Chairperson

"The Chairman is there to guide the meeting, not to boss it."

Foreword

Many workers have experienced a sense of fear and trepidation when called upon to "take the chair" because they suddenly realise that they are being called upon to undertake a position of responsibility without having the knowledge to enable them to do the job efficiently. Often they invent some excuse for declining the honour whilst inwardly wishing that they could accept.

But even amongst those who do not aspire to the office of Chairman, a knowledge of the rules of procedure is a valuable asset enabling them more intelligently to follow the business of the meeting and to participate in the proceedings instead of being merely passive listeners. It also enables them to assert their rights in the conduct of the meeting if the Chairman behaves in an undemocratic manner towards them.

The importance of a Chairman knowing his job cannot be too strongly emphasised. A Chairman who has a sound knowledge of the rules of debate can occupy his position with complete confidence and knows that he will receive the respect due to his office, even in a meeting where there is a strong difference of opinion.

A Chairman can make all the difference between a successful meeting and a failure. If he is a "good Chairman", he can steer the business through to a successful conclusion, whereas if he is "bad Chairman", he can get himself and the meeting into a hopeless muddle.

Some people are more confident than others, but confidence alone is not sufficient to ensure the orderly conduct of a meeting. A Chairman must have a knowledge of the rules of procedure, otherwise he cannot conduct the business of a meeting efficiently. Confidence without knowledge borders on impudence and an audience will not be long in discovering that weakness.

Preliminaries

From the moment that a meeting opens, whether public or private, to the time that it closes, the Chairman has the responsibility for seeing that it is conducted in an orderly and business-like manner. He does so by guiding the proceedings in accordance with certain established rules, through which he controls the meeting and ensures that the business is dealt with efficiently.

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These "Rules of Debate", as they are called, have not been established by any legal enactment, they have evolved out of common practice and have been defined from time to time by various organisations and business institutions with the result that we have a commonly accepted code of procedure for the management of meetings. In principle, the rules for dealing with motions and amendments arising from any meeting are the same.

Standing Orders

Established organisations and committees usually have their own "Standing Orders" for the regulation of their business meetings. Standing Orders is in fact a set of rules which lay down a specific procedure for the meetings of that organisation or committee and which amplify the common Rules of Debate. It is possible to depart from the Standing Orders providing the meeting agrees.

Agenda and Timetable

An agenda is always necessary at a meeting. It sets out for the guidance of the Chairman the item or items which are to be dealt with by the meeting. It is always advisable for the agenda to be compiled on the basis of a time-table so that provision can be made for all items to be dealt with before the closing time of the meeting. Even at a meeting where there is only one item on the agenda a time-table is necessary if there are to be questions and discussions. In that case a specified time is laid down for the speaker and likewise for the questions and discussion.

During the proceedings the Chairman should aim at conserving time, and if he can keep a little ahead of his time-table, it will provide him with a latitude to cope with unexpected incidents in subsequent items. It is the duty of the Chairman to prevent waste of time, and when he feels that any item under discussion has been adequately dealt with, he should propose to the meeting the closure of that business, and with approval, pass on to the next item on the agenda.

Terms, Rules, and Procedure

Motion
A Motion is a proposition submitted for discussion and vote. It must be positive in its wording and declare an opinion or call for a course of action – or both.

Resolution
A Resolution is a Motion which has been put to the vote and carried.

Amendment

When a Motion is before the meeting an Amendment is a proposition to change the words of the Motion as a whole, or the change certain words, or to add or delete words anywhere in the Motion.

Point of Order

A Point of Order is an objection raised by a member of the audience on the grounds that a speaker is departing from the subject under discussion, or that the Standing Orders are not being observed, or that the recognised rules of debate are not being operated, or that the speaker is using offensive language.

Substantive Motion

When an Amendment is voted on and carried by a majority it replaces or alters the original Motion and then becomes known as the Substantive Motion, to which new Amendments can be moved, providing they are not the same in wording or principle as that in the original Motion which was lost.

Direct Negative

A Direct negative is a proposed amendment to a Motion which offers no alternative proposition but simply seeks to negate the whole Motion. A Direct Negative must therefore always be ruled out of order by the Chairman, since its purpose can be achieved simply by voting against the Motion; and it is thus unnecessary.

