

FOR BETTER MEETINGS

A better meeting is the result of better planning and better participation. Good meetings are not haphazard affairs thrown together at the very last minute, but are the result of careful planning. The time and thought given to advance preparation will pay dividends in the form of better club programs and increased participation by members.

Planning

In planning meetings — large or small — a definite purpose should be kept in mind. Meetings are successful when they are planned for a specific reason or reasons. This calls for giving them individual treatment.

The president should meet with the other officers and the program committee and plan the meetings far in advance. It might be worthwhile to plan the entire year's program. If you do this, members will know what is coming up and more interest can be aroused. Speakers can be scheduled well in advance, and they will have more time to prepare. By planning for the year, you can develop a central theme and outline goals. Regular meetings could be steps toward achieving the final goal.

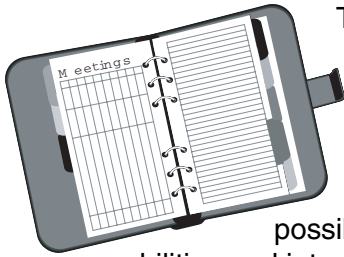
It would be wise for the 4-H club officers to get together with their local leader to do this planning. The leader will be able to give suggestions on how to plan the program for the year.

The first step in planning the program at the beginning of the year is to find out where you are. Check with outgoing officers and program committee members for suggestions on things that will work and other ideas.

Read the by-laws. If information is kept on file in a folder or in a notebook and passed from the present committee to the next, it will save a great deal of time and effort.

Plan for the year on the basis of the club's long-range objectives and what makes a good program. Long-range objectives must be broken down into goals for the year. The annual goals, in turn, must be broken down into specific plans for what will go on in each meeting. While you are planning for the year, you will plan generally for each meeting.





Time at regular meetings is limited. Use it for those things which cannot be done in other ways. Use the regular meeting for things that all members must do together. For example: pass on final details of things that have already been discussed and worked out in a committee meeting.

In planning the year's meetings, try to involve as many people as possible in the program, but, at the same time, make the assignments fit the abilities and interests of the individuals. The success of a meeting depends largely upon the chairman in charge of planning and what he or she does before, during and after the meeting. All meetings are not equally successful. One person may consider a meeting successful while another may not.

Before the Meeting

The president should keep in touch with the vice-president and the program committee to make sure that a definite program is prepared for each month. Ample time should be spent on planning, and it should be done well in advance of the meeting.

The president should keep in close touch with all committee chairmen, encourage them and help them in their projects, programs and other responsibilities.

All people on the program should be told what is expected of them and the time allotted. Make it clear to program participants that they must notify the president or the program chairman before the meeting if they cannot take part.

Be sure committee chairmen understand that they are to make reports. Plan some group activities that will allow everyone to participate. This could include some form of discussion, singing or recreation.

Give advance notice to all who might be interested in the program. An additional way of letting people know about the meeting is to send a news item to a local newspaper.

Get in touch with those to take part in the program the day before the meeting. Tell them when they are scheduled on the program, how long their activity should last and the time the meeting is expected to end. Check to see what they may need in the way of equipment.

Try to arrange a meeting place that will fit the size of the group. Avoid having 10 people meeting in a gymnasium or 25 people meeting in a room large enough for 20.

During the Meeting

Before the meeting starts, check the lights, temperature and ventilation, so that your audience will be comfortable. Arrange a stand for the speaker, and check the loud speaker system if one is available.

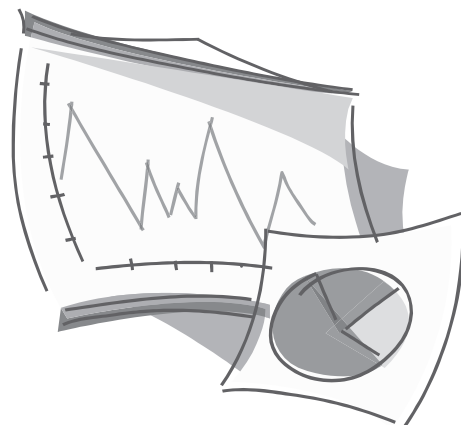
Arrange to have someone welcome people at the entrance. This person should arrive early.

