

# Making the Most of NUT School Meetings

---

## Effective meetings have:

- A clear agenda
- Timings
- Collaboration
- Interaction
- Are succinct
- Involve effective listening
- Produce a clear set of action points
- Should include goals and action points for members
- Should have a 'turn out' plan (snacks, reminders, promise to be brief, held at lunch time etc.)
- Have a 'hot button issue' to spark members' interest

## Tips for planning successful meetings:

1. Plan the meeting ahead of time. Set goals and decide what results or actions you want members to take after the meeting.
2. Develop the agenda. Focus on issues that members care about.
3. Plan an activity or invite a guest speaker that will appeal to members' interests.
4. Line up committee reports, officer reports, staff reports, etc. Decide who and how report details will be given. Consider handing out written reports to keep verbal reports to a minimum.
5. Decide where and when the meeting will be. Select a day of the week, time and location that is most convenient for the majority of members (this could be lunchtime or before school starts).
6. You do not need permission from your head teacher or principle to hold a union meeting but you do need to request permission to use the school site, if you want to hold the meeting there.
7. Distribute the meeting notice to all members well in advance. In addition to written notice – leaflets, newsletters, bulletin boards, etc., - be sure to contact members one-on-one if you want a high turnout.
8. The meeting notice should include the time / date/ location and an agenda (you can also ask for members to submit agenda items).
9. Be thoroughly prepared to conduct the meeting smoothly and efficiently so that it starts on time and ends on time.
10. Don't feel you have to know all the answers if members have questions about any agenda points. You can tell them you will seek clarification and get back to them.
11. Consider an opening activity to engage attendees before you begin the formal agenda (for example a ppt slide of information, hand outs about union events and activities or a discussion point.)
12. Have a sign in sheet ready for members to register. Create a column to request their personal email (as employers have the right to monitor work emails).

## Tips for effective chairing

1. Be prepared. Make sure you are familiar with the agenda.
2. Timekeeping. Make sure the agenda is covered. A notional time limit for each item can be helpful.
3. Sum up at the end of each item.
4. Ensure action points are noted so that everyone knows the expected outcomes from the meeting.
5. Make sure everyone gets a chance to speak and that no one single individual dominates the discussion.
6. Ensure adequate debate and a reasonable consensus where possible.
7. Make sure that the discussion doesn't ramble and sticks to the topics on the agenda.
8. Control the meeting without stifling debate.
9. Encourage people to speak so that everyone gets a say and don't allow discussion to be taken over by a small group.
10. You should avoid entering into the debate.

## Contributing to meetings:

1. Keep your contributions short. It is more likely to be understood and have impact if it is succinct.
2. Avoid interrupting others to make your contribution and do not let others interrupt you. In some meetings it is difficult to get your contribution in, once speaking there is a temptation to make several points for fear of not getting in again! If you are finding it difficult to be heard, try raising your hand to alert the chair.
3. Keep your non-verbal behaviour assertive. Both the volume and tone of voice are important. If you are too quiet you will lose impact and be open to interruptions.
4. Time your contributions. If you want to influence a meeting, it is not just what you say that counts but also when you say it. Raise points at the relevant time for maximum impact. Do not wait until the last minute to air an opposing view.
5. Getting a reaction to your contribution. If you follow the first two suggestions you stand a good chance of getting a reaction. If, however, no one reacts – then ask the meeting or an individual for a reaction.
6. Changing your mind. This is a valid thing to do, especially in light of new information or better ideas. Be honest and open about it – not apologetic.
7. Falling in with the majority. If after exploring all the options you find yourself in the minority and time is pressing – it can be assertive to 'fall in' with the majority rather than prevent the meeting from progressing.
8. Not falling in with an apparent majority. You have a responsibility to make your doubts and disagreements known. To prevent the meeting being dominated by a small number of people who 'appear' to be a majority.
9. Deciding which issues to make a stand on. If you find yourself out of line with the majority view being expressed, there will be many issues on which you could make a stand. Decide on the crucial issues on which you wish to speak out about to avoid being labelled negative and creating a counter-productive situation.