Reference Back

Reference Back is a proposition against a report which is under discussion, and may refer to the whole report or a section of it. It means that the meeting does not approve of the report, and wishes the committee which was responsible for drafting it, to alter it in accordance with the objection specified by the mover of the Reference Back.

The Question Be Put

To move that the question be put, means that the discussion should cease and the vote should be taken on the Motion (or Amendment if any) which is before the meeting.

Next Business

Moving Next Business means that the meeting should immediately proceed to the next item of business. It can be moved at any time in reference to any item on the agenda, but if it is moved and carried whilst a Motion or an Amendment is under discussion it dismisses the Motion and Amendment without any vote being taken on them. If Next Business is not carried, then the meeting resumes discussion on the original Motion and Amendment, and thereafter takes the vote on them in the usual way.

Hannington on Meetings; CU on Office Skills

Rules of Debate

A Chairman must have knowledge of the Rules of Debate, otherwise he cannot efficiently control discussions on Motions and Amendments, etc. This knowledge is especially necessary when the discussion becomes controversial and numerous propositions are moved.

Except where Standing Orders state to the contrary, the following rules affecting the rights of speech are those which operate in general practice at all ordinary meetings.

All persons moving and seconding Motions and Amendments, etc., and all those who participate in the discussion, must do so standing. The speaker then "has the floor". The only exception to this rule is in committee meetings. Of course if the speaker is physically disabled and unable to stand with ease the Chairman can give him permission to address the meeting without rising to his feet.

A speaker must address his remarks to the Chairman and not to any individual member of the audience even though he may be replying to the previous remarks of an individual.

The mover of a Motion has the right to speak when introducing his Motion and the right to reply to the discussion as the last speaker, before the vote is taken.

If there is nobody willing to second the Motion, after it has been moved, the Motion falls, which means that no discussion can be permitted on it, and the Chairman must pass on to next business.

The seconder of a Motion has the right to speak when seconding but, unlike the mover, he has no right to reply. If he formally seconds the Motion without speaking he has the right to speak during the discussion on it, but he cannot speak twice.

If, during the discussion, the mover wishes to withdraw his motion, he cannot do so without the consent of the seconder and the meeting.

The mover of an Amendment has the right to speak only when introducing it. He has no right of reply to the discussion.

Those taking part in discussion on a Motion are only permitted to speak once.

Anyone who has already spoken on the original Motion loses the right to move or second an Amendment to that Motion.

Report Writing, Correspondence and Filing

and other necessary capacities

Report Writing

In the previous part we saw that it is quite easy to organise material into a whole piece of work, in outline, using a Tony Buzan-style "Mind Map", "The Buzan Organic Study Method", and other such techniques.

All of what Buzan has to say about reading and study is relevant to the topic of report writing, and especially relevant to the preparation stage of report-writing.

In a report, you must be concrete, which is the same as being organic. The true meaning of the word "concrete" is the combination of the ("abstract") parts of a whole situation in such a way that it can be understood as a "unity and struggle of opposites".

This is what Lenin referred to as "concrete analysis of a concrete situation". It corresponds very well with the typical form of Buzan's "mind-maps".

A concrete, organic approach to report-writing will help you to make your report as brief as possible.

The length of any report should be tailored to fit the amount of time a reader, person or committee may have available to deal with it. This might be as little as fifteen minutes, or half an hour for something more important. Such might be the only opportunity for the matter to be considered, and for the people to give attention to it.

Success of a report should be judged by whether it can give rise to an appropriate decision, in the available time.

Therefore everything possible should be done to help the recipients of a report to understand its conclusions.

This can be done in the first place by presenting the report "backwards". The conclusions should be made very clear on the first page.

This might be done with a paragraph headed "Summary", or "Conclusions". There is no point in being shy about this.

Empirical facts can be given, or summarised, in an addendum, if necessary.

Tabulations (spreadsheets) often help to concentrate the presentation of data in a small space, and with a prominent "bottom line".

Your audience will undoubtedly appreciate it if your report is the proverbial "one-pager", or else a "two-page report" which can be printed back-to-back on one sheet of paper.

If it is a bit longer, then it may be possible to print it legibly as a four-page folding "booklet", so that it is still on one sheet of paper.

Write in Prose

Prose is in paragraphs, and has a beginning, middle and end. Prose does not rely on bullets, numbers, letters or other listing mechanisms.

