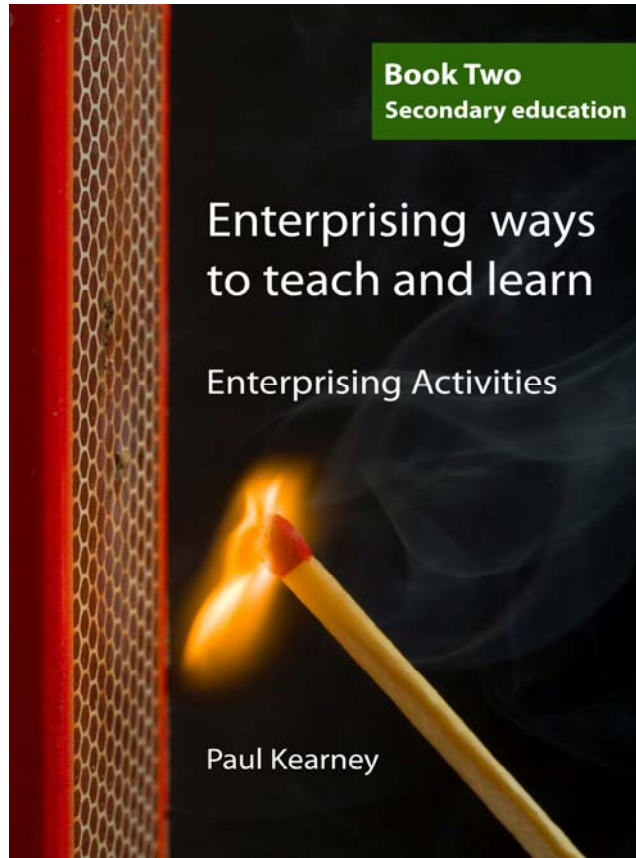


# Sample

## “Enterprising Activity”



# Running meetings

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# RUNNING MEETINGS

## Summary

Students study the process of running a formal meeting and how decisions are made. They rehearse and present a mock meeting. They can only mime the meeting.

## Focus

Holding meetings is an important part of running projects. Through enterprising projects students can learn how to prepare and run meetings both formal and informal. While most meetings during an enterprising project only need to be informal – one or two formal meetings during a project may be practical and instructional. This activity focuses on learning the structured processes of a formal meeting.

## Process

In pairs, the students examine the section: How meetings are run with one reading and the other asking questions as they go. The roles are reversed for the section: How decisions are made.

Next, pairs are coupled to form groups of four, to discuss Tips for running good meetings.

Students are evenly divided into two new 'teams'. Each team's task is to hold a formal meeting, clearly demonstrating the process, how decisions are made and the concepts involved, such as a quorum and points of order.

The teacher and a student from each team will judge which team better represents a formal meeting in terms of:

- scope – how many concepts and processes are covered
- quality of their understanding
- clarity – how easy it was for the audience to understand what the team was demonstrating

The three judges sit together. After consulting with the two student judges, the teacher scores performances on a scale of 1-6, six being the highest. The two student judges will help their team with preparation but they cannot be involved/act in the actual performance.

The next session is split into three parts

- Rehearsal
- Performance
- Debriefing

Depending how well students are faring with their rehearsal, the debrief may need to spill over into a third session. Rehearsal is the most important part of the whole activity.

Teams can only **mime** the performance!

The only props allowed are clothing, table and chairs. The performance is to be no less than ten minutes in duration and no more than 15.

Teams toss a coin to see who goes first.

If at any time the three judges find an aspect of the performance is incomprehensible, they may ask the team to 'freeze' and explain what they are doing. It is important that the explanation is restricted to the aspect at hand. Tell them to stop talking as soon as you have got the gist of the idea.

After the performance the team must provide feedback on their own performance, covering:

- the quality of their acting/miming
- the parts they found difficult to explain
- what they would do differently next time
- three most important things they learnt about running meetings

They conclude by scoring themselves out of 18.

The following teams are not allowed to talk before it is their turn – so they do not have a significant advantage in going second.

The final judging provides an entree to the debriefing session.

## Debriefing

The final judgement (scores) will be a rich source of debate. Have teams sitting apart. Encourage students to:

- dispute judgements
- criticise the other team's performance and their understanding
- challenge your comments

A good mechanism to fuel critical thinking is for each student to have an 'opinion card' with a cross symbol on one side and a question mark on the other. At anytime a student can simply display the cross to indicate they disagree with a comment – or use the question mark to indicate they need more information and/or to indicate that the speaker needs to offer a better explanation.

Emphasise the main advantages of meetings:

- two heads are better than one
- everyone knows what is going on
- information is recorded
- everyone feels involved
- project activity is planned
- decisions are binding

Conclude by revisiting *Tips for running Good Meetings*. Three points need to be emphasised:

- The role of the chairperson
- The great importance of taking notes at formal **and** informal meetings
- The need to focus on making decisions

To underscore the importance of 'getting on with the business' ask why an organisation would adopt the following strategy:

One American software company requires everyone to stand at meetings.

