
UNIT 14 MINUTES OF MEETINGS

Structure

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14.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to help you draft minutes of meetings. In order to achieve this, we shall give you some guidelines about the general format of minutes, and certain points you need to keep in mind while writing minutes. We shall also present a sample of minutes and give you some practice in writing minutes.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

Like formal letters, memos and reports, the writing of minutes also follows certain established conventions. It is necessary to know these conventions in order to be able to discharge your responsibility effectively.

In this unit, we shall briefly discuss how to draft minutes of meetings.

14.2 WHAT ARE MINUTES?

The official records of discussions held and decisions taken at a meeting are known as minutes. You may be asked to serve as recording secretary at a meeting. The duties of the secretary are to write down and distribute the minutes of meetings. Usually, at each meeting, the minutes of the previous meeting are read out, if printed copies of the minutes have not been distributed to the members beforehand. The group then votes to accept the minutes or to revise and clarify certain items.

Minutes usually contain the main points of a discussion, the recommendations made by the participants, the tasks assigned to individual members and groups, and the conclusions reached. They are, however, not a verbatim record of the proceedings of a meeting. The emotions or feelings expressed by the members during the course of a discussion are generally not recorded. What is required is an accurate, well organised and complete summary of the business transacted. Minutes, are in fact, a type of summary of what happens at a meeting.

14.3 MECHANICS OF WRITING MINUTES

When you are called upon to write the minutes of a meeting, you must go adequately prepared. You may, for instance, follow these suggestions:

- i) Bring more than one pen and plenty of paper.
- ii) Have the minutes of the previous meeting ready, and any other material that you may need.

- iii) Take down notes carefully during the course of the meeting. If it is possible, you may keep a tape-recorder as a backup.
- iv) Soon after the meeting, prepare a draft of the minutes.
- v) If you have any doubts regarding a statement or a fact, check it up with other members to ensure accuracy.
- vi) Before giving the minutes a final shape, show them to the chairperson (if possible).

14.4 THE GENERAL FORMAT OF MINUTES

The following items are generally included in the minutes of meetings, although the order may vary from one organisation to another.

- i) Name of the group or committee that is holding the meeting
- ii) Date, time and place of the meeting
Example:
DATE : 23 DECEMBER, 1988
TIME : 10.30 A.M.
VENUE : TAJ HOTEL, NEW DELHI.

- iii) The kind of meeting being held (a regular meeting or a special meeting called to discuss a specific subject or problem).

For example, if it is a regular meeting of the Board of Directors, one could give a number to it:

The Fifth Meeting of the Board of Directors.

- iv) Names of the Chairperson and the Secretary.
- v) Names of members present
Names of those who could not attend, and those who attended by special invitation.

In some organisations, much heat is generated over whether the lists of participants should be hierarchical or alphabetical, and whether they should be based on personal names or on roles within the organisation. Many variations are possible. Rigidly stratified organisations like to see status revealed in the list of members present. Less formal organisations prefer an alphabetical order. This is only a matter of propriety of organisational behaviour. With regard to the use of names and job titles, again it depends on the conventions followed in your organisation. Some organisations prefer only names, others want both names and job titles.

- vi) A statement that the minutes of the previous meeting were approved or revised, or a statement that the reading of the minutes was dispensed with.

Examples :

1. Confirmed the Minutes of the 12th Meeting of the Committee held on 26 September, 1988, at New Delhi.
2. The minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on August 7, 1988, at Hyderabad, which had been circulated to members, and on which no comments had been received, were taken as read, and approved.
3. **Minutes of the second Meeting of Project X**
The words 'electronic components' p 2, line 4, were replaced by 'resistors and fixed capacitors'. The minutes were then adopted.

- vii) Record of the proceedings of the meeting. These could include:
 - a) The main points of the Chairperson's address.
 - b) A list of the reports that were read and approved.
 - c) All the motions and suggestions that were made, with statements whether

they were accepted, defeated or merely tabled (vote postponed). It is also customary to include the names of those who proposed or seconded the motions.

- d) Resolutions that were adopted should be written out in full. If a resolution was rejected, make a statement to that effect.
- e) The final statement of vote of thanks to the chair.
Example:
The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the chair.
- f) The time that the meeting ended as well as the date, time and venue of the next meeting.
Example:
There being no further business, the meeting ended at 4.30 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for June 15, at 10 a.m. at the same venue.
- g) The signature of the recording Secretary and the Chairperson.

14.5 SOME DOS AND DONTS

There are certain points you need to keep in mind when you finally write your minutes.

