

TOOL 09

The Meeting Kit

Agendas, minutes in three styles, an action tracker and a fully worked example. For the task new assistants worry about most.

Inside

The minutes mindset · Pre-meeting setup checklist · Agenda template

What to write, what to skip · Ready phrases

Minutes: action, formal and quick-notes styles · Action tracker

Four ready emails · A fully worked example · After-meeting checklist

Minutes are not a transcript

Minutes record what was **decided** and who will **act**, by when. They do not record everything that was **said**.

STAGE	WHAT YOU DO	PAGES
Before	Set up the meeting, send the agenda and papers	Setup checklist, agenda template, agenda email
During	Capture attendance, decisions and actions	What to write, ready phrases, minutes templates
After	Draft, approve, send, and follow up the actions	Emails, action tracker, after-meeting checklist

WHY IT WORKS

Minute-taking courses charge hundreds of dollars for a single day, and they all teach the same core idea: capture decisions and actions, with an owner and a deadline for each action. Writing down every word makes minutes longer, not better.

FROM 26 YEARS AT THE DESK

Before my first minutes in any new office, I always asked for two or three old sets of minutes. They told me the house style: how formal, how long, whether names were used. Copying the style is not cheating. It is respect for how things are done there.

CALM MOMENT

It is normal to feel nervous about your first minutes. The chair approves them before anyone else sees them. That step exists to catch small mistakes, including yours.

Pre-meeting setup checklist

Tick through it for every meeting you support.

ONE TO TWO WEEKS BEFORE

- ☐ Date, time and duration confirmed with the chair
- ☐ Room booked, or video link created
- ☐ Invitations sent, with time zones checked
- ☐ Ask attendees for agenda items, with a deadline

TWO WORKING DAYS BEFORE

- ☐ Agenda approved by the chair
- ☐ Agenda and papers sent to attendees
- ☐ Catering ordered, if needed
- ☐ Dietary and accessibility needs checked

ON THE DAY

- ☐ Room set up: chairs, screen, cables, water
- ☐ Video link tested
- ☐ Printed agendas and papers, if needed
- ☐ Attendance list ready
- ☐ Your minutes template open, with the agenda items already typed in

FIVE MINUTES BEFORE

- ☐ You are in the room
- ☐ You are sitting where you can see and hear the chair
- ☐ Phone on silent, notebook open
- ☐ One slow double breath

Agenda

Give every item a purpose, an owner and a time. It keeps meetings short.

Meeting _____ Place or link _____
 Date and time _____ Chair _____

Purpose of the meeting _____

TIME	ITEM	PURPOSE	OWNER	PAPERS
	1 · Welcome and apologies			
	2 · Minutes of last meeting and actions			
	3 ·			
	4 ·			
	5 ·			
	6 ·			
	7 ·			
	Any other business			

Purpose: write *Inform*, *Discuss* or *Decide*. Items marked *Decide* should go early, while people are fresh.

Next meeting _____

What to write, what to skip

WRITE THIS DOWN	SKIP THIS
Date, time, place, and who attended (and who sent apologies)	Word-for-word speeches
Each agenda item, and a one or two line summary of the discussion	Side conversations and jokes
Every decision , in clear words	Personal opinions, unless the chair asks for them to be recorded
Every action : who, what, and by when	Who said what in a heated moment
Figures, dates and names exactly as said	Repetition: the same point made twice
Anything unclear, marked with a "?" to check later	Your own commentary

Five habits of good minute-takers

- 1 **Type the agenda into your template before the meeting.** Then you only fill in the gaps.
- 2 **Listen for decision words:** agreed, approved, decided, will, by.
- 3 **For every action, catch three things:** owner, task, deadline. If one is missing, ask kindly at the end of the item.
- 4 **Check spellings of names and figures** after the meeting, never during.
- 5 **Write the draft the same day**, while you still remember the details.

WHEN AN ACTION HAS NO OWNER

Before we move on, can I check: who will take that action, and by when?

Ready phrases

Neutral, professional sentences for every part of the minutes. Use past tense and the third person.

WHEN	PHRASE
Opening	The meeting opened at 10:00. [Name] chaired the meeting.
Apologies	Apologies were received from [names].
Previous minutes	The minutes of the meeting of [date] were approved as an accurate record.
Reporting	[Name] reported that [summary].
Discussion	The meeting discussed [topic]. The main points raised were [points].
Decision	It was agreed that [decision].
Action	Action: [Name] to [task] by [date].
Noting	The meeting noted [information].
Deferred	It was agreed to defer [item] to the next meeting.
Closing	There being no further business, the meeting closed at 11:05.
Next meeting	The next meeting will be held on [date] at [time] in [place].

FROM 26 YEARS AT THE DESK

Write "It was agreed that" rather than "Everyone agreed". Minutes record the meeting's decision, not a count of opinions. If someone asks for their disagreement to be noted, write: "[Name] asked that their concern about [point] be recorded."

Action minutes

The everyday style. Short, clear, and focused on what happens next.

Meeting

Place or link

Date and time

Minutes by

Chair

Apologies

Present

ITEM	SUMMARY	DECISION	ACTION: WHO, WHAT, BY WHEN

Next meeting

Formal or board minutes

For boards, committees and formal meetings. Check your organization's rules, or ask the chair, for any required wording.