Be sure the necessary articles required for the meeting are on the table — pencils, notebook, order of business, watch, flags, etc. Keep purses and other personal belongings out of sight.

Have a pitcher of water and glasses in a convenient place in your meeting room.

If leaflets or other printed information will be handed out, wait until the end of the meeting. If it is distributed during the meeting, people will be reading rather than listening to the speaker or to the program. Make sure that sufficient copies are available for everyone.

Display charts, slides or other material so everyone can see them.



After the Meeting

The executive committee, the officers or the program planning committee should evaluate the meeting. Some questions to ask are: What did we accomplish? Did we meet our objectives? What were the strong points and weak points? How can we make the next meeting even better?

Send a story to the newspapers and radio stations, giving names and other items of interest to the community.

Send letters of thanks to the organization that provided the meeting room and the speaker or the person who provided material used in the program.

Evaluation

There are many ways to evaluate a meeting. One is to observe and listen to members' remarks during and after the meeting. This will give you a good idea of their reactions. Discuss these reactions with the program planning

committee and the executive committee afterward.

Another way to check reaction is to pass out a simple check sheet at the meeting and ask members to give their frank opinions to such questions as: What did you like about this meeting? What did you dislike? What improvements would you suggest for future meetings? Ask them to rate the meeting as excellent, good, fair, poor or very poor.

Before the meeting ends, you might divide the group into small buzz groups to evaluate the meeting and make suggestions for improvement. These buzz groups should report to the entire group after a few minutes of discussion.

One or two members may be designated as observers of the meeting. They should be given time at the end of the meeting to report what they have observed. The emphasis should be placed on how the group participated rather than what it participated in. The entire group could then join in the evaluation.

Participation

The key to a successful club program is member participation. If the members are taking part, we know that the biggest obstacle, that of getting them interested, is overcome. Participation is also necessary for a democratic business meeting, for meaningful education and for satisfying recreation. When wholehearted participation is accomplished, you are on your way to a successful program.

Studies of group activities reveal two principles that seem to apply closely to the organization and operation of a club. They are:

- 1. People take part more wholeheartedly in an activity if they help to plan it. If a member originates the idea, participation is at its best.*
- 2. People maintain interest in an activity if they are taking part in it.*

Not all people like to talk. Those who do not must be given ample opportunity to take part in other ways. The chairman should encourage members to participate by creating a friendly atmosphere so that each person knows he or she is permitted to say what he or she thinks, no matter how drastic or different it may be from others' ideas. Another method of encouraging participation is to ask interesting questions that cannot be answered "yes" or "no" but will have to be discussed. A good chairman or discussion leader will avoid expressing his or her own opinions. It is better not to answer a question from a member, but rather to throw it back to other members for an answer.

One way of getting members to take part in the affairs of the club is to put them on committees. These committees, however, must have some definite purposes.

Committees

Most of the real work of any organization is done by committees. A committee has some advantages over the larger organization, such as:

1. **More and better discussion**
2. **More informality**
3. **Better use can be made of the knowledge of experts**
4. **More time allowed for each expert**

Committees are generally divided into two classes, special committees and standing committees.

Standing committees are more or less permanent and function the entire year. Examples would be the program committee and membership committee. Normally these committees are specified in the by-laws of the organization.

Special committees are selected to perform one task and are disbanded when the job is completed. An example is a committee

appointed to plan and arrange for a picnic. Standing committees are generally appointed by the officers shortly after they are installed. In appointing a chairman for a special committee, it is not always necessary to appoint the person who suggested the idea or the project. Many times the "idea" person will be discouraged if he or she always gets the job of carrying out the ideas. Some people are better at thinking up ideas; others are better at working out the details.

All committees should make a report at each regular meeting. This will encourage committees to accomplish their purposes so they will have something positive to report.

Committees meet between regular meetings to make minor decisions. They also investigate and prepare recommendations for major decisions. Through the use of committees, the organization can avoid many time-consuming details at the business meetings.

