

The
Official FFA
Chapter
Secretary's
Book



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This Table of Contents will not only help you find pages in the book, it will also help you organize sections of the Secretary's Book. Place dividers between sections and file the material related to that section within that division. **Example:** File all correspondence behind the section titled *Correspondence*.

The new FFA Chapter Secretary is...! Wow, the excitement of being named chapter secretary. You've been elected to a position because your fellow members believe in your ability to do a good job. But, after the excitement of being elected has worn off, and the time has come to get started, what do you do?

Being chapter secretary is a challenge. The following pages will detail the duties the secretary must perform. You probably think the secretary just takes the roll and reads the minutes of the meeting. But it's much more than that! You have a great impact on how your school and community perceives your chapter. You have the ability to make your state association recognize your chapter just by taking pride in your work.

This book will make your job easier by giving you hints on writing letters, taking minutes and keeping track of your chapter's members, plans and actions. New in this edition are suggestions for organizing the book and organizing your time. Your time is valuable, so use it wisely. Your first investment will be learning all about being chapter secretary.

Your Job Description

As an FFA chapter secretary you should:

- Take minutes at all chapter meetings and file a proofed, typed copy in the Secretary's Book.
- Bring a complete set of minutes to each meeting to be read and approved or corrected.
- Make sure copies of the agenda, chapter constitution and bylaws, chapter program of activities and the Official FFA Manual are readily available at each meeting.
- Assist with counting votes whenever an actual count is needed and record the results in the minutes.

- Prepare and send all official chapter correspondence. This includes invitations to chapter activities, thank-you notes to FFA supporters and requests for information. You may also want to correspond with other FFA chapter secretaries. Exchanging ideas with other secretaries is an excellent way to improve your chapter's image and to make new friends. You can even work with other chapters on shared projects.
- Keep attendance and participation records for every FFA meeting and activity. Accurate and complete records are important when chapter members apply for awards and FFA degrees.
- Prepare and post the agenda set by the chapter president in advance of each meeting.
- Issue membership cards.

Tools of the Trade

There are several items you'll need in order to do your job correctly. These items are referred to as "tools of the trade" because most chapter secretaries use them extensively. Although you will not have access to a few of the items listed, most are readily available for your use through your chapter:

- *Official Chapter Secretary's Book*
- Meeting Agenda
- Computer
- Notepaper
- Official FFA Stationery
- Pencils
- Record Sheets
- Ring-bound Notebook
- Typewriter

Making It Work For You

Although this is the Official Chapter Secretary's Book, it won't help you with your new duties unless you use it correctly. It is your dedication that will make the book work for you, making your job easier.

The first suggestion for keeping everything organized is placing the Official Chapter Secretary's Book in a three ring binder notebook large enough for all of your materials. This arrangement will allow you to add and remove items easily and move pages around as you need. You may also prioritize your book so that the sections you use most are in the front and easily accessible. Use plastic tabs in order to quickly turn to a section in the book.

Other Suggestions:

- Keep track of everything by adding an activity calendar to your book. You can easily add or change activity dates as you council session.
- Remember all of your FFA plans and responsibilities by keeping a "to do" list in the front of the notebook.
- Include in your book copies of the chapter constitution and bylaws program of activities Official Manual and Chapter names and phone numbers.

Meeting Responsibilities

As chapter secretary, it is your responsibility to make sure the chapter president has the list of unfinished business from the last meeting. An easy way to accomplish this is by highlighting those items on a copy of the minutes from the last meeting.

A list of unfinished business goes to the president so that he or she can prepare an agenda. Decide who will type up the agenda for the meeting. If you are not able to make a copy of the agenda for every member, take time to write the agenda on the chalkboard or on a large chart before the meeting begins. This allows every member to follow the agenda and know the business that is to be discussed at the meeting. The agenda should either follow the order of business shown here or one that better suits your chapter's needs

Order Of Business

1. Opening ceremony
2. Minutes of the previous meeting
3. Officer reports
4. Special features (speakers, awards, presentations)
5. Unfinished business
6. Committee Meetings
 - a. Standing\ Program of Activities
 - b. Special
7. Committee Reports
8. New Business
9. Degree or installation ceremonies
10. Closing Ceremonies
11. Entertainment, recreation, refreshments

Helpful Hint #1 The Chapter activity calendar can be used by all chapter members. Before the meeting, make enough copies of the upcoming month's calendar to distribute to all members. Not only will it help members remember dates, but it will also allow members to comment on any conflicts before the activity.

