

LEADING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

(adapted from *YMCA Teen Leadership Programs*)

One of the most important skills for HI-Y officers and members to develop is the ability to run effective meetings. There are three parts to consider: planning the meeting, conducting the meeting, and follow-up after the meeting.

Planning the Meeting

Preparation is the key to leading an effective meeting. It begins with developing an agenda and following a few, simple planning tips.

The Agenda

The agenda provides an outline for the meeting. It generally identifies the order of business to be accomplished within a specified time. The officers and advisors should always jointly prepare a written agenda before any meeting. Here is a sample agenda:

Sample Agenda

1. Call to order
2. Opening ritual
3. “Visions” or opening thought
4. Roll call
5. Reading of minutes
6. Treasurer’s report
7. Committee reports, if any
8. Old business
9. New business
10. Program
11. Announcements
12. Adjournment

Often meeting agendas are not this extensive or formal. However, the agenda should include certain components, which can be summarized as follows:

- *Focus on purpose.* Meetings should always start with a ritual such as reciting the HI-Y purpose or the Pledge of Allegiance. Members need to be reminded about why they exist as a group. An opening thought or “Visions” presentation sets the tone for the meeting. It should inspire members and cause them to reflect on their values.
- *Record keeping.* A system must exist to determine who is in attendance. Whether roll call is taken verbally or a sign-in sheet is passed around, members’ attendance must be recorded. Decisions must also be recorded for future reference. Ideas can be easily forgotten or decisions misconstrued if no one has the responsibility for writing them down. It is best for the presiding officer to restate

decisions verbally for the sake of the person recording and to clarify the decision with members. The record, known as *minutes*, is read at the next meeting to remind members of what was decided previously. Often, the reading of the minutes is deleted as a timesaving measure, but the minutes are kept close by for easy reference.

- *Finances.* It is important to know how much money the HI-Y has to work with. The amount of money brought in, as well as the amount of money spent since the previous meeting, should be made known. How to manage money is one of the key learning experiences that can take place in HI-Y.
- *Reports.* The HI-Y meeting is the ideal time for updates from everyone who has been assigned a specific responsibility. The President or Advisor contacts, in advance, anyone expected to make a report and make sure that he or she will be present and read to report. The advance contact should also inform the President or Advisor of any problems so they are not surprised by any information shared at the meeting.
- *Business.* HI-Y members must have a great deal of input into the activities. This will greatly enhance their sense of ownership. The business part of the meeting should focus on discussing issues (both old and new) related to HI-Y activities. Always be sure to clarify whether you are asking members (a) to make a decision, or (b) to provide feedback for the Advisor, officers, or HI-Y Leadership Center, who will make the decision. If you are asking them to make a decision, be sure you have provided them with all the facts, such as existing policies, money available, or historical information.
- *Closing.* There should be an official end to all meetings. Sometimes it is more appropriate to close the meeting before beginning the program. Whenever it is done, the closing usually includes some announcements, sometimes an evaluation of the program, and adjournment.

Additional Planning Tips

The following are additional tips for meeting planning:

- Hold meetings on the same day each week or month and at the same time. Coming to meetings become part of each member's regular routine.
- Schedule some social time (15 to 20 minutes) before starting the meeting. This will help solve the problem of late arrivals. It will also give everyone the chance to catch up on what's been happening and minimize talking between members once the meeting has started.
- Always assign a time limit to each agenda item. This will enable you to cover all items on the agenda within the time frame of the meeting. In trying to set a time limit, you may discover that there is not enough time for all items at one meeting and some will have to be dealt with at future meetings.
- Make sure you prepare or purchase enough materials or supplies for all members.
- Arrive early at the meeting site and get the room set up before members start arriving. Once they start arriving, your full attention should be focused on interacting with them.
- Display the agenda so everyone knows what the meeting will focus on.

