

Starting Your Meetings on Time!

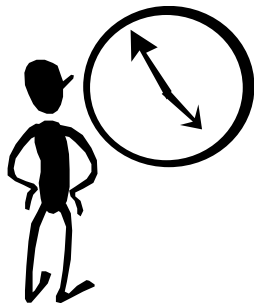
ToolTip #1
Mar 2003



Have you ever arrived at a meeting on time and then sat there for 15 minutes or more waiting for others to get settled, or for someone to start the meeting? Do you feel that you are wasting time and vow next time to come late? Or do you vow to never come again? On the flip side, have you ever chaired a meeting, wanted to start on time, but you think that if you do, you will just have to repeat everything because of stragglers? Or worse yet, as a chairperson have you ever not been ready to start on time or even were late?

It has happened to all of us involved with neighborhood organizations. Although we must keep in mind, that people volunteer their time to come to meetings, we must also learn to respect the time of those who show up and are ready to start on time. Here are a few hints on how to get your meetings (or yourself) going.

HOW TO CAPTURE THOSE STRAGGLERS! Although there are some people who are always late to meetings, most of us try to be on time. Assuming the best, let's first talk about those stragglers that seem to be late just for your meetings.

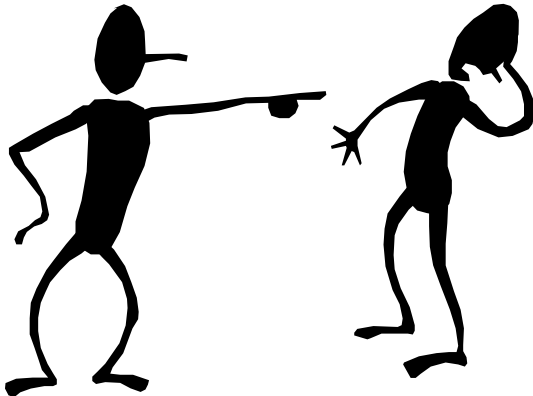


- 1. Find out if there is a reason that your meeting can't seem to get started on time..** If you consistently start meetings late because of stragglers, put an item about "meeting times" on your next agenda. Open the discussion with your observations and ask the group if the meeting time should be changed. Never point fingers at offenders but try to find out what the most common reasons are for being late. You might be surprised at the answers! After the discussion, have the group agree on a time.
- 2. Make it everyone's goal to be on time:** Once a common meeting time is established, ask everyone to make a personal commitment to be there on time or to call if they will unavoidably be late. You may want to include this in the Association Meeting Ground Rules.
- 3. What about those who are late to everything?** Rather than "punishing" late comers when they do arrive with "piercing stares", briefly acknowledge them with a welcome and then continue on with the agenda. This may be hard to do, but resist helping "catching them up". If they try to get caught up from the person sitting next to them, stop the meeting, let silence work its magic until they too are quiet, then offer to provide them with an update during a break or after the meeting.
- 4. And if you still can't get that meeting started on time?** Consider scheduling 15 minutes of socializing time or refreshments at the beginning of each meeting. Then those who only want to "do business" will know exactly when "business" starts and can come at that time. (If your meeting has speakers, this also gives them time to meet residents in a social setting prior to the meeting.)



WHAT IF YOU ARE THE ONE THAT STARTS A MEETING LATE?

First ask yourself WHY?



- ⌚ Are you typically late, and if so what are the reasons? Honestly assess your priorities. Even ask yourself if you should really continue as a chairperson or leader.
- ⌚ Does a meeting start late because you are waiting for people to come? If so, see other side for some tips.
- ⌚ Do you get to the meeting on time but have to take care of business before you can start? If so consider using a meeting preparation check list prior to the meeting. (See below for an example.)

ACTION	NOTES
Reminder Calls or E-mails	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Speaker: Clyde Hall	Left reminder message & faxed directions
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fred	Reminded him to bring refreshments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Treasurer: Bonnie	Asked to bring financial statements
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jennifer	Asked if she would be willing to chair clean-up sub-committee. She will also bring map.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> School	Remind to have room open
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> City staff/District Manager	Asked for 500 flyers on noise ordinance
Handouts	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda -- Revised/Updated and Copied	25 copies
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Flyer on Noise Ordinance	City staff to drop off before the meeting
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Flyer for Clean-up	500 copies bunched in packets of 20 in trunk
Other	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sign-in List, pencils, & clip board	Have in box in trunk.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Refreshments	Fred to bring
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Map of Neighborhood	Jennifer to bring