How to Write
Clear Language

Guidelines for writing information
that all audiences will find easy
to read and understand

Ohio
Developmental
Disabilities Council

The Leadership Development Committee and the Clear Language Subcommittee of the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council reviewed information from this list of organizations and many other resources to develop this booklet.

A Global Report by Self-Advocacy for Inclusion, Empower Us, http:www.selfadvocacyportal.com

Accessibility Toolkit for Funders Who Support Self-Advocacy Organizations by AUCD, UCEDD Resource Center, and AIDD

Federal Government Plain Language Guidelines, http://www.plainlanguage.gov

Plain Language, National Institutes of Health, htpps://www.nih.gov/clearcommunication/plainlanguage/index.htm

Plain Language is for Everyone, Neilson Norman Group, https://www.nngroup.cpm/article

Program for Readability in Science & Medicine by Institute of Transitional Health Sciences, http://prism.grouphealthresearch.org/start.htm

Typography: Readability and Legibility, Parts 1 and 2, https://www.sitepoint.com/typography-and-legibility-part-1

Writing Pure and Simple: Plain Language Communication in the Field of Disability by Northeast ADA Center, Cornell University

How to Write Clear Language

Table of Contents

The Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council is presenting this booklet as a first effort in encouraging groups and organizations—with and without members with disabilities—to create all their documents in clear language. Information should be readable and understandable by all audiences so that all can participate.

In Memory of Sue Willis

This booklet would not be possible without the guidance and expertise of Sue Willis, a former Council member and an accomplished advocate. Sue wrote this booklet and was in the process of completing it, but sadly, she passed away in May 2020. She was passionate about educating the public and the media about the importance of writing in clear language and the use of person first language. The Ohio DD Council presents this booklet in her memory and will continue her legacy to inform people about the importance of clear communication to benefit all people of all abilities.

1. About Clear Language

What is Clear Language?

Council is using the term Clear Language to describe how it is making its materials easy to read and understand. Council asks all its audiences, including members, staff, grantees, advocates, media and others to use these recommendations for printed documents, PowerPoint presentations, websites and social media.

Other organizations, including the federal government, are starting to use clear language but they call it by different names. Whether it's Easy Read, Plain Language, or other names, the purpose is to make information easier to read and understand.

Some organization's guidelines create two sets of information: one for printed materials and one for electronic materials. Other guidelines recommend materials in different reading levels: one for beginning readers and one for skilled readers. Instead of making two sets of the same information, Council recommends making only one set that is readable by everyone.

Clear Language:

- **Makes sure all readers understand information quickly and correctly.**

- **Is not over simplified and does not talk down to readers, and**

- **Readers concentrate on what a message says, instead of trying to understand complicated words and writing.**

Layout: Designing in Clear Language

Clear Language is made up of two parts. One is what the page looks like, called layout. The second is the words, often called the body copy. To write clear language, use the guidelines in this booklet for both parts.

- **Layout is all the items on a page.**
- **Words give the message.**

This section of the guidelines describes layout. Layout includes white space and words, as well as lines, boxes, colors, symbols, logos, illustrations and photographs.

Keep white space

While we don't think of white space or blank space as being important to reading, it is valuable. It gives your eyes a break. It makes pages look easy to read. For this reason, never crowd a page or think you must fill the page. Leave white space for margins, as well as between paragraphs and sections of a document.

Add graphics

Graphics are any items on a page that are not letters or numbers. Most often graphics are photographs, illustrations, cartoons, lines, symbols, boxes, charts and diagrams.

Graphics can make pages more interesting and easier to understand. Use them to break up pages that are full of words, but do not use too many on one page. Although there is no rule about how many graphics to use on a page, never let them overpower your words. As a guide, simply look at the page to see if it is interesting and easy on your eyes. You do not have to place graphics on every page.

Be consistent by using the same style and size of graphics to make pages look like they belong to the same document. For example, the graphics, or symbols, on this page look like they belong together. But if we put a large cartoon on this page, it would look out of place.

Keep graphics large enough that readers can see what the images are, but not so big that they take over the page. If you use photos of people, keep the size of the faces large enough that readers can see who the people are.

Use graphics that you think your readers understand. If you are not sure, add descriptions.

Good Size   Too Small

Accessible   Restroom

Try to put your graphics in the same area of each page, so that eyes are not jumping around. Avoid anything that interrupts the way people read.