Sample Meeting Agenda

September 7, 1998

1. Opening ceremony
2. Minutes of August 11 meeting
3. Officer Reports
 - a. Treasurer's report
 - b. Other reports
4. Special features
 - a. School Board President Mariette Wilson
 - b. Washington Conference
Program video-Lorraine Sommers and
Matt Bixby
5. Unfinished business
 - a. Forestry team expenses to national FFA
convention
6. Committee meetings
 - a. POA committee meetings
7. Committee reports
 - a. POA committee reports
8. New business
 - a. School talent show
9. Degree and installation ceremonies
10. Closing ceremonies
11. Refreshments and recreation
 - a. Cider and donuts
 - b. Basketball

Taking Minutes

Minutes. What do you think when you hear that word? Although "exciting" may not be the first word that comes to mind, taking minutes at meetings can be exciting! It may seem like hard work, but learning how to take minutes efficiently turns what could be a difficult job into an easy, exciting one.

By definition, minutes are the record of business transacted at any FFA meeting. When completed and approved, they become an official FFA chapter record. In other words, you are responsible for writing an accurate history of your FFA chapter that, if kept neatly, can be referred to for years to come.

The following hints can make the job of taking

minutes easier:

- Remember that minutes are a record of what is done at a meeting, not everything that is said. They include motions and decisions made by the chapter, as well as highlights of reports given.
- Be prepared for each meeting with fresh sheets of paper and a pencil with a good eraser. Use pencils instead of pens because corrections are more easily made.

Here are the steps for taking accurate minutes:

1. First, write down the date and place of the meeting. Also, note whether this is a regular meeting or a special event, such as the annual banquet or a summer picnic.
2. Write down each motion, who makes it, who seconds it and record the resulting vote. Underline the name of the members who make or second motions, or are involved in discussion in the meeting.
3. Keep a summary of announcements made by committee chairs, advisors and special guests.
4. Be sure you get the names of those who volunteer for activities or committees. This list is valuable when the time comes to get things done.
5. Take attendance at every meeting and write down the total number of members and guests present.

Helpful Hint #2 Send a sheet of paper around the meeting room for all members to sign as a roll sheet for the meeting. Put the date at the top and transfer the attendance record to the FFA Membership Record sheet after the meeting.

Official Minutes

Of course, you won't file the minutes that you scribbled on notebook paper in your Secretary's Book. Soon after the meeting, while everything is fresh in your mind, gather your notes and prepare to make a final set of minutes. This is the copy that will be filed in your Secretary's Book.

Double check the minutes for perfect grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Little mistakes can ruin the appearance of the entire document. Ask your advisor or English teacher to read over a draft before you prepare the final copy. Using a typewriter or word processor will help you produce an impressive set of minutes. Your final set of minutes must always be approved by the chapter members in order to be official. At the next meeting, you should read aloud, or pass around copies of the minutes for members to approve. Any corrections plus the date on which the minutes are approved, go at the bottom of your final copy. The chapter president signs the approved minutes and you file them in your Secretary's Book

The following example is a complete set of minutes.

Sample Meetings Minutes

The September 7, 1998, meeting of the Hometown FFA Chapter was called to order by Emily Buxton, chapter president, with the opening ceremonies at 7:30 p.m. in the high school auditorium. Fifty-five members were present. Guests were Hometown FFA Alumni President Dwayne Siekman and the School Board President Brenda Correll.

Minutes of Previous Meeting:

The minutes of the August 11 meeting were read by Joe Shultz, chapter secretary. Craig Wiget moved to accept them as read. Seconded by John Miley. Motion passed.

Officer Reports:

Treasurer Bob Sommers reported that the chapter has \$400 in First Big Bank. FFA dues of \$10 need to be paid by October 12. Reporter Julie Chance said that four newspaper articles have been published since August 11. President Emily Buxton gave a presentation on the state FFA camp she and the other officers attended July 24-27 in Capitol City.