- i) **Keep your minutes brief and to the point.** One way to achieve this is to organise your minutes into various topics. It may be a good idea to write a heading for each topic. Conclude each topic and then go on to the next topic. Following this set format will help you keep the minutes concise. For example, look at the extract of minutes given below:

Example:

The following matters were considered and decisions taken:

1. **Preparatory Courses**

It was noted that the over-all position with regard to the preparation of blocks and the printing of study material was satisfactory. It was further noted that the MPDD was getting the study material for printing within the scheduled period. The Chairman stated that we should not lag behind the schedule so that we could launch the Course in January, 1988, positively. He suggested that in case there was a shortage of Faculty members, the services of qualified persons could be obtained on a contract basis.

2. **Foundation Courses**

It was noted that the progress made by the Writers/Editors was satisfactory, but in a few cases the editors were not sending the materials as per the scheduled dates given to them. The Chairman suggested that in such cases we should inform the editors telegraphically that they should adhere to the deadline given to them and send the materials within the stipulated period.

3. **Elective Courses (First Year)**

It was noted that the progress made by the faculty members in writing Elective Courses was slow. The Chairman said that all efforts should be made to complete the Elective Courses according to the time schedule and Course Writers/Editors should be asked to complete the work assigned to them within the stipulated period.

4. **Modern Indian Languages**

The position explained by Pro. V.C. (Acad.) about the printing of course materials in 12 languages in different States was noted.

- ii) **Avoid being abstract and too general.** Give specific details in the minutes. For example, if it was decided at the meeting that 20 tables and 20 chairs were to be ordered, do not say,

It was decided that some furniture could be ordered.

Instead you should say,

It was decided that 20 chairs and 20 tables should be ordered.

- iii) When approved, minutes of meetings are official and can be used as evidence in legal proceedings. Therefore, the minutes that you write must be accurate, complete and clear. Keep in mind the possibility that the minutes may be used, at some time in the future, by a lawyer or a judge, who probably wouldn't be familiar with the situation you are describing—and you may not be available to explain what you wrote.
- iv) Be consistent in the way you refer to people. Do not call one person Mr. S. Gupta and another Rita Joshi. This may be unintentional, but a lack of consistency in titles or names may reveal a deference to one person at the expense of another.
- v) Minutes should always be objective and impartial. Avoid adjectives or adverbs that suggest either good or bad qualities. For example,
Mr. Sen Gupta read the very comprehensive report he had prepared.
- vi) If the member of the committee is to follow up something and report to the committee at its next meeting, state clearly the name of the member, and the responsibility he/she has accepted.

Given below is a sample of minutes. Read them carefully, before you attempt writing your own minutes.

Example:

SOUTH DELHI CLUB
Kailash Colony
New Delhi-110 048

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Executive Committee

Date: June 19, 1988

Present

1. Shri S.N. Puri (Chairperson)
2. Shri V.L. Dutt (Secretary)
3. Shri D. Bhardwaj
4. Shrimati S. Kumar
5. Shri A. Sawhney

Absent

1. Shri T. Dhar
2. Shri M.K. Swarup

The following points were discussed and decisions taken:

- 1) **Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting**
The minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on May 19, 1988, were unanimously approved.
- 2) **Appointment of an Accountant**
The secretary of the club, Shri V.L. Dutt, reported that the work of the club had increased considerably. He proposed that a full time accountant be appointed. The Committee approved the secretary's proposal, and asked him to take necessary steps for the appointment of an accountant in the pay scale of Rs. 1500-4500.
- 3) **Income Tax**
Shri S.N. Puri, the Chairman, explained that he, along with Mr. V.L. Dutta (the secretary), had met Shri D. Khurana of M/s Khurana and Twaklay, Chartered Accountants, to seek his advice about
 - i) balancing of accounts,
 - ii) activities of the club that would be liable to entertainment tax, and
 - iii) tax on the interest accrued, and other incomes of the club.

Shri Khurana had since sent his detailed report, which was received only recently. The copy of his letter was laid on the table; as Shri Puri had not had time to go through it.

The members felt that the matter needed detailed discussion, and therefore decided to defer it to the next meeting. Shri Puri said that in the meantime he would look into the opinion expressed by M/s

Khurana and Twaklay and circulate his views to the Committee soon.

- 4) **Purchase of Furniture**
The members approved the purchase of 20 easy chairs and a new sofa set. Shri Sawhney was asked to invite quotations from reputed firms and to place an order with a suitable firm after consulting some of the members.
- 5) **Schedule for the Next Meeting**
The meeting ended at 4.30 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for July 20 at 2 p.m.