Readers often must learn what symbols in a document mean. For example, Council is using a set of symbols to use on their agendas and minutes to let people know what's coming up. Some of these include:

A. A gavel means "calling a meeting to order."
B. A microphone means "people should use a microphone when speaking."
C. A megaphone means "announcements."
D. Person with a microphone means "someone giving a presentation."

A   B

C   D
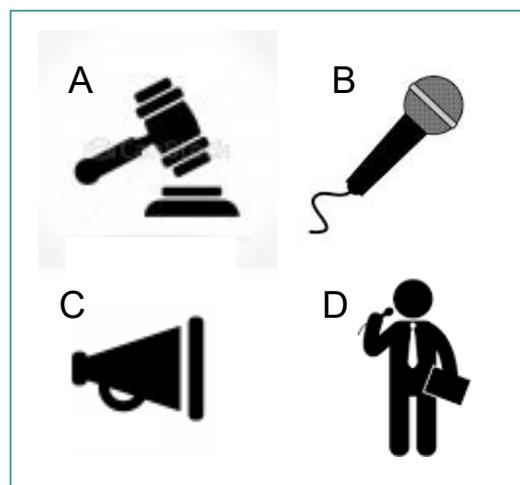
Logos are designs that represent a company, an organization or a product. As an example, almost everyone is familiar with the "golden arches." Without including words, we know it means McDonald's.

Include logos when they are a part of your information. Always use them exactly as they were designed and never stretch or condense logos, as shown in the examples below. Also never stretch or condense photographs.

Stretched logo

Condensed logo

At right is the correct use of Council's logo. The specified color is green, PMS 321. Printing companies and others use the PMS system for printing the specific colors the client requests. In other words, if you give them a PMS number, they will know exactly what color you want.

While most logos are used in a specific color, you also may use them as a black logo on a white background, called a positive image. Or you may use them as the reverse, a white logo on a black background.

Select type

The item that might be the most important to clear language is type— the letters and numbers on a page. Choosing the best type for clear language is difficult because there are so many different parts to type. These include the type font, serif, size, weight, and style. Before selecting your type become familiar with each different part because each is very important to creating clear language.

In addition to this booklet, many resources such as the ones listed inside the front cover can help you decide what type is best for reading. However, there is not one agreed-upon answer and new fonts always are being designed.

Type fonts

Type fonts also are called type faces. A type font is a set of letters and numbers that have the same look to them. This is why they often are called families of type. Use only one font in a document because using different fonts will slow down readers. Here are the names of some common fonts that are found on most computers.

Arial   Georgia   Courier   Palatino

Serif and san serif type

Serif fonts have small lines, or feet, at the ends of the letters and each letter usually has thick and thin lines. San serif fonts have no feet and the parts of each letter have the same thickness.

Serif: Times New Roman   San serif: Helvetica

Most research says there is little difference in whether serif or san serif fonts are the most readable. However, many agree that san serif is the best for electronic formats. Therefore, many writers recommend san serif type so that documents can be read both on a monitor and on a printed page.

Type sizes

Type sizes are measured in points and there are 72 points in one inch. Point size is abbreviated with an apostrophe. Therefore, 24' means 24 point.

As shown below, different type fonts that are the same size often look like they are a different size. Letters in 24-point Arial look larger than those in the same size Garamond. For best readability, look carefully when you select your size and style so that your letters look large.

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:1em; text-align:center;">

This is Garamond type in 24'.

This is Arial type in 24'.

</div>

Most resources list 14' to 18' sizes as most readable in printed documents. People using computers can adjust the size of type to one that meets their needs. However, 14' to 18' is a size that is easy to read for most people. The paragraphs in this book, called body copy, are 14'.

Use larger type sizes for headings and subheads. Be consistent when selecting your type sizes. In one document, always use one size for headings, and one size for paragraphs. Also, do not use more than three sizes of type on any one page.

Type weights

Type usually comes in light, medium and bold weights. Medium, also called regular, is generally used because light type may fade, and bold type becomes hard on the eyes. Use bold occasionally for emphasis and for headlines or subheads.

Type styles

Type fonts come in many styles, like the examples shown here. They may look like fun, but they are very hard to read. Use them occasionally for a design or a graphic. Never use styles of type like these for body copy because they slow down your readers.

