

The background features a complex geometric design. On the left, there are overlapping, semi-transparent shapes in various shades of green and a dark blue-grey. These shapes create a sense of depth and movement. The right side of the image is a solid, bright lime green. Centered on this green background is the text '▶ Meeting' in a white, serif font.

▶ Meeting

Discussion

Meetings are not the same all over the world. Answer the following questions for your company, or your country or part of the world.

- Is punctuality important? Do meetings have to begin exactly on time?
- Is it important to reach an agreement quickly ('time is money'), or are getting to know people and reaching a consensus more important than speed?
- Who has the power to make decisions – an individual (usually the most senior person at the meeting), or a group?
- Is it acceptable to show your emotions in a meeting or negotiation?
- Can you suggest parts of the world where people generally do these things differently from in your country?
- Do you think that corporate culture – a company's ways of operating and its values, beliefs and principles – is more important than the nationality of the participants or the location of the meeting?

Vocabulary

Check your understanding of words and phrases for organizing and controlling meetings (1–6) by matching them with their definitions (a–f).

1 any other business (AOB)

2 apologies for absence

3 compromise

4 consensus

5 to digress

6 minutes

a to move off the subject and start talking about something else

b a written report distributed to participants after a meeting

c often the last item in a meeting, when participants discuss issues not on the agenda

d a way of reaching agreement in which each side concedes or gives up something it wants

e the situation in which most or all of the people at a meeting agree about something

f often the first item in a meeting, concerning people who cannot be present

Lead in

Read the quiz below, and then discuss the answers in pairs or groups.

Meetings quiz

- 1 When should you call a meeting?
 - a Every time your group needs to share information.
 - b When a meeting is the best way to achieve your objective.
 - c Never, because meetings are nearly always a waste of time.
- 2 Who should participate?
 - a People who are good at telling jokes and making meetings fun.
 - b The people who can help fulfil the meeting's objective.
 - c The whole department, because you don't want to exclude anyone.
- 3 How can you stop a meeting from going on too long?
 - a You set a time limit in advance and you stick to it.
 - b You can't; I don't remember the last meeting I went to that didn't run over time.
 - c You have the meeting in a room without chairs and make everybody stand – that way they talk a lot less.
- 4 At the end of the meeting, what should the leader do?
 - a Set a time and place to continue with the rest of the agenda.
 - b Summarize, and remind all the participants of who is now responsible for what, and by when.
 - c Offer to buy everybody a drink.



Vocabulary

1 Cross out the verb in each list that does not make a word combination with the noun on the right. The first one has been done as an example.

- | | | |
|----|--|--------------|
| 1 | approve / circulate / draw up / go through / hold / put something on | an agenda |
| 2 | arrive at / break / carry out / implement / reach / take | a decision |
| 3 | call / call off / chair / close / hold / take | a meeting |
| 4 | approve / distribute / go through / set / take / write | the minutes |
| 5 | achieve / agree on / deal with / move towards / reach / set | an objective |
| 6 | agree with / ask for / express / find / give / hold | an opinion |
| 7 | approve / carry out / do / implement / present / reject | a plan |
| 8 | avoid / deal with / get round / overcome / put / tackle | a problem |
| 9 | agree on / arrive at / look after / come up with / find / offer | a solution |
| 10 | agree with / come to / consider / dismiss / put forward / reject | a suggestion |

2 Complete the sentences using the correct form of verbs from the Vocabulary exercise.

- 1 At the beginning of every meeting, we _____ the agenda, and then we appoint someone to _____ the minutes so we have a record of what happened.
- 2 That was the first time I've had to _____ a meeting, and I found controlling everybody rather difficult.
- 3 It's better to _____ the agenda a couple of days before a meeting, so that people can prepare themselves.
- 4 It's very easy to _____ an objective; it's more difficult to _____ it.
- 5 We _____ a regular meeting every Monday morning where we try to _____ any problems that have come up.
- 6 I was very disappointed because the Board totally _____ my plan.
- 7 They argued for an hour, until someone _____ a new suggestion.

Asking for and giving opinions, agreeing and disagreeing

- 1 Look at the following phrases for giving strong opinions. Can you add any phrases for giving neutral or weak opinions?

I'm (absolutely) sure / convinced / positive that ...

I have absolutely no doubt that ...

I strongly believe that ...

I definitely think that ...

I really do think that ...

It's obvious that ...

Clearly / Obviously ...

- 2 The following phrases are used to ask for opinions. Which of them show that the speaker has a different opinion?

Do you really think / believe that ...?

What's your view on ...?

Do you think / believe / consider that ...?

Don't you think that ...?

What do you think about ...?

I'd like to hear what you think about ...

Are you absolutely sure / convinced / positive that ...?

- 3 The phrases below are used for weak or tentative agreement. Can you add any phrases for strong agreement?

You may | might | could be right, but ...
I agree up to a point.

I agree with you, but ...
I agree to a certain extent.

- 4 Mark the phrases for disagreeing – S if they disagree strongly, and W if the disagreement is weak or neutral.

Really? Do you think so?
I'm afraid I don't agree.
Nonsense! | Rubbish!
I'm not totally convinced, because ...
I totally disagree with you.

I completely disagree with that.
I'm afraid I can't agree with that.
I'm against that, because ...
I can't support that, because ...
I don't agree.

Work in groups of four. Decide on a chair and have a brief meeting using one of the situations below.

After a few minutes' preparation, the chair starts the meeting, introduces the agenda, invites the first speaker to make his/her proposal, prevents interruptions, brings in other speakers, summarises, etc.

Situation 1

Meeting

To identify ways to reduce company costs.

Time:

Finish:

Place:

Participants:

Agenda

1. Staff cuts.
2. Reducing the research budget.
3. Cutting salaries and running costs.

Situation 2

Meeting

To decide on training needs and how to spend \$100,000 on training.

Time:

Finish:

Place:

Participants:

Agenda

1. Decide priorities:
marketing / information technology / languages.
2. Allocate costs.
3. Decide outline programme.