

Contributing to a Committee

A Member's Guide To The Group Process

The role a committee member plays is an important one. The success of the committee depends on the contributions made by each of its members.

Consider the following suggestions as you approach your role in committee participation:

- Study the agenda carefully before you come to the committee meeting. Be sure to ask for clarification of any items you believe are unclear.
- Stick to the agenda during the meeting. Bring up new business only at the appropriate time.
- Determine the exact purpose of the meeting and decide in advance how and what you will contribute to it.
- Keep your replies short and to the point.
- Speak in a voice everyone can hear. Wait until you have the attention of all committee members before you begin your remarks. The presiding officer should ensure that the desirable atmosphere exists.
- Speak to the entire group.
- Repeat remarks if you think they weren't heard.
- If your remarks are lengthy or involved, sum them up at the end of your discussion.
- Don't hesitate to comment, criticize constructively, or disagree. Know your subject and ask for support from members who believe as you do.
- If you disagree with the speaker, make your comments at the proper time.
- If you have a comment, ask for the floor rather than joining in aimless group discussion. If what you have to say is a genuine contribution and really does make a difference, don't let it get lost in confused conversation.
- There may be dissenters on some subjects. Ask them to summarize their convictions in a direct statement. This permits a more thorough examination of an idea that could be highly constructive when completely understood.
- Hurriedly passed motions usually don't receive the consideration they deserve.

It's better to table them until the next meeting, when they can be discussed in detail, than to pass motions you might regret later.