

Leadership Guidance

I. The Chair's Role in Presiding at a Meeting

As a board, council, or committee chair, you have three basic responsibilities:

1. To guide the meeting.

Assure that balanced interaction occurs during the meeting. The quality of discussion directly affects the quality of decisions. Don't let any one individual dominate the discussion. Keep the discussion on topic. Discuss all key ideas without straying from the issue at hand.

2. To stimulate thinking and discussion.

Create an atmosphere in which others want to participate. Encourage open discussion, and attempt to bring out all facets of the discussion, pointing out any areas of agreement or deferring discussion that clearly require information not available at the table. Making assignments on agenda items before the meeting is a good way to get members involved and to make them feel they are contributing to the committee in a meaningful way. You may want to discuss this with your staff when preparing the agenda.

Appointment of an ad hoc committee may be necessary on complex issues that require in-depth review. Assure that participants have received enough background material in advance to discuss the subjects at hand. Your staff can assist with ad hoc committee preparations.

Staff will have taken care of all meeting arrangements (in consultation with you). When planning for meetings, TMA staff considers appropriate room size, adequate seating and table space, audiovisual needs, lighting, air and ventilation, food, beverage, and special dietary needs. Arrangements are made with the intent to encourage group participation and so that members are comfortable in the meeting room.

3. To lead the meeting, assuring agenda items are addressed and necessary action is accomplished.

Despite one's personal style, a chair must maintain control of the meeting. Start on time, announce planned time of adjournment, state purposes of the meeting, and ask members to quickly review legal documents and the charges and objectives of your component (included in agenda material at every meeting). TMA meetings are governed by Sturgis's *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure*, when presiding a meeting follow these rules with poise and confidence. Speakers who dominate discussions and side conversations among the group distract from business so as chair, be aware of those who may dominate discussion or interrupt, unless it is necessary they provide important information to the group.

Increase your ability as a listener—this assures others that you are guiding discussion toward a resolution. Meetings often include a broad range of personalities. Among them may be the:

- Devil’s advocate
- Passive-aggressive personality who waits until after the meeting to present his/her honest views
- Know-it-all who derides others or who tries to undermine authority or other contributors
- Complainer
- Yes-person who agrees with whomever he or she thinks carries weight in the meeting
- Constant talker or meeting de-railer
- Heckler
- Pals who whisper to each other or write notes and share meaningful glances
- Summarizer
- Show-and-tell participant who tries to impress everyone with his special or superior knowledge

Some committees may have members who tend to come from the same background and have similar views while others may have members with varied backgrounds and views. In the first case, there may be a danger that all facets of an issue will not be brought out. In the second case, consensus may be difficult to achieve. As chair, you may need to intervene in order to re-direct discussion, bring out facts that may be left out, and clearly state points of agreement and disagreement. Also in the latter case, it may be appropriate to appoint an ad hoc committee to wrestle with the complexities of the issues.

Chairs should be familiar with TMA governance structure, policies, and procedures. Further, chairs must act on the decisions of the group, regardless of whether you agree with those decisions. A chair’s responsibility is to assure the group is fulfilling its objectives as stated in the Bylaws and as directed by the House of Delegates, and that the group meets the essentials of key TMA objectives and strategies.

At the beginning of every meeting, chairs must review required legal documents and review the previous meetings minutes for approval. Further, reviewing action items of the House of Delegates (Audit Trail) relating to your committee will help ensure understanding of the business at hand and that objectives and appropriate implementation is carried out in a timely manner.

Sunset Review

You may be appointed to chair a committee undergoing the sunset review process. Sunset review occurs every three years. Staff will notify members when this time comes so that committees can discuss and give reasons why its work should continue. The committee discussion and reasons to remain active are reported to the group’s parent council. The council then conducts the committee’s sunset review process and reports to the TMA Board of Trustees to sunset or not.) The House of Delegates then acts on the recommendations of the board.