Calendar of Participation

A good way to keep a check on member participation is to prepare and use a "calendar of participation." Such a calendar will help spread duties over the entire membership.

Prepare it this way:

Using regular notebook paper, rule off columns similar to those in Figure 1.

In the first column, write the names of all club members, using as many sheets of paper as necessary to have a complete roster.

In the second column, after the name, list any office held. The third column should be devoted to committee assignments; the fourth to leading pledges; the fifth to reports, and continuing across the page until there is a space given to all activities.

Figure 1. Calendar of Participation

NAME	OFFICER	COMMITTEE	PLEDGE	REPORT	DEMONSTRATION	MISCELLANEOUS
Suzie Brown	Vice Pres.	Program	(An. Oct.)			
Jim Doe		Rec. Com.	An. Nov.			
Ed Green	Treasurer					
Vera Jones		Membership				
Joyce Long		Rec. Com.				
John Martin			(4-H Oct.)			
Ann Page	Secret.	Membership			Election - October	
Ray Smith			(4-H Nov.)			

When the president and the other officers are planning the year's work, various members could be assigned duties. These should be written in the proper columns, even with the members' names. The duty and month might be written in pencil in advance and then written in ink when the duty is actually performed. Or the duty could be written in ink and then circled after it was accomplished.

Other participation could be handled in the same way. Any time a member participated in a special way on the program or in the organization's activities, it should be recorded.

From time to time during the year, the president should look over the calendar of participation and give special committee

assignments and other jobs that come up unexpectedly to those members who have not had an opportunity to participate previously.

In assigning responsibilities, always take into consideration the person's capabilities and interests. Give new members the easier jobs at the beginning to build up their confidence and experience. Never overlook an opportunity to develop the leadership potential within your own organization.

If, at the end of the year, each member has several items checked by his or her name, this will indicate that the members and the organization have had a successful year.

The Chairman

The presiding officer holds not only the position of highest honor, but of greatest responsibility. The success of the meeting depends largely on his or her attitude and skill. The chairman should be impartial, courteous, tactful, dignified, firm and self-controlled. He or she may speak of himself as "your president" when mentioning something done outside of a 4-H meeting in an official capacity. Decisions and opinions rendered while presiding, however, are always those of "the chair."

The chairman should be enthusiastic and talk so that people can understand. He or she should use simple, correct English and pronounce words distinctly. The chairman is in control of the meeting and may enforce, ignore or neglect regulations as he desires until a member calls his hand, based on fundamentals of parliamentary authority. He is then obligated to recognize this authority and base his decision and actions accordingly.

The Gavel

The gavel is a symbol of authority of the presiding officer. A good chairman uses the gavel with discretion, respecting the rights of the minority and the will of the majority and, at the same time, moving the meeting along in an orderly manner.

When a meeting is called to order the chairman taps the gavel and says, "The meeting will now come to order." More than one tap of the gavel may be made if needed to get the group quiet. The gavel is not a device to drown out noise but is the voice of authority. Three taps bring all members to their feet for any part of the meeting. One tap will then seat the members. Some presiding officers give a light tap of the gavel when each item of business is completed. This is a good signal for new business to be presented. One tap follows the announcement of adjournment of the meeting.

The use of the gavel on an unprotected table or desk will leave scars. Use an old magazine or book or a gavel block. A block 2 inches by 6 or 8 inches makes a good size. When used on a highly finished table, the block should have a felt strip glued to the bottom.

It is nice if the gavel has local significance. Perhaps it was made of wood from a tree on a particular farm in the area or from one of the old homes. Perhaps it was made especially for the club. When such a gavel is passed on to the next president, it has more meaning.

At the Meeting

The chairman should sit or stand behind the table facing the audience and rise when “putting a motion” or speaking to the group. Normally, the vice-president will be seated on the right and the secretary on the left.

The president or chairman of the meeting must be in control at all times. He or she may delegate some of the responsibility at times, but must always be in control.

The best way to make meetings interesting and enjoyable is for the leader to be enthusiastic. Members of the group will set their tempo by that exhibited by the leader. If the chairman is slow and dull, the meeting will be also. On the other hand, if the chairman is energetic and enthusiastic, the meeting will be spirited and interesting.