Italic

O u t l i n e

Decorative

Script

Spacing and line length

Spaces between letters and words are both important to ready clearly. Today's computers automatically adjust these spaces to make type readable. When typing on a computer keyboard, remember not to double space after a period because the computer will insert the correct amount of space.

For best reading keep lines of type no longer than six inches. Avoid longer lines because they can cause readers to get lost and to go back and read the same line twice. Or readers may jump down and skip a line because they can't find the line they were reading.

Always place lines of type horizontally on the page. Never place type vertically, diagonally or in curves unless you are using it as a design.

Uppercase and lowercase type
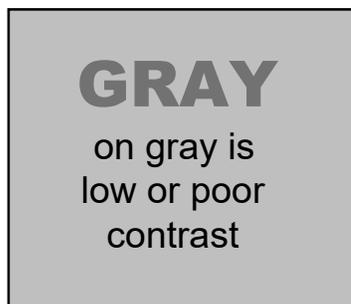
Uppercase type uses all capital letters. Lowercase type uses letters that are easier to read than uppercase because without thinking about it, we read by shape. For example, when you read the word below, you don't see each letter. Instead, your brain quickly reads the shape of the word. In all capital letters, the shape is simply a rectangle, and will slow down a reader

instantly   INSTANTLY

Colors of type

The most important thing to remember about choosing a color of type is to keep a high contrast between the type and the background. The highest contrast is black type on white background. Black type on a gray background become a lower contrast. Type can be any color if it contrasts with the background. The reverse, white or a light color, on a dark background should not be used because it becomes very tiring on your eyes.

BLACK
on white is
highest contrasts

GRAY
on gray is
low or poor
contrast

WHITE
on black is high
contrast but
becomes tiring

Readers with low vision who are using a computer can change the background on their monitor to a color that is easier for them to read. However, people who are reading printed documents cannot usually change the color of the paper. This paragraph has low contrast and takes longer to read.

This paragraph is easier to read than the one above because it has a higher contrast between the type and the background. For best reading, always use a light background and dark type as in this example.

If you are creating documents that are to be printed, avoid glossy paper. It creates glare under different kinds of lighting and glare interferes with easy reading.

Follow layout guidelines

In addition to the guidelines previously described about how-to layout pages to create clear language, here are some additional pointers.

- The paragraphs in a document are called the body copy or text. Body copy gives the message and does not include the headings, subheads or graphics.

- Use headlines and subheads that are larger and bolder than the type in paragraphs. Put a verb in each heading to make it more interesting and make them no longer than one line. Use subheads to guide your readers to what's coming.

- Use flush left type for body copy. This means starting each line of type at the left margin. It makes the same starting point for our eyes each time we come back to read the next line. If copy is not flush left, our eyes continually must find a new starting point. This breaks up our reading and slows us down. Flush left copy also works better for screen readers.

Flush left type
The type in this booklet is set flush left, making the margin on the left side always the same. Because we read from left to right, our eyes always will have the same starting point.

- Use centered type only for headings and do not make them longer than one line. And do not use justified type for body copy.

Centered type
Using lines of type that are centered, as in
this paragraph makes our eyes have a different starting point
every time we read the next line.
Centering type interrupts our reading, slows
us down, and is confusing.

Justified type
Justified type is both flush left and flush right as in this example. To make words come out evenly, the lines of type add extra spaces between some letters and words. Changing spacing interrupts reading.

- To emphasize a word or phrase, use bold or a larger size. Do not use underlining, all caps or italics.

- When possible, use lists to break up long paragraphs. Create bulleted lists with basic round or square bullets — no hearts, flowers, decorative diamonds or other items as bullets.

- Many users find reading charts and tables easier to read than long or complicated paragraphs. However, screen readers may not read charts or tables correctly, so always check to see if the format you are using reads accurately.

- Don't hyphenate words at the end of lines. Try changing your words so that you don't have this problem. Breaking up words with hyphens will slow down readers. Set your computer to eliminate hyphens and it will automatically drop the beginning of a word to the next line, so there is no hyphen.

- Avoid splitting a person's name, so that a first name is at the end of a line and the last name is on the following line. Simply bring down the first name.

- If a paragraph has only one line left to carry over to the next page, bring over at least two lines.

Words: Writing in Clear Language

Clear Language is made up of two parts: layout and words. To be readable and understandable, you must use guidelines for both.

