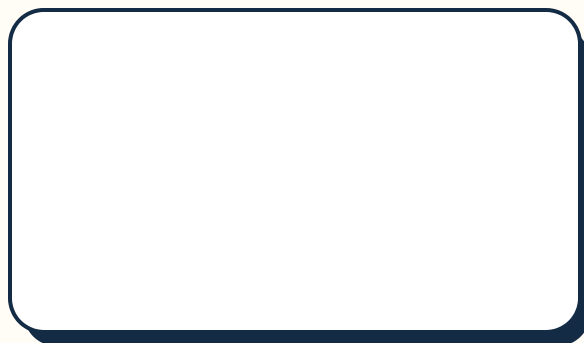


Case 19: What should Gia say in her two-minute comment?

Gia has two minutes to speak to the parks committee about the court lights, but her draft is three pages long.

On your own Read What happened and underline the sentence that says what item 4 proposes. About 4 minutes.



Gia and Mateo sit on a front stoop, each holding pages of notes.

Your role: You're the one holding the timer and listening for the request. **New skill:** Fit a request to the body's remit and time limit.

What happened

It is Tuesday, 5:40 p.m. The parks committee meets at 6. Item 4 on its agenda is a proposal to turn off the park's court lights at 8 p.m. The reason given is complaints about evening noise from nearby residents.

Gia, 21, wants to speak against item 4. It is her first time speaking at a public meeting. Each speaker gets two minutes. On Monday night, Gia wrote a three-page draft. When she reads page one out loud, it takes two minutes and forty seconds.

Mateo, 22, is timing her from a bench. He follows every word, but he cannot tell what she wants the committee to do. The draft also mentions a friend's private situation, and page two is about the bus. Everything Gia says will become part of the public record, along with her name.

Your question: What should Gia keep in her two-minute comment, and what should she cut?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example, then write your first guess in the box. About 5 minutes.

Agenda item An agenda item is one topic listed on a meeting’s official schedule of business.

En español: punto del orden del día

In this case: Item 4, “Evening court hours,” proposes turning off the court lights at 8:00 p.m. Its action is a committee recommendation to the full council.

Remit A remit is the set of matters that a committee or other body is responsible for and can act on.

En español: competencia

In this case: The parks committee can recommend court hours. It cannot change bus routes, so page two of Gia’s draft belongs with a different body.

Public record A public record is information a government keeps that anyone can ask to see, such as meeting comments.

En español: registro público

In this case: Comments and speakers’ names become part of the public record. That is why Gia leaves her friend’s private situation out of her comment.

Who is involved



Gia

Speaking at a public meeting for the first time

“I timed page one out loud. Two minutes forty. There are three pages.”



Mateo

Timing Gia’s practice run from a bench

“I followed all of it. I still couldn’t tell you what she wants them to do.”

Before you look at the evidence, what do you think Gia should say in her two minutes?

[illegible]

Reading passage

One request the committee can answer

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Agenda item:** An agenda item is one topic listed on a meeting's official schedule of business.
- **Remit:** A remit is the set of matters that a committee or other body is responsible for and can act on.
- **Public record:** A public record is information a government keeps that anyone can ask to see, such as meeting comments.
- **Proposal:** A proposal is a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet.
- **Decision-maker:** A decision-maker is the person or group with the power to make a particular choice.

The story: A practice run on a bench

At 5:40 p.m. on a Tuesday, twenty minutes before the parks committee meets, Gia is reading her public comment out loud to Mateo. Item 4 on the agenda proposes turning off the park's court lights and closing the lighted courts at 8 p.m., because nearby residents have complained about evening noise. Gia, who grew up in Fort Greene, wants to speak against it. It is her first time at a public meeting.

The rules are simple. Sign up by 5 p.m., speak for two minutes, and know that comments and speakers' names become part of the public record. Written comments may be sent in before the meeting too. Gia's problem is length. On Monday night, she wrote three pages. Page one alone takes two minutes and forty seconds.

Mateo is timing Gia from a bench, and he listens the way a committee member might. He follows all of it. He still could not tell anyone what she wants the committee to do. Instead of rewriting her draft, he asks one question. If they only remember one sentence, what is it? Whatever she answers, he says, that sentence goes first.

