

Minute Taking Skills



Objectives of Workshop

- Share ideas, support one another
- Common approach
- Develop minute taking skills
- Make job easier
- Identify future actions

Session Foundations



Respect

Listen

Support and Feedback

Share and Get Involved

Safe Environment

Confidentiality

Timekeeping

Mobiles Off

Introductions

- Why am I here?
 - Already taking minutes/starting out
 - Specific problem
- What kinds of meetings do I minute?
 - Formal/Informal
 - Large/Small
 - How often?
- What are my concerns about taking minutes?
- What would I like to get out of today?

‘A committee is a group that keeps minutes and loses hours.’



*“As I read the minutes of our last meeting,
please keep in mind that each minute
felt more like an hour.”*

Minutes are:

- An agreed record of:
- DECISIONS:
- WHAT was decided
- HOW it was decided
 - Was it a valid meeting?
 - Properly called
 - Properly constituted
 - Properly run

Minutes are:

- An agreed record of:
- ACTION points:
 - WHO is going to do
 - WHAT, and
 - By WHEN
- Did the job get done? Does it need following up?

**We're having a meeting tonight.
What could possibly go wrong???**



“That went well.”

The Chair's role



- To set the agenda (with administrator)
- To ensure meetings run effectively
- To make sure all business is covered
- To make sure everyone knows WHAT needs to be decided and WHO will take action
- To see that everyone has a chance to speak
- To distribute tasks fairly and evenly

Quiz answers: 1

	Must	Worth	Optional
The name of the organisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The title of the meeting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The day and month of the meeting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The year of the meeting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where the meeting took place	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The time the meeting started	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The time the meeting finished	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Quiz answers: 2

	Must	Worth	Optional
The members who were present	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other people who were present	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Who sent apologies for absence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Who was absent without apologies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Who chaired the meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Who took the minutes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The date, etc. of the next meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PLANNING

“ I had six honest serving men who taught me all I knew. Their names were where, when, what, how, why and who.”

- WHY
- WHO
- WHERE
- WHEN
- WHAT
- HOW

The Pre-Meeting Meeting

What can usefully be discussed with the Chair?

- Structure of the meeting
- Technical terminology
- Type of minute needed
- Summarising
- 'Right of interruption'



Structure of an Agenda

- Title: *Does it inform?*
- Time and date: *Is this in full? Have you an end time?*
- Place: *In full?*
- Objective: *Will this help to tell people why they're coming?*
- Attendees: *Names in full? Guests' job title/place of work? Who is chair/minute taker?*
- Items: *Minutes read, agreed and signed? Matters arising? Are items logical? Is process clear, e.g. report/discuss/agree/decide?*
- AOB: *Is this really necessary?*
- Next meeting: *Please have access to your diary.*



"I fear we may have strayed from the agenda somewhat."



