



Unit: Writing

Skill 21: Meeting Notes And Agendas**Activity A: How To Take Meeting Notes****Activity Skills:**

Small group discussion.

Leadership Skills:

Understanding what goes into good meeting notes and how to take them.

Suggested Level:

Beginning

Time:

30-40 minutes

Supplies needed:

- Large sheets of paper or flip chart and markers.
- Pencil and paper for every participant.

Do Ahead:

N/A

Source:

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BACKGROUND:

One of the most effective ways to make sure a meeting has impact is to take good notes during the meeting, and then distribute them to all the participants – and any other interested parties – shortly after the meeting. There are two main ways to take meeting notes:

As summary notes: These notes are brief summary statements of the main ideas, and are written on a large sheet of paper posted in front of the group. A scribe or the meeting facilitator captures the essence of what is being said by the group, and jots down the ideas on the flip chart so people can immediately “see” the progress of the discussion. This allows the group to double check that what they are talking about is being accurately reflected in the notes.

As meeting minutes: In the more traditional approach, one person is the note taker, and writes down everything that is said and who said it. These notes then become the “minutes” of the meeting, and are distributed as a record of what happened later once the meeting has concluded. If corrections are needed, people submit their corrections to the minute-taker, or bring the corrections up when the minutes are up for approval at the next meeting.

Both approaches have value, and either or both methods can be used depending on the results you want. If you need an accurate record of everything that was said and who said it, make sure there is someone assigned to take minutes. If you just need to get a summary of the ideas that everyone agreed to, then capture the big issues in front of everyone on a flip chart. If both types of notes would be helpful, then do both – just make sure you have recruited others to help with these tasks.

WHAT TO DO:

Have participants divide into mid-size groups of 5-8 people, or do as one large group depending on numbers. Have the groups identify an idea for a meeting situation, perhaps from their own experience. Make sure they have an issue to discuss that has some differing points of view. Have the groups identify who will record the minutes and the summary notes, and who will facilitate the meeting. Have the groups conduct a mock meeting about their situation, with various participants playing different roles and representing different views on the topic. Allow them about 10 minutes to conduct their meeting, and then have each group present their notes to everyone.

Make sure that the notes record what follow-up tasks must be done, who will handle them, and by what date. If a meeting is to be productive, there need to be results, and it is these resulting decisions that need to be recorded.

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Activity A: How To Take Meeting Notes

Notes:

TALK IT OVER:

Reflect:

- What situation did your group choose?
- What issues got reflected in the summary notes that were in front of everyone?
- Did the summary notes prompt people to clarify an issue or correct what was recorded?
- Did the minutes accurately reflect what was said by whom?
- Did the minutes identify the key tasks and those responsible?

Apply:

- Think about a meeting that you have attended in the past. Who took the notes? Were they useful after the meeting?
- Have you ever seen summary notes taken in front of a group used to clarify the issues and help reach consensus? Do you see how this might happen?
- Why are meetings important?
- Why are meeting notes important?

BEYOND THE BOX:

Optional Homework: Attend a meeting at school or work and take notes. Try to capture the main ideas discussed as summary statements, and also record the details of what was discussed and who said it. What were the outcomes of the meeting in terms of people's thoughts on the issue being discussed? What were the tasks and assignments that resulted?

Resources And Web Links:

"Meeting Facilitation and Group Decision Making," Growing Communities Curriculum, American Community Gardening Association.