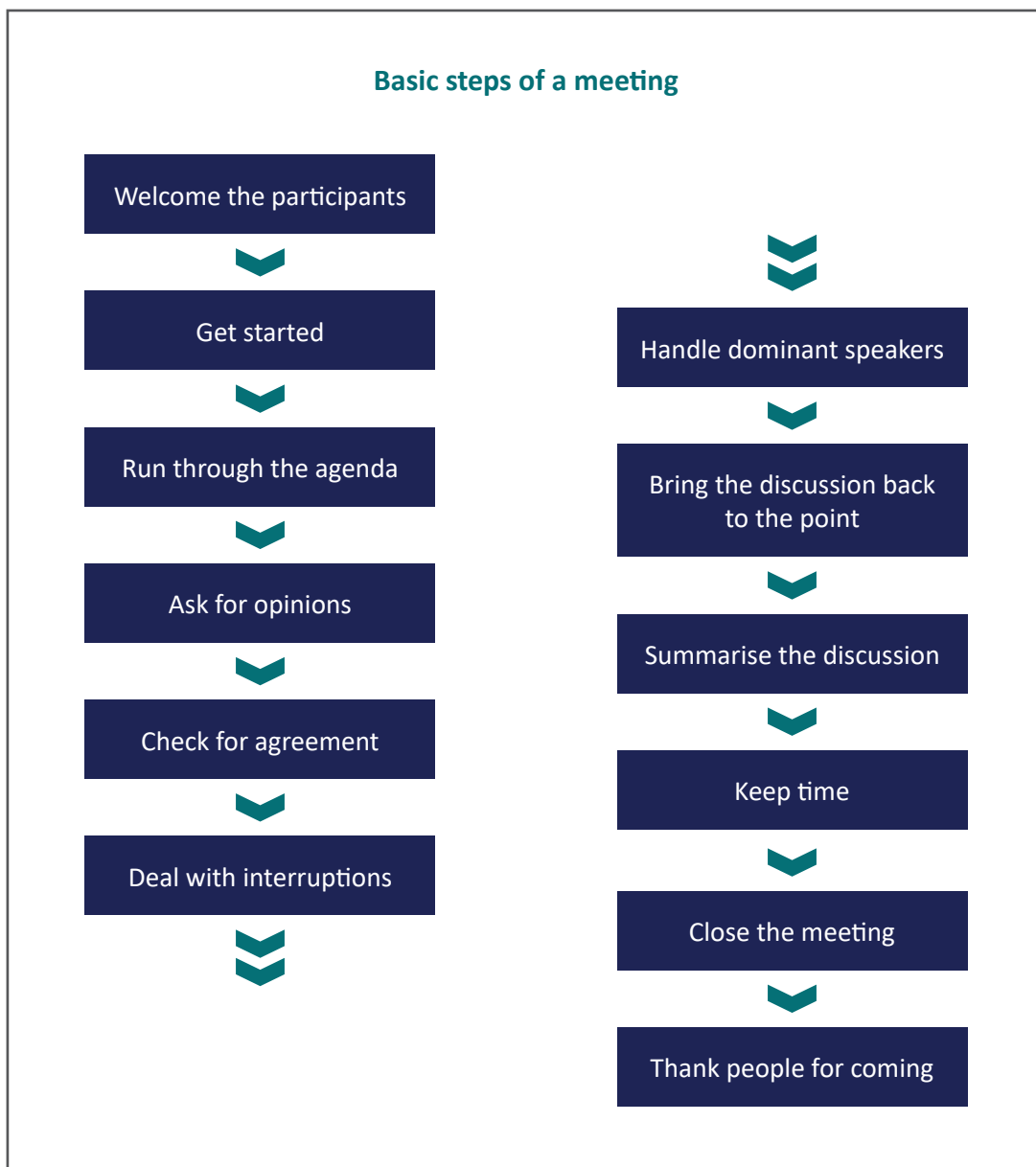


KEY PHRASES FOR EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

If you are asked to chair a meeting in English, it is helpful to have a clear outline of the structure and how you want the proceedings to run. A huge amount of time is wasted in meetings which do not have clear goals and in which there is no consensus. To be an effective chair, you need language to build rapport, make decisions, handle potential conflict, include less confident participants and reach satisfactory outcomes.

