



**HOME STUDY FOR TENANTS  
Chairing Skills Part 2  
Increased Effectiveness**

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**Course Description**

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## **Chairing Skills Part 2 - Increased Effectiveness**

### **INTRODUCTION**

As we have seen in *Chairing Meetings Effectively Part 1*, there are many attributes, skills and tasks that fall under the domain of the group's Chairperson.

It is no easy task - however many of you take on this position with gusto, working hard to assist the group achieve its aims and objectives and do the best it can for the wider membership and community at large.

It is hoped that this workbook will assist you to further develop your skills in chairing meetings. Enabling you and the group to increase the effectiveness of your meetings and make the best use of your limited time.

In this workbook you will cover:

- ◆ **Planning Meetings**
- ◆ **Conducting Meetings**
- ◆ **Improving Meetings**

As with Part 1, we recommend you work through the workbook at your own pace, taking regular break's, either when recommended in the text or at your leisure.

We hope you enjoy the workbook.

Good luck!

## SECTION 1

### TO GET US STARTED - "*Checking the Quality of Your Meetings*"

#### ACTIVITY 1

Think about the meetings that you attend, whether as chairperson, member or participant. Compare these meetings to the following characteristics of an effective meeting. Tick those statements that apply to the meetings you usually conduct or attend:

- 1. An agenda is prepared prior to the meeting
- 2. Meeting participants have an opportunity to contribute to the agenda
- 3. Advance notice of meeting time and place is given to those invited
- 4. Meeting facilities are comfortable and adequate for the number of participants.
- 5. The meeting begins on time.
- 6. The meeting has a scheduled ending time
- 7. The use of time is monitored throughout the meeting
- 8. Everyone has an opportunity to present his or her point of view
- 9. Participants listen attentively to one another
- 10. There are periodic summaries as the meeting progresses
- 11. No one tends to dominate the discussion
- 12. Everyone has an opportunity to present his or her point of view
- 13. The meeting usually ends with a summary of accomplishments
- 14. The meeting is periodically evaluated by the participants
- 15. People can be depended on to carry out any action agreed during the meeting
- 16. Minutes or notes of the meeting is provided to each participant following the meeting
- 17. The meeting leader follows up with participants on action agreed during the meeting
- 18. The appropriate and necessary people can be counted on to attend each meeting
- 19. The decision process used is appropriate for the size of the group

20. When used audio - visual equipment is in good working condition and does not detract form the meeting

Number of statements ticked \_\_\_\_\_ x 5 = \_\_\_\_\_ Meeting score

A score of 80 or more indicates you attend a high percentage of quality meetings. A score below 60 suggests work is required to improve the quality of meetings you attend.

***SOMETHING TO NOTE!***

*Perhaps you and others on your committee / group can look at which items you were unable to tick with confidence and develop an action plan that will help the group change this!!!*

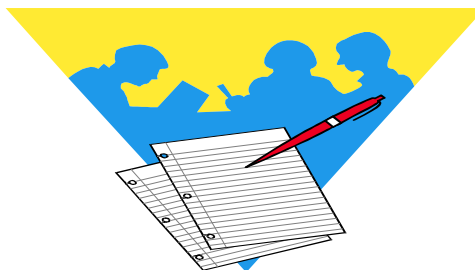
**SECTION 2 - PLANNING THE MEETING**

From your experience in attending and chairing meetings you will hopefully agree that good planning before the meeting will assist the success or otherwise of the meeting itself.

**ACTIVITY 2**

List 5 things that if done before the meeting, will increase its effectiveness: -

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_



Some of the things you will have identified may include:

1. An appropriate **venue** has been booked, in a location that will allow easy access to all participants, with a room size suitable to the number of people expected to attend. If a meeting room is too small or too large it can effect the participation and behaviour at the meeting
2. An **agenda** has been drafted and distributed to all participants in advance of the meeting. This allows members to come to the meeting prepared to discuss the appropriate items and understand the main aims of the meeting.
3. The **notes or minutes** of the previous meeting have been distributed to all participants prior to the meeting.
4. The **layout of the room** is suitable to the type of meeting you are organising. For example is it a large information meeting, where a theatre style layout is more appropriate OR is it a decision or discussion based meeting where a board room or circular type layout would be more beneficial?
5. **Refreshments** have been organised. If a meeting lasts more than an hour and a half, a break should be scheduled. Having refreshments available at the beginning or end of the meeting encourages informal conversations, allows members to get to know each other better, can build team spirit and stimulate new ideas.

