

Lesson 13: Meetings

Today you're going to learn almost 100 practical English phrases to use in meetings. Many of them - such as the phrases for expressing opinions, agreeing, and disagreeing - can also be used in other situations outside of work.

Let's begin with a few vocabulary words. The verbs typically used with "meeting" are "have" and "hold":

- We're going to **have** another department meeting on Friday.
- Let's **hold** a meeting to discuss the policy changes.

You can also use "schedule," "arrange" or "organize" to talk about having a meeting in the future.

When you participate in a meeting, you "attend" the meeting (formal) or "go to" the meeting.

- Did you **go to** the project team meeting?
- Several people did not **attend** the development meeting.

A well-organized meeting will have an **agenda** - that's a list of topics (often called items) that will be discussed. In some meetings, one person keeps notes that will be the official record of the meeting - these are called the meeting **minutes**.

Why hold a meeting? There are many different reasons. One is to **brainstorm**. "Brainstorming" is creating a lot of different ideas, so that they can later be analyzed, evaluated, and the best ones can be selected. Brainstorming is often done as a first step in a project, before there is a definite plan.

Another reason to hold a meeting is to develop a **strategy** and **allocate tasks**. A strategy is a plan for completing a project, and to "allocate tasks" means to assign specific items of work to specific people.

Meetings are also held to **collaborate** (work together) on projects and give **updates** - reports of progress and current status. Finally, meetings are held to **make decisions**.

Some meetings use a formal system of **voting**, in which a decision is made if it receives the majority (more than 50%) of the votes. Other meetings use a less formal system of decision-making, aiming for the group to come to a **consensus** (a general agreement).



Beginning a Meeting

To start the meeting, the meeting leader (who is called the **chairperson** or **chair**) may use one of these phrases:

- **Hello, everyone. Thank you for coming today.**
- **Since everyone is here, let's get started.**
- **First, I'd like to welcome you all.**

If there are new people in the meeting, or people from different departments who might not know each other, the chairperson may introduce them:

- **I'd like to take a moment to introduce... [name + description]**
I'd like to take a moment to introduce Carla, from the public relations department.
- **Please join me in welcoming [name + description]**
Please join me in welcoming Jim, a consultant who will be helping us with project management.
- **Sheila, would you like to introduce yourself?**

Finally, it's good to state the specific topic or objective of the meeting, in order to focus the discussion:

- **As you can see from the agenda, we'll be talking about... [topic]**
- **I've called this meeting in order to ... [goal]**
- **Our main goal today is to ... [goal]**
Our main goal today is to determine the budget for 2013.

Asking for Opinions

Meetings often begin with the presentation of some information and then a request for opinions. To ask people for their opinions, you can say:

- **What does everyone think about...?**
- **I'd like to get your feedback on...**
- **What are your thoughts about... ?**
- **What are your views on... ?**

After one person has expressed his or her opinion, you can say "Thanks," to acknowledge the opinion, then use these phrases to ask for more people to respond:

- **What does everyone else think?**
- **Are there any other comments?**

If there's a specific person who you would like to hear from, you can ask him or her directly by using these phrases:

- Susan, can we get your input?
- Would you like to add anything, Susan?

Giving Your Opinion

Now let's learn some phrases for giving your opinion - with some detail in order to give you some flexibility in the way you express your opinion:

Strong

- I strongly believe that...
- I'm positive that...
- I'm convinced that...
- I have no doubt whatsoever that...
- There's no question that...
(strongest)

Normal

- I think / believe / feel that...
- From my point of view...
- In my experience... / I find that...
(use these phrases to base your opinion on your experience)
- I'd say that...
- If you want my honest opinion, I think that... / To be honest...
(use these phrases when you want to express a negative or critical opinion. The word "honest" is a diplomatic way to signal that you are going to say something negative or unpopular)

Weak

- It seems to me that...
- It's possible that...
- I tend to think that...

- **My initial reaction is...**

(use this phrase to show that this is an opinion you haven't thought very deeply about)

Agreeing / Disagreeing

Once other people in the meeting have expressed their opinions, you can react by agreeing or disagreeing. Here are some appropriate phrases for this purpose - again, based on degree of strength.

Strong agreement:

- **I completely agree.**
- **I couldn't agree more.**
- **You're absolutely right.**

Normal agreement:

- **Exactly!**
 - **That's just how I see it.**
 - **I'm with Peter on this.**
- (you can use this phrase to refer to another colleague's opinion)*

Partial agreement:

- **Well, it depends.**
- **I agree with you up to a point, but...**
(this means that you agree with some of the opinion, but not all of it)
- **I agree with you in principle, but...**
(this means you agree with the opinion in theory, but not in practice)

Normal Disagreement:

In English, saying "I disagree" can be a little too direct, and may be considered impolite. Use one of these phrases instead, to disagree diplomatically:

- **I'm afraid I disagree.**
- **I'm not so sure about that.**
- **I see it differently.**
- **Yes, but...**
- **Not necessarily.**

Strong disagreement:

Finally, here are some phrases for disagreeing strongly. The words "I'm sorry" make the phrase more polite.