- **Layout is all the items on a page.**
- **Words give the message.**

The words that give your information are called the body copy or text of a document.

Understand words, text and body copy

Clear language includes complete sentences and correct words. It is not unprofessional or a way of talking down to people. Instead, it is a way of making information easy to read for all audiences. Clear writing tells the readers exactly what they need to know without using extra words and long words.

Write clear language in a conversational style, as if you are talking with someone. Use pronouns in your sentences, such as "I, we and you." Write your ideas in short, complete sentences and paragraphs.

Make writing fat free

Most people write using too many words and too many complicated words. Be brief and get to the point. Organize your copy by first telling what your document will be about and follow up with your description. The shorter the words or phrases, the faster your readers will understand. Here are a few examples:

Use	Instead of
use	utilize
soon	in the near future
whether	whether or not
about	with regard to

Choose words carefully

The following points, used with layout guidelines, will help you create clear language.

- Use language your audiences understand. Choose common, everyday words. If you must use a complicated word or an acronym, define it and give an example.

- Always use person-first language. Emphasize the person first, not the disability. For example, say "My neighbor, who is blind, won employee of the month at ABC Company" instead of saying, "My blind neighbor won employee of the month at ABC Company." Talk about the person first and include the disability only if it is necessary to the article.

  Council has a brochure called "Person-First Language" that describes how to use person-first language. Visit the Ohio DD Council website at ddc.ohio.gov to download this publication.

- Use active voice. The subject of your sentence should act, instead of being acted upon. For example, say "We will ask you questions." instead of "You will be asked questions."

- Putting the subject first in your sentence usually creates active voice. If you're wondering if your sentence is in active voice, ask yourself "who" is doing the activity. If you can answer "who," then it probably is active voice.

- Another way to find active voice is to eliminate the helper verb "to be." Do not use these helper words with another verb: is, are, was, were, be, being, been.

- Write short sentences and keep them to the point. Sentences should average 15 words or less.

- Limit paragraphs to one main idea and remove details that are not needed. A paragraph can be as small as one or two sentences.

- Use clear, descriptive headings and subheads. If you center your headings, be consistent and center every heading in your document.

- If you are starting a sentence with a number, spell it out, such as: "Fifteen people attended" not "15 people attended."

- Do not use roman numerals because most people find them confusing. Use regular numbers, such as 12 instead of XII.

- Use reader-friendly layouts along with clear writing so your documents look interesting and will be easy to read.

Proof your document

One of the best ways to find errors and to see if your message is easy to understand is to read your complete document aloud. And ask others to read your document. Someone who is notfamiliar with your information is more likely to find things that are not clear.

If you are creating your document on a computer, many people think it is helpful to print a copy for proofing, instead of always reading from a screen.

Another tip for checking your language is to put away your document and review after a few days.

Overall, do not think your clear language is too simple. If it is easy, it will be more useful for beginning readers and will be that much quicker for all readers. You are not talking down to readers. You are making sure everyone understands your message.

2. Council's Guidelines

Council is adopting the following guidelines for layout and for writing all the information they create.

Layout Guidelines

Page size	8.5 x 11 inches, vertical.
Paper direction	If some pages need to read horizontally because of large charts or graphics, be consistent by making all pages in the document horizontal. Do not make readers flip the pages back and forth.
Type line length	Keep line length to six inches or less. If using large paper, you can use columns of type instead of long lines.
Type font	Arial, regular.
Body copy	14-point, regular, lower case. Flush left. To emphasize a word or phrase, use bold. Do not use all caps, underlining or italics.
Headings	16-24 point, bold. Flush left. Headings may be centered.
Subheads	14-18 point, bold. Flush left. No longer than one line of type. Helpful for guiding users through parts of a document.

Margins	Top and bottom, one inch. Headers, footers, and page numbers can print inside the margins. Left margin: 1.5 inches. Right margin: .75 inches Column for symbols at left, .75 inches.
Color	Keep strong contrast between type and background (paper). Use committee colors of paper when needed. Avoid glossy paper. Do not use reverse type (white type on black or a dark color) for the body copy of a document.
Graphics	Use photographs, illustrations, lines, boxes, charts, symbols, and diagrams to break up copy and add interest. Never let graphics overpower a page.
	Use symbols to guide people through a document and let them know what topics will be covered; especially helpful for beginning readers.
White Space	Use white space for margins, between paragraphs and sections, and around graphics. Do not crowd items on a page.