Here are some specific pointers for the chairman:

Start on Time

Start the meeting on time. Do not penalize those who follow instructions and come on time for the benefit of those who did not. If members know your meetings start on time, they will make an effort to get there on time. If you wait for stragglers to arrive, then the regular on-timers plus the stragglers will plan to come that much later.

Tell What the Meeting Is Going to Be About

Do not keep members in the dark about the program. When the meeting opens, explain what the program is for the day so they can look forward with anticipation. If you send out an announcement before the meeting, you should state what is going to be on the program.

Guest Speakers

Try to create a desire on the part of the audience to hear the person you are introducing. Be enthusiastic. Lead the applause and remain standing until the speaker has taken his or her place. At the conclusion of the talk, express your appreciation and the appreciation of the group. Do not forget to write a letter of appreciation later.

End on Time

Decide when the meeting should end, and make every effort to end the meeting at that time. Many members will have more than one meeting to attend. If the members can depend on your meeting ending on time, they can know what time to make their next appointments. Some members may have to be picked up, and this way they can let the drivers know the exact time.

If you are having a guest speaker or other people on the program, let them know what time the meeting will end. Do not let routine club business and general discussion take part of your speaker’s time. If you have set up a timetable for your meeting and people on the program are aware of it, then you can move smoothly throughout and end on time. If the meeting runs overtime, it might be well to give members with other appointments an opportunity to leave.



Hints for the Chairman

- 1. Know the rules.** While it is not necessary to memorize every detail of parliamentary procedure, if you know the general rules you can preside with ease and confidence. To ensure harmony, follow the rules yourself and insist that everyone observe parliamentary principles.
- 2. Lead.** Lead firmly, courteously and impartially. You must make certain decisions, so do not delay. Make them. At the same time, do not overlook the feelings of others. Allow both sides of the question to be heard.
- 3. Help.** Help a member state his or her motion clearly. If the motion is vague or stated in a negative fashion, you may reword it, asking if that is what the speaker had in mind.
- 4. Keep moving.** Keep the meeting moving steadily forward. Start the meeting on time and keep within the time limits. Do not allow members' discussions to wander or move away from the question at hand.
- 5. Create a friendly atmosphere.** Make all members feel welcome and glad that they came. Encourage shy members by asking for their opinions. Discourage the member who talks too much, too long and too often. Make newcomers feel welcome.
- 6. Omit personalities.** Do not allow personalities to enter into discussions. Confine speakers to the issues only.
- 7. Clarify motions.** Make sure every member understands what is being voted on. If there is any doubt, explain the expected results if the motion passes.

Order of Business

It is not necessary to follow exactly the same agenda at each meeting. The agenda may be varied by having the educational part of the program first and the business toward the end. Recreation can be mixed in at any time. Sometimes, a little recreation at the beginning gets the members into the mood and allows time for stragglers to arrive.

Many organizations have by-laws setting out a certain order of business to follow. The following order is used when there are no such by-laws:

1. Call to Order. The presiding officer stands. He or she may tap the table with a gavel to attract attention. The use of a gavel is recommended because it gives a businesslike appearance. The officer says, "The meeting will please come to order." This is the form used in ordinary meetings. In legislative assemblies, "The house will come to order" is the form used.

2. Opening Exercises

Pledges — The chairman should call on a club member to lead the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag and another member to lead the 4-H Pledge.

These jobs offer an opportunity to encourage participation of younger club members. A different member should be asked each time.

Songs — If a song or songs are part of the opening exercises, the chairman should select a song leader before the meeting. The song leader should decide on the songs and, when called on, should promptly come to the front and say, "We are going to sing two stanzas of . . ." (naming the song).

Prayer — If a prayer is used to open the meeting, it is part of the opening exercises.

Roll Call — The chairman says, “The secretary will now call the roll.” The secretary can call each member by name or, if it is a large club, the roll can be called by grades or classes. One member from each group is appointed to check on members in his or her group and report to the secretary.