II. Qualities of a Successful Committee Chair

- Ability to communicate with candor
- Record of active participation and interest in the association
- Willingness to listen
- Be able to encourage free expression of ideas, opinions, and recommendations
- Ability to command attention and inspire others
- Ability to control a meeting without domination
- Have a working understanding of parliamentary procedure
- Show initiative, motivation, and be a self-starter
- Maintain prestige and respect within the medical industry and profession
- Know and understand the committee charges
- Ability to think and act in terms of the association's goals and objectives
- Ability to create the right atmosphere for productive committee work
- Have the time and resources necessary to carry out chair responsibilities
- Have a clear understanding of the position and role of committee members and staff

III. Guidelines for Conducting Effective Meetings

- Be prepared and start on time.
- Make sure everyone is introduced and acquainted.
- Start the meeting with a statement of objectives.
- Review the facts of an issue and lay the groundwork before taking action.
- Encourage participation and keep the meeting moving and on track.
- Summarize major points and keep members focused on the subject.
- Note factors that may affect relations between committee members.
- Talk to the group as a whole; avoid prolonged speech to an individual.
- Listen carefully when someone is speaking and summarize your understanding of their statements.
- Call a brief recess if lack of interest or stalemate develops, then reconvene with focus.
- Solicit opinions and experiences, especially when disagreement occurs.
- Engage members by directing questions to them or assigning them agenda items to discuss.
- Adjourn on time.

IV. How to have a Productive Committee

Use the following suggestions to encourage productive, active meetings.

1. Maintain a file of current events, relevant information, key articles, and possible agenda items as related to the committee's charges; discuss with your staff to determine if appropriate for meeting material.
2. Be knowledgeable of agenda items and what action is needed.
3. If the committee feels strongly about a particular issue or position, suggest the following options and how each can be accomplished:
 - Develop TMA policy statement(s)
 - Write a white paper, one-pager, or article (i.e. for *Texas Medicine* or *Action*)
 - Write a letter stating the committees position
 - Implement a special project or program for TMA physicians (i.e. a collaboration or endorsement)
4. If the committee wants to educate physicians about a particular issue, suggest the following options and necessary steps to accomplishment:
 - Write a commentary, insert, or article for *Texas Medicine* (all TMA members receive)
 - Write a commentary, insert, or article for TMA's *Action* (all TMA members receive)
 - Write a commentary, insert, article, or ad slick to include in TMA's *News of Interest* (all county medical societies receive)
 - Sponsor a CME program at TexMed (approval by Council on Annual Session)
 - Submit a handbook report to the House of Delegates
5. Provide Continuing Medical Education (CME) credit or ethics credit at committee meetings.
 - Ask your staff to coordinate.
6. Keep an ongoing "to-do" list to help you stay on track, accomplish action items, and follow through on requests and committee business.
7. Know that the following resources are available:
 - Sturgis's *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure* (your staff has access to this)
 - The Knowledge Center (research assistance) ext. 3862
 - TMA's Division of Communication staff (assistance with anything related to communications)
 - House of Delegates staff (assistance with report and resolution information)

Familiarizing yourself with TMA resources, procedures, and communication avenues will make you a more informed and effective chair.

V. Frequently Asked Questions

1. What if I have an emergency at the last minute and cannot attend the meeting?

No Problem! Staff is always available to assist you in. Contact your staff person as soon as possible, at which point plans can be made.

2. What if a quorum is not present?

Go ahead and conduct the meeting following the agenda. Should the members present wish to propose action, a conference call and official vote can be conducted after the meeting. If reaching a quorum is a continuing problem, you and your staff may wish to bring this to the attention of the council to which your committee reports.

3. What if the committee wants to make a recommendation to the house, but is not sure how to go about it?

The committee should discuss and decide on the goal of the recommendation at your meeting. Following the meeting, your staff will research how best to accomplish it. At the next meeting of the committee, members will need to take action on the idea regarding whether or not it will submit a handbook report and make a recommendation to the house.

4. What if the committee wants to develop an educational video or educational brochure?

The House of Delegates must approve all video and brochure productions and will refer action to the Board of Trustees for funding. The committee will need to provide a handbook report including all relevant information and recommendation(s) with a fiscal note indicating estimated costs. Your staff will research details and draft the report for committee approval.

5. What if the committee wants to publish a white paper, one-pager, or an article in *Texas Medicine*?

All *Texas Medicine* article ideas must be submitted to the *Texas Medicine* Editorial Committee for approval. White papers, one-pagers, and short educational articles also must be approved by the *Texas Medicine* Editorial Board. Your staff will coordinate if such a request arises and will facilitate activities with *Texas Medicine* staff for approval.