
Business writing – meeting minutes

A half-day programme

To satisfy the requirements of business meetings we have to write various documents such as agendas and minutes. The construction, planning, and organisation of written work need to be of a much higher quality to promote a professional image of the organisation. This short programme aims to coach people, who have to generate these documents, in the techniques necessary to produce the type of minutes commensurate with the various types of meetings that can take place. For example, the minutes that are required for a project progress meeting will be very different from those produced for decision-making meetings.

We stage a mock meeting with some of the delegates while asking others to take a set of minutes and then analyse the types of difficulties and problems encountered by the minute writers.

Key elements of minute writing

Most meetings are formal affairs, and happen at regular intervals. So if we chose you as the minute taker first establish your duties. The best way to do this is to draw up a checklist of all the duties that need performing, in consultation with the meeting chairperson. Having agreed all the duties that need to be completed assign these to whom the chairperson designates. This checklist should be published to all those involved in the meetings, and to those who receive information from the meetings so that they are aware of who to contact on any issue. From this checklist you, as the minute taker, will have accepted your own duties, and can now plan accordingly. Formal meetings need terms of reference, a list of members both permanent, and those who may be called in, for specific topics, rules, procedures, and follow-up mechanisms.

The programme enables participants to:

- To organise their writing of minutes to a higher degree of quality
- To understand the importance of standards and layouts to their readers
- To appreciate the needs of different types of meetings
- To use technical aids such as word-processing, grammar and spell checking
- To appreciate how to incorporate graphical and other visual information

Learning outcomes:

People who attend this training programme will be able to plan, design and write professional minutes that are clear and concise. They will also be aware of the pitfalls that are all too common in modern business writing and be able to avoid them.

Programme Agenda

Duties of the minute writer

A brief explanation of people's expectations of the minute writer and how their duties need clarifying

Supporting documentation to the agenda

We develop an analysis of the most effective way of cross-referencing of supporting documents and references.

Typing up minutes after the meeting

We show people how best to accurately record resolutions, decisions, facts, and opinions.

Typical delegates are:

People who need to improve their minute writing skills, with the accent on efficient production.

Formulating the agenda

Defining the style and format of the agenda relative to the type of meeting that is to take place, including checkpoints in agenda planning.

Taking minutes

Written minutes using both long or shorthand methods and the use of tape machines

Determining styles and layouts

We develop a checklist for producing minutes, and tips on how to set up styles for the different types of meetings.