To increase interest, vary the response. Instead of just saying “here” in response to their names, club members may be asked to answer with their birth dates, favorite colors, favorite TV shows, etc.

In some organizations the secretary merely records those present and no verbal response is required.

3. Reading of the Minutes. The presiding officer says, “The secretary will read the minutes of the last meeting.” After they are read, he or she says, “Are there any corrections, or additions?” The officer pauses, then continues, “If not, the minutes stand approved as read.”

Every member of an organization is responsible for seeing that records are correct. If anything has been omitted from the minutes or is not accurately reported, the member who notices it shall call attention to the fact and suggest a correction during the pause before the presiding officer announces that the minutes are approved. Corrections are suggested without a motion, second or vote. If there are no objections to the corrections, the secretary makes the changes. Where there is a difference of opinion as to what was said, the chairman will entertain a motion to amend the minutes.

When this has been disposed of, the chairman says, “Are there any further corrections?” If there is no response, he or she continues, “The minutes stand approved as corrected.”

4. Reports

a. Officers and Standing Committees.

Officers, boards or standing committees should be called upon to report in the order in which they are mentioned in the constitution or by-laws of the organization.

No action is required on the treasurer’s report. It is for information only. To protect the treasurer from an honest mistake, the treasurer’s report should always be filed for audit or received for audit or just received. It should never be accepted as read. Normally, in the routine conduct of an organization, an audit is made when the new officers are elected. At that time, their reports are approved and this is retroactive to when they were received or filed for audit. Normally, members of the group do the auditing.

b. Special Committees.

Special committee reports follow standing committee reports.

Committee reports should consist of the material agreed on by the majority of the committee. They may be oral or written. If they contain recommendations or resolutions, they should be written. It is preferable for them to be signed by all members of the committee. When the final draft has been made by the chairman after the committee meeting, and it is difficult to get the other signatures, the chairman of the committee may sign the report. In this case, he or she may write the word “chairman” after the name to indicate that he or she is acting for the committee.

The nature of a report that is received, that is, has been presented to the organization, determines how the report will be disposed of. If the report gives information, tells what the committee has done or gives the opinion of the committee on the subject involved, then no action is necessary. The proper motion, if any action is taken, should be to “accept the report.” This has the effect of endorsing the report and making the organization assume responsibility for it. It seems more courteous for the club to accept the report, thus recognizing its obligations to the committee.

The committee may make recommendations as to the action to be taken on the subject or if it is extremely important or involves another organization or individual outside the club, it may recommend resolutions to carry its suggestions

into effect. The recommendations or resolutions should be grouped at the end of the report, even though they were discussed separately before. The chairman of the committee should move their adoption. Members of the club who vote for the adoption of the recommendations or resolutions should realize they are obligating themselves to carry them out.

When a report ends with a resolution or a series of resolutions, it saves time and avoids confusion for the chairman of the committee to move the acceptance or adoption of the resolution or resolutions. The members of the committee know more about the subject, and they should be willing to stand behind the report. A resolution is always a main motion.

5. Unfinished Business. This is action on any business not settled at adjournment of the previous meeting. The secretary should give the chairman a list of unfinished business before the meeting, or the secretary may be called upon to stand and state the unfinished business to the group. This unfinished business is completed by motions.

As soon as an item of business is disposed of, the chairman should announce the next item.

The chairman follows the list of items on the agenda and allows time for matters to be suggested by members.

During the business meeting, decisions will need to be made. Many groups use some form of parliamentary procedure, such as **Robert's Rules of Order**, or a modification of them to assist in arriving at a decision. Use rules to get things done, not to slow the process.

6. New Business. After all unfinished business is completed, the chairman asks, "Is there any new business?" Anyone having a new idea or problem for the group to consider presents it at this time. The chairman may know of matters to be acted upon. He or she should inform the group and ask for any items of business they wish to propose.

Today parliamentary procedure is becoming more flexible. Some groups find that it helps to

discuss a question informally and come to a general agreement before a formal motion is made. In such cases when the motion comes to the floor, it can be disposed of quickly and easily.

