

How to Chair a Meeting

It is not always the extrovert or natural leader who makes the best chair, although some leadership qualities are required. The skills of chairing meetings can be acquired and largely depend upon an ability to listen patiently whilst remaining aware of what else is happening around the meeting table. The Chair should not be afraid of making unpopular statements. The following points should be kept in mind when conducting a meeting, however may not be applicable to all groups.

- Involve new members from the start – if there are people attending for the first time introduce them to the others, and ask members to go round the table briefly introducing themselves in turn to the new person.
- Begin the meeting with a short statement – to summarise the purpose of the meeting, what facts are known already, why a decision is required and how you intend to structure the meeting in order to reach a decision.
- Try to separate fact from opinion – ask members for the facts first. Summarise these and then go on to seek members' opinions
- Guide the meeting with a summary at each stage of the discussion – this will ensure everyone is clear about what has been achieved so far.
- At the end of the discussion, summarise the decision which has been reached and who is responsible for implementing the decision.

The Vice Chair

The Vice Chair acts for the Chair when the Chair is not available and undertakes assignments at the request of the Chair. They will provide support to the Chair and where appropriate use the role to train as a future Chair.