## Handout – How meetings are run

Before a meeting is called it should be decided:

- who will attend
- where the meeting will take place (place should be quiet)
- when and for how long the meeting will last
- why the meeting is being held and what decisions will be made

Before the meeting, people will need a list of topics (called items). The list of items is called an **agenda**. They will also need the minutes from the last meeting. These are an accurate record of the previous meeting, including the decisions made and actions to be taken.

Reports, copies of the budget, diagrams and any other information needed for the meeting are prepared and copied for each person.

When everyone is present, the chairperson 'opens' the meeting by announcing any '**apologies**' – a list of the participants who are not able to attend – and often why.

Often the chairperson checks there is a **quorum**. There must be a certain number of people at the meeting before official decisions can be made. This number of people is called a quorum. When there is no quorum, items on the agenda can be discussed but decisions cannot be made.

The chairperson asks if everyone understands the agenda and whether they would like to add an item. **New items** are covered at the end of the meeting under the topic/item General Business.

Next, the secretary 'tables' the **minutes** from the last meeting. If everyone is happy that the minutes are an accurate account of the major decisions and discussions made at the last meeting, the chairperson 'moves' the 'motion' that the minutes be '**adopted**'. Someone has to 'second' the motion and then a vote is taken to approve the decision.

The first item is **Business arising** (from the minutes of the last meeting). At this time, reports are made concerning decisions made at the last meeting.

Next, the meeting works its way through each item on the agenda. As each item is discussed the secretary records the decisions and major points about what will be done, by when and who by. These will be written up as minutes for the next meeting. Usually people get a copy of the minutes before the next meeting.

Usually the final item is called **General Business**. At this time items not appearing on the agenda are dealt with.

After setting the date for the next week, the chairperson finishes the meeting by saying *If there are no further items, we will close the meeting at...* (the exact time). The time of the closing of the meeting is recorded as the last item in the minutes of that meeting.

## How decisions are made

When someone at a meeting wants the group to make a decision about something, he/she '**moves a motion**' that... The 'motion' is the idea or proposal the person wants approved. For example, the motion could be that an amount of money should be spent on a particular thing or that a letter is sent, or contact is made with a particular person. Before a decision is voted on, someone else has to '**second**' the motion – which means this person agrees a decision should be made. If the group agrees with the motion, the chairperson will say it is '**carried**'. Sometimes people will want to change the motion, e.g. spending less money. This is called making **an amendment**, which can be moved, seconded, voted on and carried, or not.

Most groups who meet regularly have a set of rules, called a **constitution**. The constitution sets out the rules as to how the group is run and includes such items as how many members constitute a quorum for a meeting's decisions to be valid. Some rules may say that you can only spend more than a certain amount of money, if all members agree. When everyone agrees it is called a **unanimous** decision.

Sometimes someone disagrees with the way things are being run, such as someone leaves so there may no longer be a quorum and the group may still try to make a decision. A member can call for a **point of order**, which means the chairperson has to stop and check the rules. Another 'point of order' could involve someone complaining they are not getting a chance to speak. Points of order usually relate to the constitution. For example, the group may want to spend more money than the constitution allows, but someone disagrees. If this is the scenarios, the decision will not be unanimous, so the rules of the constitution will be broken.

## Handout – How meetings are run

1. Everyone is very clear about what the meeting is being held for.
2. People get the agenda a couple of days before the meeting.
3. The meeting starts exactly on time.
4. The chairperson makes sure the group sticks to the topic. The discussion can go *all over the place*. For example, when the item is about spending money on a new computer, people may start talking about how money was raised last year. With this example, the Chairperson must say *we need to stick to the topic and make a decision about buying the computer*.
5. Focusing on making decisions will keep the meeting on track. But sometimes the best decision is to find out more information so good decisions can be made at the next meeting.
6. Individuals should not be allowed to **dominate** the meeting by talking all the time. When someone is dominating the discussion, the chairperson can ask *whether anyone else has an opinion about the matter*.
7. People should not **interrupt** someone who is talking.
8. The chairperson indicates **whose turn** it is to talk.
9. When an item is going to be discussed, the chairperson should go around the group and ask each person's opinion.
10. The motion is stated by the chairperson before it is voted upon. The secretary writes down the motion and result, as soon as the decision is made.
11. The minutes record what will be done, by whom and how.
12. Participants feel comfortable asking for more information.
13. Participants take their own notes during the minutes.
14. The chairperson needs to be confident. However, it is not their job to make decisions. They should not talk too much about the topic. It is their job to make sure:
  - everyone gets a say
  - people stick to the topic
  - the rules are followed