The Meeting Agenda: Start Simple

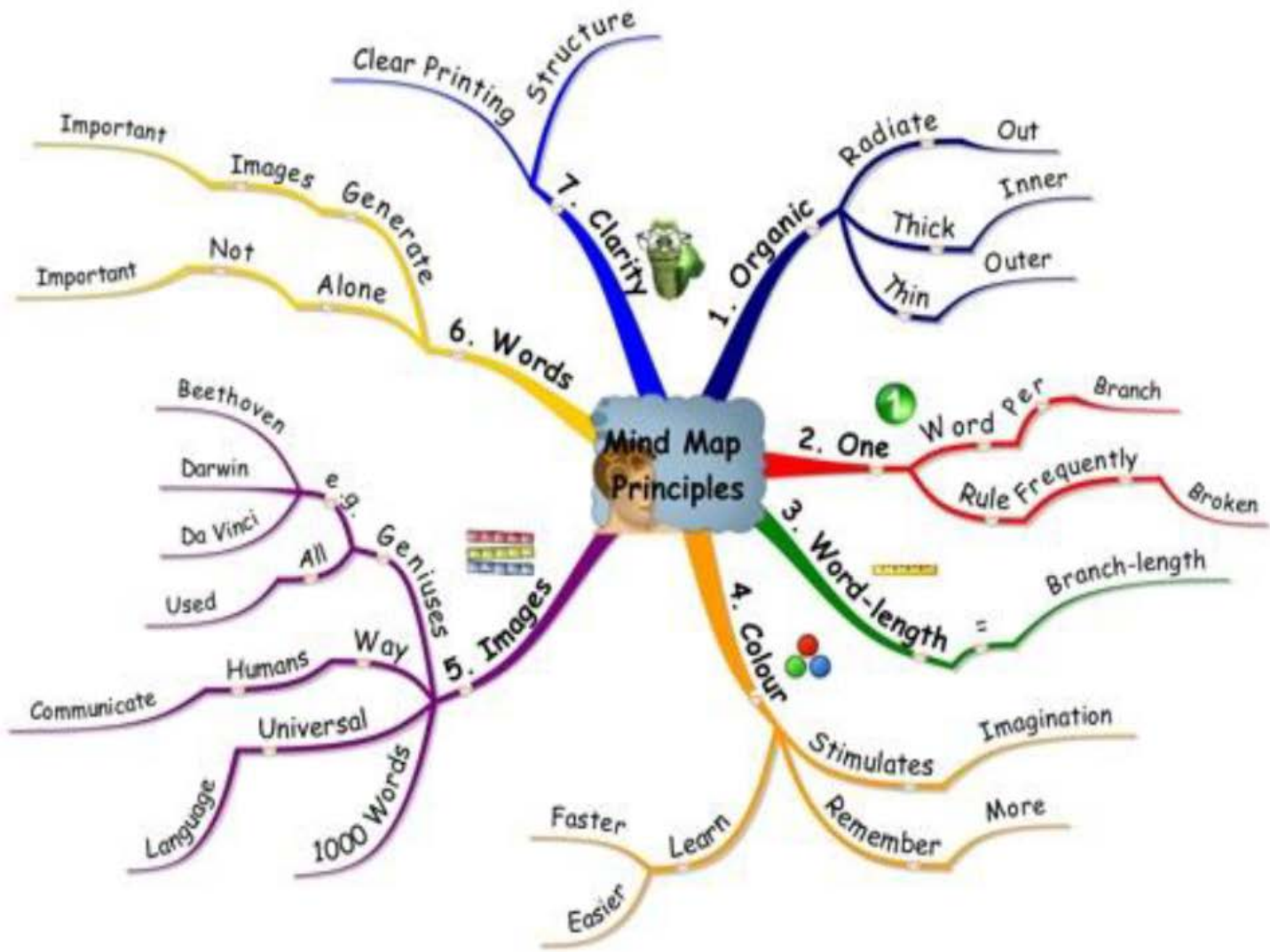
Practical arrangements for the meeting

Consider:

- Time and place
- Venue
- Refreshments
- Equipment



Example Mind Map



Mind Mapping

- All your ideas around a central topic
- Categorise
- Identify the categories
- Prioritise the categories
- Sub-prioritise
- Reconsider

Mind Maps are useful for:

- Preparing a report
- Drafting a letter
- Revising for an exam
- Planning a presentation
- Drawing up an agenda
- Taking notes at a meeting, lecture etc.
- Taking the minutes of a meeting
- Planning the day.

‘The human brain can make an infinite number of associations; and our creative thinking potential is similarly infinite’ *Tony Buzan*

Taking Notes at the meeting

- Every minute of writing can be balanced by five minutes of listening.
- The average length of a minute in traditional handwritten minute books is 25 to 30 words.

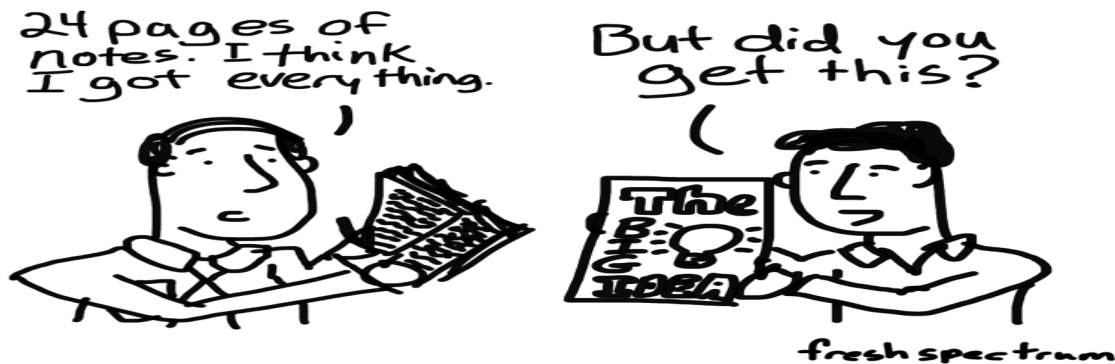
It is an enlightened fact that anything can be summarised in an average of between 20 and 35 words.

A framework for each minute

- Start with a helpful heading
- Set the scene: who did what?
 - What happened next?
 - Did additional information emerge?
 - What were the main arguments for and against?
- What were the decisions?
 - Do the reasons need to be recorded?
- Action: what, who and by when?

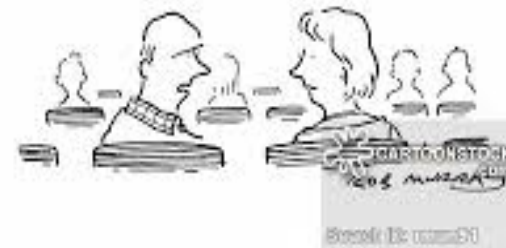
Note Taking Techniques

- Spend more time listening than writing. Hearing is not the same as listening.
- Use a pro-forma. A minute book can be a useful way of taking notes.
- You can use mind mapping. Use different colours for actions and information.
- Only write what is relevant.
- Use abbreviations and short-cuts.
- Avoid short-hand or recording the meeting.
- Don't forget, the planning and preparation can help you to take the appropriate notes.



