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Meetings 1: types of meeting

A

Word combinations with 'meeting'

arrange set up fix	a meeting	organize a meeting
bring forward		make a meeting earlier than originally decided
put back postpone		make a meeting later than originally planned
cancel		not have a meeting after all
run chair		be in charge of a meeting
attend		go to a meeting
miss		not go to a meeting

B

Types of meeting

Meetings come in all shapes and sizes, of course. Here are some types:

- **chat** (informal discussion) with colleagues at the coffee machine.
- **brainstorming** among colleagues: where as many ideas as possible are produced quickly, to be evaluated later.
- **project meeting / team meeting** of employees involved in a particular activity.
- **department/departmental meeting.**
- **meeting with suppliers**, for example to negotiate prices for an order.
- **meeting with a customer**, for example to discuss a contract.
- **board meeting**: an official, formal meeting of a company's directors.
- **Annual general meeting / AGM** (BrE); **annual meeting** (AmE): where shareholders discuss the company's annual report.
- **EGM**: extraordinary general meeting: a shareholders' meeting to discuss an important issue such as a proposed merger.

C

How was the meeting?

Some colleagues are discussing a meeting they have just come out of.

Anil: I thought it was very **productive**.

Juliet: Well, I thought it was a complete **waste of time**. I didn't hear anything I didn't already know.

Barbara: I agree with Anil. I felt we had some very **useful discussions**, and that we reached an agreement that was good for both sides. We certainly **covered a lot of ground**. It was incredible the number of things we got through.

Juliet: But there were too many **digressions**. John was **rambling** and kept **wandering off the point**. He just uses meetings as a chance to show off. Just like a lot of men: he just wanted to show how powerful he is and what a good talker he is.

Anil: But to be fair, the chair really **kept things moving**: she encouraged people to be brief and to **stick to the point** and we achieved a lot in a short time. Anyway, I learned a lot and I think they listened to what we had to say.

54.1 Replace the underlined expressions with appropriate forms of the verbs in A opposite. In some cases, more than one verb is possible.

A meeting of the Tennis Club Committee was (1) organized for 1 March, but not everyone could (2) go to it, so it was (3) delayed until March 31. One committee member said that this was too late, so eventually we (4) moved it to March 15. The chairperson (5) was in charge of it very efficiently, and we decided on some new membership rules. Only one committee member (6) did not go to the meeting.

54.2 Look at B opposite. At which type of meeting would you be most likely to hear each of these things?

- 1 I'm pleased to announce another good year for shareholders of this company.
- 2 I know this sounds crazy, but how about giving away 100,000 free samples?
- 3 Things in the sales department are getting out of control. We should all start making a real effort.
- 4 So, you think you can provide 10,000 a month at a unit cost of £4.90?
- 5 Have you heard? Suzanne is being fired: apparently her sales figures aren't good enough.
- 6 That's a deal then. Looking forward to working with you. I'm sure you won't be disappointed.
- 7 Amazingly, we're ahead of schedule on this project.
- 8 I recommend to shareholders that you accept Megabook's offer for our company.
- 9 As you know, Megabook wants to buy this company. As chief financial officer, what do you think of their offer, Saleem?

54.3 A management consultant is talking about meetings, using expressions from C opposite. Put what she says into a logical order.

- 1 point and rambling. And then there are those who want to show
- 2 moving. If they do this, it's amazing how much ground you can cover.
- 3 Of course, everyone wants meetings to be productive and achieve results. But from personal experience, we know that a lot of them are a waste of
- 4 off: to show how important and clever they are. The chair should keep things
- 5 the point. And we've all seen those annoying people who keep on wandering off the
- 6 time, and nothing is achieved. In order for discussion to be useful, people should not go off on digressions: they should stick to

Over to you

What sort of meetings do you go to in your school or organization? Are they useful?



Types of meeting



55

Meetings 2: the role of the chairperson

A Before the meeting



Hilary Rhodes is a management consultant who specializes in meeting skills:

‘A good **chairperson** has to be a good **organizer**. What they do before the meeting is as important as the meeting itself. They should make sure the **agenda** (the list of things to be discussed) is complete by asking those involved what should be on it and then **circulating** (distributing) it to everyone concerned. They should check the **venue**, making sure the room will be free, without interruptions, until the end of the meeting.’

