Meetings

Basics

No meeting should ever last longer than one hour.
Only meet if there is a purpose
Never start a meeting without knowing how it will end.
Send out an agenda prior to a meeting
Begin meetings on time.

Before the Meeting

Define the purpose of the meeting.
Meet with your advisor to discuss the agenda.
Develop an agenda with officers and advisors.
Distribute the agenda, background materials, and lengthy documents prior to the meeting.
Choose an appropriate meeting time.
Set a specific time limit and stick to it.
Arrange the room so members face each other.
Use visual aids.
(write the agenda so that all can see)

During the Meeting

Greet members and make them feel welcome.
Serve refreshments if possible.
Start on time. End on time.
Review the agenda and set priorities for the meeting;
Stick to the agenda.
Encourage group discussion to get all points of view.
Keep conversation focused on the topic.
Keep minutes for future reference in case a problem arises.
Be a role model by listening and showing interest, appreciation and confidence in members.
End meeting on a positive note.
Set date, time, and place for next meeting.

NOTE: You should make every effort to allow the discussion to resolve itself. Try not to intervene and call for a recess unless absolutely necessary.

Special Situations (Cont’d)

• Out of Control Attendees

Every now and then, a member of the group will have a strong opinion about an issue. This is not bad. Once you get three or more of these opinions clashing in the middle of a meeting, you may have a problem. One way to handle this is to call for a five minute recess.

During the recess:
   o Pull the group of debaters aside.
   o Initiate an activity (prepared in advance) for the rest of the members in attendance (ideas could include: brainstorming for a collaborative event, ice breaking activity, or just a simple five minute rest room break).
   o While you have the attention of the strong opinions, ask them if they are willing to accept the other point of view. If not, suggest to them that the issue being discussed will be tabled until a future date.

After the break, be sure to gather the group back to assembly and explain to them what has been decided.

NOTE: You should make every effort to allow the discussion to resolve itself. Try not to intervene and call for a recess unless absolutely necessary.
Meetings

After the Meeting

Write up and distribute minutes within 4 days.
Discuss any problems during the meeting with officers and advisors; come up with ways to improve.
Follow up on delegation decisions.
Check to see that members understand and carry out responsibilities.
Give recognition and appreciation to excellent and timely progress.
Put unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting.
Conduct a periodic evaluation of the meeting.

Meeting Checklist

Opening the meeting
• Have goals for the meeting been identified?
• Has necessary background information been reviewed?
• Are expectations for member’s contributions clear?
• Has the sequence of events for the meeting been previewed?
• Have time constraints been identified?

Encouraging Balanced Participation
• Have leader and members used questions to draw out quiet members?
• Are off-track comments redirected?
• Do members suggest moving on when an agenda item has been dealt with adequately?

Maintaining a Positive Tone
• Are questioning and paraphrasing used?
• Are dubious comments enhanced as much as possible?
• Does the meeting reflect the cultural norms of attendees?

Solving problems creatively
• Is the problem defined clearly?
• Are the causes and effects of the problem analyzed?
• Are clear criteria for resolving the problem established?
• Are possible solutions brainstormed without being evaluated?
• Is a decision made based on the previously established criteria?

Special Situations

• Latecomers
Don't insult them; let them take their seats and feel welcome (they probably have a good excuse which you don't know about). If necessary, talk to the member after the meeting in private.

• Debate
Debate is healthy to an organization—it shows that people care about an issue. If not handled properly, though, these discussions can sometimes turn threatening.