

THE ROLE OF THE SECRETARY

What would I need to know
to become a Secretary?

If you would like to attend a workshop, organise a workshop for a group, or simply purchase or download another resource from the Running Sport series, visit the following website for further information:

www.sportengland.org/runningsport

Sport England is an organisation committed to creating opportunities for people to start in sport, stay in sport and succeed in sport.

Sport England is the strategic lead for delivering the Government's sporting objectives in this country, and we distribute both Lottery and Exchequer funds to sport.

Our vision is to make England an active and successful sporting nation.

This resource forms part of the Running Sport series

Running Sport
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ENGLAND

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Glossary of terms

Correspondence: Written form of communication between two or more people e.g. letters, emails

A meeting agenda: List of items to be dealt with during a meeting e.g. matters arising from a previous meeting, new correspondence

Minutes: A formal record of any discussion, agreements and action points arising from a meeting

Annual General Meeting (AGM): A meeting held once a year, which involves all of the club/organisation members, not just the main committee. An AGM will be used to discuss the end of season finances, elect new committee members, and decide on the future direction of the club/organisation. AGM's are strictly governed by the club's/organisation's Constitution

Impartial: Not favouring one side of a discussion more than another

Welcome

Welcome to this Running Sport resource. This forms part of Sport England's education & training programme that provides recognition, information and learning resources aimed at supporting volunteers in relation to the administration and management of their sporting organisation, club, group, team, or governing body.

I hope that you find the information of use in your sporting role and that you will continue to contribute to helping people participate in sport in England. Through you, a valued resource, one of 5.8 million – we know that we are on our way to achieving our goal of making England an active and successful sporting nation!

Thank you for all your support and good luck for your volunteering future – long may you continue!

Roger Draper
Chief Executive
Sport England

Why do it?

If you have been elected as Secretary of your sports club/organisation or are thinking of taking up this role, then this resource should help you see what the role involves along with some useful help to meet the challenges ahead. You may be a new Secretary and 'feeling your way' or an experienced Secretary and want to review your role. Secretarial jobs differ but there are many common aspects. This resource lists many of the duties expected of a club/organisation Secretary.

So why have you agreed to take on this responsibility?

- You want to make a worthwhile contribution to the work of the club/organisation
- You want to have more influence over the way the club/organisation is run
- You feel that it is your turn, and you have an obligation to help
- You are the best-qualified person to do the job. You may have work based skills that you could also use in this role
- You want to become more closely involved with the running of the club/organisation
- You like the friendship and social contacts.

What does the Secretary do?

The smooth running of the club/organisation depends on the efficiency with which you handle the records, correspondence and other communications. Experienced Secretaries will tell you that their duties often expand beyond what is normally expected of the Secretary.

The main purpose of the job is that of principal administrator for the club/organisation. The Secretary carries out or delegates all of the administrative duties that enable the club/organisation and its members to function effectively. The Secretary is a pivotal role within the club/organisation, with a close involvement in the running of the club/organisation.

It is important to know what all other persons are responsible for to ensure the whole club/organisation is united in its work. The role therefore requires the Secretary to have good communication skills and a general knowledge of both the playing and non-playing side of the sports club/organisation.

The Secretary is usually the first person an outsider contacts, and a good Secretary is vital to the successful management of any club or association. The Secretary is the principle administrative officer, and provides the link between the members, the executive committee and outside agencies, e.g. other clubs, leagues, the National Governing Body, the local community and the media.

People interested in a sports club/organisation should contact the Secretary for information or details about becoming a member, meetings, events and activities.

Key tasks involved

The role of Secretary is diverse and varied, and they will often be at the forefront of a mix of duties, all of which are as important as each other.

Here is a summary of some of the more typical key tasks:

- Being the first point of contact for all enquires
- Attending meetings to represent the club/organisation e.g. league meetings, local development group meetings
- Keeping up to date with sports initiatives by compiling and checking a list of useful websites regularly
- Affiliating the club/organisation to the local league
- Registering players
- Dealing with correspondence
- Organising and booking match facilities
- Organising the clubs/organisations Annual General Meeting (AGM)
- Organising and attending all Executive Committee meetings
- Taking and distributing minutes. Maintaining accurate records
- Ensuring action points from meetings have been carried out
- Organising special events
- Supporting the club/organisation with funding applications
- Collecting and analysing information from the members e.g. from an end of season feedback form or questionnaire



What qualities do you need?