VED LAL DUTT
Secretary

SOM NATH PURI
Chairman

1 **Check Your Progress**

In the extract of the minutes given below, there are certain items that are missing, and some that are incorrect. Point out the missing items, and correct the incorrect items.

Minutes of the Meeting between
Pure Spices (P) Ltd. and ABC & Co.

Date: 17 January, 1989

Present:

(from Pure Spices Pvt. Ltd.)

1. Mr. Vivek Sahgal (Manager)
2. Mr. Virendra Sahgal (Chairperson)

From ABC & Co.

1. Mr. Ram Lal Anand (Chairperson)
2. A.B. Chandra (Manager)

The following decisions were taken:

1. **Appointment of Distributor**

Pure Spices Private Ltd. (PSPL) agreed to appoint ABC & Co. as their distributors on an exclusive basis for the territories covering the states of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.

This arrangement comes into effect on 1 February 1989, and will be initially for a period of two years.

2. **Range of Products**

The franchise will include all the products of PSPL. It will also include those products which they will include in their range later.

3. Agreed between the parties that ABC & Co. will get a gross margin of 30%, out of which they will disburse at least 18% to the retailers and spend at least 4% on local publicity.

4. **Supply of Goods**

All supplies to ABC & Co. will be on 'freight paid upto destination basis', duly insured against transit hazards of loss, theft, damage, pilferage etc.

5. **Mode of Payment**

6. **Assurance of Cooperation and Date of Next Meeting.**

2. Imagine that you have been appointed the Reporting Secretary for the fifth meeting of the Executive Committee of the city Supermarket held on June 16, 1988. Write the minutes of the meeting, assuming the agenda to be as follows:

- i) Adoption of the Minutes of the last meeting.
- ii) Appointment of sales staff
- iii) Proposal to buy six shelves for the display of goods
- iv) Complaints regarding the quality of 'dals' sold.

You may add any other point that you wish. Be sure to follow the format we have suggested.

Dotted lines for writing notes.

14.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to guide you in the drafting of minutes of meetings. In order to do this, we have given you some points which tell you about

- the general format of minutes, and
• some dos and don'ts in writing minutes.

14.7 KEY WORDS

- convention : a common, agreed way of doing things
var-batim (var-batim) : repeating the words used by the original speaker or writer exactly.

ANSWERS

Check Your Progress

1. The time of the meeting and its venue are missing. Mr. Vivek Sahgal, who is the Manager, should be placed below Mr. Virendra Sahgal, the Chairperson.

Insert 'Mr.' before 'A.B. Chandra'.

5. **Mode of Payment.** Add:

It was agreed that ABC & Co. would make full advance payment by Bank Draft with each purchase order. PSPL should not, at any time, make any supplies on credit or Deferred Payment basis.

6. **Assurance of Cooperation and Date of Next Meeting.** Add:

PSPL and ABC & Co. assured each other of their full cooperation. They agreed to meet on ... to monitor the results of the decisions taken at the meeting.

2. **The City Supermarket**

**The City Supermarket,
10, Nehru Place
New Delhi-110 048.**

Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the Executive Committee of the City Supermarket.

Date: June 16, 1988

Time: 4.30 p.m.

Venue: Committee Room of the City Supermarket

Present:

Mr. R.M. Kamra, Chairman

Mr. S. Kumar, Sales Manager

Mr. P. Singh, Office Manager

Apology was received from Mr. R.K. Chaturvedi, General Manager, who is in hospital.

1. **Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting:** The Minutes of the Executive Meeting held on 16 May, 1988 were unanimously approved.
2. **Appointment of Sales Staff:** The Sales Manager, Mr. Kumar, reported that 3 salesman had left. He requested that the vacancies be immediately filled as work was suffering. He also wanted 2 more salesmen, as the work had increased considerably. His request was granted, and he was asked to issue an advertisement for 5 salespersons.
3. **Purchase of Shelves:** The Office Manager, Mr. Singh, reported that the shelves were too cramped and goods were sometimes left lying on the floor. He proposed buying 6 more shelves. This was agreed to and he was asked to place an order for 6 shelves.
4. **Complaints of Consumers:** The Sales Manager read out the complaints of consumers regarding the quality of 'dals'. The packets containing dals, they said, had pieces of stones in them. He suggested that supplies should be more carefully examined and those who supplied goods of a poor quality should be blacklisted.

Date of next meeting: Agreed for July 18 at 10 a.m. in the board room.

(R.M. KAMRA)
Chairman