



*What's a Snippet?* Glad you asked! A Snippet is short article about meetings or parliamentary procedure. New snippets are released on the first day of every month at [www.agreatmeeting.com](http://www.agreatmeeting.com).



## Snippet #103 Executive Session

### Executive Session Q & A

1. *What is an executive session?*

A meeting or part of a meeting in which the deliberations are kept secret.

2. *Who can attend?*

Members of the group holding the meeting (if a board, only board members). Others can be invited to attend by majority vote, but can be asked to leave at any time.

3. *Why have an executive session?*

Executive sessions are usually held to protect the organization when holding discussions of a sensitive nature. Executive session is also sometimes used when members feel that those present will speak more honestly if they know that what they have to say will not be repeated. Members are bound to keep the discussion in confidence and are subject to discipline for violating the executive session.

4. *How do you initiate an executive session?*

During a meeting, a member can raise a Question of Privilege and interrupt the proceedings to request an executive session. It takes a majority vote, with no debate, to go into executive session, although this is usually handled by general consent. Executive session can also be adopted as part of an agenda.

5. *What about minutes of an executive session?*

If no action is taken in executive session, there are no minutes. You can also take action in executive session and then, upon returning to regular session, adopt a motion to remove the secrecy from the motions and place them in the regular minutes, keeping the deliberations confidential, and avoiding the need for executive session minutes. A final option is to take action in executive session and maintain the secrecy of the actions, in which case minutes of the executive session are written. At the next meeting, during executive session, the minutes are reviewed and adopted. Place the approved minutes in a tamper-proof sealed envelope and file them with the regular minutes, as they are also an official corporate record.

*Recommendations for executive sessions:*

- Don't have an executive session unless you really need to ensure that the debate is kept confidential. Appropriate reasons include contract negotiations, personnel issues, disciplinary matters, or other sensitive items.
- Decide before returning to regular session whether or not the actions should be kept privileged. Either way, make sure everyone is clear to what extent the deliberations can be divulged.