To be a good Secretary you must:

- Be methodical and reliable
- Be a good communicator
- Ensure that tasks you have delegated have been actioned
- Be impartial
- Be a good planner
- Be alert to constitutional and legal requirements
- Be enthusiastic about your sport
- Be interested in people
- Have tact and discretion
- Have good organisational skills
- Have good communication skills
- Be able to maintain confidentiality
- Be able to lead and supervise others
- Be able to delegate
- Be a good decision maker
- Be a strategic thinker and be able to plan ahead
- Be aware of the key agencies and partners that can support your club/organisation, and work in partnership with them

Dealing with correspondence

You should read and reply to correspondence promptly even if only to acknowledge receiving the letter and passing it onto the relevant person at the club/organisation.

- By following these tips you should be able to deal with the club's/organisation's correspondence quickly and efficiently
- Maintain a register of correspondence 'in' and 'out' by recording the date of receipt on all incoming mail and note on it to whom copies have been distributed
- Deal with each letter promptly. If you cannot answer the query, or need to wait until the next committee meeting for a policy decision, send an acknowledgement explaining the reason for the delay. If this sort of thing happens often, prepare copies of a standard letter that you can use
- Make sure that you are up to date with correspondence before committee meetings, so information can be distributed and dealt with at the meeting, whenever possible
- Keep a copy or a note of the letters that you send, and the date you sent them
- File copies of correspondence under the appropriate heading, if you think you might need to refer to them again. Do not file everything just for the sake of it
- Throw things away when the matter has been finalised, or they are no longer of any use
- Keep contact details, addresses, email addresses and mobile telephone numbers, either on your computer or have a paper copy
- Keep notes of important telephone conversations
- Make informal enquiries or replies by telephone or a computer typed letter

What equipment is needed?

These are some of the essential items:

- Use of a computer and email address. A computer will help you produce letters, reports and posters quickly and accurately, and enable storage of information, such as:
 - Membership lists
 - Results of competitions
 - Standard letters
 - Financial records
- An office computer package with templates and useful programmes may also be a helpful, and relatively cheap investment
- Filing cabinet
- Set of folders (one for every project/topic)
- Notebook(s) for taking notes during meetings
- An annual diary/chart to record a schedule of all the clubs/organisations activities, including events, competitions, closing dates, meetings, social functions, etc
- Lever arch files, ring binders or minute books to store typed copies of the minutes of meetings, reports and statements of accounts
- Headed stationery and envelopes
- Files for storing correspondence and records
- Ring binders to store permanent records
- A telephone, with access during the daytime and evenings, including an answer phone
- A fax machine is also a valuable investment and can produce photo copies on a small scale

Standard letters are a big help, especially if held on a computer (you will find templates in most standard computer office packages). Spaces can be left to enter information that may change (including dates, names, fees, etc), but the overall form of many letters will follow standard themes, such as:

- Thank you for your enquiry, which will be dealt with at the meeting on _____
- I am pleased to say that you have been accepted as a member
The fee for the year is _____ payable to the Treasurer by _____
- Thank you for your letter regarding _____
I enclose some information that may be of assistance to you

Liaison with other members and external agencies

The Secretary has an important responsibility to keep everyone informed of decisions and events, and to check that tasks have been carried out.

A close working relationship with the Chairperson, Treasurer and President is essential, and the Secretary should ensure that they are well informed on all matters relating to the club/organisation.

External liaison

It is essential that your club/organisation identifies and works in partnership with key external agencies, as this will provide the club/organisation with support and awareness of possible grants. Such agencies include the local authority, schools, leisure centers, community police, local businesses, the media and volunteer agencies.

