



B

Giving your opinion

Briefing

Giving your opinion in international meetings is important. It makes people notice you and it gives you a reputation. How you give your opinion is especially important. It decides if your reputation is good or bad and if you will increase your influence or lose it.

Here are eight tips to help you give your opinion and increase your influence in international meetings.

| | |
|--|--|
| 1 Know what you want to say | Make sure you have a good reason to say something. Say it because you think it is a useful contribution to the discussion. Don't say it because you are angry or because you want to prove a point. |
| 2 Focus on action | You want to change the way people think or what they do. Say the point you want to make simply and clearly. Focus on WHAT you want people to think or do. Then say WHY they should think or do it. |
| 3 Be objective | Always remember there are two sides to any discussion. Don't assume your view is the only one that matters. Be prepared to recognize both sides of an argument and then state your position. |
| 4 Focus on the problem, never the person | Don't insult, blame or complain. Be objective and fair. Focus on the facts as you see them. If you do this, more people will agree with you. |
| 5 Don't judge | If you want to express an opinion say: 'I feel this is wrong.' Don't say: 'You are wrong.' |
| 6 Show respect | Respect the other person even if you disagree with them. If you are wrong, be prepared to concede your point politely, never angrily. |
| 7 Be consistent | Don't change your views or your principles. People will respect you if they know your principles and your approach. They won't respect you if you change your view all the time. However, if you do change your view, say so. |
| 8 Be calm | A calm measured tone of voice, not too emotional or too fast, gets respect from your audience. During a conference call, be recognized by your calm, balanced tone. If you are chairing a meeting and two colleagues disagree with each other, always use a calm balanced tone of voice. |

Remember: in a meeting or conference call your voice is your brand.



Listening



1

Listen to two extracts from the continuation of the meeting you listened to in 8A about the introduction of a single business management system within a large corporation. Answer these questions.

Extract

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | In which extract does Don agree with Silvia strongly? | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 | In which extract does Don disagree with Silvia strongly? | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 | In which extract does Silvia agree with Don with reservations? | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 | In which extract does Don concede a point? | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 | In which extract does Silvia agree with Don strongly? | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |



2

Listen again to the two extracts and complete these sentences.

Extract 1

- 1 I agree with you.
- 2 Well, I agree with Don up to a
- 3 I your point.

Extract 2

- 4 Well, with all due respect to Silvia, I disagree.
- 5 What's the best way to this?
- 6 ! We definitely need more information to work with.

Business practice



1

Listen and repeat these phrases and sentences.

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| How to agree strongly | Absolutely! I quite agree with you. |
| How to disagree | I agree up to a point but ... I understand what you're saying but ... |
| How to disagree strongly | With all due respect I completely disagree. I'm afraid I can't agree with you on that one. |
| How to be objective | If we look at the situation objectively, ... The facts of the matter are these. |



How to concede

I take your point.
In that case, I withdraw my objection.

How to manage disagreement

Let's discuss this outside the meeting.
Can I suggest a compromise on this?

How to agree to disagree

Let's agree to differ.
I'm afraid we have to agree to disagree on this one.

2

Test yourself. Cover the sentences above and then complete these sentences.

- 1 The facts of the are these.
- 2 I'm I can't agree with you on that one.
- 3 If we look at the situation
- 4 Can we compromise this?
- 5 Let's agree to



3

You are in a meeting to discuss the purchase of a new management information system. Jenny is sure which system she wants. You disagree. Follow the instructions. Then listen to the model conversation.

Jenny: Can we all agree on the German management system?

You: *Say you have no objection to the quality but you have a strong objection to the price. Ask if Jenny can find a cheaper option.*

Jenny: No, quality comes at a price.

You: *Agree up to a point, but insist that equally good local options exist and they are cheaper.*

Jenny: Is there a cheaper option with the same quality?

You: *Explain it is important to look at the situation objectively. There are three facts to consider: quality, service and price. Ask whether Jenny has negotiated the best price.*

Jenny: Yes, I have. I don't know why you're objecting.

You: *Suggest a compromise. Get quotes on management information systems from three suppliers, local and foreign and see which is best.*

Jenny: I'm sorry, I think that's a waste of time.

You: *Say you will have to agree to differ.*



Business writing

How to agree and disagree in writing

Sometimes, you need to put your opinions in an email or memo. To write your opinions clearly and effectively, remember these points.

- 1 **Summary** Write a one-sentence summary of why you are writing.
- 2 **Context** Make the context clear. Say what you are writing about. Make it clear which meeting or discussion you are referring to and when it took place.
- 3 **Agree** Say what you agree with first. Use phrases like:
I agree with you about ..., Although I agree with you that, ...
- 4 **Disagree** Now write what you disagree with and explain why you disagree. Use phrases like:
I'm afraid I disagree with ..., I strongly disagree with ..., I object to ...
- 5 **Make positive suggestions** Write what you want to happen.
- 6 **Style** Have a clear layout. Use plenty of spaces. Make it easy to read. Check it for logic and for errors and spelling mistakes. If necessary, ask a colleague to read it through.

Writing task

Look at Business practice activity 3 again. Write an email to Jenny. Summarize your opinions. Then read the model answer in the Answer key.

Key take-aways

Write down the things you will take away from Unit 8 and how you will implement them.

| Topic | Take-away | Implementation strategy – How? | Implementation time frame – When? |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| How to intervene | | | |
| How to make your point | | | |
| How to deal with interruptions | | | |
| How to prepare a discussion paper | | | |



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