



People hate going to meetings...

...because they're often boring and not productive. This worksheet shows you how to make the meetings you lead both interesting and productive.

HOW TO MAKE MEETINGS INTERESTING:

- Don't do all the talking! The meeting leader, who is often the same person as the committee chairperson, is a facilitator, not a lecturer
- Ensure everyone has a chance to speak, especially those who are shy
- Practice positivity even toward those with bad ideas. Volunteers who do not feel valued will leave
- Meet somewhere new and exciting like outdoors, in an art museum, or in someone's home

HOW TO MAKE MEETINGS PRODUCTIVE:

1. Accomplish the meeting's purpose:

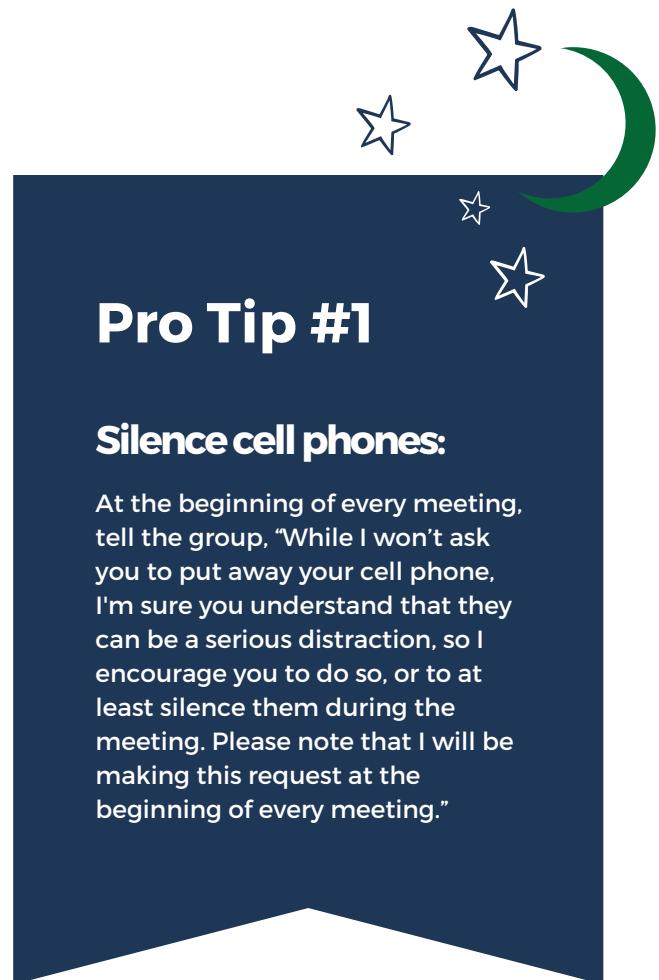
The #1 job of the meeting chairperson is to ensure that the group accomplishes the meeting's purpose. The rest of this document explains how to do this.

2. Verbalize the meeting purpose:

At the beginning of the meeting, remind the group what the purpose of the meeting is and what the group is trying to accomplish during this meeting

3. Maintain focus:

This is a hard one. Volunteers tend to be passionate visionaries with big ideas and will often steer the meeting into discussions that are beyond the agenda. It's the job of the meeting chairperson to allow pertinent discussions (even those that were not anticipated) but also to accomplish the goals of the meeting in the scheduled time.



Pro Tip #1

Silence cell phones:

At the beginning of every meeting, tell the group, "While I won't ask you to put away your cell phone, I'm sure you understand that they can be a serious distraction, so I encourage you to do so, or to at least silence them during the meeting. Please note that I will be making this request at the beginning of every meeting."

4. Feedback ground rules:

In situations where you are asking the group for ideas or their opinions, be sure to first share instructions on what kinds of answers you are and are not looking for. Otherwise, people might get frustrated if you do not accept suggestions that seemed to fit what you asked for.

5. Accountability I:

In the NGO setting, it is essential to ask meeting participants to report on their assignments from the last meeting. Unlike in the business world, where the boss can tell you if you've done a bad job, in the NGO setting we promote volunteers who get things done by trusting them with greater roles.

6. Accountability II:

At the end of the meeting, repeat and clarify what each meeting member, during the course of the meeting, agreed to accomplish by the next meeting.

Pro Tip #2

Dinner and childcare:

Volunteers with empty stomachs and volunteers who have children won't pay attention in your meeting. Offer both for free but insist that neither interferes with the meeting.

How to handle disruptive speakers

Here are 3 ways to handle a situation where a group member is taking the meeting off track:

- **Parking lot:** Recognize the importance of the speaker's comments but suggest that this topic be put in the "parking lot" (an expression that means 'saved for later') and addressed at a future meeting.
- **Separate meeting:** Recognize the importance of the speaker's comments but suggest that a separate, smaller group meet at another time to discuss only this topic.
- **Diplomacy:** Nicely explain to the speaker that while their ideas are important, they are separate from the goals of this meeting.

