# 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

2.4

- 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?
  - 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 <u>not</u> 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
  - 2 arrive at / break / carry out / implement / reach / take
  - 3 call/call off/chair/close/hold/take
  - 4 approve / distribute / go through / set / take / write
  - 5 achieve / agree on / deal with / move towards / reach / set
  - 6 agree with / ask for / express / find / give / hold
  - 7 approve / carry out / do / implement / present / reject
  - 8 avoid / deal with / get round / overcome / put / tackle
  - 9 agree on / arrive at / look after / come up with / find / offer
  - 10 agree with / come to / consider / dismiss / put forward / reject

an agenda a decision a meeting the minutes an objective an opinion a plan a problem a solution 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.

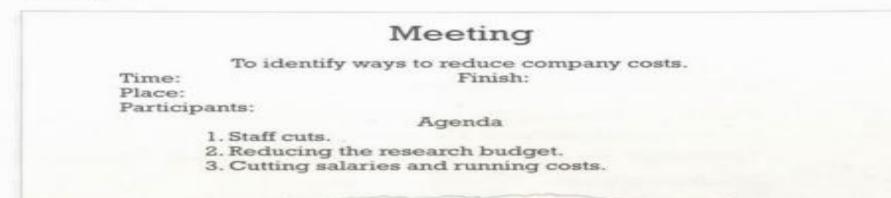
4 Mark the phrases for disagreeing – S if they disagree strongly, and W if the disagreement is weak or neutral.

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



#### 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.