Additional points

- Avoid anything that slows down or interrupts readers. Always use consistent layouts for each document.
- To keep the same starting points for eyes, use flush left margins.
- Eliminate items that will make the pages look busy, heavy or complicated.
- When possible, break up long paragraphs with charts or bulleted lists.
- Eliminate hyphenated words at ends of lines of type. If you need to carry over copy at the bottom of a page, bring over at least two lines.

Writing Guidelines

- Keep all words and body copy easy to read and understand.

- Write with accurate, simple words. Choose words you think your audiences understand. Eliminate acronyms and jargon unless you define them. Eliminate extra words.

- Use person first language

- Write in conversational style, as if you are talking with a person. Use pronouns.

- Write in active voice.

- Use complete, short sentences and paragraphs. Keep paragraphs to one main idea.

- Create clear headings and subheads to guide your readers through a document. Arrange your paragraphs in a logical order.

- Don't use long words when a shorter word will do.

- Don't write more than you need.

Symbols

Symbols are helpful for all users. They are a quick way of finding parts of a meeting or a document. Without reading the copy, users can see what's going on.

Because symbols can have more than one meaning, it's important to explain what your symbols mean and always use them to mean the same thing. For example, a gavel could mean a courtroom, or a judge, or making rules. However, DD Council always uses a gavel to mean "opening or closing a meeting."

Place your symbols in the same place on your pages to keep readers eyes from jumping around. Council places symbols on the left side and keeps each symbol approximately the same size.

Council is adopting the following symbols to use on its documents.

Agenda Symbols

Gavel

Shows that the chair or vice-chair is running a meeting. For example, use a gavel to call the meeting to order or to adjourn.

Microphone

Members will use a microphone to introduce themselves or when speaking to a group so everyone can hear.

Group at table

Counting to see if there is a quorum—enough members present to hold a meeting.

Writing notes
Chair asks to approve minutes of a meeting

Guest speaker or presenter
Shows when the meeting will have a presentation.

Check list
Shows the agenda—the parts of a meeting.

Check mark
Shows members are taking a vote during a meeting.

Megaphone
Asking for people to give announcements.

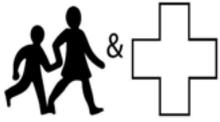## Raised hand
Person asks to speak or to vote.

Cup
Shows it's time for a break.

Place setting
Shows it's time for a meal.

Committee Symbols

Children & Health Committee

Community Living Committee

Employment Committee

Executive Committee

Leadership Committee

Outreach Committee

Public Policy Committee

Color Coding

Each committee of Council uses a color to identify their materials. Committees will print or copy all their documents on one of the colors of paper listed below. Use black ink and a very light color of paper to keep a high contrast.

Using specific colors to represent committees is called color coding. Color coding for DD Council makes it easy to see what committee information is from.

Paper color	Committee
White	General Business
Canary	Executive
Pink	Children's and Health
Golden rod	Community Living
Lilac	Employment
Green	Leadership
Cream	Outreach
Blue	Public Policy

Words and Terms

Council often uses words and terms that people are not familiar with. In clear language they try to replace unknown words with easy words.

The words and terms in the box below are used in many Council documents, but they are often unknown or difficult to understand. Therefore, Council will be putting together definitions and alternatives for words like these and will post them on their website.

innovative	visions	systems change
federal funding	initiatives	nonprofit
capacity building	implicit bias	collaboration
grant cycle	solicit	state agency

When writing clear language, always use a word that is understood. If you can't find one, then describe the word or term. And in general, stay away from long words.

Acronyms
Council and other organizations use many acronyms. Acronyms are abbreviations of titles and programs, such as SS means Social Security and DODD means the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities.

Council has a booklet called Alphabet Soup that defines many acronyms. You may get a copy by calling: 614-466-5205 or going to Council's website at http://ddc.ohio.gov.

Templates

A template is a pattern or blueprint that shows how to put things on a page. Templates create consistency—doing things in the same way. And consistency is one of the keys to developing clear language.

While some people think following templates makes items boring, Council is most concerned about making materials in clear language. As people get used to reading documents designed with these templates, their pages will become easier and quicker to read and understand.

As an example:
Page 23 is the template for laying out a Council Agenda.

