

WI Presidents' Training Resource Document

The President is elected at the Annual Meeting, by a secret ballot of the members, from the elected committee members.

1. The Role of the President

Many of the President's responsibilities involve preparation for the WI Meeting, the chairing of which is one of the most important duties a President has.

It is important that the President makes meetings friendly and welcoming for all the members and ensures the 'business' is kept to a maximum of 20 minutes. This ensures that the bulk of the meeting is focused on providing an interesting and enjoyable opportunity for members to come together, socialise and learn.

Preparing For the Meeting

- Agree the agenda with the Secretary and read through any necessary papers and correspondence, including the Federation Newsletter
- Discuss and agree items of business, clarifying details with the committee.
- Arrange the running order (see My WI: <https://mywi.thewi.org.uk/running-your-wi/guide-to-running-meetings>)
- Time the agenda
- Identify any item that needs special attention
- Take all relevant materials with you to meeting, such as agenda, Federation Newsletter and notes about the speaker

Chairing the Meeting

- Arrive in good time
- Start on time and keep to the general timing of the Agenda
- Use a microphone (where and if available). Some members may have difficulty hearing so check that everyone can hear and see you
- Stand up and start the meeting with a welcoming smile and friendly greeting
- Try to introduce any new members/visitors by name and make sure new members and visitors are spoken to by members and the committee
- Introduce agenda items clearly and audibly

- Ensure all opinions and questions from members are heard. Maintain order by asking all remarks to be addressed through the chair
- Reach decisions by summing up the main points for and against, then ask for a show of hands, or a paper vote (secret ballot) if appropriate
- Be informative and enthusiastic. Tell members all they need to know to feel involved and interested, remembering that information will always need to be explained for newer members
- Welcome and introduce the speaker, with a short appropriate biography
- Make time to circulate among the members and chat informally
- Close the meeting formally and thank the members and any visitors for coming
- If you can, make sure you speak with any visitors before they leave, encouraging them to consider returning
- It's a good idea for the President and Committee to stay until the last members have left!

At each meeting, the following WI business must be covered:

- record of the last meeting and signing where necessary
- matters arising
- correspondence (including the federation newsletter)
- financial statement by the Treasurer (at least every three months)
- reports from any sub-committees, delegates, working parties etc.
- reminder of upcoming events and the election of a delegate if required
- next meeting information

It is up to each WI to decide how they incorporate WI business into a meeting. Where possible we would encourage WIs to verbally inform members that the federation newsletter is available and email members with a copy or add it to the WI WhatsApp for example, rather than reading it out. Similarly, meeting records, sub-committee reports etc. can be emailed or added to the WhatsApp group. A reminder of the next meeting and what is happening can be part of wrapping up a meeting.

After the Meeting

- Check and then approve the draft copy of the minutes/record prepared by the Secretary
- Check with the Secretary any follow-up work generated by the meeting
- Write any letters of congratulation or condolence on behalf of the WI – it's more appropriate for these to come from the President

2. Responsibilities of the WI Committee

- Assist with the organisation and running of the WI
- Understand and comply with the requirements of the WI Constitution and Charity Law governing the administration of funds
- Recommend plans to members, rather than making decisions independently as a committee.
- Implement plans once they are approved by the members
- Involve other members in the running of the WI where possible through regular communication, providing opportunities for discussion and voting on changes where appropriate.
- Plan the smooth running of the Monthly Meeting and ensuring the time and place of meetings has been arranged.
- Share relevant information sent to the WI by the federation and the NFWI with members
- Encourage members to take part in federation activities, NFWI meetings and courses
- For virtual WIs, select appropriate software and allocate budget for any appropriate subscription or licences
- Outline the programme and present it to the WI members for approval.
- Accurately administer WI funds following consultation with members and ensure members are kept informed on the financial state of the WI
- Encourage the recruitment and introduction of new members to the WI.
- Engage with and participate in the activities of the federation, ensuring your WI has strong links with its federation.

The committee must meet at least six times a year and further information about committee meeting requirements can be found in the WI Handbook.

What makes an effective WI Committee?

- Members enjoy being part of the committee
- The committee meetings are accessible and timed to suit all the members
- Consideration is given to the meeting format. For example, does it suit all committee members best to meet in person, do some meetings need to be done online, can they be hybrid if needed.
- It is a good idea to review the format of the meetings, especially when new committee members join.
- Communication is open and all committee members are encouraged to discuss and put forward ideas

- The committee members have pride in belonging to the WI
- Co-operation is encouraged among members to work together in a relaxed manner
- A positive “can do” attitude
- Praise and thanks freely given
- If problems arise, they are openly discussed, and ways are found to solve them constructively

A President needs to be able to:

- Treat all members alike
- Do what she says she will and be supportive
- Be consistent and act positively
- Be mindful of people’s individual needs
- Stay calm, be tactful and diplomatic
- Make time to discuss and exchange ideas
- Make sure all members understand what the Committee is aiming to do (good communication)
- Listen to the members to discover the skills and experience of the group
- Delegate and involve all members in the running of the WI
- Act as a positive ambassador for the WI

3. Helpful Hints For Better Meetings

- Encourage members to put forward new ideas so that the programme reflects members’ interests and needs
- Try out any new ideas and be open to change
- Encourage feedback in the form of questionnaires and group sessions
- Ensure regular communication between meetings. One meeting a month is often not enough to engage people, additional communication and groups may help, for instance:
 - Newsletters by email or post
 - Craft, art and produce groups
 - Sport, e.g. walking group
 - Dining Club
 - Book Club
 - Other special interest groups
 - Website
 - Facebook

- Twitter

- Encourage observer members at committee meetings so more members are aware of the work of the committee and will put themselves forward in the future
- Involve new members in activities and small groups
- Provide information about the WI organisation easily available at meetings and online
- Ensure that skills and experience of members are shared freely
- Ensure that committee minutes and agendas sent out before meeting if possible (e.g. by email)
- Chair the meeting effectively as President:
 - Prepare for the meeting
 - Guide discussions and keep members focused on the agenda
 - Encourage the exchange of ideas and active listening among members
 - Promote respect for differing views and opinions
- Provide opportunities for the members to circulate and to chat freely
- Ensure the venue is comfortable and welcoming
- Offer drinks or other refreshments

Resources for the WI Committee:

Federations may hold resources for WIs, such as WI account books and financial statements, and receipt books.