

# 8 minute-taking mistakes to watch for

No minute-taking training is complete without some “Gotcha!” warnings. Do you ever make the mistake of:

- 1. Not setting standards in advance.** What goes in, what gets left out? How long should summaries of discussions be? How will voting be done?
- 2. Being unfamiliar with the terms and concepts that will be discussed.** The better your comprehension of the subject matter, the less you’ll have to ask for clarifications.
- 3. Failing to see the big picture.** “If I were looking at these minutes six months from now, what would I really want to know?” is the question you should be asking yourself.
- 4. Assuming everyone will get the gist.** There shouldn’t be too much room for interpretation of what someone meant in a set of minutes. Write them as if no one knows the meeting participants or the subject matter.
- 5. Not establishing how to signal when there needs to be a clarification or slowdown.** Both you and the organizer of the meeting must know immediately when it’s time for a brief interruption.
- 6. Missing something while scrambling to keep up.** The best minute-takers know how to condense things in their own notes for expansion later, when they have time to settle.
- 7. Letting the details slip.** The date, time and location of the meeting, plus the time it began and ended, the type/category of meeting, along with all items on the agenda: Make sure it’s all in there for the record.
- 8. Allowing dud formatting through.** Minutes present a visual challenge to the eye; there’s a lot of unfortunate but necessary clutter. Take a few minutes to make them appealing and visually clear.