Pages 24-25 show what an agenda looks like when using the template.

Page 26 is the template for Council Minutes. Load each template in your computer, so that when you write a document it follows the same layout.

Using 14' for body copy in your documents will add more pages than using smaller type but will make the pages more readable for everyone.

Note: On **How to Run a Meeting**, Page 28, the type size is 20'. It is larger than regular body copy because people need to quickly look at the page to see what comes next. Clear language accepts using larger type whenever it is helpful.

75"
column
for
symbols

Left
margin
.5"

Heading
18'-24'
bold
flush left

Sub
heads
14'-16'
bold
flush left

Body
copy
14'
flush left

Bottom
margin
1"

Place
footers
and
page
numbers
in the
margin.

Name of group or meeting
Date
Place
Time

AGENDA

1. Call meeting to order.

2. Ask for introductions.

3. Check for quorum.

4. Approve minutes.

5. List activities and topics, such as:
   Speakers
   Old business
   New business
   Announcements

6. Ask for motion to adjourn

Contact:

Right
margin
1"

Template
Sample

Employment Committee
May 3, 2018
Doubletree Hotel, Newark OH
2:30-4:00 pm

AGENDA

1. Call the meeting to order.

2. Ask for introductions.

3. Count members for a quorum.

4. Ask to approve minutes

5. Follow agenda items (next page).

Introduce speakers
- John Smith and Karen Adams,
Ohio Department of Health

Old Business
- 2019 State Plan Language Updates
- Review quarterly reports

New Business
- Discuss ideas for 2019 grants

6. Announcements

7. Ask for motion to adjourn.

Next meeting: July 12, 2018

Staff person: Leslie Connelly, leslie.connelly@dodd.ohio.gov

Logo may extend into margin.

75" column for symbols

Left margin 5"

Heading 18'-24' bold flush left

Sub head 14'-16' bold flush left

Body copy 14' flush left

Bottom margin 1"

Place footers and page numbers in margin

Name of group or meeting
Date
Place
Time

MINUTES

Members present
X   Name
X   Name
     X

Name
Name
X   Name
Name

Staff present
X   Name

Guests present
X   Name
X   Name
X   Name

Include all members' names on page and place an X by names of those in attendance.

Symbols are not usually needed on MINUTES because the readers are not participating in an activity. They simply are hearing what happened at a meeting.

When MINUTES continue to other pages, repeat the name of the meeting in 14' bold at the top of each page and include the page number See example on Page 26.

Write activity, discussion and motions for each section.

1. Call to order and introductions
2. Approval of minutes
3. Meeting highlights
4. Old business
5. New business
6. Adjourn
7. Date of next meeting

3. Examples

This section provides examples of documents created for Council members using clear language.

The first example, How to Run a Meeting, is a two-page tip sheet, printed front to back. It is laminated and given to each chair and vice-chair to use during meetings. Other organizations are encouraged to use this tip sheet to help members follow along with all the steps in a meeting. Words and symbols guide people through the steps in Council's meetings. The first page is an easy to follow list. The back page gives a little more information about parts of meetings.

The second example, More About Meeting, gives more information about parts of Council's meetings. This is used by Council members to learn more about actions in a meeting, like quorums, motions and voting.

As Council develops more documents in ClearLanguage, they will be shared with members and posted on the Council's website at ddc.ohio.gov for everyone to use.

How to Run a Meeting

Chair will:

1. Call the meeting to order.

2. Ask for introductions.

3. Count members in attendance for a quorum.

4. Ask to approve the minutes.

5. Follow the agenda items:
   - Speakers
   - Old business
   - New business
   - Announcements

6. Ask for a motion to adjourn.

What is a quorum?

A quorum is the number of people that must be present in order to do business. If you do not have a quorum, you cannot hold a meeting.

How do members make a motion?

1. Ask for a motion and a second.

   If no one makes a motion or a second, the item dies. Nothing happens to the motion.

2. Ask for brief discussion of the motion.

   Make changes to the motion if the person who made the motion agrees to the changes.

3. Read the complete motion aloud.

4. Ask for a vote on the motion:
   - People in favor (yes)
   - People against (no)
   - People who do not want to vote (abstain)

How do members vote?

