



runningsports

Sport England supporting clubs and volunteers

# the role of the chairperson



# what is runningsports?

The runningsports programme has been created, and is funded, by Sport England for the benefit of volunteers working in sport.

The runningsports programme provides products and services in a variety of formats to support the work undertaken by volunteers and sports development officers. From Role Outlines, Top Tips and Quick Guides through to workbooks, workshops, e-learning and qualifications, the range of resources supports three key themes of club and volunteer development:

- governance and administration
- finance and funding
- volunteers and volunteer management.

For further information about runningsports, visit

**[www.runningsports.org](http://www.runningsports.org)**

or call 0800-363 373.



Throughout this Quick Guide, reference is made to 'clubs'. This term is used to include all sports organisations, such as leagues, county and area associations and other community groups, that provide opportunities, whether in an organised setting or a more informal environment.

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## role of the chairperson

Many clubs are governed by voluntary members, and use committees and meetings to assist in their management. This Quick Guide gives information on the structure of such committees and the role of the chairperson.

The chairperson will normally be elected either from the entire organisation's membership or from those who sit on the executive or management committee. In the executive role, the chairperson not only chairs the meetings but also acts as principal officer throughout the year, making decisions when the need arises in consultation with other committee members.

In addition to the chairperson, many clubs have a president. This is usually within a federation, which comprises a small number of separate, self-governed clubs. Sometimes, the same person may hold both positions of chairperson and president. The president has little or no involvement in the day-to-day affairs of the club and may attend meetings in a neutral and uncommitted capacity. This enables the group to conduct a discussion, and having an impartial person in the chair is

particularly useful in negotiations where the chairperson acts as a conciliator between two parties trying to resolve some kind of disagreement. Of course, if the club has a separate president, then he or she may undertake these functions. The president would chair or preside at general meetings, especially the annual general meeting.

If the president chairs the general meetings, the chairperson is able to represent his or her personal views and those of the committee. This way, the members will feel that they have a neutral person in the chair who they can trust to give them a fair hearing if they disagree with the committee.

### A good chairperson will be:

- well informed about the activities of the club and its current financial position
- actively involved in developing an action plan for the club
- able to represent the organisation at local, regional and national levels

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- able to chair committee meetings and manage the general meetings so that everybody has a chance to present their views
- well prepared and well informed about the agenda of the meeting and the items to be covered
- able to keep a debate focused, avoiding any deviations
- able to ensure that planning and budgeting for the future are carried out in accordance with the wishes of the members
- unbiased, impartial and, if personally involved in a matter, prepared to give up the chair during that particular discussion
- a good listener, who is able to summarise the main points of a discussion
- able to communicate clearly and concisely to avoid confusion
- conversant with the constitution and standing orders of the club, and with recommended procedure for the conduct of meetings
- diplomatic, helpful and able to get the best out of the other committee members
- able to maintain the harmony of the group, even when there is disagreement about the proposed course of action.

## term of office

A term of office is sometimes governed by the Articles of Association, and clubs should check their existing rules before deciding on the length of appointment.

The chairperson's term of office is usually governed in one of two ways. One way is to make it a once-in-a-lifetime appointment, for one year only. The alternative is to elect the most capable person and to allow that person to remain in office for as long as he or she continues to be re-elected.



The Annual System	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It prevents an individual from becoming too powerful and influential.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each new secretary takes time to acquire knowledge and experience.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It rewards long service.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As the chairperson begins to establish the requirements of the position, he or she is replaced.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It saves one person from having to carry the responsibility continuously.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It can encourage inconsistency and instability in the club when constantly faced with change.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The club gradually acquires a pool of skilled individuals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The chairperson may not gain any detailed knowledge of the work of the club, which might increase the power and influence of those who do remain in office for long periods (eg the secretary, treasurer or other staff).</li> </ul>

Having a Longer-term Chairperson	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Familiar with the workings of the club and can provide leadership with continuity and consistency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An individual can build up a wealth of knowledge, experience and authority, which may result in an club being 'controlled' by its chairperson and therefore not open to new ideas or ways of working.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The chairperson becomes skilled at chairing meetings, which may improve the quality of the meetings and the decisions made.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The club might become so dependent on the chairperson that it has difficulty finding a replacement when he or she retires.</li> </ul>

Neither system is perfect. A compromise that allows key members of the committee to be elected for a maximum period (eg not more than four years), can preserve the best of both.