Your role is to hold the timer and listen for the request.

❓ Stop and think. Mateo asks what one sentence the committee should remember. Why is that more helpful than rewriting Gia's draft?

Cutting to the remit

An **agenda item** is one topic listed on a meeting’s official schedule of business. Item 4 is narrow: court lights and a closing time. Gia’s draft asks the committee not to close the park, which nobody has proposed. A **remit** is the set of matters that a committee or other body is responsible for and can act on. Page two, about the bus, is a real problem outside the parks committee’s remit. Case 10 taught you to send a problem to the office responsible, so the bus goes to a different office on a different day.

The new skill is fitting a request to the body’s remit and time limit. It builds on Case 4. There, the crew prepared a comment for a nonprofit board, and you learned that a **proposal** is a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet. You also learned that a **decision-maker** is the person or group with the power to make a particular choice. The agenda shows the chain. The committee makes a recommendation, and the full council decides.

Gia’s answer to Mateo’s question becomes the spine of the comment. Name item 4. Share what she counted: twenty or thirty people on the courts between 8 and 9. Explain why it matters: a lot of them work late. End with one request the committee can act on: keep the lights on until 9 on weekdays this summer.

The comment should also acknowledge the other side. A nearby resident wrote that the courts are good for the neighborhood but that late noise carries into their apartment, and they have kids with school in the morning. A request for 9 p.m. instead of 8 p.m. gives the committee a middle option.

Finally, Gia cuts her friend’s private situation. A **public record** is information a government keeps that anyone can ask to see, such as meeting comments. The story is her friend’s, not hers.

 **Stop and think.** How could Gia’s comment respond to the resident’s concern about noise?

How public comment works in real places

Every body sets its own rules. Seattle City Council, for example, takes spoken comments in person or by phone and written comments by email, and each speaker gets up to two minutes (Seattle City Council, no date listed). A Philadelphia guide walks residents through signing up, finding the agenda item and fitting a point into the time limit (The Philadelphia Citizen, March 10, 2025). Students have used this process too. In Newark, a student coalition brought its own research and specific requests to the school board (Chalkbeat Newark, November 26, 2025).

 **Stop and think.** Court users who work late may miss a 6 p.m. meeting. How could their views reach the committee?

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document and write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 6 minutes.

Evidence A | Meeting agenda

Item 4 on the parks committee agenda

Item 4. Evening court hours. Proposal to turn off the court lights and close the lighted courts at 8:00 p.m. Background: complaints about evening noise from nearby residents. Action: committee recommendation to the full council.

Look closely: Circle the item number, the proposed time and the action.

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Comment rules

How to comment at the meeting

Sign up to speak by 5:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting. Each speaker has 2 minutes. Written comments may be submitted before the meeting. Comments and speakers' names become part of the public record.

Look closely: Underline the deadline, the time limit and what becomes public.

What it shows

What it leaves out

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Draft

Gia’s three-page draft (excerpt)

“The park is really important to everyone and closing it is a terrible idea. I go there all the time with my friends... You guys never listen to young people. Please don’t close the park.”

Look closely: Find the request. Does it match what item 4 proposes?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence D | Written comment

A comment from a nearby resident

The courts are good for the neighborhood, but the noise late in the evening carries into our apartment. We have kids with school in the morning.

Look closely: What does this resident like, and what is the problem?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

Key idea: remit

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics, then answer the question in the box. About 7 minutes.

A **remit** is the set of matters that a committee or other body is responsible for and can act on. The parks committee can make a recommendation about court hours. It cannot change bus routes. That is why Gia's comment should ask for something the parks committee can do.

An **agenda item** is one topic listed on a meeting's official schedule of business. Each committee, council or board sets its own rules for who can speak, when and for how long. Seattle City Council is one real example. Its public comment page describes speaking in person or by phone and signing up before the meeting. Each speaker gets up to two minutes, and written comments can be sent by email.

A short comment can do four jobs. It names the agenda item, shares something the speaker observed, says why it matters and ends with a clear request. Before adding personal details, check whether comments become public. A **public record** is information a government keeps that anyone can ask to see, such as meeting comments. At Gia's meeting, comments and speakers' names become part of the public record.