Special Features:

School Board President Mariette Wilson explained school board policies for student organizations. Lorraine Sommers and Matt Bixby gave a presentation and showed a video on their experiences at the Washington Conference Program.

Unfinished Business

The Secretary announced that the motion made at the August 11 meeting by Wally Hendrickson that the chapter pay one third of the costs for the forestry team to compete at the national FFA convention, seconded by Kris Jacobs, postponed until this meeting, was now on the floor in the debatable form. After remarks from the chapter treasurer and advisor, the motion passed.

Committees

The chapter meeting recessed into Program of Activities committee meetings. After the recess, all POA committee chairs reported to the chapter (written reports are attached).

New Business

Greg Dague moved that a school talent show on January 23 be sponsored to raise money for chapter activities. Second by Jason Sharp. Following considerable discussion, Lesley King moved to refer the motion to a committee of three appointed by the chair to research this idea and report back at the next meeting. Kellie Warner seconded the motion. Motion passed. The committee is: Abby Henry, Holly Bentley and Shannon Wilcox (chair).

Lorraine Thomas moved that the chapter invite former members to attend a special chapter 25 Anniversary Review to be held November 30 at 7:00 pm. John Goff seconded the motion. Motion carried. Dan Schroer volunteered to organize the event.

Lisa-Marie Ehlerding moved to adjourn. Second by David Andre. Motion carried. The closing ceremonies were conducted. Refreshments provided by the alumni were served.

Respectfully submitted,



Joe Shultz, Chapter Secretary

Minutes approved, October 10, 1998



Emily Buxton, Chapter President

Membership Records

Chapter membership lists are important. However, names and addresses aren't the only items needed for complete membership records. A record of degrees and awards that members receive as well as committees they served on and offices they held are all important and should be kept up to date.

Without good records, it's almost as if these things never happened. These records will also help members when it is time to apply for degrees and awards.

Good record keeping is an easy skill to acquire but it takes organization. Once you have your basic membership records sheet prepared, all you have to do is use it regularly.

Steps To Keeping Good Records

1. Take a notebook to chapter activities. Write down who is there and who is doing what. This information can easily be transferred to the official membership records.
2. Circulate an attendance sheet at meetings or fill in the correct space in the membership records as each member arrives.
3. If you have access to a computer, learn how to use it. It can save you time and your records will be neater and more accurate.
4. Make poster size version of the chapter membership records sheet. Use it as an agricultural classroom wall chart. Assign the junior secretary or another member the responsibility of keeping it up to date using the records from your book. This allows members to easily check on their own progress and inform you of any errors.

Membership record sheets for you to copy and use are in the back of this book. Feel free to use them or to develop your own. Remember to include members' names, degrees, offices, committee activities, and dues.

A recommended system of some of the most

commonly used symbols along with a record example are shown below and on the next page.

Symbols

P	Present
A	Absent
E	Excused
GH	Greenhand Degree
CH	Chapter FFA Degree
ST	State FFA Degree
AM	American FFA Degree
CC	Committee Chair
CM	Committee Member
PR	President
VP	Vice President
SC	Secretary
TR	Treasurer
RE	Reporter
SE	Sentinel

Helpful Hint #3 As you organize meeting minutes, transfer committee assignments made during the meeting to the FFA Membership Records sheet. This will help to keep records of committee assignments up to date.

Sample FFA Membership Records

FFA Membership Record					
Name	Dues Paid	Highest Degree Held	Office	Years in FFA	Committee Assignments
Matt Bixby	Y-9/98	CH	VP'97;SE'96	4	CC 97-98;CM 96-97
Lucy Fernandez	Y-8/98	ST	PR'98;TR'97	4	CC 98-99;CM 96-98
Darius Howard	GH			2	CM 98-99
Terry Jackson	Y-10/98	GH		2	CM 97-99
Chris Robinson	Y-8/98	CH	TR'98	3	CC 98-99;CM 97-98
Jan Schmidt	Y-9/98			1	CM 98-99
Laura Wong	CH	SE'92		3	CC 98-99;CM 97-98

FFA Membership Record														
Monthly Meetings											Chapter Activities			
8/98	9/98	10/98	11/98	12/98	1/99	2/99	3/99	4/99	5/99	6/99	BBQ			
P	P	A/E									P			
A/E		P	P								P			
A		P	P								P			
P		A	P								P			
P		A/E	P								P			
P		P	P								A/E			

Correspondence

Writing and sending invitations, letters, requests for information and thank-you notes on behalf of the chapter is an important part of your job. The way the letters look can make or break your chapter's image, and since you sign them, they reflect on you as well. Learn how to send correspondence that makes a great impression, for the chapter and for you!

