

Running a great meeting

Top tips on how to get the most out of your meetings and engage new people.



Participation

Participation is vital for a dynamic and exciting meeting. From feeling welcome and confident enough to contribute, to helping shape a meeting's agenda, participation by everyone present will make a meeting more interesting and productive.

Tips on how to encourage participation:

- Welcome people at the beginning of the meeting and introduce newcomers.
- Give everyone the chance to speak.
- Try to avoid too much jargon, or as a group put together a "jargon buster" at the start.
- Try to share tasks and encourage newcomers to take things on.
- Try a go-round to get everyone's opinion on something or to see what ideas people have.
- A go round is when everyone takes a turn to speak with no interruption.
- Try splitting into smaller groups or pairs to get a discussion going. This can help some people feel less intimidated about speaking.

An interesting agenda

The best meetings feel worthwhile and productive. Varying the issues discussed and the ways in which meetings take place can help keep people motivated. Group meetings should be enjoyable!

- As a group establish a few aims or expected outcomes for the meeting. What do you want to get out of it?
- You can try setting the agenda together, or asking for suggestions before the meeting takes place.
- Start the meeting with a short video or piece of exciting news.
- Finish the meeting with action points for different people to take on. This can help people feel involved and have more ownership over the group's activities.
- Take time to chat and get to know each other. It can be nice to have an informal social after the meeting by going to a café or a pub.
- Celebrate successes and positive actions!

Facilitation

Good facilitation is crucial for making people feel included and able to participate, making the meeting flow and keeping an eye on the time.

- Welcome everyone to the group and go over any housekeeping issues (e.g. location of toilets or tea and coffee).
- Go through the agenda at the start so people know what to expect and can add things that are missing.
- Keep the meeting focused and make sure you are getting things done. This can help prevent it becoming a talking shop.
- Take breaks. If you feel the energy levels are dropping or discussions are getting stuck in a rut, a short break can refresh everybody.
- Share roles in the meeting: consider letting different people facilitate and take notes each week.
- Ask for feedback on how the meetings are run. Find out what could work better and what lessons you can learn for next time.

Venue and time

Meet in an accessible and welcoming venue. Think about if your venue may turn some people off from attending.

- Make sure your meeting doesn't clash with other significant meetings or events that might draw people away.
- Make sure your venue is easily accessible by public transport.
- Does your venue have wheelchair access or provisions for the hard-of-hearing?
- The venue needs to be big enough, but not too big as this might make the meeting feel tiny.
- Try shaking things up once in a while and having an event in a different place.

Further reading

Seeds for Change, a training and support coop for grassroots activists: www.seedsforchange.org.uk