These are some duties you may be called on to carry out:

1. With other agencies

- Act as the public officer of your club/organisation or group or in the absence of a formal public relations officer
- Project a favorable image and seek support from the public, business circles and the media
- Liaise with officials, coaches, clubs, affiliated bodies, government agencies and committees

2. Liaise with associations (e.g. The National Governing Body or local league)

- Process transfer applications
- Enter teams in competitions
- Represent your club/organisation at association/ league meetings
- Obtain association sanction for club or group events
- Communicate information between association and club/organisation or group members, such as event deadlines

3. General affairs

- Keep a register of members' names and addresses
- Handle bookings and entries
- Supervise kit and equipment
- Respond to general duties as directed by the Executive Committee
- Maintain a register of sponsors

Organising a meeting

If possible, prepare in advance an agreed schedule of meetings for the year; otherwise it may be necessary to consult all the members about their availability before fixing a date for each meeting. In any case, you should always consult the Chairperson before fixing the date of a meeting.

Give plenty of notice of the proposed date and time of the meeting. An Annual General Meeting or large committee or council needs at least a month's notice. In the case of a smaller committee, consult the members by email, letter or telephone, enquiring when they are available, prior to fixing the date.

Make arrangements for the meeting venue, including admission to the building, seating arrangements, and use of services, e.g. catering, photocopying, etc.

Send adequate notice of the meeting to all concerned, including the venue, day, date and time, together with the agenda. The agenda may be prepared with the consultation of the Chairperson and, if possible, should indicate clearly what decisions need to be made, so those concerned can arrive prepared. The minutes of the previous meeting should also be enclosed if they have not already been circulated, as well as any other correspondence or documents that members need to read before the discussion on the topic.

Members need the papers well in advance: about ten days before the date of the meeting is ideal (this is enough time to read them, but not so long that they will be mislaid!).

A sample meeting agenda

There will be a meeting of the _____ Committee, at _____ (place),

on _____ (date), from _____ (time).

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes – to approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record
4. Matters arising – to consider any matters arising not otherwise included on the agenda
5. Financial report
 - To receive a report on the current financial position
 - To make any decisions regarding budgets, fees, expenses, payments etc
6. Consideration of reports from officers and sub-committees
7. General business – updates from individual teams or sports sections
8. Administrative business, including consideration of statutory matters (e.g. date of AGM)
9. Date of next meeting
10. Any other business

Writing minutes

At the end of a complicated discussion, using simple language provide a brief, clear summary of what you think has been agreed. Confirm in a few words the decision, the action to be taken, who is going to take that action, and by when.

The Secretary is in an influential position, but has the sometimes difficult task of contributing to the discussions while keeping a record of the meeting. Do not assume that you will be able to remember all the decisions. Short notes and jottings taken during the meeting may seem perfectly clear at the time, but a week later can cause confusion as to what was actually agreed.

Follow these guidelines when you write the minutes:

- List those people present and record the apologies for absence
- Follow the order of the agenda, and try to keep each section short. Give each sub-section its own separate heading, and give each point a separate paragraph
- State the main issues, and decisions made
- Do not take sides when recording a discussion. Try to be objective, and outline the facts of each argument
- Record the full text of motions, if a vote was taken
- Write up the minutes as soon as possible after a meeting, while the discussions are still fresh in your mind
- Circulate the minutes to all members of the committee soon after the meeting (ideally within a few days), so as to inform those who were absent and to remind those who have some work to do arising from the meeting

- Make a diary note for a fortnight's time to follow up action points and check the jobs have been carried out
- When documenting Annual General Meetings, which are usually governed by strict constitutional rules regarding procedures, keep a formal record, stating the names of proposers and seconders, quoting the exact text of resolutions, and the results of the voting
- Committee meetings can be minuted more informally, by simply stating the decisions that have been taken, unless any special request has been made to record disagreement

Take down minutes following a standard style, choosing the appropriate word to suit the circumstances. Examples are as follows:

Agreed – indicates a strong consensus to support a particular course of action

Recommended – indicates a proposal to another committee or club/organisation

Noted – indicates that a matter was reported, but no decision was necessary

Received – indicates that a report was presented and accepted

Approved – indicates that a recommendation has been endorsed

Recognised – indicates that information was accepted, but no decision was taken

Resolved – indicates that a motion was formally proposed, voted upon and passed

Annual General Meetings (AGM's)