Good letters:

- Have a clear introduction, main body and conclusion.
- Are free from errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation. Corrections are invisible.
- Are neatly typed or word processed.
- Are free from slang or inappropriate language.
- Are sent on the appropriate stationary. For most chapter business, this means official FFA stationary. You may also use the FFA Week logo for your stationary.
- Give each message quickly, completely, and accurately. Avoid phrases like "at the present time" or "at this point in time" when you mean "now." Why use four or five words to do the job of one?
- Are written especially for the people who will be reading them. Letters to business people should have a different tone than recruitment letters for eighth grade students.
- Follow an accepted business letter format. For examples of these formats, check a typing manual or Webster's Secretarial Handbook. Short letters may be double spaced throughout. Longer letters are double spaced between paragraphs and single spaced between sentences.

Before you send correspondence out, make an editing checklist to make sure it's perfect!

Checklist

- Are names spelled correctly?
- Is grammar correct?
- Are all dates and times accurate?
- Does it do what you want it to?
- Is all spacing correct?
- Does it look professional?

If you have doubts about any of the above questions, have an English teacher look it over to suggest improvements.

Also, make a copy of each letter you send for future reference and to help next year's secretary.

The following pages show examples of correspondence.

Helpful Hint #4 Be sure thank-you letters and other correspondence are sent promptly. Try to get correspondence mailed two to four weeks before an event and thank-you letters mailed the week following the event. This will ensure future participation and support of sponsors.

Sample Invitation

100 Freedom Way
Town, ST 11221
September 8, 1998

The Honorable _____
The State Assembly
Capitol City, ST 12345

Dear Representative or Senator _____:

The Hometown High School FFA Chapter will celebrate its 25th anniversary on November 30, 1998 at 7:00 p.m. with a banquet honoring chapter members and supporters of their achievements.

As an FFA member at Hometown High School, you were active in numerous contests and activities. We invite you to participate in our banquet as our featured speaker, discussing the influence FFA has had on your career.

I would appreciate it if you or your staff could contact me as soon as possible at the address above or at 222-333-5555 between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. regarding this invitation.

Thank you for considering our request. We hope you will be able to speak at our banquet.

Sincerely yours,



Kellie J. Warner
Hometown FFA Chapter Secretary

Sample Thank You

100 Main Street
Best, ST 10101
January 2, 1993

Ms. Heidi Gensen
Sales Manager
Saverite Stores
324 Main Street
Here, ST 43215

Dear Ms. Gensen:

On behalf of the members of the Hometown FFA Chapter, I would like to thank you for your store's generous support of our New Year's dinner.

Saverite's donations of food, drink and party supplies made our dinner possible. Your help contributed greatly to the success of our event.

Thank you again for your help and support. Please accept the enclosed certificate as a token of our appreciation.

Sincerely,



Kellie J. Warner
Hometown FFA Chapter Secretary

enclosure

Sample Annual Report Introduction

(written by chapter secretary)

The Hometown FFA Chapter has had a full and exciting year. Highlighting the year were many trips that allowed FFA members to learn while experiencing different areas of the country. Emily Buxton and Joe Shultz attended the FFA Washington Conference Program July 7-12. Their expenses were paid by full scholarships from the Hometown FFA Alumni. The Hometown Forestry Judging team won a silver award at national FFA convention in Kansas City, Missouri, in November. This was the highest placing a team from our state has ever received. In May, the chapter's agricultural sales team earned second place at the state contest.

But, there are more than just a few accomplished members in our chapter. Throughout the school year, FFA members competed in leadership contests, worked to improve their SAE programs, gave Food For America presentations to elementary school students, held a teacher luncheon during National FFA Week and much more.

