

Co-operantics

People skills for co-operatives

Do's and Don'ts for maximising participation in meetings

Do

- send out the agenda in advance, with any papers to be discussed
- indicate whether Agenda items are for information, discussion or decision
- write up Agenda items on a flip chart for all to see, with estimated timings for each item
- start and finish the meeting on time
- have a break with refreshments half way through the meeting
- support the Chair
- sit the Minute (or Note) taker next to the Chair
- use "Action Minutes" – a record of decisions taken; anyone who wishes it to be recorded that they did not agree; and any controversial discussion
- pay for professional child care rather than having children in the meeting
- hold the meeting in an accessible venue
- hold the meeting at a time when the majority of members can attend
- have good lighting, comfortable seating, tables if required, fresh air
- encourage quiet people to speak by controlling the opinionated
- practice your listening skills

Don't

- allow opinionated people to dominate the meeting
- expect people to read papers and participate in the meeting at the same time
- allow the Chair to take Minutes, they are both important jobs
- forget to record who will carry out decisions taken at the meeting
- speak just to agree with the previous speaker
- allow everyone to speak at once, if discussion gets heated, people should indicate to the Chair that they wish to speak by raising their hand
- permit two way conversations – people should speak "through the Chair"
- forget to practice your listening skills