' names should be made available for members at least seven days before the AGM

3. When preparing the agenda for the AGM, remember to include an agenda item specifically addressing election of management committee members

4. Determine the person responsible for conducting the elections. This is often called the returning officer. The returning officer should officially close the election, oversee the vote count to determine successful candidates and declare the winners. For a vote by raise of hand this could be the chairperson. If the vote is competed by ballot, scrutineers can be nominated and approved to count the votes. Neither the returning officer nor scrutineers should be candidates for any position in the election

When it comes to electing an organisation's committee, there are several methods of voting that can be employed depending on the organisation's constitution and the resources available. Here are three common methods:

Raise of hand: This is the most traditional and straightforward method, often used in smaller organisations or when the vote is not contentious. In a meeting (either a general meeting or an AGM), the chairperson will ask for those in favour of a motion to raise their hand, then those against and finally those abstaining. Each hand raised represents a vote, which are then counted and recorded

Ballot: Ballot voting is more formal and is typically used for larger organisations, for contentious issues, or when anonymity is preferred. Each member is given a paper ballot where they can mark their choice privately. The votes are then collected and counted. This method requires more preparation and resources but ensures privacy and is suitable for complex voting matters

Online voting systems: With the increase in digital tools and remote participation, online voting has become more prevalent. This approach is convenient, especially for members who can't attend meetings in person. Online voting systems vary, but they generally provide secure platforms where members can cast their votes anonymously. Votes are then automatically counted by the system, reducing human error. This method requires reliable internet access and some degree of digital literacy among members

Abstaining

If someone chooses not to vote on a decision at a meeting, this is called abstaining. People choose to abstain from voting for various reasons; from apathy, to not wanting to be seen to support one candidate over others, or for what they may feel are ethical reasons.

If someone abstains from voting, this could change the number of Yes votes needed for a motion to pass. For example, if there are 20 people voting at a meeting, a motion would need 11 Yes votes to be carried (i.e. a simple majority) and a special resolution would need 15 Yes votes to be carried (i.e. 75%). But in the same circumstances, if 4 people abstained from voting, that would mean that there would only now be only 16 people present and voting, so a regular motion would need only 9 Yes votes to be carried by simple majority and a special resolution would need 12 Yes votes to be carried by a majority of 75%.

It is important to check your constitution for specific wording regarding the required number of votes for motions to be carried during your meetings.

Meeting guide

Conflict in meetings

Disagreements should be expected at meetings, so don't avoid them. In fact, meetings are a great opportunity to challenge ideas and find the best solution through debate. Just ensure things don't get personal.

Constructive conflict in a meeting is a good sign that you are having the sort of robust debate that leads to well-considered decisions. But destructive conflict, like personal attacks or petty arguments, can derail a meeting and delay important decisions.

Always remember that the management committee as a whole sets the direction for the organisation, not just the president or chairperson. You're working together for the benefit of your members.

Here are some tips for the chairperson to deal with conflict in meetings:

- Establish meeting expectations
 - Stay respectful and open minded
 - Keep discussions on topic
 - Allow others to share their views
- If destructive conflict arises, calmly take control and bring the discussion back to the agenda
- Once enough debate has taken place, summarise the discussion and bring the item to a close by putting the matter to a vote
- If necessary, follow the more formal meeting procedures at the end of this guide to keep the debate structured and to maintain order during the meeting

Create an action plan

Great meetings lead to great decisions, which lead to great actions, which lead to great outcomes for great organisations! It's therefore important that you make a note of all the actions arising during your meeting, in the minutes. Here are some tips for keeping track of your actions:

- Ensure actions are clarified and allocated to people during the meeting. E.g. "Sam to get three quotes for a new dishwasher by Tuesday 28 February"
- Establish timelines for progress and follow up dates. E.g. "Kris to distribute the survey to members by Sunday 30 April and provide an update to the management committee by the following weekend"
- Include agreed actions in the meeting minutes and review them at the following meeting

After the meeting

- The secretary should **complete the minutes** as soon as possible after the meeting
 - If you're using meeting software that includes easy-to-use templates and pre-populated wording of common motions, you can finish your minutes as soon as the meeting is closed
 - Using software means that everyone at the meeting will have a copy of the minutes straight away and can get straight into implementing actions assigned to them

Complete action items

- Everyone should complete the actions assigned to them by the due dates

Template formal meeting rules

There are further formalities you can follow during meetings, if required. These formal meeting rules, also known as 'Standing Orders', can be followed if there is any contention in a meeting.

They address the way that attendees are to behave at meetings, how motions are dealt with and the powers of the chairperson. You may need to call on the following template formal meeting rules on occasion, to help keep your meetings on track.

- All meetings, including general meetings, management committee meetings and subcommittee meetings will be conducted in an orderly manner
- The chairperson will have the authority to maintain order to ensure that the meeting is productive
- Any attendee desiring to speak at a meeting will raise their hand and address the meeting when called upon by the chairperson
- A motion must be moved and seconded before anyone other than the mover of the motion can speak to it. If a motion is not seconded, it lapses without debate and does not need to be recorded in the minutes
- The chairperson will, as far as practical, call on speakers for and against a motion alternatively
- If a formal amendment to a motion is proposed, the amendment is to be moved, seconded, debated and voted on as a separate matter from the original motion, before debate on the actual (substantive) motion can continue
- Immediately preceding the vote on a motion, the mover of the motion will be offered a final right of reply
- The chairperson will have the authority to allow any attendee to speak only once on any motion, with the exception of the final right of reply for the mover of the motion
- The chairperson will be entitled to vote on motions
- Any or all of these formal meeting rules may be suspended at any time by a simple majority vote of attendees (i.e. more than half)
- Once a matter or motion has been resolved at a meeting, there is to be no further discussion or debate regarding that matter or motion at that meeting, with the exception of a new motion to rescind any resolution previously passed
- Any decision made at a meeting that was properly called and held will not be void because there was a departure from these formal meeting rules which was not detected until after the decision had been made
- Any matters not dealt with in these formal meeting rules will be governed by the customary procedure at meetings