Correspondence

The Secretary of any structure is responsible for its correspondence, and especially for its letters or official e-mails. Responsible for receiving them, for replying to them, and for keeping the messages received and sent and copies of replies. The secretary must report correspondence to the organisation in a way that is regular, convenient and timely.

Filing

Filing is the storage of documents in a classified manner such that they can be searched by date, or alphabetically, or by some numbered referencing or catalogue system.

Files and a hole-puncher used to be the tools of filing. But now, files are kept in computers, and sometimes in both forms.

Hannington on Meetings; CU on Office Skills

Other necessary capacities

Computers

Not much has changed in the last 20 years. The most necessary programmes are still four in number: <u>word processing</u>, <u>spreadsheets</u>, <u>e-mail</u> and <u>Internet-browsing</u>.

Typically, people use MS-Word and Excel for words and numbers.

E-mail software is a little more varied: Outlook is good, but so is Thunderbird. In browsers, Google Chrome is good, but Internet Explorer is the Microsoft default.

A little capacity for simple manipulation of image-files is good to have. This can be got from the free programme called "Paint" that comes with "Windows".

Layout

The appearance of documents has a major effect on whether they are read and understood, or not. This is a factor that is relatively, though not completely, independent of the text, or content

A well-laid-out document will go further. It will be read and absorbed by far more people than if the same text is badly produced.

Hence layout, which at first seems to be a subjective matter having to do with taste and pride, turns out to be an objective factor which eventually becomes an iron necessity.

This is because documents compete for attention. The documents of the revolutionaries have to be presented well if they are to stand a chance of getting the attention that they must have, if they are to be effective, and have consequences.

Presentation is equally a factor, whether the documents are internal, or external to any given organisation or structure of an organisation.

Venues

Just as the presentation of text on paper, or on a screen, strongly affects the take-up of any message, and so becomes a major material factor, so also does the layout of any venue for gathering, as well as the acoustics of a venue.

Venues can be considered as being of three types. The first is the "**boardroom**", or "council chamber". This type of arrangement is conducive to participation by all those present, in more-or-less equal degrees of prominence. An oval table is better than a rectangle, for example.

This is the type of venue that the Communist University uses, and looks for.

The second type is "**classroom**", or a lecture theatre. It is suitable for lectures. It gives prominence and priority to the platform. It disadvantages the floor. It is conducive to "questions of clarity" but not to "contributions".

The third is the "**stadium**", which is equivalent to the "classroom" but on a larger scale. A stadium works well for rallies. Audience participation does takes place, but only in forms such as cheering and singing, or of booing and walking out.

Timetable and Agenda

This is an induction course, designed to show how structures work. If they are not given "quality" time, they cannot work. If agendas are filled with ad hoc tasks, and if the organic functioning of the organisation is consequently denied time, then it is going to die away.

In COSATU, Shop Stewards Councils are turned into rallies and demonstrations. In the SACP, gatherings at all levels are turned into no more than distributions of tasks by leadership. In the ANC, branch activity is suppressed or suspended. None of these are invariable tendencies but all of them do exist.

It is the healthy functioning of the base units of the organisations that regenerates and cleans the organisations. It has to be given time.