B During the meeting

The chairperson should be a good **timekeeper**. They should start the meeting on time, without waiting for **latecomers**.

They should appoint a **minute-taker** to **take the minutes**, making sure that opinions and **action points** (where participants agree to do something) are noted.

They should make sure each point on the agenda is **allocated** the **time** it deserves and should keep to the **timetable**. When the time allocated to one point is up, the chair should make sure that discussion **moves on to the next point**, even if the issue has not been completely covered or **resolved** (decided).

The chair should make sure that each participant has the chance to **make their point**, and should deal **tactfully** with disagreements, making sure that each side feels their point of view has been noted. They should also try to avoid **digressions**, where people get off the point.

Finally, they should ensure the meeting **finishes on time**, or early.

C Follow-up

After some meetings, it’s necessary for the minutes to be circulated, especially if there are **action points** that particular people are responsible for.

At the next meeting, the chair should ask for the minutes to be read out and see if all agree that it is an **accurate record** of what happened, and see if there are any **matters arising** (any points from the last meeting that need to be discussed). And they should check what progress has been **made** on the **action points** from the previous meeting.

55.1 Replace the underlined phrases in this article with the correct expressions from A and B opposite.

I don't know how to chair a meeting!

I've been asked to chair a meeting about the Christmas office party, but I'm incredibly nervous as I've never chaired one before. Is there a secret for success?

You may never have chaired a meeting but as you've probably been to lots you'll have seen it done well and badly. Think about the things that please and annoy you and build on them. (1) Make sure everyone has the agenda well in advance, and check that you know enough about the participants and issues to be discussed. Arrange for the (2) room to be cool rather than warm; people will be less likely to go to sleep.

See yourself as a referee whose job it is to ensure fair play through careful watching and listening. You must ensure that the timid have a chance to (3) say what they want; deal (4) in a diplomatic way with the argumentative and to be kind to the (5) person you have asked to take notes. Getting that individual on your side is essential if you want the record to reflect your desired outcomes. It's normal to suggest

what should be left out of the minutes and how any difficult bits should be phrased. Make sure you stick to the (6) time you have allowed for each point and keep things moving by not letting people (7) wander off the subject. Get decisions made and recorded, even if it's only to postpone matters until the next meeting. If someone is being difficult, defuse things by offering to continue the discussion personally at a more appropriate time.

If the meeting is likely to be more than a couple of hours long, try to include a break at the mid-point; it acts as a marker and stops people getting restless.

Aim to leave everyone feeling they have had a chance to say what they wanted to say and gain lasting and well-deserved popularity by finishing (8) when you said the meeting would finish. ■

55.2 Look at A, B and C opposite. Match the verbs (1–7) with the nouns (a–g) that they go with.

- | | |
|-------------|---------------------|
| 1 take | a a minute-taker |
| 2 appoint | b the minutes |
| 3 circulate | c time |
| 4 allocate | d the agenda |
| 5 move on | e to the next point |
| 6 avoid | f on time |
| 7 finish | g digressions |

Over to you 

What do you think are the most important skills for someone chairing a meeting?

56

Meetings 3: points of view

A

Opening the meeting

Carla Eagleton, chief executive of Creative Advertising, is opening a meeting.

She could also have said:

It's about time we got started.

Let's begin, shall we?

Shall we make a start?

Let's make a start.

Let's get down to business.

OK, let's get started.

Then she says 'As you know, I've called this meeting to discuss the situation in the design department. The designers have a lot of freedom to work as they wish, but it seems that things are getting out of control ...'

She could also have said:

- As you are aware ...
- I've arranged this meeting to ...
- The purpose of this meeting is to ...
- The main objective is to ...

B

Inviting people to speak

Carla then uses some of these expressions.

Inviting someone to start:

- Would you like to open the discussion, Greta?
- Greta, would you like to kick off?
- Perhaps you'd like to get the ball rolling, Greta.

Asking for one person's opinion:

- What about you, Keith?
- What do you think about this, Keith?
- What are your feelings on this, Keith?
- What are your views on this, Keith?

Asking for everyone's opinion:

- What's the general feeling on this?

C

Making your point

The other participants use some of these expressions.

- a Head of human resources: I believe the design department needs a certain amount of freedom, but there are limits.
- b Head of design: As I see it, I can't run the design department as if it was the accounts department.
- c Chief financial officer: In my opinion, they're going much too far. I can't bear to think of the costs involved.
- d Senior designer: Of course, we are sensitive types and need to be given the freedom to work how we like.



