

Getting good audio

Everything that matters for a recording we can turn into accurate minutes. One page, as promised.

The short version: put one phone flat in the middle of the table, ask people to say their name the first time they speak, and have the chair announce each agenda item by number and read decisions out loud. That alone gets you 90% of the way there.

Before the meeting

- **Tell everyone it is being recorded**, and why. The chair saying so at the start, plus a line on the agenda, covers most cases. This one sits with your charity rather than with us, and it takes ten seconds.
- **Charge the phone**, or plug it in. A flat battery at minute 50 loses the end of the meeting, which is usually where the decisions are.
- **Flight mode, wifi on**. An incoming call stops the recording on some handsets.
- **Send us the agenda and papers** if you can. Names, project titles and acronyms come out far more accurately when we have them in front of us.

Setting up the room

- **One device, in the middle**. A phone flat in the centre of the table beats a phone in front of the chair. If the table is long, two phones at either end work better than one in the middle.
- **Off the bare table**. Resting it on a folded jumper or a coaster stops the thud of hands and papers travelling straight into the microphone.
- **Away from the noise**: not beside a laptop fan, radiator, projector, or a window onto a main road. A room with soft furnishings sounds better than a hard-walled hall.
- **Nothing on top of it**. Papers laid over the phone will muffle everything.

During the meeting

- **Names on first speech**. "Sarah here, I think we should..." Once each per meeting is enough, and it is what lets us attribute decisions to the right people.

- **One voice at a time**. People talking over each other is the single biggest cause of gaps in minutes.
- **Say the agenda number**. "Item 5, the budget." It lets us match discussion to your agenda without guessing.
- **Read decisions out loud**. "So we're agreeing to spend up to two thousand pounds on the roof, proposed by Jim, seconded by Anita, all in favour." If the chair does this at the end of each item, your minutes will be excellent.
- **Actions with a name and a date**. "Ravi will get three quotes by the 12th." This is what makes an action log worth having.
- **Flag anything confidential**. Say so on the recording, or tell us afterwards. We will minute it in neutral terms or leave a marked gap for you to complete.

Sending it to us

- **Email the file to hello@thecommitteeroom.co.uk**. A two-hour phone recording is usually 40 to 100 MB and sends fine. If your email bounces it back, use WeTransfer, Dropbox, Google Drive or OneDrive and send the link, or just ask and we will send you an upload link.
- **Tell us if your deadline is tighter** than two working days and we will say honestly whether we can meet it.
- **Include your template** if your charity has a house style. If you do not have one, we will use ours, and it is yours to keep.

If the recording goes wrong

It happens. If the phone stopped, the battery died, or half of it is inaudible, send us what you have plus any notes anyone took. We can often produce a usable draft from a partial recording and rough notes. Where the audio genuinely will not support a sentence, we mark the gap clearly rather than guess at what was said, and we tell you before you see the draft.