



TIPS TO FOSTER PARTICIPATION AT MEETINGS*

- 1. SMILE!** No matter how serious the purpose of the meeting, remember the meeting itself is a positive event. Neighbors are coming together to solve problems.
- 2. Make everyone feel welcome.** Personally greet as many people as possible.
- 3. Encourage everyone to fill out and wear nametags.**
- 4. Keep the meeting moving.** As soon as you can wrap up one Agenda item, move immediately to the next.
- 5. Encourage participants to speak their minds freely, but stay on schedule.** Be polite, but firm. (for example: “Basically, then, what you are saying is...” Or “So, you think we should...”)
- 6. When a speaker begins getting off the subject, gently but firmly return their focus.** (for example: “That’s a subject we could talk about another time, but right now we need to resolve (this issue) first.” Then call on someone else.)
- 7. Treat everyone with respect.** Don’t belittle or criticize any participant.
- 8. Accept all ideas equally, even those with which you disagree.** Use the discussion period to voice your preferences, but be willing to accept the majority opinion gracefully, even if you do not agree with it.
- 9. Don’t let disagreements between participants become personal arguments.** Try to stop arguments before they get started. (for example, “Okay, that’s good. We have two completely opposite ideas on this subject. Let’s hear some other ideas now.” Or, “Would someone else like to comment on these ideas?”)
- 10. Never complain about members.** Praise the people who came to the meeting instead of complaining about those who didn’t. Praise those who volunteer to help. Never complain about those who don’t.
- 11. Keep the meeting upbeat.** Generate enthusiasm and hope. People with positive attitudes can accomplish almost anything.

* This section is from TAKING ACTION, the City of College Station Neighborhood Services by Barbara Moore, Neighborhood Services Coordinator.