Conducting the Meeting

Each HI-Y decides how formally or informally its meetings will be conducted. Some will choose parliamentary procedure based on *Robert's Rules of Order*. Others will choose a less structured

approach. This section provides tips on handling potential problems that occur during meetings and some information on how groups work.

Tips on Handling Common Problems

All meetings often experience common problems. HI-Y officers and the Advisor are to minimize these problems. Often it is helpful to involve all members to solve persistent problems. Generally, these ideas should minimize meeting problems.

- **Members don't show up for meetings.**

- ✓ Be sure each member is informed in advance of the date, time, and place of each meeting.
- ✓ Analyze your meeting agenda from the members' perspective. Do members only get to sit and listen to the officers give reports? Are they only being told of what has already been decided for them? Does it make any difference whether they are there or not? Make sure there are opportunities for open discussion and active participation during meetings.
- ✓ Consider incentives for meeting attendance. Keep accurate records and give points or recognition at meetings for perfect meeting attendance.

- **Members show up late for meetings.**

- ✓ Start on time regardless of how many members are there. Members will realize they will miss something if not on time. Too often members feel it doesn't matter if they are late because meetings never start on time anyway. You set the standard.
- ✓ If you use an incentive plan, assign points to being on time.
- ✓ Survey your late members individually and in private. Perhaps you will discover a problem that you need to solve (i.e. parking problem, time, etc.).
- ✓ No one wants to be the first one there. Have the officers always there first and talking with the members. You'll encourage members to arrive early or at least on time.

- **The meetings always take longer than planned.**

- ✓ You probably have too many things on your agenda. Limit the agenda items. Perhaps assign a committee to look at the items you don't have time to discuss.
- ✓ You are not keeping the planned time schedule. Members are getting the meeting off track. When discussions go off on a tangent, quickly point out the agenda item at hand and redirect the discussion.
- ✓ Have a watch or clock you can look at inconspicuously while conducting the meeting. Manage the time. Bring discussions to a close or vote when time is running out. Simply announce it is time to move on to another agenda item.
- ✓ Consider time-efficient ways to deal with roll call (e.g. pass around a sign-in sheet), reading the minutes (e.g. dispense with reading them), committee or officer reports (e.g. assign a time limit), and discussions (e.g. alternate between those who want to speak in favor and against of the issue).

- **Members continue to talk to each other even after the meeting starts.**

- ✓ Make sure whoever is addressing your HI-Y is speaking loudly enough to be heard and understood by everyone in the room.

- ✓ Have members agree on their own courtesy guidelines for meetings. Examples:
 - Compliment others on their good ideas.
 - Take the attitude that there is no stupid question.
 - Be sensitive to others' feelings.
 - Listen to what others say.
 - Don't speak while someone else has the floor.
 - Don't belittle others' ideas.
 - Don't make negative remarks about other people.
 - Give everyone the right to his or her own opinion.
- ✓ The speaker must stay in control of the group; they must give their attention to the group and not turn to make private comments or ask questions to individuals.
- ✓ Members might not be interested in what is being presented or discussed. Get more input from members when planning the agenda. Give more members opportunities to lead discussions and become involved.
- **Some members display aggressive behavior, openly putting others down or criticizing their actions, making fun of others' ideas, or taking credit for them.**
 - ✓ Counter negative remarks or put-downs with positive comments and support for whom the person verbally attacked.
 - ✓ Remind members of the courtesy guidelines created by your HI-Y.
 - ✓ Express appreciation to those who make contributions, and thus prevent others taking they do not deserve.
 - ✓ Give the disruptive members an opportunity to lead a discussion or activity to let them experience being on the other side.
 - ✓ Have the advisor talk to the individuals privately and offer suggestions on better ways to express themselves in the group.
- **Some members are negative, always disagreeing, complaining, and opposing beyond reason, and frequently trying to bring back an issue after the group has rejected or bypassed it.**
 - ✓ Thank them for their opinion and remind them that they are not expected to agree with every decision, but they are expected to accept it.
 - ✓ Do not allow them to get your HI-Y off track. After allowing them to speak, remind them that it is no longer appropriate to discuss that issue, because the group has moved on to another agenda item.
 - ✓ It may become necessary to have secret ballot votes on certain issues to minimize the effect such negative members can have.
 - ✓ Have the advisor talk to them privately about better ways to express displeasure, such as giving constructive criticism, offering a better alternative, or volunteering to find a solution.
- **Some members try to dominate by asserting a superior status, giving directions authoritatively, interrupting others, or commenting on everything.**
 - ✓ Restrict comments to only those recognized by the presiding officer.
 - ✓ Put a time limit on how often or how long each person can speak.