These phrases will give you options for chairing both formal and informal meetings. Follow the basic steps and choose the phrases most relevant to you.



Welcoming

Thank you for attending, everyone.

Great to see you all. Thanks for coming!
I know how busy you all are,
so thanks for giving up your time today.

Getting started

Shall we start?

Is everyone here? Let's get started.
Right, let's make a start then.
Did everyone receive the agenda?
Have you all seen / got a copy of the agenda?

Running through the agenda

I've asked you all here today to discuss ...

So, this meeting is scheduled to last ... minutes.
I won't keep you more than ...
The purpose of this meeting, as you know, is to discuss / explore / report back on ...
I'm sorry for calling this meeting at such short notice, but ...
I'd like you all to contribute.
I'd like to hear what everyone has to say, so please speak up.
It's important that everyone gets to give their opinion / say what they think.
Time is short, so please keep all comments until the end.
Andy, will you take the minutes, please?
Sonja, I'd like you to take the minutes, please.
Can I have a volunteer to take the minutes?
Jorg, would you talk us through the first point, please?
OK, item one is about ...
So, the first point up for discussion is ...
If no-one has anything else to say about this point, let's move on.
Can we move on to the next item?
Are we all happy to move on to the next point on the agenda?

Asking for an opinion or reaction

What do you think of ...?



Fred, what's your opinion of ...?

What's your position on ...?

So, Alice, what do you think of / about ...?

Greg, I'd like to hear your views on ...

Could I ask for your reaction to ...?

I was wondering where you stood on this question, Berndt.

Would you like to comment on this, Sally?

Checking for general agreement

Does everyone agree?



Are we all happy with that?

Any objections?

Dealing with interruptions

Could you wait until ... has finished, please?



Yann, can you just let Isobel finish what she was saying, please?

Please don't interrupt!

That's great ..., but can we hear what the others think now?

Handling dominant speakers



Thank you, Lizzie, you've obviously got a lot to say on this subject, but I'd like to hear some other points of view.

Thanks for that, Thomas. What do the rest of you think about this?

Bringing the discussion back to the point

I don't think this is relevant to the discussion. Let's focus on ...

I think we're getting side-tracked here. Can we get back to the point, please?

This is out of the current scope of discussion. Let's get back to the point in question.

Summarising the discussion points

To summarise, ...

Well, if I could just sum up by saying ...

To sum up then, we have agreed to ...

Briefly, the main points that have been made so far are ...

I'm sorry, but we're running out of time.

Keeping to time

I'm sorry, but we're running out of time. Can we move on to the next point?

Time is short, so could we keep this discussion brief / to the point?

We need to be wrapping up shortly, so could you just finish what you were saying and we'll move on.

I'm afraid we've run out of time. We'll have to keep this point for the next meeting.

Closing the meeting

Is there anything else anyone wants to add?

If there are no further comments, let's call it a day.

I think that just about covers everything.

So, I think we can finish there.

Thanking people for coming

Thank you all for your participation.

Thanks for coming, everyone. That was a very useful discussion.

Thanks for your input. See you all next week!

Thanks for coming.

Participation

As a non-native speaker of English, it can be more challenging to participate in meetings. You may not always be able to express yourself as clearly as you would in your own language. You may also find it more difficult to interrupt native speakers and you will definitely find their use of idioms, jargon and culture-specific references hard to follow! Don't be afraid to ask the native speakers to slow down and explain any unfamiliar expressions.

Asking for repetition

Sorry, could you repeat that please?