A club needs to think carefully about its objectives before deciding to replace the chairperson on a regular basis.

The only circumstance in which this might be considered essential is when the club is a federation, comprising a small number of separate self-governing organisations. In this case, it may be necessary to ensure each organisation, in turn, appoints the chairperson for a relatively short time so that no one federation member can dominate its affairs.

# the committee

The committee is the workhorse of a club, and it is important that it is structured appropriately to meet the club's aims and objectives. The committee is led by the chairperson.

Consider what roles you want the committee members to undertake before you recruit people into those particular posts. This way, you can ensure you have the right people with the right skills to do the work. While this requires investment of time and effort at the beginning, you will have a much more effective and competent committee in the longer term. **runningsports** has a range of Role Outlines that can be downloaded and adapted to meet the needs of your club.

The club should have an action plan with a very clear vision of what it is trying to achieve. The plan will create the pathway for future performers, volunteers, coaches and officials who will help to keep your sport going in 10 and 20 years' time.

For more help in creating an action plan for your club, check out the *Planning Your Club's Future* Quick Guide and the **runningsports** 'Action Planning for Your Club' workshop.

The committee will need to hold regular meetings to discuss club business; these can be divided broadly into:

- **Items for information** – these relate to events that have already happened or decisions already made. Verbal or written reports are given to inform other members, who then have the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification.
- **Items for debate** – these relate to future events and enables the whole team to discuss the issues and develop options for their resolution. Consultation with members often results in a better outcome, commitment to, and ownership of, the action to be taken.

Committee meetings can be less formal than general meetings, provided committee members do not take advantage of the informality to disrupt the meeting. The chairperson should deal with minor disruptions positively, but more formal meeting procedures should be adopted if the disruption becomes difficult to resolve.

Most people have some idea of how a meeting should be run, and many successful meetings are run in a low-key way, with informal ground rules. Larger clubs, however, use formal rules (eg standing orders) when conducting a meeting.

# meetings

Meetings provide an opportunity for members to make their point and obtain consensus or authority to put it into action. However, meetings can take up huge amounts of time, and it is therefore important that they are planned and carried out effectively.

As chairperson, you will need to think about:

- holding meetings only when necessary – if you only need to announce information, perhaps an email or a website post will do; save meetings for meaningful interactions
- topics to cover, the order in which to cover them and the environment in which you want to hold the discussion
- circulating discussion items and necessary information ahead of time – let people know what's expected of them at the meeting so they are prepared to come with their comments.



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## A good meeting will:

- motivate the team of volunteers
- allow the messages to be put across and clarification sought
- help forge good relationships between colleagues and members
- promote sound decision making
- clearly communicate issues
- define the outcome of decisions and action required.

## An unnecessary or unproductive meeting will:

- waste time and money
- be demotivating and frustrating for members
- diminish the status of important meetings
- have no constructive outcome or action and therefore prevent the club from running effectively.

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As chairperson, it is your role to:

- make initial introductions and welcome new members
- set out the purpose of the meeting and any outcomes it is expected to deliver
- advise what time the meeting will end
- state any ground rules
- check that everyone has the relevant papers
- review and approve previous meeting minutes
- ask members present to declare if any item on the agenda represents a conflict of interest to them
- strike a balance between keeping the discussion moving forward and ensuring that everyone who wants to speak has an opportunity to do so

- allow points of view to be expressed
- hold discussions
- draw conclusions
- agree actions.

Whenever possible, confirm a decision by common consent of the whole meeting, rather than by a majority vote. To get this consensus, round off the discussion by saying, 'Is it agreed then...?' or 'I take it we are all in favour of...?', then restate the decision and wait a few seconds to give everybody a final opportunity to voice any opposition.