The Secretary is responsible for preparing for the Annual General Meeting (AGM), and for making arrangements to ensure that all members receive the necessary information. This may include:

- Arranging venue, date and time
- Collecting reports from other officers
- Notifying members of the date, time and place of the meeting, which needs to be done well in advance (the constitution usually stipulates the minimum period of notice required)
- Inviting and receiving nominations for the election of officers (refer to the constitution to find the closing date for nominations)
- Arranging the printing of the annual report and statement of accounts
- Arranging for guest speakers, if this is the usual practice
- Arranging catering and hospitality

The rules of all clubs/organisations and associations should state how notification of the Annual General Meeting must be given to members. The Secretary should be aware of any special rules of the club/organisation and follow them strictly. The meeting could be declared invalid if the rules have not been followed.

The AGM is an opportunity for all members to attend, learn and question how their club/organisation is being run. They can comment on the annual report and statement of accounts, determine any amendments required to the constitution and rules, and elect the officers and committee for the coming year.

At an AGM decisions should not be taken on any item that was not included on the printed agenda. This ensures that if any changes to the constitution or rules are being considered, all members have an opportunity to think about the proposals in detail, and to prepare counter arguments if appropriate.

Keeping records

The filing and maintenance of club/organisation records is the responsibility of the Secretary. It is important to know where you can find the information about all the different club/organisation activities.

Minutes of meetings, annual reports and statements of accounts are best kept in a separate folder or series of folders on your PC, or in ring binders kept in date order (the most recent copy at the front). This ensures that a good copy (the copy that has been signed to certify that it is a correct record) is always easily accessible and stored safely. Do not remove these master copies from the ring binder.

If the Secretary is responsible for maintaining current members records, then this information may be kept in a box file, a ledger, or on a computer (with a back up stored). If the

club/organisation has a lot of members or regularly sends information to members, access to a computer that can mail merge and produce labels templates is an advantage. Membership records may also be necessary for returns to regional or national associations and in support of applications for grants or other means of financial support. Make sure the up-to-date numbers are always available.

Historical records are useful for reunions, fundraising activities, recruiting volunteers, etc. Be selective, however, and throw away anything that is not worth keeping, is out of date or has no historical interest. Most routine correspondence does not need to be kept at all, so ask yourself, 'If this information had been given over the telephone, would I have made a point of writing it down and filing it?' If not, throw it away.

Things to avoid and things to remember

Things to Avoid

Don't make the committee deal with lots of trivial topics. It is frustrating and annoying if important items are left off the agenda, or are not reached.

Don't put the most important item at the end of the agenda in the hope that the committee will quickly deal with other matters and then be able to concentrate on this one. People are more attentive at the beginning of meetings, and it is better to have their energy directed to important items at the beginning, rather than starting off with trivial points, which may get more discussion time than they warrant.

Don't let members talk at length about their own pet project. A written agenda distributed in advance makes it much easier for the Chairperson to bring the discussion back to the important issues.

Don't let matters arising from the previous meeting take up most of the time at the next meeting. This is frustrating because nothing new is being accomplished, and it is non-productive. Identify loose ends from the previous meeting and set them down as agenda topics of their own, putting them in priority order, near the end of the agenda.

Don't let the committee forget about the people they are serving. Too often a committee becomes immersed in its own activities, and disregards the needs and interests of the members.

Things to remember

You will be a good Secretary on behalf of your club/organisation if you remember the following tips:

- You need to be motivated to do a good job
- You need to be well organised and conscientious
- All correspondence must be dealt with promptly
- Follow meeting guidelines to ensure they are productive
- Remind yourself that the important thing about keeping records is keeping the right records, and being able to find them quickly and easily. Have hard paper copies, store on a computer and have back up facilities available
- Remember to work in partnership with your Executive Committee and external agencies to ensure your club/organisation runs effectively and efficiently

It will not take long for you to become a very valuable and important member of the sports organisation, and your role off the pitch or court will often become as important as the people and results on it!

