

## Forum Communicators Hints and Tips on Meeting Rules and Skills

The following is for general use only. For full information on Meeting Rules and Skills Forum Communicators recommend you purchase the publication “The Australian Guide for Chairing Meetings” (previously known as “Mr Chairman”) by Marjorie Puregger, published by University of Queensland Press.

A sample Agenda and Chairman’s Guide is also available to download as a WORD document “Agenda.doc”

### *Tip 1 - Chair that Meeting:*

- The Chairman is responsible for the tone of the meeting. Preparation, combined with a firm, friendly manner will do much to ensure a well-conducted meeting.
- A detailed Agenda is the Chairman’s greatest asset. This should be prepared before the meeting after consulting with the Secretary to determine any correspondence or other matters. This ensures confidence and helps overcome nervousness.
- Check if a quorum is present before opening the meeting.
- Always start the meeting on time and declare the meeting open.
- Many incorporated associations have strict guidelines in their Constitution regarding the Chairman’s duties – read them well.

### *Tip 2 – Being a Secretary*

- The Secretary reads or circulates the Minutes of the previous meeting. The Chairman calls for a motion “that the Minutes be confirmed as a true and correct record” or this can be shortened to “that the Minutes be confirmed”. The Secretary does NOT move this motion – it is for someone else who was at that meeting to confirm that the Secretary has recorded the proceedings correctly.
- The Secretary records the Minutes as they happen at the meeting. A Secretary does not add to the Minutes anything that has happened after the meeting. Any relevant outcomes which occur after the meeting can be recorded as a separate independent report.
- It is wise to keep the rough copy until the Minutes are confirmed at the following meeting.
- A detailed Agenda should be prepared with the Chairman to assist the Secretary to be familiar with each topic. This will make writing the Minutes easier.
- When typing the Minutes allow space for easy reading. When recording a motion it is usual to include the name of the mover and seconder, and whether the motion has been Carried or Lost. Forum Communicators recommends that “Carried” or “Lost” be recorded at the right hand side of the page to allow for easy research at any later date, eg  

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### *Tip 3 – The Treasurers role:*

- The Treasurer must keep books of accounts and Attendance Register and must receive all subscriptions and monies due and bank them accordingly.
- A clear record of expenditure and receipts must be kept throughout the term of office.
- A Financial Statement must be prepared regularly and presented to meetings of members. This should show a clear record of income and expenditure for the specified period, and the balance in hand.
- Any urgent accounts approved by the Executive between meetings must be ratified at the next meeting.

- Any Accounts for Payment should be presented to the Treasurer before the meeting and then a motion “that the accounts as presented be paid” can be moved by any member at the meeting.
- An audited Financial Statement must be presented at the Annual General Meeting of the organisation. If the organisation is incorporated the details of this can be found in their Constitution. This Statement should cover the full period from the last Annual General Meeting and give a detailed analysis of the financial situation of the organisation.
- A copy of all Financial Statements must be given to the Secretary to keep in the Minute Book. The Treasurer will keep a copy in a book or folder provided for that purpose.
- When presenting the statement at a meeting the Treasurer is the person to move the motions “that the Financial Statement be received and/or adopted”, this is because the Treasurer is the only person who has access to the books to say that the statement is true.

*Tip 4 – Motions and Voting*

- When a members wishes to present an idea to the meeting he/she moves a motion. This will usually start with the word “that”, eg I move “that the Secretary write to the Minister for Main Roads regarding the safety of Jones and Main Roads intersection”. If another member considers this topic worthy of discussion they will “second” the motion – thereby opening it for discussion. If no-one seconds the motion, it will lapse for want of a seconder and is therefore not discussed further.
- Each member should only speak once to a motion. The only other way is to ask a question of one of the speakers.
- The person who moves the original motion has a Right of Reply before the motion is put to the vote. This ends the debate. He/she may not introduce any new matter, but merely answer the arguments put forward. If an amendment is moved, the usual practice is for the mover of the motion to exercise his/her right of reply before the first amendment is put because this amendment changes his/her original motion and the mover may want to keep it as it is.
- A member may move an amendment to the motion. Once an amendment is moved and seconded, discussion must be confined to the section of the original motion that it is proposed to alter, and the whole motion can no longer be debated. When voting on an amendment the Chairman or Secretary reads the original motion, followed by the amendment, and takes a vote on the amendment only. If this is carried the motion becomes part of the original motion known as the ‘substantive motion’. The substantive motion is now open for further discussion and/or amendment. When discussion is complete a vote is taken on the motion as a whole.
- When the Chairman is a member of the organisation, he/she has a vote as a member and this can be used when all members vote. If the vote is then even, the Chairman can use his/her casting vote. But the Chairman would be advised to stay with the status quo and not change anything with a casting vote as this could lead to dissension within the organisation. However, it is for each organisation and/or the Chairman to decide.

Remember, joining a club where you can practise meeting procedure can help you gain confidence and poise. You’ll learn how to participate in a meeting when you join at Forum Communicators. Look at our Contacts page for the Forum near you. This document is compliments of Forum Communicators Assoc Inc. - [www.forumcommunicators.asn.au](http://www.forumcommunicators.asn.au)