Professional standards

Real source | American Society for Public Administration (ASPA)

ASPA Code of Ethics: 3. Promote democratic participation

"Inform the public and encourage active engagement in governance. Be open, transparent and responsive, and respect and assist all persons in their dealings with public organizations."

In plain words: ASPA's code asks people in public service to make it easy for every affected person to take part in decisions.

Question: The instructions allow written comments in advance. How does that help court users who cannot come at 6 p.m.?

Your answer

A written comment lets ____.

Sort the evidence

On your own Follow a comment from the speaker to the final decision and fill in each box. About 6 minutes.

Follow a comment from the speaker to the final decision. Which body hears it, which body decides, and whose concerns reach the room?

Turn off the court lights at 8 p.m.?

Who decides

Full council: takes the final action

Under which rule

Who lives with it

Your way in

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose the best opening sentence, explain why and fix the two marked phrases. About 6 minutes.

Gia has two minutes on item 4. Which opening sentence gives the committee the most to work with?

- ☐ A “The park is really important to everyone, and closing it is a terrible idea.”
- ☐ B “Good evening. I’m Gia, and I’m commenting on item 4, the proposal to turn off the court lights at 8 p.m.”
- ☐ C “You guys never listen to young people, so I hope tonight is different.”

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student’s first draft

Hi, my name is Gia and I have lived in this neighborhood my whole life. The park is really important to everyone and closing it is a terrible idea. I go there all the time with my friends and it’s one of the only free things to do around here. My friend works late and this is the only time she can play and **1** she’s been going through a lot at home. You guys never listen to young people. **2** Please don’t close the park.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

Grades 9–10

Your task

On your own Read the steps and fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 8 minutes.

Cut Gia's long draft into a 90-second comment, then write a note explaining what you cut and why.

Use: Gia's draft summary, the agenda and the Seattle comment page as a real example.

You'll make: 90-second comment plus a 100-word cutting note

Time: 50 minutes

- 1 Reread Gia's draft in Evidence C and item 4 in Evidence A.
- 2 Sort each part of the draft into Keep or Cut in the planner.
- 3 Rewrite the comment so Gia can read it aloud in 90 seconds or less.
- 4 Keep four parts: the item, one observation, why it matters and one request.
- 5 Leave out private details about other people.
- 6 Write a cutting note of about 100 words that gives a reason for each cut.
- 7 Time the comment aloud with a partner.

Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Keep

Cut

Gia's request in one sentence

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions, mark your level in each rubric row and write one change you made. About 6 minutes.

Does the comment keep the item, one observation, why it matters and one request?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Did you remove private details about other people?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Does the comment still sound like Gia?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Does your cutting note give a reason for each cut?	☐ Yes	☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ No facts.	☐ General claim about importance.	☐ One specific observation tied to the item.	☐ Observation plus acknowledgment of another perspective.
Reasoning	☐ Attacks the body.	☐ States a feeling only.	☐ Explains why the change matters.	☐ Weighs the concern and offers a middle path.
Audience & purpose	☐ Wrong body or no request.	☐ Request is vague.	☐ Names the item and a specific request.	☐ Request fits the body’s remit and includes a follow-up.
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Shortens only.	☐ Removes private details and adds a request.	☐ Explains each cut in terms of time, privacy and purpose.

One change I made after feedback

[illegible]

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question, then complete the sentence frames. About 8 minutes.

- 1** The parks committee cannot fix the bus problem. Who should get that question instead?

- 2** How could Gia's comment respond to the resident's concern about noise?

- 3** Court users who work late may miss a 6 p.m. meeting. How could their views reach the committee?

My take

My claim: ____.

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Talk about this case at home

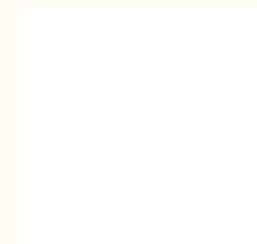
Case 19: What should Gia say in her two-minute comment?

In this case, Gia gets two minutes at a parks committee meeting to speak about a plan to turn off the court lights. Your student helped cut her three-page draft into a short comment with one clear request.

Questions to talk about

- 1 Who makes decisions about parks and other public spaces in a town or city?
- 2 What makes a short request easy for a listener to remember?
- 3 Why might someone leave a friend's story out of a public comment?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.