



# ► 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.