

The role of the Chair

The Chair's job usually falls into four main areas:

- Chairing meetings.
- Helping the committee to work together as a team.
- Having an overview of the work of the organisation/group.
- Being the main contact person.

Chairing meetings

Chairing meetings is the most visible role of the Chair. Your job is to help the meeting to run smoothly and effectively and involve everyone.

Here are some central points:

- Plan and think about the meeting in advance.
- Prepare an agenda.
- Make sure the meeting gets through all the necessary business.
- Make sure everyone gets a chance to talk and no one dominates.
- Make sure clear decisions are reached and any action noted.
- Start and finish on time.

Helping the committee to work together as a team

The strongest committees work as a team. The Chair is an important part of the team, but is not the boss. It is not your role to make all the decisions, or do all the work. It is your role to encourage and involve all committee members in whatever way they are able to contribute.

Having an overview of the work of the group

The day-to-day work of the group is important, but someone needs to be thinking about the bigger picture.

It's not up to the Chair to decide the direction and activity of the group, but to help the committee work this out.

Regularly remind yourself of your aims, and think about what needs to be done to achieve them.

Some ways of doing this are:

- Once a year, have a discussion at the committee about the group's plans for the coming year. What are the main things you want to achieve?
- Have a regular item on the agenda to discuss how recent events and activities went. For example, what worked and what didn't at your public meeting, or the successes and problems with a Fun Day.

Being the main contact person for the group

The Chair may be the first point of contact for the organisation.

You might be asked to attend other groups' events, or to get involved with another project.

It's not the Chair's job to take all of this on by yourself. Discuss it with committee members, see if it is something the group wants to do and if so who is best person to do it.

The Chair, along with the Secretary, is also often the advertised contact person for new members.