Developing your own abbreviations when taking notes

- IWA *it was agreed*
- MWD *the matter was deferred*
- PMA *the minutes of the previous meeting were approved and signed.*
- DONM *date and time of next meeting*
- W8C *wait and see – in due course*
- B4 *before – in advance*
- L8r *later – afterwards*
- 1/7....3/7 *1 week 3 weeks*



Barriers to listening

- Hijacking
- Advising
- Sparring
- Being right
- De-railing
- Placating
- Rehearsing
- Comparing
- Mind reading
- Filtering
- Judging
- Dreaming

The film of Billy Elliot

Billy Elliot, the son of a Tyneside miner, discovers he is a talented dancer. He overcomes his family's resistance, wins a scholarship to ballet school and makes a successful career as a ballet dancer. (34 words)

The plot of Anna Karenina

Anna Karenina, an aristocratic woman in nineteenth century Russia, leaves her husband and child to live with her soldier lover in exile. She is tormented by her disgrace and finally commits suicide. (32 words)

From Ashbrook Parish Council Records

'It was agreed that four dwellings be built at the southern end of John Brown's field to provide permanent accommodation for four stonemasons and their families.' (26 words)



After the meeting

- Write up the minutes as soon as possible.
- Ensure all the necessary information is included.
- Use the same framework for each item. Start with a helpful heading (usually the same as the agenda). Then set the scene: did the meeting receive a proposal and what was its purpose. What happened next – was it discussed etc. What were the decisions and who has to take what act
- Avoid the 'he said', she said', unless the Chair requests that a remark is quoted and attributed. Concentrate on resolutions, decisions and actions agreed.
- Remember the rules of good business writing: Accuracy, Brevity and Clarity.

- “Writing is the hardest work in the world not involving heavy lifting.”

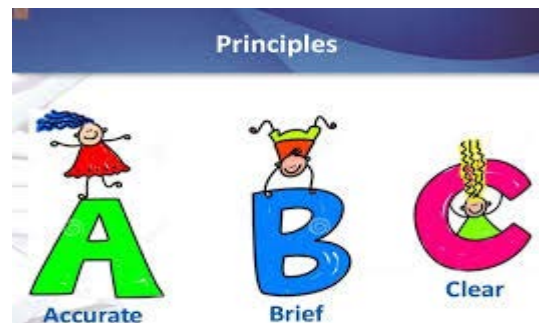
Pete Hamill (US Journalist)

Style and tone

- The language is specific, appropriate
- Unnecessary words, words, words have been deleted – even erased or rubbed out.
- The sentences vary in length and structure
- The writing is direct, clear, easy to understand
- The tone is right.

ABC of business writing

- **Accurate:** say what you mean, good punctuation, spelling, use active rather than passive, be consistent in terminology.
- **Brief:** short simple words, sentences, paragraphs – whenever the topic changes, don't assume a commercialised writing style.
- **Clarity:** only use jargon in the right place, keep your work logical, make topic clear at start, finish with action(s), check for ambiguity.



Keep it brief

Research shows:

- Sentences of 28 words or more 96% of readers re-read
- Sentences of 16-27 words 25% of readers re-read
- Sentences of 15 words and under 4% of readers re-read



Number of words

- The Ten Commandments 130 words
- U.S. Constitution 485 words
- EU directive on Aubergines 7000+ words

Brevity – the simple way of saying things

- Presented
- Investigate
- Stated
- Regarding
- Advised
- Forthcoming
- Endeavour
- Proceed
- Acquaint

Cont/d

- Terminate
- Herewith
- Matter
- Suggested
- Remarked
- Remarked
- Correspond with
- Communicate

Affords an opportunity to

In view of the fact that

It was noted that

It was remarked by Ms X that

It was agreed that

In order to

Enclosed herewith

Were submitted to by X

Communicate – Don't discombobulate!

It was stated that, in view of the great increase in the price of raw materials, suggestions would have to be forthcoming regarding cutting expenditure. Measures should be taken to investigate forthcoming trends and endeavours should be taken to proceed with caution to terminate unnecessary expenditure. It was remarked that this matter is of the utmost importance, and that we should correspond with the Northern Office to accommodate a solution.

Turns into:

John said raw materials are becoming very expensive. We need to cut back costs, We must look at future trends and be careful not to overspend. Jane said it was urgent to warn Leeds and get their help.

“If you get stuck, get away from your desk. Take a walk, take a bath, go to sleep, make a pie, draw, listen to music, meditate, exercise, whatever you do, don’t just sit there scowling at the problem. Open a gap for your words, create a space. Be patient.”

Hilary Mantel

CHECK IT OUT!

EDIT AND PROOF READ



Read from the back of the document

Read in pairs

Put it to one side – do it later!

Proofreading

- Focuses on:
 - Spelling mistakes
 - Missing words
 - Spelling
 - Punctuation
 - Capitalisation.

Editing

- Additional focus on:
 - Style
 - Clarity
 - Logic
 - Organisation.

ACTIONS

As a result of being here today, identify some things you can do differently to help you with your minute taking.