- ✓ Call on others who usually do not speak and encourage their involvement.
- ✓ Emphasize the importance of listening to what everyone in the group has to say.
- **Some members are apathetic; they never speak up or volunteer.**
 - ✓ Often they are just shy and need to be encouraged. Call on them by name in front of your HI-Y, ask their opinions or ideas.
 - ✓ Give them a specific assignment during the meeting such as counting hand votes, distributing supplies, making a presentation, or leading an activity.
 - ✓ Talk to them one-on-one, find out what their interests and skills are, and make the best possible use of their talents.
 - ✓ Provide positive feedback when they do speak up.
 - ✓ Ask “Could we hear from someone who has not spoken on this issue?”

Parliamentary Procedure

TRY IT...you'll find it can mean a lot to the success of your HI-Y!

ADVANTAGES IN USING PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

13. Justice and courtesy are assured to all.
14. One item of business is considered at a time.
15. The majority rules.
16. The rights of the minority are respected.

• THE MAIN MOTION

Definition: The main motion is the major proposal or suggestion for action. It is the only way to bring business before the group.

Form:

Member: The member rises or raises hand to be recognized by the President.

President: "The Chair recognizes _____."

Member: "Madam/Mr. President, I move that"

Another Member: "I second the motion."

President: "It has been moved and seconded that"

"Is there any discussion?" Members who wish to speak for or against the motion must be recognized by the President and will present their viewpoints to the group.

President: When it seems that all viewpoints have been adequately presented, it is time to answer the question before the group - that is... "Shall the motion pass?"

"All in favor of the motion say 'Aye'. All those opposed say 'Nay'. The motion is carried (or defeated)."

Summary: Any member may make a motion after securing the Floor and after being recognized by the President. A motion is out of order if other business is on the floor. A second from the Floor is required. The motion is debatable, can be amended, and needs a majority to carry.

• SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS

Definition: The subsidiary motions in some way alter or change the disposition of the main motion. They are always acted upon before the main motion.

Rank Order: Each subsidiary motion may be acted upon in the order listed below. The further down the list, the higher the priority.

Postpone indefinitely: "I move the matter be postponed indefinitely." A second is required, it is debatable, and a majority vote is needed. It cannot be amended.

Amend the motion: An amendment to a motion may be made by deleting and/or adding to the main motion. "I move to amend the motion by striking out the word(s) and inserting the word(s)". A second is required, it is debatable, and can be amended. A majority vote is needed.

Substitute motion: A substitute motion ranks as an amendment to the main motion. Its purpose is to strike out the entire motion and insert in its place a more satisfactory motion. The procedure is the same as for an amendment. "I move the following substitute motion: (state substitute motion)."

Motion to refer: Generally, the motion to refer is made to a committee. "I move that this matter be referred to the (state name of committee)." A second is required, it is debatable and amendable, and requires a majority vote.

Postpone to a set time: "I move consideration of this motion until (state time)." A second is required, it is debatable and amendable, and a majority vote is needed. Generally, motions are postponed until the next meeting.

Previous question - Limit debate: The purpose of this motion is to close debate and vote immediately on any and all pending questions. "I move the previous question, namely the main motion" or "I move we limit debate on this question to (time)." A second is needed, it is not debatable or amendable, and requires a two-thirds vote.