I'm sorry, I didn't catch that.

Could you explain that last part again, please?

Clarifying

Asking for clarification

What do you mean by ...?

I'm not 100% clear on that.

So, you're saying we should ...?

Clarifying

What I mean is ...

Let me put it another way ...

The point I'm making is ...

Understanding

Checking for understanding

Do you understand what I'm saying?

Do you follow me?

Does that make sense (to you)?

Is that clear?

Clarifying understanding

Yes, I see what you're getting at.

Yes, perfectly.

Well, yes and no.

Not exactly.

Interrupting

Interrupting

I'm sorry, can I interrupt you?

Can I just say something here?

Countering interruptions

Sorry, could I just finish what I'm saying?

Let me just finish my point, please!

Giving opinions

Neutral

In my opinion ...
I think we should ...
I believe that ...
As I see it ...
As far as I'm concerned ...
From my point of view ...

Strong

I'm absolutely convinced that ...
There's no doubt in my mind that ...
It's quite clear that ...
I'm certain that ...

Agreement

General agreement

I agree.
I think we are all in agreement on that.
I think you're right.

Strong agreement

I completely agree.
I agree entirely with your view.
I'm of exactly the same opinion.
I'm in total agreement.

Partial agreement

I tend to agree with you on that, but ...
I agree with you on the whole, but ...
I agree in principle, but...
By and large I would accept your views, but ...

Disagreement

General disagreement

I don't completely agree with you on that.
I can't agree with you on that.
I don't really share your views.
I'm not totally convinced by your argument.
I feel I must disagree.

Strong disagreement

I totally disagree with you.
I don't agree at all.
I disagree entirely.
Under no circumstances could I agree to that.
That's out of the question!

Partial disagreement

I agree up to a point, but ...
To a certain extent I agree with you, but ...
You have a point there. However, ...
I take your point, but have you considered ...?
I can see your point of view, but surely ...

Practice Exercises

1 > Chairing meetings

What would you say in these situations? Give two examples for each situation.

a) You want everyone to stop chatting and start the meeting.

1)
2)

b) You want to bring the discussion back to the point in question.

1)
2)

c) You want to check that everyone agrees.

1)
2)

d) You need to deal with a colleague who tends to interrupt another.

1)
2)

e) One participant is dominating the discussion and you want to bring in other people.

1)
2)

f) You want to summarise the main points.

1)
2)

g) You need to remind the participants that there isn't much time left.

1)
2)

h) You want to close the meeting and thank people for coming.

1)
2)

2 > Participating in meetings

Complete the following expressions:

a) Expressing a very strong opinion:

<i>I'm absolutely c_____ this is what we should do.</i>
<i>There's no d_____ in my mind that we should change it.</i>

b) Expressing a more neutral opinion:

<i>F_____ my point of view, it's a good idea.</i>
<i>As I s_____ it, there shouldn't be any problems.</i>

c) Expressing partial agreement:

<i>I agree in p_____.</i>
<i>On the w_____ I agree.</i>

d) Expressing strong disagreement with an idea:

I disagree e_____.

That's out of the q_____!

e) Expressing partial disagreement:

I agree with you to a certain e_____.

I t_____ your point, but _____.

f) Asking for clarification:

Sorry, I'm not 100% c_____ on what you're saying.

What do you m_____ by _____?

So, are you s_____?

g) You have no idea what another participant is saying.

I'm sorry. I didn't c_____ that. What did you say?

Sorry, I'm not with you. Could you r_____ what you just said?

Sorry, you've lost me! Could you e_____ that last part again, please?

3 > Vocabulary extension

Which verbs go with these nouns?

To c_____ the agenda (send round)

To n_____ someone to do something (choose someone)

To w_____ up the minutes (complete the minutes)

To p_____ an item for the agenda (make a suggestion)

To m_____ a recommendation

To a_____ the meeting (stop for a break)

To r_____ (start again)