You may have identified additional planning tasks that help meetings run more smoothly. If they work for your group, continue with them. You may also find it useful to consider the ones above?



## Worksheet for Planning a Meeting

The following worksheet may assist you plan for the meetings which you yourself chair or for other meetings that you attend as a participant or group member.

1. **Objective.** What key results do you want to achieve?

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2. **Timing.** How long should the meeting last? When is the best time to hold it?

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3. **Participants.** Who should attend? Be sure to include those who can decide, those whose commitment is needed, and those who need to know.

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4. **Agenda.** What items should be dealt with? Who is responsible for preparing and distributing the agenda? How will participants help in developing the agenda?

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5. **Physical arrangements.** What facilities and equipment are required? How should the meeting room be arranged?

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6. **Roles.** What roles need to be taken on board? For example, minute taker, secretary, timekeeper, and discussion facilitator.

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7. **Evaluation method.** How will the meeting be evaluated in order to improve the next time?

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You may come up with some other headings that could be added to this worksheet. Feel free to do so, in agreement with the other members of your group!

## SECTION 3 - CONDUCTING THE MEETING

Being a natural chairperson is a rare gift. It is not, as often assumed always the most extrovert or natural leader who makes the best chairperson for your group. However, some leadership skills do come in handy.

As we have seen in Chairing Skills Part 1 we can develop our skills through practice, experience and time.

### ACTIVITY 3

A good chairperson will: - **PLEASE COMPLETE THE BLANKS**

Have the ability to \_ \_ s \_ \_ n patiently whilst remaining a \_ \_ r \_ of what else is \_ a p \_ e \_ n g around the m \_ \_ t \_ n \_ table, and not be afraid to make un \_ o \_ ul \_ r s \_ at \_ m \_ n \_ s.

As a chairperson it may be helpful to use the following to assist you further develop your skills: -

#### Stage 1 - Conducting the meeting

- ◆ **Begin the meeting with a short statement** summarising the purpose of the meeting, what facts are known already, why a decision is required and how you intend to structure the meeting in order to reach a decision.
- ◆ **Try to separate the facts from opinion by asking members of the group for the facts first.** Summarise these and then go on to seek members' opinions.
- ◆ **Guide the meeting with a summary at each stage** of the discussion so that everyone is clear about what has been achieved so far. At the end of the discussion, summarise which decision has been reached and who is responsible for implementing that particular decision.

#### Point to Remember!

**It is the chairperson's job to ensure things get done - not to do everything.**

As seen in Activity 3, "having the ability to **listen** patiently whilst remaining **aware** of what else is **happening** around the **meeting** table, and not being afraid to make "**unpopular statements**", will assist the chairperson conduct the meeting in a satisfactory manner.

## **Stage 2 - Guiding the meeting with questions**

- ◆ **Encourage participation by asking leading questions.** It is not the role of the chairperson to spend two hours telling people what they think should be done. Use questions to draw out the quieter members and those with special experience or to deal with those who monopolise discussions by criticising others.

**The six types of questions are as follows: -**

- ? **The open question** to obtain information  
"What experience do any of you have in this matter?"
- ? **The overhead question** addressed to the whole group  
"What solutions can we suggest?"
- ? **The relay question** in response to a question  
"That's an interesting question. How would the rest of you deal with that situation"
- ? **The direct question** to individuals, either to draw out special expertise or the quieter members, or to keep the discussion going  
"I wonder, Mr X, if you can tell us about your group's experience of this situation?"
- ? **The re-directed question**, bringing in more people to the discussion  
"Mrs B, do you feel the suggestion put forward by Mr X would be relevant for your group's situation?"
- ? **The reverse question**, asking the person who posed the question to answer it themselves  
"I understand you had to face this problem once. Perhaps you could tell us how you succeeded in overcoming it?"