Decision making by consensus keeps the committee united and helps to prevent later complaints along the lines of: 'I didn't agree with the decision' or 'I didn't get a chance to have my say'.

More information on how to run meetings can be found within the **runningsports Effective Communication** Quick Guide.



# questionnaires and self-assessments

## influencing questionnaire

This questionnaire should help you to discover how you influence people.

Reflect on each of the following items below and select a score that best represents how you generally behave when you are influencing (or attempting to influence others).

For each of the statements below, choose an answer from 0–4 and place the number in the corresponding score box.

0 = 'I never do this'

1 = 'I rarely do this'

2 = 'I sometimes do this'

3 = 'I often do this'

4 = 'I always do this'

No.	Item	Score
1	I fully express my personal values when I talk to others.	
2	I work hard to ensure that aims and objectives are absolutely clear.	
3	I try to find out exactly what sort of help other people need.	
4	I excite other people's imagination by communicating images of how the future should be.	
5	I use rational argument to make points.	
6	I am prepared to make a fuss to get things done.	
7	I get myself into formal positions of power and influence.	
8	I take great care to educate others so they can understand what I am thinking.	
9	I encourage and support people with good ideas.	
10	I am empathetic when expressing what I believe in.	

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No.	Item	Score
11	I make sure that people understand the objectives they should strive to achieve.	
12	I help other people to solve their own problems.	
13	I am good at vividly communicating what the future could be like.	
14	I carefully collect data to demonstrate the validity of my case.	
15	I push other people to give me support.	
16	I take steps to acquire formal authority to enable me to implement my plans.	
17	I encourage people to learn new ways of thinking.	
18	I support those people who want to make changes for themselves.	
19	I clarify to the other person what I believe is important to me.	
20	I carefully monitor the performance of others who are working with me.	
21	I help people find effective answers to problems that concern them.	
22	I am able to communicate what needs to be done and create a better future.	
23	I ensure that my views are based on demonstrable facts.	
24	I 'lean on' people who are not pulling their weight.	
25	I acquire formal authority to give me more clout.	
26	I ensure that people are given training.	
27	I go out of my way to encourage people who are struggling to change things for themselves.	
28	I have a clear code of principles that I communicate to others.	
29	I make sure that I check on other people's performance.	

No.	Item	Score
30	I help people find answers to their own problems.	
31	I strive to inspire other people by the way I present my ideas.	
32	I take great care to present sound arguments logically.	
33	I use psychological pressure to get what I want.	
34	I try to acquire formal authority and responsibility for getting things done.	
35	I use education as a way of opening people's minds.	
36	I give moral support to people who want to make changes.	



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### Answer grid

Transfer your scores from the questionnaire to the grid below by adding up the total score for each row and inserting into the total column. Look at your totals – where is your highest score? This is your predominant 'style'.

Question	Score	Question	Score	Question	Score	Question	Score	Total	Style
1		10		19		28			I
2		11		20		29			II
3		12		21		30			III
4		13		22		31			IV
5		14		23		32			V
6		15		24		33			VI
7		16		25		34			VII
8		17		26		35			VIII
9		18		27		36			IX

### Style explanations

Your profile gives you the opportunity to think about how you influence other people. Nine distinct influencing styles are described below. Consider each and identify those styles that you should develop further on an action planning sheet. It may be helpful to discuss your profile with another person who can help you to consider how to increase your skills.

#### I Value-driven style

You have deeply held beliefs about what is good and bad, important and unimportant.

#### II Goal-setting style

You ensure that aims and objectives are clearly understood by all concerned and direct effort towards achievement.

#### III Need-fulfilment style

You are concerned with being practically helpful. You identify others' needs and show how these can be fulfilled.

#### IV Visioning style

You are aware of the 'bigger picture' and can see beyond the immediate detail and task in hand.

**V Rational presentation style**

You are good at argument and debate. Your facts are valid. You collect data, evaluate information, build a logical case and present sound arguments.