1. Members may vote yes, no, or to abstain.

2. Members may vote in one of these ways:
   - Voice or show of hands
   - Roll call (staff reads names and members vote by voice)
   - Consensus (everyone agrees)
   - Ballot (vote on slip of paper)

3. Count all the votes and announce if motion passed or failed.

More About Meetings

What is a quorum?

A quorum is the number of DD Council members who must be present in order to do business. The quorum for each committee and other meetings is one person more than half the members present. For example, if ten members are present, the quorum is six. Other organizations count their quorums in different ways.

If your group does not have a quorum, you cannot make decisions or do any business.

What are motions?

A motion is a formal action or statement that a member brings to a group for them to consider whether or not to approve.

- After members have talked about an idea, item, or action, they will need to decide what to do about it.

- The chair asks, "Does anyone want to make a motion about what to do with this item?" If someone answers "yes," the chair asks the person to clearly say what the motion will be.

- Then the chair asks if there is another member who agrees to the motion that was just made. If there is, that person seconds the motion. If no one agrees to the motion, it dies. Without a second, nothing happens.

- After a motion is made and seconded, the chair gives members a short amount of time to talk about it. They can make changes to the motion if the person who made the motion agrees to the changes.

- After discussion, the chair asks the secretary to read the motion including any changes that were made. The chair then asks the members to vote.

How do members vote?

Before voting, the Chair makes sure the group has a quorum. If the group does not have a quorum, it cannot vote on the motion.

Members can vote with a yes, a no, or to abstain. Abstain means that a person does not want to vote. Anyone can abstain without giving a reason.

Staff records each motion in the minutes and includes whether it passed or failed.

1. Vote by voice or raising hands
The chair asks members to vote by saying yes, no, or to abstain. Or the chair asks members to raise their hands to vote yes, no, or to abstain. The votes are counted, and the chair announces whether the motion passed or failed

2. Vote by roll call
The secretary will read each member's name and members will say yes, no, or abstain when their name is called. After the votes are counted, the Chair will announce whether the motion passed or failed.

3. Vote by consensus
If it looks like everyone will vote the same way, the votes do not need to be counted. The chair simply says, "If there are no objections, the motion passes or fails." But if anyone has an objection, the group must vote.

4. Vote by ballot
If members want the vote to be secret. The chair asks members to clearly write their votes on a piece of paper and give them to the secretary to count. The chair announces whether the motion passed or failed.

More about how to run a meeting

The committee chairs will run the meetings. The vice-chairs will run the meetings if the chair is absent.

Chair will:

1. Call the meeting to order on time.

2. Ask for introductions.
- Ask everyone to use a microphone.
- Ask all people in the room to give their name, where they are from, and if they are a Council member.

3. Count members in attendance to make sure the meeting has a quorum. You cannot conduct business without a quorum.

4. Ask to approve the minutes.
- Ask for a motion and a second to approve the minutes.
- Ask if there are any changes or additions to the minutes.
- If there are changes, ask the person who made the motion to approve the changes. If not, the motion must be voted on as it was first made.
- Ask for a vote to approve the minutes.
- Staff will record all motions, and who made and seconded them, in the minutes.

5. Follow the agenda
- Announce each agenda item in order and complete the business for each item before going to the next.
- Call on people who raise their hands or ask to speak. People should always speak one at a time and use the microphones.
- Give extra time to people who have difficulty speaking or who are using communication devices. Be respectful of people using sign language interpreters and speak to the person, not the interpreter.
- Give everyone a chance to speak about an item before giving more time to people who've already talked.

6. Guest speakers

- If you have time, greet your guest speakers before the meeting begins. Let them know how much time they will have.
- Introduce the guest speakers, tell where they are from, and what organization they represent.
- If the speakers didn't ask for questions, you can ask the members if they have any questions.
- Thank the presenters for coming.

7. Old business

- Discuss things the group has talked about in previous meetings. Bring a close to any items you think the group has talked about long enough.

8. New business

- Introduce new information that belongs in this committee.
- Announce the date and time of the next meeting, and any assignments that have been made.

9. Announcements

- Give members a chance to tell about things that may be interesting to the group but are not part of this meeting's business.

10. Ask for motion to adjourn

- Ask for a motion and a second to end the meeting. You do not have to take a vote. Simply say, "Meeting is adjourned."

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Council is interested in finding out who may be using these guidelines and if you have questions, changes or additions. Please send any thoughts or comments to Leslie Connelly at leslie.connelly@dodd.ohio.gov.

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