

TIP SHEET

Meeting Tips

These tips may help to ensure that your meeting is not a waste of time, or a barrier to the achievement of the organization's objectives.

- ~ The agenda can be your most important piece of paper. Properly drawn up, it has the power of speeding and clarifying a meeting. The main fault with most agendas is they are unnecessarily brief and vague. For example, the phrase "Choosing activities" doesn't really say very much, whereas the longer explanation "To brainstorm about possible activities to promote healthy food choices in restaurants" helps members to form some ideas in advance.
- ~ Don't send or email the agenda too far in advance, since the less organized members may forget or lose it.
- ~ Memorandums sent out early with meeting date, time and place, noting that meeting materials will follow, are helpful. The agenda can then be sent out with the meeting materials.
- ~ The early part of a meeting tends to be more lively and creative than the end of it, so if an item needs mental energy, bright ideas, and clear heads, it may be better to put it high up on the list.
- ~ A common fault is to dwell too long on trivial but urgent items, to the exclusion of significant long-term subjects of fundamental importance. This can be remedied by putting the time frame for discussion of the important long-term issue on the agenda-and observing it.
- ~ Very few meetings achieve anything of value after two hours. An hour and a half is usually enough time to allocate for most purposes. It is often a good idea to put the finishing time of a meeting on the agenda, as well as the starting time.
- ~ It is a good idea to send out background material along with the agenda. It not only saves time, but it also helps in formulating useful questions and considerations in advance.
- ~ If papers are produced at the meeting for discussion, they should be brief and simple, since everyone has to read them.