Further tips

The 10 Secretarial Commandments;

1. Thou shalt prepare an agenda, with your Chairperson, for every meeting
2. Thou shalt make sure committee members are aware of the time and place of the meeting and ensure the Chairperson starts on time
3. Thou shalt not read the minutes of the last meeting in full (unless members require it)
4. Thou shalt not attempt to take detailed notes of discussions. (Only ensure that the key facts are stated)
5. Thou shalt record all resolutions taken exactly as passed by the members and ask the Chairperson to repeat the words of the motion if you are unsure
6. Thou shalt ensure that you record the names of the people responsible for following up a resolution, since failure to do so will result in you, the Secretary, doing everything!
7. Thou shalt not volunteer for everything. Delegate work and nominate committee members to assist. That's what they are there for

8. Thou shalt not become too involved in debate. If you feel you want to have close involvement in a topic, ask for someone else to take the minutes for that item

9. Thou shalt encourage members to put in written (even hand-written) reports to cut the waffle and help you in your duties

10. Thou shalt remember that all committee members, especially the Secretary, must help the Chairperson

...run a friendly, fair and effective meeting.

Adapted from: Department of Sport and Recreation (Government of Western Australia)

NB: Your role will inevitably vary and you may at times be asked for help and advice with writing a variety of documents e.g. a club constitution, role descriptions for volunteers and coaches, membership forms, health and safety sheets etc.

The Sport England Clubmark resource contains a variety of general templates. To view a copy of the resource visit www.sportengland.org/clubmark.



Useful contacts

Central Council For Physical Recreation

Francis House
Francis Street
London
SW1P 1DE
Tel: 020 7854 8500
Fax: 020 7854 8501
Email: info@ccpr.org.uk
Website: www.ccpr.org.uk

Child Protection In Sport Unit

NSPCC National Training Centre
3 Gilmour Close
Beaumont Leys
Leicester
LE4 1EZ
Tel: 0116 234 7278/7280
Fax: 0116 234 0464
Email: cpsu@nspcc.org.uk
Website: www.thecpsu.org.uk

Clubs for Young People

371 Kennington Lane
London
SE11 5QY
Tel: 020 7793 0787
Fax: 020 7820 9815
Email: office@nacyp.org.uk
Website: www.clubsforyoungpeople.org.uk

English Federation of Disability Sport

Manchester Metropolitan University
Alsager Campus
Hassall Road
Alsager
Stoke On Trent
ST7 2HL
Tel: 0161 247 5294
Fax: 0161 247 6895
Email: federation@efds.co.uk
Website: www.efds.net

Running Sport Hotline (general enquiries)

Tel: 0800 363373
Running Sport Support Team
(workshop & resource enquiries)
3rd Floor, Victoria House
Bloomsbury Square
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WC1B 4SE
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Fax: 0207 383 5740
Email: runningsport@coachwise.ltd.uk
Website: www.sportengland.org/runningsport

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Email: info@sportengland.org
Website: www.sportengland.org

sports coach UK (general enquiries)

114 Cardigan Road
Headingley
Leeds
LS6 3BJ
Tel: 0113 274 4892
Fax: 0113 275 5019
Email: coaching@sportscoachuk.org
Website: www.sportscoachuk.org

sports coach UK Business Support Centre (workshop enquiries)

Sports Development Centre, Loughborough
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LE11 3TU
Tel: 01509 226 130
Fax: 01509 226 134
Email: bsc@sportscoachuk.org
Website: www.sportscoachuk.org

Sports Leaders UK

Clyde House, 10 Milburn Avenue
Oldbrook
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Fax: 01908 393744
Email: info@sportsleaders.org
Website: www.bst.org.uk

Women's Sports Foundation

3rd Floor, Victoria House
Bloomsbury Square
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WC1B 4SE
Tel: 020 7273 1740
Fax: 020 7273 1981
Email: info@wsf.org.uk
Website: www.wsf.org.uk

Youth Sport Trust

Sir John Beckwith Centre for Sport
Loughborough University
Loughborough
Leicestershire
LE11 3TU
Tel: 01509 226600
Fax: 01509 210851
Website: www.youthsporttrust.org

Volunteering England (London)

Regents Wharf
8 All saints Street
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Volunteering England (Birmingham)

New Oxford House, 16 Waterloo Street
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B2 5UG
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For both offices:
Tel: 0845 305 6979
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