

The Role of Chairperson

The chairperson must take the lead in the organisation and management of the society. The success of a meeting will often depend on the chair's abilities. Sometimes discussion can be lively, even heated, and other times discussion can be so tightly controlled that few people get a chance to participate. It is the chairperson's job to make sure everyone can take part, to make clear decisions and to finish the business. Here is a guide to successful chairing.

1. Participation

The chair should encourage all committee members to contribute. Allow plenty of notice for important items on the agenda, and encourage committee members to prepare reports beforehand. If members put forward a view make sure it is not ridiculed or angrily shouted down. It is a chair's responsibility to keep order, ensure everyone is treated with respect and make sure only one person is speaking at any time.

2. Debate

As chair, you must keep the discussion on the key topics, and watch the time. Familiarise yourself with the items that need to be discussed. There will be times when you need to clarify the discussion. An ability to understand what is being said will be vital. A chair must:

- Highlight proposals that are made in meetings.
- Summarise what committee members have said.
- Help find common ground between opposing views.
- Summarise what has happened at the end of a discussion, indicating clearly what decisions have been made and who is responsible for carrying them out.
- Clarify what members are voting on and casting a vote in the event of a tie.

3. Rules

Your constitution will probably contain a set of standing orders or meeting regulations for larger meetings. If you use them, it is important you read them and understand how to use them. Use these regulations when you think there may be conflict – if there is a great deal of business to get through in a short space of time, or when the meeting is large.

Remember:

- Chairing is pivotal to the success of a meeting.
- A good chair allows people to contribute, ensures everyone understands the discussion and gets a decision made.
- A chair should understand the society's constitution and rules relation to the meeting.
- As chair you should stay positive as much as you can, negativity will only lead to negative results.

A society is made up of its committee, which should be a team with shared goals and also its members.

Goals:

Setting your goals, always think SMART,

SMART goals = Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Time-phased

If you are a new committee set some short term easily achievable goals to see how you work as a team, always keep lines of communication open, listen to each other, do not be afraid of disagreement or differences of opinion, work through these differences to reach consensus, this is the natural tension of change and growth. Be honest, have integrity, listen, do what you say you will do, do not take on more than you can manage. You all have the potential to make great team members and leaders; here are some of the skills you may need to develop:

Teams:

A team is a group of people who have:

- Good communication
- Different backgrounds, skills & abilities
- A shared sense of mission
- Clearly identified goals
- Successful teams need:
 - Common goals
 - High targets
 - Leadership
 - Interaction / involvement of all members
 - Maintenance of individual's self-esteem
 - Open communication
 - Decision-making power

Remember: *no one person is central. Everyone's role is of equal importance...*

but not necessarily of equal precedence at a given time.

Leadership:

To help teams feel empowered, leaders should:

- Provide inspiration & motivation
- Have trust in their fellow committee members
- Commit themselves fully to the job
(without taking on other committee members' responsibilities)