**VI Pushing/driving style**

You are influential because you use weight to cajole, demand, insist or push people to act differently.

**VII Institutionalising style**

You believe in obtaining formal authority to create a power base. You want to obtain powerful positions and build a legitimate role.

**VIII Educating style**

You expose people to new ideas, experiences, concepts, possibilities or inner reflections.

**IX Supporting style**

You encourage people to identify needs, evaluate opinions, formulate action plans and take incentives into account.



## chairperson's self-assessment

Circle 'Yes' or 'No' for each question.

1	Do you check that items from previous meetings have been actioned?	Yes	No
2	Do you read meeting papers thoroughly and make margin notes?	Yes	No
3	Do you set objectives and prioritise the agenda accordingly?	Yes	No
4	Do you start on time?	Yes	No
5	Do you set ground rules at the start of the meetings?	Yes	No
6	Are you clear and specific?	Yes	No
7	Do you adhere to the agenda?	Yes	No
8	Do you ensure others are clear, specific and to the point?	Yes	No
9	Do you allow opportunity for discussion?	Yes	No
10	When several people want to speak, do you indicate the order?	Yes	No
11	Do you summarise discussions, where appropriate?	Yes	No
12	Do you listen and question?	Yes	No
13	Do you ensure decisions are taken?	Yes	No
14	Do you clarify who has the responsibility for actioning decisions?	Yes	No

If you answered 'Yes' to 10 or more questions, you are actively influencing meetings to be smooth running and productive. Well done!

If you answered 'Yes' to fewer than 10 questions, try to address these areas.

## committee member's self-assessment

Circle 'Yes' or 'No' for each question.

1	Do you action all items from the previous meeting that are your responsibilities?	Yes	No
2	Do you read the agenda and papers in advance and make margin notes?	Yes	No
3	Are you clear and concise? Do you keep to the point?	Yes	No
4	Do you state your views?	Yes	No
5	Are your suggestions constructive?	Yes	No
6	If you disagree, do you say so and speak against?	Yes	No
7	If something or someone is unclear, do you ask for clarification?	Yes	No
8	If you have insufficient information on which to make a decision do you ask for more information?	Yes	No
9	If called upon to do something you don't want to do, do you say no?	Yes	No
10	Do you actively participate in the decision-making process?	Yes	No
11	Are you an active and influential participant in meetings?	Yes	No

If you answered 'Yes' to seven or more questions, you are making an active contribution to effective meetings. Well done!

If you answered 'Yes' to fewer than seven questions, try to address these areas.

## glossary of terms

**Annual general meeting:** A yearly meeting of members for holding elections and reporting the club's business conducted during the previous 12 months.

**Articles of Association:** These are regulations governing the relationships between the shareholders and directors of the company, and are a requirement for the establishment of a company by law. Together with the memorandum of association they form the constitution of a company.

**Chairperson/chairman/chair:** The person appointed to oversee the business of a club and its meetings, and to keep order among its members. He or she has overall control, gives direction, keeps focus and provides structure. The chairperson's ultimate responsibility is to take decisions on behalf of the committee following consultation with its members. He or she takes responsibility for the day-to-day management of the club.

**Constitution:** A written record of the principles that govern a club.

**Federation:** A collection of self-governing clubs.

**General meeting:** A meeting open to all members of a club to discuss an agreed agenda.

**Standing orders:** The rules that stipulate how business will be conducted.



# useful contacts

## **Sport and Recreation Alliance**

Burwood House  
14–16 Caxton Street  
London SW1H 0QT  
Tel: 020-7976 3900  
Website: [www.sportandrecreation.org.uk](http://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk)

## **Child Protection in Sport Unit**

NSPCC National Training Centre  
3 Gilmour Close  
Beaumont Leys  
Leicester LE4 1EZ  
Tel: 0116-234 7278  
Website: [www.thecpsu.org.uk](http://www.thecpsu.org.uk)

## **county sports partnerships**

For a complete list of county sports partnerships, check out the Sport England website at [www.sportengland.org](http://www.sportengland.org) and search for 'county sports partnerships'.