- **INCIDENTAL MOTIONS**

Definition: Incidental motions concern matters of procedure arising out of business and must be settled at once.

Examples:

Point of Order: This means that there has been a breach of parliamentary rules, the constitution, etc. It is in order at any time. A member may stand and interrupt the speaker.

Close nomination: Purpose is to close nominations. It must be seconded but cannot be discussed. Two-thirds vote needed.

**Robert's Rules of Order should be referred to
on all parliamentary questions.**

Opportunities of the President

DISCIPLINE CONTROL

- Limit discussion.
- Follow Parliamentary Procedure.
- Direct all work through committees.

ASSURANCE OF WELL-PLANNED AND EXECUTED PROJECTS

- Have planning sessions.
- Place all events and projects on HI-Y and school calendar.
- Assign each project to a committee to be planned.
- Keep in touch with Committee Chairs.
- See that members are personally encouraged to participate.
- Give praise and recognition for a job well done.

ASSURANCE OF ORDERLY MEETINGS

- Plan all meetings in advance.
- Build agenda according to time allowed for meeting.
- Avoid delay and confusion.
- Limit discussion.
- Work through committees.
- Keep programs moving.
- **START ON TIME - DISMISS ON TIME.**

ASSURANCE OF FUNCTIONING COMMITTEES

- Appoint competent Committee Chairs.
- Emphasize the importance of committee work.
- Keep close check on progress of committees.
- Help other Officers.

ASSURANCE OF THE FULFILLMENT OF HI-Ys PURPOSE

- Set a personal example of dedication and involvement.
- Evaluate your HI-Y activities.
- Place emphasis on inspirational “Visions” at all activities (not just meetings).

MAINTENANCE OF REGULAR ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

- Announce when and where each meeting will take place.
- Contact absentees immediately.
- Have a good program and members will attend.
- Make business meetings as brief as possible.

How to Conduct a Good Meeting

PRINCIPLE OF INVOLVEMENT

- The more involved we become, the greater responsibility we feel for our success.
INVOLVEMENT = RESPONSIBILITY
- Club officers need to be involved in planning their HI-Y's operation. The more members participate, the more their interest grows. Involve your members...HI-Y is not a spectator sport.

PLAN MEETINGS WELL IN ADVANCE

- Officers must meet regularly to plan HI-Y activities. An extended (one to three hours) monthly planning meeting, reinforced by weekly check-up meetings, can be helpful.

WRITE DOWN YOUR AGENDA

- A written agenda is a map for the meeting. It shows you know what you are doing. It builds respect for you as a leader. Be ready at each meeting to show members how far we need to travel during the time we share together.

PROGRAM MUST BE PEOPLE-CENTERED - NOT JUST ACTIVITY-CENTERED

- It is easiest to plan an outing, a party, a swim or a film, but while most members will be interested in such activities, they will soon begin to lose interest in HI-Y, since such activities can be found almost anywhere. More importantly, any sharp young student will go "all out" for programs that are meeting some their deeper needs and interests. Officers must be sure to use tools available to discover the interests and needs of HI-Y members and plan people-centered programs to meet these needs.

DON'T TRY BLUFFING

If HI-Y members complain that other members are unruly, don't pay attention, or talk during business meetings, etc., it may be that the following is happening:

- The Presiding Officer does not have a written agenda;
- The decision the HI-Y is asked to make is really one which the Executive Committee or the President should make;
- There is insufficient information collected in advance, THEREFORE HI-Y members cannot make a sound decision;
- The President or Officers have made a decision members should have shared;
- There are too many items on the business agenda. "All business" is boring. Allow time for programs and fellowship.
- The Presiding Officer, when a new item of business requiring heavy debate is presented from the floor, permits immediate discussion on it rather than referring it to a committee for consideration at the next meeting.

