Suggestions to help create “youth friendly” meetings
{Note: these suggestions came from several gatherings in 2000 of mentors involved with Youth Action Teams}

Meeting Preparation
- Do a thorough call around to get people there
- At some point, get youth to take responsibility for organizing meetings; e.g., teach phone tree skills, but be sure to monitor first efforts
- Tap into local resources
- Make sure people bring ideas and what to expect
- Routines are helpful: regular locations, regular times (e.g., every second Tuesday evening)
- Provide food
- It’s good to have a relaxed physical space; i.e., comfortable with couches

What to do – and not do at Meetings

Start of meeting
- Start with play; e.g., ice breakers to get people warmed up
- If there is nothing to be “meeting” about then don’t stick to play

Using agendas
- It’s good to have an agenda
- It’s even better to be able to let go of agenda and be creative
- Best of all: youth set the agenda
- Timing: have a set amount for business and stick to it (don’t go over); e.g., one hour for business and remainder for games, craft, open discussion, theatre
- Being issue focused can help build momentum

Planning
- Have youth research speakers on topics of interest to group and then make the arrangements to bring them in
- Plan special events - skiing, swimming
• Take home discussion to family or friends to be shared the following week
• Keep contact with adults/family - build an activity day where the family members are involved; also, give responsibility to parents
• Try to plan a schedule for a month or two ahead so everyone knows what is coming up
• Give responsibility for planning and follow up to youth
• Visiting other groups (e.g., other YATs) for skill swaps, play games, and to take action

Do’s ➔ things that work most of the time
• Mix up meeting time (decisions, planning, problem-solving) and play time
• Having fun; e.g., games, laughing lots, spontaneity
• Keep group journal
• Give youth opportunity to lead; e.g., ask if anyone wants to lead a game
• Meet group where they are at!!
• Give them ownership of ideas
• Consensus (most of the time), or agreeing on “common ground” (avoid majority rule)
• An active component to meeting, such as painting the room, preparing posters for the children’s fun day, etc. Or, have meetings as part of an activity, e.g., while shoveling gravel
• There is “safety” in routine; e.g., we always play, then talk, do some stuff, play some more
• Provide opportunity for people to tell their stories
• Theme based meetings are fun (use costumes)
• Acknowledging that members will come and go

Don’ts ➔ usually not a good idea
• Being inconsistent
• Disorganization in planning and setting up a meeting
• Squelching momentum
• Formal “Rogers Rules” style of meeting
• Not using consensus in smaller business type gatherings
• Using consensus in large group (i.e., instead, use principle of “common ground”)

Facilitating discussion
• If group is having difficulty listening ask yourself why?? i.e., are they bored? Is the topic pertinent?? Is the space hot or stuffy?? Are there other distractions?
• Use of talking stick or.... as a focus point for speaking and listening
• Check in to be sure all voices are being heard
• Youth facilitate the meetings
• Check in to find out how people are doing (right now in the meeting and/or with life in general)
• Opportunities to model different styles of facilitation and follow through
• Being aware of and appreciating what members' abilities are
• Sharing responsibility
• Learn effective communication
• Respect
• Listening
• Asking “good” questions

End of meeting
• Before end of meeting identify something that will be happening at the one coming up so there is something to look forward to
• Identify with group what was accomplished at gathering
• NOTE: reflection does not always need to be structured
• Finish with play