

Leadership: Secretary of an Organization



Keeping records is always a big responsibility. Your job as secretary is vital because your club cannot function efficiently without current and accurate records.

Your Responsibilities

Think about your secretarial position. It is important and detailed, and it is important you become familiar with and carry out each part of the secretary's job. A record lost, a list unmade, or a report not filed can mean trouble for your organization. Details fall into place much better if you are organized. This means doing jobs when they need to be done, having records when they are needed, and knowing where things are.

Your responsibilities as secretary include the following:

- Writing the minutes.
- Keeping an up-to-date membership roll.
- Checking attendance at each meeting.
- Making a record of all committees and notifying members if they were named to a committee when they were absent.
- Handling the correspondence.
- Presiding at the meeting when the president and vice president are absent.
- Making reports and sending to the proper place.
- Keeping a copy of the bylaws with amendments properly entered.
- Taking part in each meeting.

Keeping Minutes

First on the list of secretarial responsibilities is taking and writing the minutes. Your club probably has a record book designated for the minutes. It's your job to accurately record accounts of each meeting in the order the business and the programs are conducted. The minutes are more than just a "handy reference" if properly written. They become a written history of your organization.

It may be helpful during the business meeting to take the minutes in note form without being overly concerned about neatness. This way you can keep your mind on what people are saying and doing. You can enter the minutes in the official record book when you get home, taking all the time you need to transcribe your notes. Using a tape recorder during meetings is helpful. You can add the taped information to the record books later.

An outline of the minutes includes the following:

- I. Opening of minutes
 - A. Notes the kind of meeting (whether regular or special).
 - B. States the name of the club.
 - C. States the date, time, and place of the meeting.
 - D. States the name of the presiding officer.
 - E. Notes the fact that a quorum is present.
- II. Proceedings of the minutes
 - A. Notes whether the minutes of the previous meeting were read, corrected, and approved.
 - B. States the subject of each report, the name of the person who presented it, and the action taken on it. Sometimes minutes also contain summaries of important reports.
 - C. Notes all motions and their results. The minutes should not contain discussions of motions.
 - D. Notes all points of order, appeals, and their outcome.
- III. Closing of the minutes
 - A. Notes the hour of adjournment.
 - B. Gives the secretary's signature.

The minutes record what was done, not what was said. Minutes should not contain discussions, personal opinions, adjectives, or interpretations. The secretary signs the minutes when they are written, and the president signs after they are approved.

Corrections to the minutes are made by marking through the word or words to be corrected and writing the correction above, or in the margin, and then initialing.

Handling Correspondence

A secretary is responsible for all club correspondence (for example, notifying members of meetings, writing sympathy or congratulatory messages, sending thank-you notes, and replying to all letters and inquiries). As a courtesy, the secretary sends a copy of correspondence to persons mentioned in the letter and/or to the appropriate committee chair. The president of your club should receive copies of all correspondence. Be prepared to read all correspondence at the business meeting.

Attendance Records

The secretary is responsible for keeping attendance records. Record the names of all members and keep up with their attendance. Develop symbols for absent, present, excused, and other often-used terms to make attendance records easier to understand and to record. Keep entries current, and be legible and neat. Erasures or corrections should be verified and initialed. If roll is taken by sign-up sheet, transfer the data to the attendance book immediately.

Other Duties

You actually are the president's secretarial assistant; therefore, always be prepared to explain what business is pending. As secretary, you have all the rights of membership. You may introduce motions, discuss them, and vote on all measures. You need to be present at all meetings, and if you are unable to attend, you should send the record book to the president.

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