

How to be a master minute taker: 3 tips

People frequently panic when they have to take meeting minutes because they're afraid they will forget to record something important. Christy Crump, who has 25+ years of experience as an administrative professional, provides her top three minute-taking tips to help you diminish this fear:

Tip #1: Keep it simple. Think about what meeting minutes are — they are not a word-for-word transcription of what goes on in a meeting. Meeting minutes are a summary of the actions taken and the discussions that are had in the meeting. So you want to keep it simple — you only want to include things that are minute-worthy. You want to make sure to avoid derogatory comments, personal opinions or excessive information about the speakers when you just need to know who they are and why they're there. Also, keep in mind when you're actually recording your minutes, you only have to record verbatim motions and amendments to the motions.

Tip #2: Always be prepared for your meeting. Follow the 80-20 rule. You do 80% of your work in the first 20% of your time. If you spend the first 20% of your time getting ready for your meeting before it even begins, you'll have 80% of your work done. Take each item on your agenda and give yourself a little bit of space in between each item so that you have room to take your notes in the meeting. If you take your notes on paper, then you have plenty of space to write, or if you take your notes on a laptop computer, you have plenty of space to actually type your notes in there. If you go into your meeting with a minute-taking template made from your agenda, you'll be sure not to miss anything. It's kind of like a security blanket that you can use to make sure you're getting everything.

Tip #3: What to do after you've drafted your meeting minutes. After you pass the draft of the minutes you took on to the meeting chair and he or she edits them, make sure that you keep the edited copy. There are two reasons you want to keep that marked up copy. The first is so that you can learn all of the little idiosyncrasies that the chair of the meeting has. For instance, maybe the chair likes certain words capitalized or likes to see the comma before the word "and" in a series of three. You can pick up on those little idiosyncrasies, and make sure that going forward you always hit on those things. The second reason you always want to keep that marked up copy is in case somebody asks later why something was changed. You can pull it out and say, "Because you told me to change it." So just a little cover for yourself there.

Beyond this, if you're still nervous about taking meeting minutes, Christy Crump suggests that you find a class, webinar or mentor who can walk you through how to take meeting minutes. But the biggest thing to keep in mind is that when you have a fear or anxiety about something, don't run away from that fear but face it head on. Put yourself in a position to take meeting minutes as often as you can. The more you do something, the better you get at it. The better you get at it, the less fear you have. And the less fear you have, the more your confidence grows. If you take meeting minutes well and do it with confidence, you're going to be a master minute taker, and you'll stand out from your competition.