



Taking Minutes Made Easy

A quick and easy guide on how to take minutes at your next meeting.

Definitions

MINUTES: The written record of what was *done* at a meeting, not what was *said* at a meeting

TRANSCRIPT: Usually a typed copy of dictated or recorded material

NOTES: Condensed or informal record



Let's first start off by defining the three main ways of record-keeping to help guide us as we get further into how to take minutes at your board meeting or committee meeting.

Minutes – minutes are the written record of what was DONE at the meeting, not what was SAID at the meeting

Transcript – transcripts are usually a typed copy of dictated or recorded material

And Notes – these records are condensed and informal

Standard for Taking Minutes

Robert's Rules of Order

- **Commonly used rules of parliamentary procedure which govern the manner in which meetings are conducted.**

Since this is the standard by which we run our meetings, it makes sense to use this as the standard by which we take the minutes of these meetings.



It's important to have a standard established for taking minutes.

Most organizations use the standards of Robert's Rules of Order to conduct their meetings.

It makes sense, then, to use Robert's Rules of Order as the standard by which you take the minutes at these meetings.



Proper recording of the minutes can be an easy task if you **START WITH A GOOD AGENDA**, outlining all the business that is to take place. It will be much simpler for the recorder or secretary to fill in the necessary details as the meeting progresses.

What DO the minutes include?

- **The kind of meeting**
- **Name of the organization**
- **Date and place of the meeting**
- **The time the meeting was called to order**
- **Names of the presiding officer(s) and secretary (recorder)**
- **The number of members present (to determine a quorum)**



So then the issue becomes, what do you INCLUDE in the minutes, exactly?

- What kind of meeting is this? – is it a quarterly board meeting, committee meeting, or task force meeting?
- What is the name of the organization?
- When and where is the meeting taking place?
- When was the meeting called to order?
- Who is the presiding officer and who is recording these minutes?
- How many members are present? Documenting this will also serve to verify that a quorum exists and the organization can therefore conduct business during this meeting. You may want to note that a quorum is defined in the organization's bylaws.

What DO the minutes include?

- **Points of order and appeals**
- **Action items from the previous meeting for follow-up status**
- **Action items assigned**



Other items to capture when introduced into the meeting are:

- Points of order or appeals
- The follow-up status on action items from the previous meeting
- And if there were any new action items assigned at the meeting

What DO the minutes include?

- **Any report given at the meeting (e.g. committee reports)**
 - Record the name of the committee and reporting member
 - Attach written copy of the report
 - *Do not summarize the report in minutes*



When your agenda includes committee or task force reports, all that is necessary to record is the name of the committee and the individual giving the report. If they submit a written copy of their report, you should attach it to the final copy of the minutes, but note in the minutes that it is attached.

For instance, label the report as “Appendix A,” attach it to the end of the minutes, but be sure to insert a notation within the minutes to “See Appendix A” for the report.

Resist the urge to summarize or include notes on the report that is being given. You cannot guarantee that what you’ve captured in your summary is accurate or even objective. It’s best to just use their exact words through attaching the actual report, which is in keeping with the standard of Robert’s Rules of Order.

What DO the minutes include?

- **Main motions as they were voted**
 - Who made the motion
 - The contents of the motion
 - If the motion was seconded
 - Whether it was discussed
 - If it was amended & the motion as amended
 - Vote count
 - Pass/fail/tabled
- **The time of adjournment**



When recording main motions, you should record the following:

- Who is making the motion? (for NACD and other large organizations, it may not be a person's name, but the state or role which they represent)
 - What are the contents of the motion? The recorder should not be afraid to respectfully ask that the motion be repeated in order to get it accurately recorded.
 - Was the motion seconded? It isn't necessary, however, to specify WHO seconded the motion.
 - Was the motion discussed? If so, record the discussion by simply stating "Discussion." Never try to capture the contents of the discussion as that is very subjective. This can be inaccurate as it is based on only what the recorder can capture in the moment.
 - Was the motion amended and what was the exact amended motion?
 - What was the vote count on the motion? With large organizations such as NACD, only a majority vote is noted unless it is a close vote or a two-thirds vote is required. If a roll call vote is required, you must record the names of the voters. In the case for NACD and other large organizations, you may only record the name of the state and their vote rather than the individual's name.
 - Then, note whether the motion passed, failed or was tabled
- Last of all, don't forget to note the time of adjournment.

What DON'T the minutes include?

- Any opinions or interpretation of the recorder/secretary
- Judgmental phrases such as "heated debate" or "valuable comment"
- The content of discussion
- Motions that were withdrawn
- Name of the person who seconded a motion
- Flowery language



Now that we know WHAT to include...what DON'T the minutes include?

- Opinions - Be sure not to record ANY opinions or interpretations of events within the meeting. Remember, minutes are a record of what was DONE not what was said in a meeting.