Organization _____ Chair _____

Meeting _____ Secretary or minute-taker _____

Date, time and place _____ Quorum present (yes or no) _____

Present _____

Apologies _____

In attendance _____

#	ITEM	DISCUSSION SUMMARY	RESOLUTION OR DECISION
1			
2			
3			
4			

MOTION	MOVED BY	SECONDED BY	RESULT

Meeting closed at _____ Next meeting _____

Chair's signature _____ Date approved _____

FORMAL MEETINGS

Board and nonprofit minutes can have legal requirements: what must be recorded, who signs, and how long they are kept. Follow your organization's bylaws and the chair's guidance.

Quick notes

For short team meetings and calls, when full minutes are not needed.

Meeting _____ Who was there _____
Date _____ Notes by _____

KEY POINTS

DECISIONS

ACTION	WHO	BY WHEN

QUESTIONS TO CHECK AFTER THE MEETING

[illegible]

Four meeting emails

1 · SENDING THE AGENDA

Subject: Agenda: [meeting] on [date]

Dear all,

Please find attached the agenda and papers for [meeting] on [date] at [time], in [place / link].

If you are unable to attend, please let me know by [date].

Kind regards,
[Name]

2 · DRAFT MINUTES TO THE CHAIR

Subject: Draft minutes for your review: [meeting], [date]

Dear [Chair's name],

Please find attached the draft minutes of [meeting] on [date]. I have marked two points with a question mark where I would be grateful if you could confirm the wording.

Once you are happy with them, I will send them to all attendees.

Kind regards,
[Name]

Four meeting emails, continued

3 · FINAL MINUTES TO ATTENDEES

Subject: Minutes: [meeting], [date]

Dear all,

Please find attached the approved minutes of [meeting] on [date]. Actions are listed at the end, with owners and deadlines.

The next meeting will be held on [date] at [time].

Kind regards,
[Name]

4 · ACTION REMINDER

Subject: Reminder: your action from [meeting]

Hi [Name],

A friendly reminder of the action agreed at [meeting] on [date]: [action], due on [date].

Is there anything you need to move it forward? If the date needs to change, just let me know and I'll update the tracker.

Thank you,
[Name]

The agenda

A fictional company and meeting, so you can see what finished documents look like.

Meeting	Monthly Operations Meeting, Harbor Lane Consulting		
Date and time	Tuesday, April 14, 10:00 to 11:00		
Place	Room 4, and video link for remote attendees		
Chair	Laura Bennett, Operations Director		

TIME	ITEM	PURPOSE	OWNER
10:00	1 · Welcome and apologies	Inform	Laura Bennett
10:05	2 · Minutes of last meeting and actions	Decide	Laura Bennett
10:10	3 · Office move to the third floor	Decide	Tom Alvarez
10:30	4 · Second-quarter travel budget	Decide	David Okafor
10:45	5 · New starter onboarding checklist	Discuss	Priya Nair
10:55	6 · Any other business		All

FROM 26 YEARS AT THE DESK

Notice the order: the two decisions come first, while everyone is fresh. Discussion items go later. The chair approved this agenda two days before the meeting.

The minutes

Action minutes style, as sent to attendees after the chair's approval.

Monthly Operations Meeting · Harbor Lane Consulting

Tuesday, April 14, 10:00 to 11:00 · Room 4 and video link

Present: Laura Bennett (Chair), David Okafor, Priya Nair, Tom Alvarez

Apologies: Sarah Kim

Minutes: [Your name], Executive Assistant

- 1. Welcome and apologies.** The Chair welcomed everyone. Apologies were received from Sarah Kim.
 - 2. Minutes of last meeting.** The minutes of March 10 were approved as an accurate record. All actions were completed, except the parking permit renewal, which is carried forward under item 6.
 - 3. Office move.** Tom Alvarez reported that the third floor will be ready on May 12. It was agreed that the move will take place on the weekend of May 16 and 17. **Action:** Tom Alvarez to confirm the moving company by April 30. **Action:** [Your name] to send a move notice to all staff by May 1.
 - 4. Travel budget.** David Okafor reported that travel spending is 10% over budget for the quarter. It was agreed that from May 1, any trip costing more than \$1,500 will need Director approval. **Action:** David Okafor to update the travel policy note by April 25.
 - 5. Onboarding checklist.** Priya Nair presented a draft checklist for new starters. The meeting suggested adding a welcome lunch in week one. **Action:** Priya Nair to circulate the final checklist by April 22. **Action:** [Your name] to book welcome lunches for the two May starters.
 - 6. Any other business.** Parking permits expire on May 31. **Action:** Tom Alvarez to renew them by April 30.
- The meeting closed at 10:58. **Next meeting:** Tuesday, May 19, 10:00, Room 4.

The action tracker

Every action from the minutes, copied into the tracker the same day.

ACTION	OWNER	MEETING	DUE	STATUS
Confirm moving company	Tom Alvarez	Ops, Apr 14	Apr 30	In progress
Send move notice to all staff	[Your name]	Ops, Apr 14	May 1	Not started
Update travel policy note	David Okafor	Ops, Apr 14	Apr 25	In progress
Circulate onboarding checklist	Priya Nair	Ops, Apr 14	Apr 22	Done
Book welcome lunches, May starters	[Your name]	Ops, Apr 14	Apr 28	Not started
Renew parking permits	Tom Alvarez	Ops, Apr 14	Apr 30	Not started

After-meeting checklist

- ☐ Draft minutes written the same day
- ☐ Names, figures and dates checked
- ☐ Draft sent to the chair for approval
- ☐ Final minutes sent to attendees
- ☐ Minutes saved in the right folder (see your Desk Manual file map)
- ☐ Every action copied into the tracker
- ☐ Reminders set a few days before each deadline
- ☐ Next meeting booked, if needed

CALM MOMENT

Done. Close the file, and take a three-minute break before your next task. Finishing well deserves a pause.