

7 Tips for Perfect Minute Taking...

1. Be clear about what your role as minute taker entails.

The Chair is responsible for...	The Minute Taker is responsible for...
Setting the agenda	The administration (room/refreshment bookings)
Facilitating the meeting	Sending out the agenda, invites, papers
Keeping attendees to the agenda/time	Making notes during the meeting
Summarising action points	Drawing up the minutes
Approving the minutes	Sending out the approved minutes

2. Form an effective team with the Chair

You and the Chair need to work closely. Too often minute takers think their needs are unimportant and this gets in the way of you being efficient. You need to discuss with each other how each prefers to work and agree standards with each other.

3. Prepare an objectives agenda before any meeting

How many minute takers write down everything and hope to pull out clear action points amongst the discussion? Compare the 2 agenda items below:

(Open) Agenda	(Objectives) Agenda
1. Pilot programme for appraisal skills training	1. Pilot programme for appraisal skills training HR to provide feedback on pilot appraisal skills for appraiser development. Committee to: i. ...agree whether appraiser training should be 2 days or 1 day, compulsory for all, by individual nomination or by training needs analysis. ii ...agree if appraisees require development, and if so, what type of development.

The objectives agenda enables you to have a synopsis of what is to be discussed and will help you understand what to listen out for during the discussion(s). Agree with the Chair to work with each attendee prior to the meeting to get the synopsis and outcomes (objectives) desired.

(7 tips for effective minutes)

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4. *On the day of the meeting...*

Block off 30 minutes preparation time to ensure:

- Your mind is totally focused on the meeting in hand
- You have time to set the room up (how often have I found a room littered with dirty cups and the buffet from the last meeting?)
- You have a 5 minute meeting with the Chair for last minute changes, updates, planning
- You can reserve the seat by the Chair - ask the Chair to 'guard' the seat for you
- You can meet and greet people in the right frame of mind

5. *Listen more than you write...*

It is important to relax and listen to the conversations and points raised. If you do not actively listen to what is being said you will take pages of notes which will not help you in writing minutes, which is the purpose of the minute taker. Shorthand must not be used for the same reason.

6. *Record the actions...*

Remember **Who, What, When.**

Who - *who* has been assigned to it?

What - *what* are they to do?

When - *by* when?

Make sure your Chair never leaves an action point without these three. Interrupt if you are unclear by stating "I apologise for this however I didn't catch when this is to be done. What date shall I note?".

7. *Write clear minutes that help people understand the actions...*

Every organisation should have a simple template that anyone involved can pick up the minutes and draw out the results of the discussion and action points quickly. We do not have time nowadays to read pages of discussion of what was said and by whom.

An easy format is - Header (bold) - synopsis (plain text) - action point (indented and italics) :

1. Pilot programme for appraisal skills training

HR provided positive feedback on the pilot appraisal skills for appraiser development.

HR to perform training needs analysis for 1 and 2 day appraiser courses

Managers to discuss appraisee development with staff

*HR
3 June 2007*

*ALL
by next meeting*

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