The chairman states, "Is there any further business to come before the group?" (pause) If not, this concludes the business and will take charge of the program.

7. Program. Some groups have the program as part of the business meeting. Others adjourn the meeting and then have the program.

The person introducing the guest speaker should tell about the speaker's training, experience, special interests and qualifications for speaking on the particular subject. This introduction should be brief. Allow the guest speaker to make the speech.

8. Adjournment. A member can make a motion to adjourn or the chairman can ask for a motion to adjourn. This motion is not discussed, but brought to a vote quickly. The meeting is not adjourned until the chairman taps the gavel once and says, "The meeting is adjourned."



Ways to Increase Interest

Some suggestions to increase interest of the members and, at the same time, increase attendance are:

1. **Provide a well-planned program.**
2. **Accomplish something.**
3. **Provide for group participation.**
4. **Allow several people to have a part on the program.**
5. **Socialize: Have some fun and fellowship.**
6. **Run the meeting on a businesslike basis.**
7. **Eliminate wasted time of the whole group in discussing minor points or discussing items before adequate information is available. Assign lengthy subjects to committees for further detailed study and ask them to make recommendations.**
8. **Summarize accomplishments.**

Worthwhile Projects

One of the best ways to increase interest in meetings and organizations is to have worthwhile projects to report on.

Have committees plan and work on projects that are new and different. Don't forego the good things the group has done in the past, but inject a new idea or project into the organization periodically.

When members are sitting around discussing and planning new projects at a brain-storming

session, encourage them to use their imagination. Throw out a couple of "wild ideas." This will give other members the incentive to use their imaginations also.

Select several ideas and then plan how to adapt them to fit your own situation. After members have had an opportunity to discuss various projects, they can settle on one or two new things to try for the year. New projects will keep members interested and participating.



How to use the Order of Business

The chairman should keep this publication in a loose-leaf notebook along with Parliamentary Procedure, LSU AgCenter Publication 1376. During a meeting the chairman should have this notebook open in such a manner that the last page, Order of Business, is on the left side and a sheet of regular notebook paper on the right side. In planning for the meeting, the chairman should write, opposite the duties, the names of those selected to perform such activities as songs, pledges and prayers. On the notebook paper opposite unfinished and new business should be listed any items that came up during the planning session or that were in the minutes that the secretary suggested should be considered at the meeting. Who is going to be responsible for the program and what the program is going to contain should also be written on the notebook paper.


This method will enable the chairman to see at a glance who will have duties during the meeting, and it will also eliminate the possibility of any important items being overlooked. During the business meeting, if any questions come up about parliamentary procedure, the chairman can quickly check in the Parliamentary Procedure publication.

Other Publications

Additional aids for better meetings and better organizations are available from the LSU AgCenter state office or parish offices.

Pub. 1376 - "Parliamentary Procedure"

Pub. 1424- "Election of Officers"



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www.lsuagcenter.com

Order of Business

1. Call to Order

"The meeting will please come to order." (Tap the gavel once.)

2. Opening Exercises

Pledges - "We will now have the Pledge of Allegiance. _____ will lead us in the 4-H Pledge."

Roll Call- "The secretary will now call the roll."

Songs - "We will have songs led by our song leaders _____ and _____."

Prayer - "_____ will lead us in prayer."

3. Reading of the Minutes

"The secretary will read the minutes of the last meeting."

"Are there any corrections or additions?"

"The minutes stand approved as read," or "the minutes stand approved as corrected."

4. Reports

Officers and Standing Committees

"We will now hear the treasurer's report."

Reports of Special Committees

5. Unfinished Business

"Is there any old business to come before the group?"

6. New Business

"Is there any new business?"

7. Program

"If there is no further business to come before the group, this concludes the business, and we will turn the meeting over to _____ for the program."

8. Adjournment

"Do I hear a motion to adjourn?" "The meeting is adjourned." (Tap the gavel.)

Louisiana State University Agricultural Center

William B. Richardson, Chancellor

Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station

David Boethel, Vice Chancellor and Director

Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service

Paul D. Coreil, Vice Chancellor and Director

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