

How to Plan a Meeting

Consider the following elements when planning a meeting.

Purpose

Name the three most important things you hope to accomplish. The purpose for a meeting might include these points:

- planning or assigning tasks
- connecting or building community
- completing a specific task
- learning or training
- socializing
- faith sharing, prayer, or reflection

Timing

When determining how long the meeting should last, consider these questions:

- Can we realistically cover the agenda?
- Will the group have enough energy for the agenda?
- When will the meeting start?
- When will it end?
- What is the best time to meet, as determined by these concerns:
 - availability
 - energy
 - impact on other activities

- What prayers, new business, introductions, and other elements are needed?

After you have created a written agenda, complete these tasks:

- Distribute the agenda before the meeting so that the participants will know what to expect.
- Review and adapt the agenda at the beginning of the meeting as needed.
- Review the agenda at the end of the meeting, highlighting items that were not covered and tabling them until the next meeting.

Physical Arrangements

Consider the following questions:

- What facilities and equipment does the meeting need?
- How should the meeting room be arranged?
 - Can everyone see one another?
 - Are tables needed for written work?
 - Is the room large enough or small enough to comfortably hold those in attendance?

Role Assignments

Every meeting should include three roles:

- The **facilitator** leads the meeting, guides the conversations, and keeps the group on task. One or more people can play this role during a meeting.
- The **recorder** documents the discussions and the decisions made by the group. After the meeting the recorder provides a written report of the meeting to all those who participated, keeping a copy for reference at future meetings. The recorder should not be the same person as the facilitator.

- The **timekeeper** ensures that the meeting starts and ends on time. The timekeeper also makes sure that the group does not spend too much time on any one agenda item. Sometimes the facilitator plays this role during a meeting.

In addition, consider these roles:

- setup and cleanup
- hospitality
- prayer leader
- presenter

Follow-up Methods

Meetings often lead to additional tasks being assigned for completion in the coming weeks or months. At the end of the meeting, it is important to know the following:

- what tasks have been assigned to whom
- the deadlines for completion of those tasks
- who is accountable to whom

Also be sure to give a summary of the meeting, including these elements:

- Describe the mutual understanding of decisions made, tasks assigned, and work completed.
- Identify items that need follow-up, and who will do the work.
- Identify any next steps and possible agenda items for the future.

You might also want to check in on these concerns:

- How are people feeling?
- Do people need anything (such as information, help, or supplies) to move forward?

(The material on this handout is adapted from *Effective Meeting Skills—A Practical Guide for More Productive Meetings*, by Marion E. Haynes [Menlo Park, CA: Crisp Publications, 1988], pages 26–27. Copyright © 1988 by Crisp Publications. Permission applied for.)