## **English Federation of Disability Sport**

SportPark  
3 Oakwood Drive  
Loughborough  
Leicestershire  
LE11 3QF  
Tel: 01509-227 750  
Website: [www.efds.co.uk](http://www.efds.co.uk)

## **National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA)**

The Tower  
2 Furnival Square  
Sheffield S1 4QL  
Tel: 0114-278 6636  
Website: [www.navca.org.uk](http://www.navca.org.uk)

## **National Council for Voluntary Youth Services**

3rd Floor  
Lancaster House  
33 Islington High Street  
London N1 9LH  
Tel: 020-7278 1041  
Website: [www.ncvys.org.uk](http://www.ncvys.org.uk)

## **national governing bodies of sport**

For a complete list of national governing bodies, check out the Sport England website at [www.sportengland.org](http://www.sportengland.org) and search for 'national governing bodies'.

## **SkillsActive**

Castlewood House  
77–91 New Oxford Street  
London WC1A 1DG  
Tel: 020-7632 2000  
Website: [www.skillsactive.com](http://www.skillsactive.com)

## **Sport England**

3rd Floor  
Victoria House  
Bloomsbury Square  
London WC1B 4SE  
Tel: 020-7273 1551  
Website: [www.sportengland.org](http://www.sportengland.org)

## **Sport Northern Ireland**

House of Sport  
2a Upper Malone Road  
Belfast BT9 5LA  
Tel: 028-9038 1222  
Website: [www.sportni.net](http://www.sportni.net)

**Sporting Equals**

1301 Stratford Road  
Hall Green  
Birmingham B28 9HH  
Tel: 0121-777 1375  
Website: [www.sportingequals.com](http://www.sportingequals.com)

**sports coach UK**

Chelsea Close  
Off Amberley Road  
Armley  
Leeds LS12 4HP  
Tel: 0113-274 4802  
Website: [www.sportscoachuk.org](http://www.sportscoachuk.org)

**sportscotland**

Doges  
Templeton on the Green  
62 Templeton Street  
Glasgow G40 1DA  
Tel: 0141-534 6500  
Website: [www.sportscotland.org.uk](http://www.sportscotland.org.uk)

**Sport Wales**

Sophia Gardens  
Cardiff CF11 9SW  
Tel: 0845-045 0904  
Website: [www.sportwales.org.uk](http://www.sportwales.org.uk)

**Sports Leaders UK**

23-25 Linford Forum  
Rockingham Drive  
Linford Wood  
Milton Keynes MK14 6LY  
Tel: 01908-689 180  
Website: [www.sportsleaders.org](http://www.sportsleaders.org)

**Volunteering England**

Regents Wharf  
8 All Saints Street  
London N1 9RL  
Tel: 0845-305 6979  
Website: [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

**Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation**

3rd Floor  
Victoria House  
Bloomsbury Square  
London WC1B 4SE  
Tel: 020-7273 1740  
Website: [www.wsff.org.uk](http://www.wsff.org.uk)

**Youth Sport Trust**

SportPark  
3 Oakwood Drive  
Loughborough  
Leicestershire LE11 3QF  
Tel: 01509-226 600  
Website: [www.youthsporttrust.org](http://www.youthsporttrust.org)

# more help from runningsports

This Quick Guide is one of a series that has been created to provide information about some of the key sports volunteer roles, and information and solutions on topics that have an impact on sports volunteers.

Log on to the **runningsports** website to find everything you need to help you with:

- **governance and administration**
- **finance and funding**
- **volunteers and volunteer management.**

Network Members are able to download the guides for **free**. If you are already a Network Member, access the Quick Guides from the Network Member Intranet.

To become a Network Member, log on to the **runningsports** website and click on the 'Register as a Network Member' icon on the front page.

For further information on this or other titles in this series, contact **runningsports**:

- **telephone: 0800-363 373**
- **email: [info@runningsports.org](mailto:info@runningsports.org)**
- **website: [www.runningsports.org](http://www.runningsports.org)**



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