- **I'm sorry, but I completely disagree.**
- **I'm sorry, but I don't agree with that at all.**

Settling a disagreement:

What do you do if you're in charge of a meeting and people are arguing? Use one of these phrases to settle the disagreement and continue the meeting:

- **We don't seem to be getting anywhere with this, so maybe we could discuss it further at another time.**
- **Let's move on. I think we're going to have to agree to disagree.**

Suggestions

If you'd like to make a suggestion or recommendation, you can use these phrases. The "weaker" phrases introduce an option as a possibility. The "stronger" phrases give more emphasis to your belief that it is a good idea.

Weak:

- **We could...**
- **Why don't you/we....?**
- **How about...?**
- **What about...?**

Strong:

- **I suggest...**
- **I recommend...**
- **We should...**
- **Let's...**

Note:

We could / Why don't we / We should / Let's are followed by the base form of the verb:

- We could **invest** in new technology.

How about / What about / I suggest / I recommend are followed by the -ING form:

- How about **investing** in new technology?

Interrupting

At times, you might want to interrupt the discussion to add a point. Here are three polite ways to do that:

- **May I have a word?**
- **Could I just say one thing?**
- **Excuse me - sorry for interrupting, but...**

Controlling the meeting

If you're controlling the meeting, you'll need these phrases to move the discussion to the next item on the agenda:

- **I think we've spent enough time on this topic. Moving on...**
- **If nobody has anything else to add, let's move on to the next item.**
- **We're running short on time, so let's move on.**

- **I'd like to skip item 2 and go directly to item 3.**
(This means you want to go from item 1 directly to item 3)

If you'd like to give control of the discussion to another person, you can say this:

- **I'd like to hand it over to Brian, who is going to lead the next point.**
- **Next, Brian is going to tell us about...**

Finally, it's common for discussions to go off topic - however, you can bring the discussion back to the main point by using one of these phrases:

- **I'm afraid that's outside the scope of this meeting.**
- **I think we're getting a bit off topic.**
- **We'd better save that for another meeting.**
- **Let's get back on track, OK?**
- **Getting back to... [topic]**

Closing

At the end of the meeting, use one of these phrases to close it:

- **It looks like we've covered the main items on the agenda.**
- **That will be all for today.**
- **If no one has anything else to add, then I think we'll wrap this up.**

You can also use a phrase similar to the ones used at the end of presentations, such as "Let me quickly summarize the main points."

You can also set a date for the next meeting:

Our next meeting will be... / Let's get together...

- **on January 29th.**
- **on the first Monday of next month.**
- **two weeks from today.**

If the date of the next meeting is not yet scheduled, then you can say, "I'll let you know the date of our next meeting."

Now you know all the phrases you need to participate in a meeting in English! We covered a lot of material today, so make sure you take the quiz to practice the vocabulary.

Quiz: Lesson 13

- 1) Since everyone is here, let's get _____.
- A. beginning
 - B. moved on
 - C. started
- 2) Please _____ me in welcoming Patty, our HR director from the London office.
- A. hold
 - B. join
 - C. meet
- 3) What _____ everyone think about Dan's proposal?
- A. does
 - B. has
 - C. is
- 4) Are there any other _____ about this item before we continue?
- A. comments
 - B. feedbacks
 - C. minutes
- 5) I _____ believe that lowering our prices is a terrible idea.
- A. urgently
 - B. strongly
 - C. very
- 6) From my _____ of view, the new employees are working well with our team.

- A. bit
- B. place
- C. point

7) To be _____, I think the downsides of that plan outweigh the benefits.

- A. brief
- B. direct
- C. honest

8) I think you're 100% correct. I _____ agree more.

- A. couldn't
- B. shouldn't
- C. wouldn't

9) I'm not so _____ we should go ahead with this project. It just doesn't seem like we've done enough planning.

- A. agree
- B. correct
- C. sure

10) I have an idea - why _____ we outsource the manufacturing?

- A. aren't
- B. don't
- C. not

11) I suggest _____ to see if the economy improves before we take action.

- A. to wait
- B. wait
- C. waiting

12) We're running short on time, so let's _____.

- A. take on
- B. move on
- C. run on

13) I'd like to _____ it over to Jackson for the discussion of the security issue.

- A. hand
- B. have
- C. hold

14) I think we're getting a bit _____.

- A. away-point
- B. off-topic
- C. out-of-focus

15) It looks like we've _____ the main items on the agenda.

- A. covered
- B. favored
- C. showed

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Quiz Answers: Lesson 13

1.C, 2.B, 3.A, 4.A, 5.B, 6.C, 7.C, 8.A, 9.C, 10.B, 11.C, 12.B, 13.A, 14.B, 15.A