IF THE GROUP HAS A HISTORY OF NOISY, DISORGANIZED BUSINESS MEETINGS, THIS PATTERN CAN BE CHANGED BY FOLLOWING SOME OF THE ABOVE SUGGESTIONS.

Understanding How Groups Work

HI-Ys accomplish tasks effectively through the contributions made by members. Members play different parts that ultimately lead to completion of the task or project. *Group Leadership* by Donald S. Hayward summarizes some of these roles. Members find themselves playing a number of these roles, not just one. The goal is for your members to know when each role is needed and to assume it accordingly.

Gatekeeper. Makes sure that everyone is included and has a chance to be heard.

Examples: "We haven't heard from everyone." "(Name), what is your idea?"

Initiator. Proposes an idea, suggests a solution, helps the group get started.

Examples: "Let's start planning a trip." "Why don't we organize a service project?"

Encourager. Agrees with and supports the ideas of others, acknowledges others' ideas with a positive response.

Examples: "I like that idea!" "Sounds great. Let's talk more about it."

Information-Seeker. Asks for facts, opinions, or clarification of ideas presented.

Examples: "How did that work the last time we tried it?" "What would it cost?"

Opinion-Giver. Lets others know where their position is on the issue.

Examples: "I'm not sure this is the best plan." "I will need to think about this more, but, so far, it sounds great."

Information-Giver. Offers facts or provides details.

Examples: "It will cost \$200 to use the facility." "Last time we tried this, no one came."

Expresser of Group Feelings. Senses what the HI-Y members are feeling and attempts to describe it.

Examples: "Everyone seems tired." "There seems to be a lack of support for this idea." *Note.* This is different from the opinion-giver who speaks only for themselves.

Clarifier or Elaborator. Builds on the ideas or suggestions of others, tries to spell out what others have already said, points out implications of a suggestion.

Examples: "That would mean we would have to change the date and time." "Let's not invite just 5 new members. Let's make it 15."

Harmonizer or Mediator. Reconciles disagreements and reduces tensions minimizing negative feelings.

Examples: "You are both supporting the same idea; you just have different approaches to scheduling it." "There are several different ways to look at this issue." "Would you both agree that . . .?"

Summarizer. Restates where the group is so far, identifies the points of agreement and disagreement, points out what still needs to be done.

Examples: "We've agreed we want to have a picnic. Now we have to decide where and when."

Compromiser. Admits an error or a change of opinion, is willing to com-promise.

Examples: "If everybody else likes the earlier time, I'll see if I can come then also." "I want to be in charge of this project, but if you feel _____ needs the experience, it is OK with me."

Consensus-Tester. Checks how much agreement there is and if the group is close to making a decision.

Examples: “Does this sound like what we’ve decided so far?” “Are we agreeing to hold a car wash as a fund-raiser?”

Standard-Setter. Expresses a new standard or rule for the group, reminds the group of standards it already has.

Examples: “We ought to have a rule that anyone who misses the discussion cannot vote on the issue.” “That would be fun , but it doesn’t fit with the purpose of HI-Y.”

Diagnoser. Determines sources of difficulties and suggests next steps.

Examples: “There’s no need to discuss this further until we find out if the facility is available.” “We should find out how much it will cost before we start the project.”

Evaluator. States group decisions or accomplishments in relation to group’s purpose or goals.

Examples: “The food bank drive we decided on will help us meet our community service goal.” “This will be a good event for leadership training.”

Following Up After the Meeting

Too often, once a meeting adjourns there is little follow-up. There are important steps to take as soon as possible after the meeting.

17. Create a “to do” list for yourself based on decisions and agreements made at the meeting. Write out the list while they are still fresh in your mind.
18. Make note of what others agreed to do during the meeting and select a day to check with them on their progress.
19. Develop a tentative agenda for next meeting. List all the issues that will require action or discussion.
20. Contact absent members to find out why they were absent (if the reason is unknown), and update them on what was decided at the meeting.
21. Make sure thank-you notes are sent to any guest speakers or others deserving of your thanks.