## ACTIVITY 4

Sometimes the chairperson has to deal with difficult people, can you think of any from your own experience? Please insert below

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

In these situations the chairperson has to employ the attributes of:  
Complete the blanks:

D\_ p\_ o\_ a t

*And*

P\_ l\_ t\_ i\_ n

Although the chairperson on many occasions has to be firm in their control of the discussion, avoid the temptation of showing any discourtesy or irritation towards members. Not only does this lose the willingness of these difficult members it can also backfire and cause you to lose the support of useful members, in particular the quieter and less experienced members.

### ***Helpful Hints***

- ☺ make sure you have the up-to-date facts on all matters on the agenda
- ☺ use summaries and questions to guide the meeting
- ☺ encourage participation but avoid domination by a few members
- ☺ be prepared to be unpopular at times if it is for the benefit of the organisation

As we have seen the chairperson sometimes has to adopt the roles of politician and diplomat in order to assist in dealing with the more difficult members, such as

1. the ones who talk all the time
2. the ones who know it all
3. the ones who jump from one thing to another and never follow the agenda
4. the ones who agree to one thing at the meeting and then spend the next month criticising that decision

You may have come up with other difficult people or types of behaviour from your own experience. Will the skills of politician and diplomat assist how your meetings are chaired? You may want to think of what could be done and how it would benefit your organisation.

*Complete the following to assist you reflect on how a recent meeting could have been improved:*

#### ACTIVITY 5

What was the difficult behaviour?	What could have been done?	How would the meeting have been improved?

You may want to use a table like this to assist you reflect on previous meetings or to plan for situations you think may occur in future meetings.



You may want to take a break now before moving on to the next section!

## SECTION 4 - IMPROVING MEETINGS

### " A case study"

Read the following scenario and then complete the activity sheet.

#### **Sun Valley Tenants Group**

At a recent meeting of the Sun Valley tenants group the secretary handed out the agenda for the evenings meeting. The agenda comprised of seven items for discussion. Harry, as usual chaired the meeting. He began promptly with the first agenda item regarding vandalism in the area. This had been raised at the end of the meeting last fortnight but there had been no time to discuss it.

The subject of vandalism turned out to be an issue that everybody had an experience of or an opinion on. The discussion went on for nearly an hour, only coming to an end when one of the members asked when they were going to discuss the issue that she had placed on the agenda. Harry suddenly realised that far too much time had been spent on the first agenda item and the subject of vandalism was then hastily dropped. However, no decisions, recommendations or plans for future action emerged from the discussion.

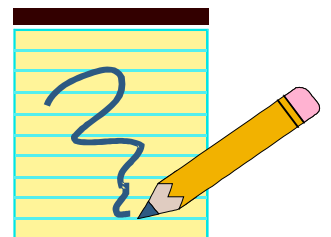
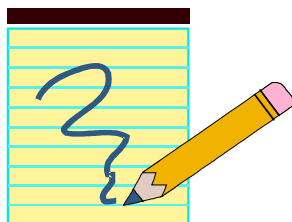
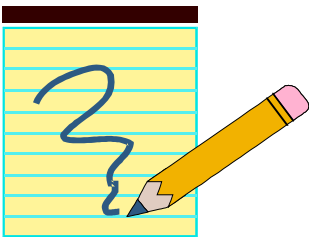
The meeting lasted two hours, but only 4 of the seven items on the agenda were discussed. At the end it also transpired that 2 new group members had hoped to bring up some additional problems for discussion, Harry promised that the group would discuss these at the next meeting.

***It would appear that this is an example of a poorly chaired and organised meeting. Wouldn't you agree?***

### ACTIVITY 6

Make a list of five things that Harry could have done to make the meeting described in scenario one more productive.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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No doubt you have found several areas for improvement in this meeting scenario. You may have identified some or all of the following:

- 4 Time management
- 4 Focus the discussion - what exactly about vandalism
- 4 Clarify at the beginning any additional items that people may want to add to the agenda
- 4 Circulate the agenda in advance of the meeting - along with copies of the previous minutes and any other relevant paperwork
- 4 Set a realistic timescale for the meeting. Try to work out how much time will be needed for each agenda item. It may also help to include some extra time for any other business that may arise.