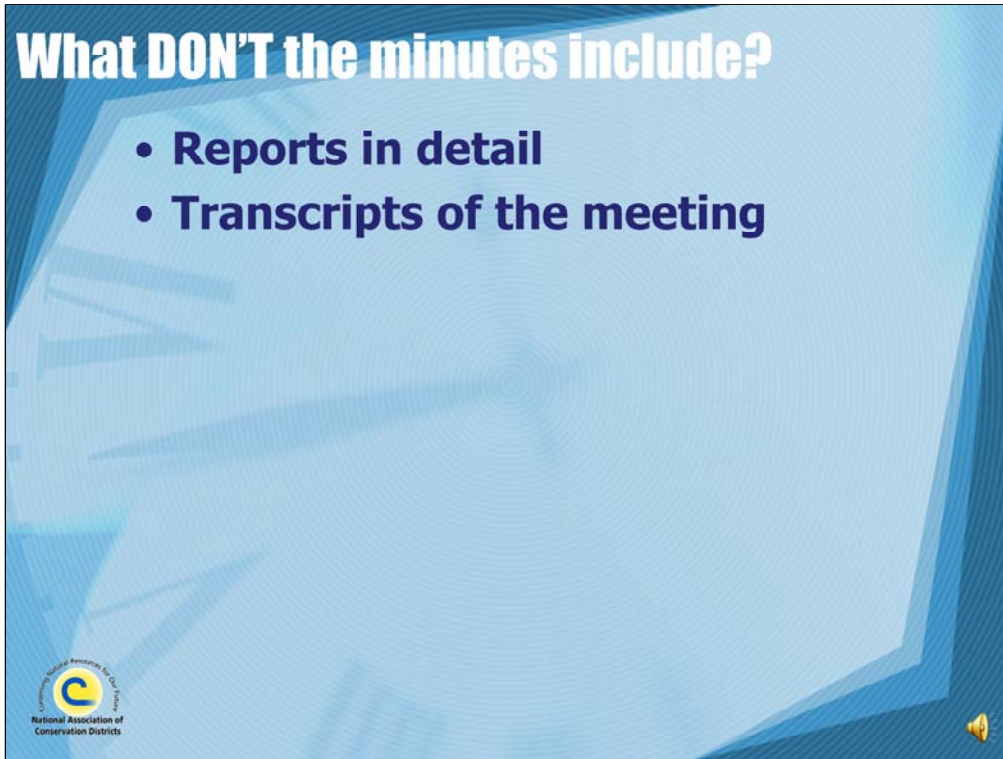
- Judgmental phrases such as "heated debate" or "valuable comment" should be omitted from the minutes as these are also opinions

- Again, don't record the content of the discussion, but just state that the issue was discussed. The recorder is only human and therefore is bound to omit some of the discussion content. If the content of a discussion is requested, that can be found in the audio recording of the meeting or a transcript, but not in the minutes. It is important that your organization's members and staff know in advance of a meeting if the organization is set up to provide either option.

- When a motion is withdrawn, it should then be omitted from the minutes.

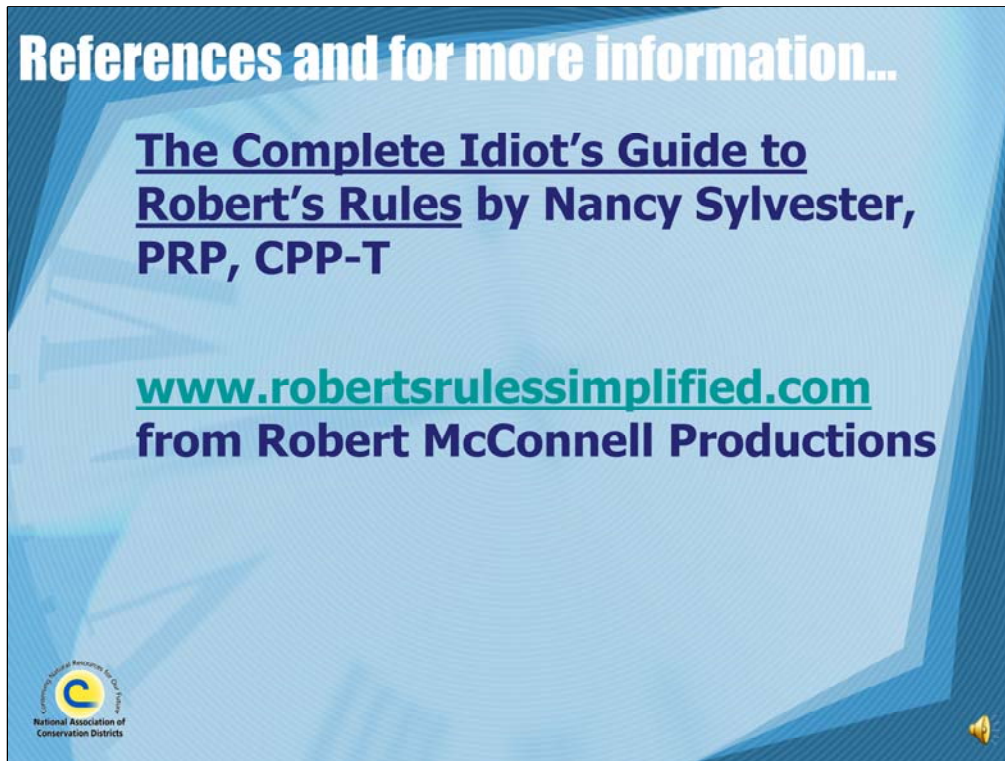
- You may omit the name of the person who seconded the motion. It is only necessary to mention that a motion was seconded.

- Sometimes recorders add flowery language in an attempt to make the minutes sound more official or professional. That too is unnecessary and may ACTUALLY be another way of stating opinions. Be sure to keep it simple and to the point.



•As stated earlier, recorders should never try to capture the content of the reports given within a meeting or even try to summarize the reports. Just state the group or committee and the name of the person giving the report. If the speaker would like to submit a written report for the minutes, it can be added to the minutes as an appendix. This ensures that nothing is taken out of context or captured incorrectly by the recorder.

•And remember, transcripts are a totally different kind of document than minutes. They should never be included in the minutes.



So now that you know the basics, taking minutes at your next meeting will not seem so daunting and you can also start setting a uniform standard as to how your meetings are recorded.

To view the references from this presentation and for more information on this subject (as well as Robert's Rules of Order), please be sure to check out the book The Complete Idiot's Guide to Robert's Rules by Nancy Sylvester and visit the website www.robertsrulesimplified.com from Robert McConnell Productions which contains other resources including short training PowerPoint presentations.



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