Hannington on Meetings; CU on Office Skills
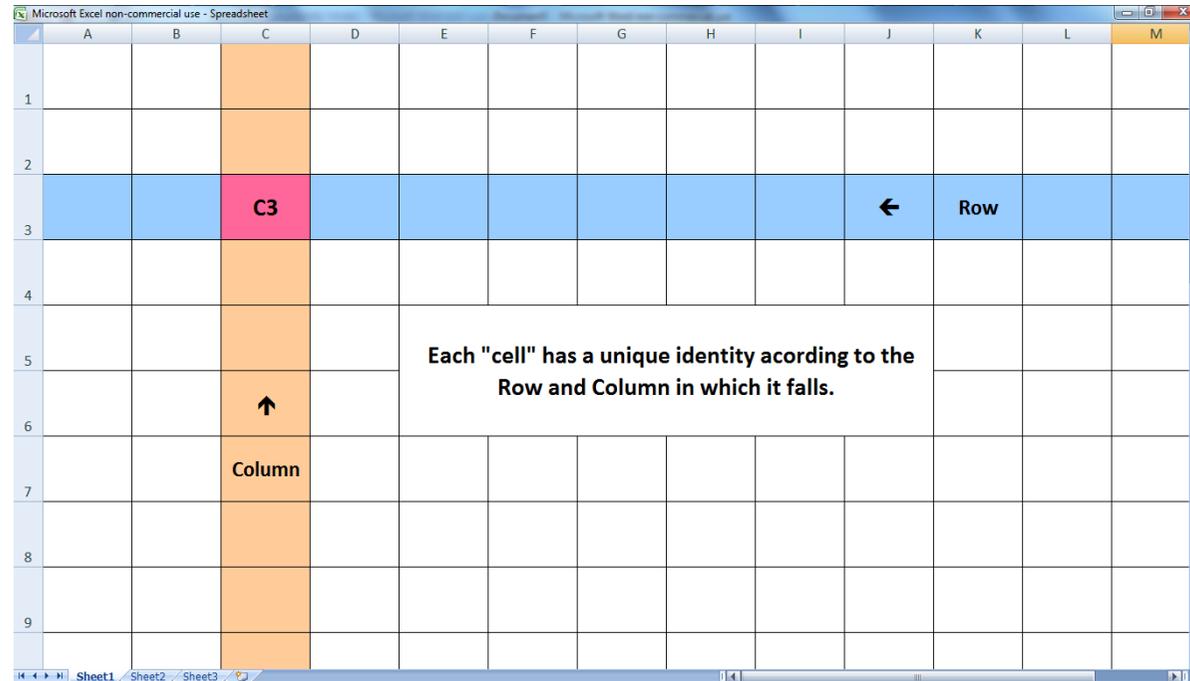
Spreadsheets

Spreadsheets are the same as "tables", "tabulations" and "schedules". They are arrangements in rows and columns. This way of arranging data (on paper) has been used for hundreds of years.

In a computer spreadsheet, such as Excel, each "cell" has a unique identity given by the row and column in which it falls. Rows are numbered, and columns have letters. Please see the illustration above, taken from Excel.

At the bottom of each sheet there are tabs. Excel files, called "Workbooks", can have many sheets in them, accessed by the tabs at the bottom.

In the following pages there are examples of different uses of spreadsheets.

Analysis

Date	Item	Total	Apples	Oranges	Pears	Cabbages	Odd
1	Oranges	300		300			
2	Mixed	400	200	100	100		
3	Apples	200	200				
4	Pineapples	150					150
5	Pears	500			500		
6	Cabbages	150				150	
7	Mixed	200		100		100	
8	Avocadoes	75					75
9	Cabbages	100				100	
10	Apples	200	200				
11	Mixed	450		150	150		150
12	Avocadoes	150					150
13	Pears	200			200		
14	Apples	300	300				
15	Oranges	125		125			
16	Mixed	400		200	200		
	Totals	3900	900	975	1150	350	525

Computer spreadsheet cells can be set to add up figures above or sideways. Many different operations can be programmed into the cells. Cells can also pull data from other cells and from other sheets.

Computerised spreadsheets can in this way become self-adjusting, such that when data is changed in one place, all other related cells will recalculate automatically.

Checklist

CHECKLIST FOR ALL EVENTS

	Who will do it?	By when?
Decide target group		
Decide event and budget		
Plan programme		
Get venue		
Confirm speakers		
Brief speakers		
Publicise event		
Organise transport		
Organise sound		
Organise security		
Organise catering		
Organise decorations		
Organise ANC table		
Pay all accounts		

This is from page 25 of the Gauteng ANC Election Manual. It is a simple spreadsheet for visualising event-planning on one page.

MONTHLY FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Area _____   Coordinator _____   Period covered by statement: From _____   To _____

Income			Expenses		
Money from the PET			Office rent		
Donations and fundraising			Phone + electricity		
			Stationery		
TOTAL	R _____ (1)		Allowances		
			Transport		
The receipts written during this period run from			Printing		
Receipt number _____ to number _____			Venues		
			Catering		
			Other		
			TOTAL	R _____ (2)	

Balance at the beginning of this period			Where is the balance of the money now:	
Add Income (1)			Amount in bank?	R
SUBTOTAL	R		Amount in cash?	R
Subtract Expenses (2				
Balance at the end of period	R			

This is from page 48 of the Gauteng ANC Election Manual, in Chapter 8 on Managing the Campaign. Rows and columns.

Hannington on Meetings; CU on Office Skills