Sometimes you may feel that chairing a meeting is a bit like trying to juggle many things at once, but with good planning, preparation and teamwork meetings can be chaired very effectively!

**POINT TO REMEMBER**

Other group members also have a responsibility to ensure that meetings work well, tasks get completed and decisions are taken!

## **"Another Case Study"**

Read the following scenario and identify some good and bad points by completing the worksheet:

### **Brookfield Tenants Association**

At the recent Annual General Meeting, Brookfield tenants association elected a new chairperson. The new chair has been an office bearer within the group for 3 years, and she thinks that she will be good at chairing meetings.

The meeting begins with the chair introducing herself, thanking everybody for coming and asking if anyone has any additional agenda items that they would like to add to the agenda. No one has anything they would like to add so the meeting begins.

During the course of the discussion one of the tenants had not properly heard what the chair had said, and he asked for the chair to clarify her point. The chair curtly replied that there was a lot to get through, and that everybody must keep themselves concerned with the discussion in hand. This remark left the tenant who had asked the question feeling very angry and he was unable to concentrate for the rest of the discussion.

### **ACTIVITY 7**

1. What type of behaviour did the chairperson display in this scenario?

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2. How could she have handled the situation differently?

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3. Why do you think this person thought she would make a good chairperson?

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Sometimes people who have been involved with a group for a long time believe that if or when they become the chairperson, that they will be good at it. However, chairing a meeting can be quite stressful, and people may behave differently than usual, for example by becoming more aggressive. When chairing a meeting we have to learn to keep our cool. In the above scenario, for example it would have been better if the chair had responded quickly and concisely to the request that was made. This would have ensured that the meeting was more beneficial and less fraught for all concerned. This would also have prevented the chairperson from potentially damaging her relationship with the other group members.

**“Your own experience”**

**ACTIVITY 8**

Please complete the following:

What was bad about a recent meeting you attended / chaired?	How was the situation handled?	Could anything have been done differently? If so, what?

You may want to use a format like this to assist you to review performance and identify areas for improvement. If you find difficulties in a meeting you may want to log them afterwards and consider potential improvements. Similarly if you find something that works well you may want to log this too. These points could be referred to before any subsequent meetings and may assist you plan and prepare for them.

<p><b>POINT TO REMEMBER</b></p> <p><b>“Practice, practice, practice makes perfect, perfect, perfect!”</b></p>
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## Now to round off the workbook!

This section gives you a chance to check over what you have covered in the workbook. It takes the form of a quiz. All you have to do is insert your answers in the spaces provided.

1. When preparing for a meeting, what are the 5 main things that if planned beforehand will help the meeting run smoothly?

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_
- d) \_\_\_\_\_
- e) \_\_\_\_\_

2. What roles does the chairperson have to take on sometimes?

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_

3. What should the chairperson avoid at meetings if possible?

- a) \_\_\_\_\_

4. What 3 things will increase the effectiveness of meetings?

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_

5. What are the responsibilities of the other group members?

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_



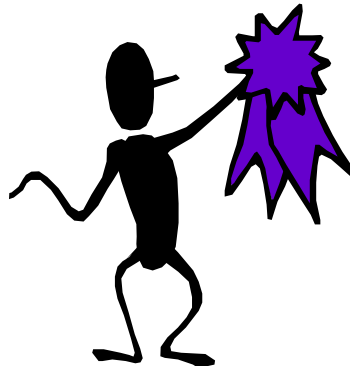
## What Next?

Phone or write to TIS to ask for the Checkback pack for this workbook.  
We'll send it to you straight away.

In it you will get: -

- The answers to the quiz
- A list of other courses in the TIS "Home Study for Tenants" series
- A questionnaire to allow you to give us feedback on how well or how badly this course worked for you
- A Certificate of Completion

For the moment - Congratulations in completing this workbook.  
We hope you enjoyed learning this way and that you will go on and do more of the courses in the series.



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