Making your point

Other ways of making your point include:

- The way I see it ...
- Personally, I think ...
- Obviously ...
- It's clear to me that ...
- It looks to me as if ...

Note: You use **Of course** and **Obviously** to introduce an idea, but also to show that you think other people will be aware of it already. Be careful, as this can sound rude.

56.1 Which of these expressions from A opposite are correct? Correct the mistakes.

- 1 It's about time we get started.
- 2 Let's begin, let we?
- 3 Shall we make a start?
- 4 Let's do a start.
- 5 Let's get up to business.
- 6 I've call this meeting to ...
- 7 The purpose of this meeting is to ...
- 8 The main subject is to ...
- 9 As you are beware ...

56.2 Look at B opposite and make these invitations to speak less aggressive and more natural.

- 1 John, kick off.
- 2 Kay, open the discussion.
- 3 Len, get the ball rolling.
- 4 Monica, tell us what you think.
- 5 Nigel, give us your views.
- 6 Olive, what do you feel?

56.3 Match the sentence beginnings (1–5) with the correct endings (a–e). The sentences all contain expressions from C opposite.

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 1 The way | a I think that the prizes we win help us to attract and keep the best designers. |
| 2 Personally, | b as if the design people think of themselves as living on another planet. |
| 3 It looks to me | c I see it, you should be looking at what we produce, not at the time of day we produce it. |
| 4 It's clear to | d opinion, we have to think of the needs of each department. |
| 5 In my | e me that they set a very bad example to the other departments. |

Over to you



How freely can people express their feelings in your school or organization? Are people at all levels encouraged to say what they think? Are new employees asked for their opinions?

Meetings 4: agreement and disagreement

A

Discussion without argument?

Hilary Rhodes is talking about the importance of keeping calm in meetings:

'In a meeting, you **discuss** things. In the **discussion**, some people may **agree** with you. Others may **disagree**. They may have **differences of opinion** with you, but the important thing is to **keep calm** and remain **courteous**. It's OK to disagree, but it's not OK to be **impolite** or **rude** or to **lose your temper**.

An **argument** is when people disagree about something, perhaps becoming **angry**. **Your argument** is also the set of ideas that you use to **prove your point**: to show that what you are saying is true.'

Note: **Agree** and **disagree** are verbs (e.g. I agree with you, She disagrees with him, etc.). You cannot say ~~I am agree with you, She is disagree with him~~, etc.

B

Agreeing

Strong agreement:



- a **You're perfectly right**. The costs involved must be incredible.
- b **I couldn't agree more**. We got our latest recruits after we won the industry award for best advertisement.
- c **Precisely**. Creativity comes to some of our people in the middle of the night.
- d **Exactly**. We have to look at the company as one unit.
- e **Absolutely**. It's the output, not the input, that counts.



Mild agreement:

- f **You may be right there**. We're already ten per cent over budget.
- g **That's true, I suppose**. There must be some limits on when they work.
- h **I suppose so**. They seem to arrive and then go straight out again to eat.

C

Disagreeing

Mild disagreement:



- a **That's not really how I see it**. Everyone should be allowed to work in the way that's best for them.
- b **I don't really agree**. The prizes are important, but people would come to work for us anyway.
- c **I can't really go along with you there**. I think we need to see people at their desks actually working.
- d **I think you're mistaken**. If the designers get to work late, they don't go out for lunch.
- e **I'm afraid I can't agree with you there**. All you financial people do is worry about costs.

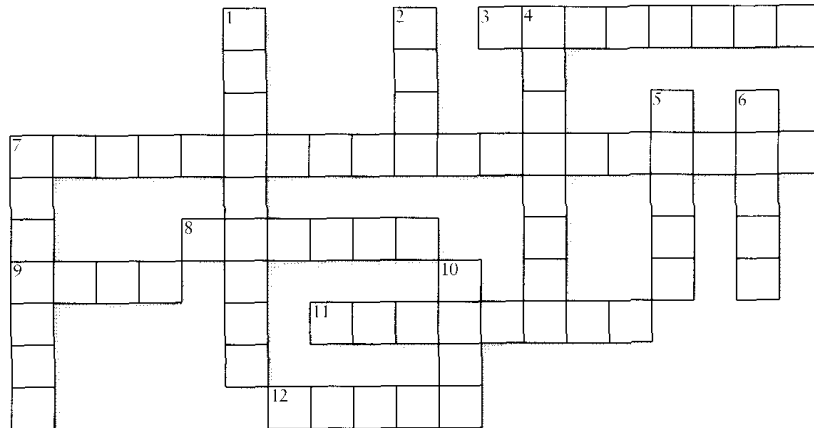


Strong disagreement:

- f **I'm sorry, but that's out of the question**. You can't expect people to go home at ten and come back at nine in the morning.
- g **I think you're wrong**. The design department's costs are justified because of our high quality work. The costs of the other departments are not justified.
- h **Of course not**. The latest figures I've seen show that the project is within budget.
- i **That's absurd**. There must be some sort of control on when people work.
- j **That's ridiculous**. Each department has very specific needs.

Note: Be careful with **That's absurd** and **That's ridiculous**. These expressions are very strong and can be offensive.

57.1 Complete the crossword using the correct form of words from A opposite.



Across

- 3 The opposite of 'agree'. (8)
- 7 What you have if you do not agree with someone. (10,2,7)
- 8 See 2 down.
- 9 Whatever you do, keep (4)
- 11 When people disagree, they have an (8)
- 12 and 6 down If you want to show you are right, you try to your (5,5)

Down

- 1 If you are pleasant and unaggressive, you are (9)
- 2 and 8 across If you become angry, you your (4,6)
- 4 The opposite of 'polite'. (8)
- 5 The noun corresponding to 'angry'. (5)
- 6 See 12 across.
- 7 If you talk about something, you it. (7)
- 10 Another word for 4 down. (4)

57.2 Match each statement (1–8) to an appropriate reaction (a–h) from B opposite.

- 1 And another thing: you should be looking at what we produce, not at the time of day we produce it.
- 2 Apart from that, if you try to control our working time, we'll lose our creativity.
- 3 Besides that, the prizes help us to attract and keep the best designers.
- 4 Even so, I agree that some limits should be set, even if my designers are very different from the accounts people.
- 5 Not only do we have these very high costs, but it also sets a very bad example to the other departments and they start going over budget too.
- 6 On the one hand, we have to think of the needs of each department. On the other hand, we have to think of the company as a whole.
- 7 In addition, our biggest current project looks as though it will be over budget too.
- 8 What's more, they leave for lunch two hours later.

57.3 Now match the statements (1–8) above with the reactions (a–j) in C opposite.

Over to you



What are you like in meetings? Do you often disagree with other people? Or do you prefer to avoid arguments?

58.1 Use complete expressions from A and B opposite to complete the dialogue, based on the prompts in brackets. The first one has been done for you.

A: We really will have to increase productivity.

B: (hedge: coming) but there are limits to how much we can ask of each individual employee. After all, if you look back at the records for ...

I hear where you're coming from on this, but there are limits to how much we can ask of each individual employee. After all, if you look back at the records for ...

A: (interrupt: stop) you have to admit things were different then. That was in the 1980s.

B: (hedge: understand) but that's not so long ago. The pressures were the same.

C: (refer back: go back) there are limits as to what we can ask from the creatives. They ...

A: (interrupt: interrupt) I hate that word 'creative'. A lot of them haven't created anything except chaos since they arrived in the company.

C: (check: imply) that the creative department has people who shouldn't be there?

58.2 Put the extracts from this newspaper report of a public meeting into the correct order.

1 a compromise or a consensus. There was total disagreement. After four hours of heated discussion, Ms Johns said, 'It's been a very interesting discussion but we're running

2 out of time and we're going to have to stop there. I'll let you know the committee's decision about the solution to this problem by the end of the month.

3 So unless anyone has anything else to add, I think that's it. A very useful meeting. Thank you all for coming.'

4 There were strong differences of opinion at last night's meeting to discuss banning cars from the centre of Newtown. The chair, Ms Yolanda Johns of the town council's transport committee, organized the meeting well. A lot of ground

5 saying it would improve the quality of life. It was not possible to come to

6 was covered and both sides of the argument were heard. To sum up the arguments, there were those who thought that banning cars would damage shops and businesses in the town. Others disagreed,

Over to you

Are compromises always possible? In your organization or school, are decisions based on compromise and consensus or are they imposed by the management?