

Effective Meeting Practices – Agree on 4 Rules

IMPORTANT FOUNDATION

It's critical that all members of a meeting body understand and practice the principles of courtesy and respect. Address poor behavior calmly and in a timely manner.

WAIT TO BE RECOGNIZED

Speak, debate, make motions only once the Chair of the meeting has acknowledged you. Consider adopting a rule to address how long member/public is allowed to speak for.

GAIN CONFIDENCE

Interventions can be uncomfortable, but practice will make them easier; speak calmly and speak in the affirmative; and keep trying and practicing.



It's all about order. That's why meeting bodies have agendas, a Chair to preside, and rules. Meetings are not about having conversations about things, but to decide on the business at hand – the agenda items.

The Chair announces the item for discussion, goes around the table to hear each member's position on the topic and then asks for a decision. It's important that everyone has an opportunity to speak and that one or two people are not dominating the conversation. Speak once and then only once more on any given agenda item. If needed, meeting bodies may adopt time limits for anyone who speaks.

If the Chair decides something for the group, it can be appealed and then voted on. The group is the final

1. Follow the agenda; if things go off-track,
 - all agree to interrupt to remind the group to stick to the agenda
2. Members are to be recognized by the chair before speaking; speak once on a topic before speaking a second time
3. The meeting body controls any changes to the agenda, not the Chair; consensus of the group is the authority, not any 1 person
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4. Public meeting does not belong to the public, it's just not held in private. Public (and members) address comments to the Chair
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authority, not any one person. Use Point of Order to draw attention to a breach of your rules, improper procedures or breach of established practices. Fundamentals to Parliamentary Procedures are order, speed, and fairness. Following a set of rules and members abiding by them ensures there is order. Helping one another stay on topic and limiting the number of times and for how long a member speaks, helps the body conduct business speedily and respects everyone's time. Fairness about the meeting body, not about what's fair to one member or just the chair. The meeting is fair when the majority decides, the minority is heard, and absentee's are protected.