The story of the Hometown FFA Chapter is told through officer and committee reports included in this annual report.

References and Records

This section of your book is important in that it contains reference materials and records. These reference materials will be useful when completing correspondence and when writing your annual report. It is also where you keep copies of the correspondence you've sent.

Some materials you'll need to include are:

- Names, addresses and phone numbers of:
 - Chapter Officers
 - Regional or District Officers
 - State Officers
 - National Officers
- Important phone numbers of:
 - Alumni members
 - Sponsors
- Membership records
- Minutes of chapter meetings
- Chapter Program of Activities
- Committee assignments for POA
- Officer and committee reports
- Chapter calendar
- Chapter point system
- Copies of correspondence sent and received

You only need to file one copy of each letter. If the same letter is sent to several people, make one copy and write "**copies to:**" at the bottom of the page.

**FFA Chapter Officers
Names & Addresses
19__ - 19__ Year**

President:

Vice President:

Secretary:

Treasurer:

Reporter:

Sentinel:

Reports

Written reports should be prepared monthly by all Program of Activities and special committee chairs. They should summarize all meetings and any actions taken by the committees. The treasurer's report must be given at each meeting and filed in your Secretary's Book. Other officers may also be required to give monthly reports. Collect and file these reports as well. When presented at chapter meetings, these reports keep members informed of what their chapter leaders are doing. The written reports also serve as a valuable chapter guide for future officers and committee chairpersons, so be sure to keep them filed properly.

As secretary, you collect these reports and file them by month, office or committee in the Secretary's Book. Sometimes your fellow members may need a reminder or two to get their reports done. Reminding them is your job.

You are not responsible for retyping or editing the reports, just collecting and filing them. However, encouraging typewritten reports is suggested.

Annual Chapter Report

Each officer and POA chair also prepares an annual written summary at the end of their term of office or chairmanship. These summaries can then be combined with their other monthly reports into an annual chapter report. Copies of the annual report may be given to administrators, alumni, parents, and members. It can serve as a valuable public relations and informational tool that will allow you to promote your chapter's activities.

You'll need to write both a secretary's report, an introduction to the report and edit the other final reports before combining them into the annual report.

Sample reports are located on the following pages. Share them with your fellow chapter leaders so they have a better understanding of what's unexpected.

Helpful Hint #5 At your first meeting of the year, explain officer reports to your fellow officers. Pass along the samples and encourage them to ask if they have questions. Planning ahead for the reports will save lots of time when you are trying to compile your annual report.

Helpful Hint #6 Laminate pages in your Secretary's Book that you will be taking out and using frequently. This will preserve the page for your year-long use.

Officer Report

Period covered: September 1 - October 7, 1998

Reporter

The Town Times published an article on September 5 about FFA activities planned for the new school year and a feature story about Troy Burchetts' SAE, describing his work at the Red Rose flower shop. Chapter President Emily Buxton and secretary Joe Shultz were interviewed by Andrea Chambern, Channel 10 "Around Town" program host, for a special segment on young leaders. A bulletin board highlighting FFA summer activities is in the main hallway of the high school.

Respectfully submitted,

Bridgett Long
Hometown Chapter Reporter
October 7, 1998

Committee Report

Period Covered: October 15 - November 15, 1998

FFA Winter Break Party Special Committee

Committee members Tricia Reynolds, George Heines and Julie Wilson met on November 1 during homeroom in the school library. We recommend that the party be held on December 17 at 5:00 p.m. at the Olde World Pizza Parlor. If 30 chapter members attend, we will be given a separate room. The pizza will cost \$9 each and we'll need one pizza for every four people. Drinks are included with the pizzas. The Alumni will pay for the first nine pizzas, or \$81 of costs. We suggest that if more than 36 people attend, everyone contribute \$1 to pay for more pizzas and garlic bread.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Yokum
Winter Break Committee Chair
November 15, 1998

FFA Chapter Secretary Minutes

Date: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____

Type of Meeting: _____

Officer Conducting: _____

Attendance: _____

Approval of Previous Minutes:

Officer Reports:

Special Features:

Unfinished Business:

Committee Meetings/Reports:

New Business:

Motion to Adjourn

Time: _____

Submitted by: _____