



Help, I've Been Elected President!

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Help, I've been elected President!

You are the president and now have to run the meetings. What do you do to make the chapter meetings go smoothly? The president provides leadership, but does not make all the decisions or do all the work. During the meetings he must direct the club's decision making. The following are some tips to make this easier.

1. Have an agenda. Print it or projected it so members know what is going to happen and when. Let people know when they can have their chance to present items and discuss chapter business and activities. FOLLOW THE AGENDA. Use the same agenda order each meeting so members get used to what is going to happen. You could make a very detailed agenda with spaces for your secretary to fill in the missing blanks so that their job is easier.

2. Have a budget. At the beginning of the year, develop an annual budget and have it approved by the chapter. Include authorization of spending approval for routine and yearly expenses. This is an efficient practice that eliminates the need for many motions throughout the year.

3. Use committees. There are two types of committees, standing committees and special committees. Standing committees are committees that are listed in the chapter by laws that have specific duties spelled out. They can be given power to complete tasks and may have money appropriated to them to make spending decisions. Special committees are temporary committees that end after their purpose is completed. These committees are set during meetings by one of two methods. A motion can be referred to a committee during discussion of the motion. This should be done when there is not enough information available to make an informed decision on the motion. The motion can include who will be the chairman of the committee, who the members of committee will be and when they should report their findings. If this information is not in the motion, the president should appoint a chair and members or allow the chairman of the committee to select his members. The President should determine when the special committee should report. In time sensitive issues the committee can have a spending limit and the ability to act on their decisions.

4. Prep members on presenting motions. If you know of a motion that needs to be presented you can have a member pre-arranged to present the motion. They can have the motion well written with complete and clear information. If this is a long motion they can have a printed copy of the motion to present to the secretary. You can have members prepped to explain and discuss these motions so that the chapter is clear on what the motion is all about. Remember, the presiding officer is not supposed to discuss motions and should remain neutral on the motion. If it is necessary for you to discuss the motion you should turn the chair over to another qualified member.

5. Introduce the Motion to the Floor. After the motion is made and seconded, insure that the motion is in order and is clear and understandable. If the motion is not in order, state why, and don't introduce it to the floor. If the motion is not clear and understandable, work with the originator to reword the motion. After the motion is clear, and the originator agrees with the wording, make sure the secretary has recorded the motion correctly. Clearly state the motion, word for word, placing the motion on the floor. Allow discussion. As chairman you need to keep the meetings moving along in a comfortable pace that is not too fast or too slow. Be careful not to limit debate on a motion. Make sure your members have the opportunity to let their opinions be known. Make sure that the discussion is on the motion that is on the floor. If they get off subject let them know that they can bring that up when a motion on that topic is presented.

6. Record what happens. Make sure your secretary has the information on what happened at the meetings: Exact wording of motions and amendments. Who made motions and seconds. The results of the votes. If discussion is held it can be noted that it was held. You don't need to put the discussion in the minutes. You can request that members that made motions and seconds see the secretary to insure correct spelling of names. Recording of the meetings with a recorder is commonly done to insure accuracy.

How to vote. Approval of minutes, and committee reports are commonly voted by consensus. Any objections? Seeing none, report is accepted. Simple motions that need a majority vote are commonly voted by voice. If it is close you make a decision and allow members to call for a division of the house where you revote with a method that can be counted. You could also say that you can't determine the results and take a hand count. A motion that requires a 2/3 vote you should have a vote that can be counted. Any contested elections should be voted by secret ballot. If you have problems with people voting to do an activity and then not participating, you can have some version of roll call so you know who was in favor of the activity.

7. Relax. Running meetings is hard to do. EVERYONE MAKES MISTAKES. You get better by making mistakes and correcting those mistakes. You were selected by your members to do the best you can do. If you plan ahead and do your best, most members will appreciate what you are doing and most will be glad they are not the chairman! Find a simple, easy to use Parliamentary Procedure guide to help answer your questions.

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