

How to Take Minutes

What to Include: *Robert's Rules of Order*, a manual for running nonprofit organizations, explains that minutes are a record of what was done at the meeting, not what was said. At

a minimum, minutes should include:

1. Name and kind of meeting. Is it a regular board meeting, an annual meeting, a meeting of the housing committee or a special meeting. If it is a special meeting, attach a copy of the meeting notice given to members.
2. Date, place, and time that the meeting began and ended.
3. Names of the chair and secretary or their substitutes.
4. Names of voting members attending and whether a quorum was present. You may circulate a sign-in sheet and attach it to the minutes.
5. Names of guests and their subject matter.
6. Whether minutes from the previous meeting were approved or corrected.
7. Motions made. You must record:
 - * the exact wording of the motion
 - * who made the motion
 - * the result of the vote
8. Reports. Record the name of the report, the name of the member presenting it, and any action taken on the report. If the report was in writing, attach it, or tell where it may be found. An oral report may be summarized briefly.
9. Other actions, assignments and deadlines, resolutions, and recommendations can be briefly recorded.
10. Secretary's signature once the minutes have been approved.

Summarizing Discussions

Some boards may opt to go beyond the basics and include additional items. For example, a summary of a discussion can give a more complete picture of the meeting. This can be helpful to members who could not attend the meeting and to those looking back at the historical record of the organization. Summaries, if included in the minutes, should be balanced and include major opposing viewpoints, even if they are not adopted.

What to Leave Out

The minutes are a factual record of business. Do not include:

- * Opinions or judgments: Leave out statements like "a well done report" or "a heated discussion."

- * Criticism or accolades: Criticism of members, good or bad, should not be included unless it takes the form of an official motion. Thanks or expressions of appreciation

should only be included if there was a clear consensus of meeting participants. (For example, by applause.)

- * Discussion: If the organization has opted to include discussion summaries, do not personalize it by recording the views of individuals.

- * Extended rehashing of reports: Just hit the highlights or key facts, particularly if a written report is attached.