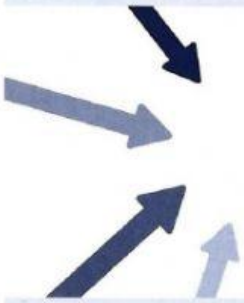
7 Running a successful meeting

Did we make a decision in there?
— US executive after a meeting in Britain



Aims

- How to prepare an agenda
- How to run a meeting
- How to understand what people expect from a meeting
- Tips for chairing meetings
- How to write the minutes of a meeting

A Setting the agenda

Quiz

How do you feel about the meetings you attend?

How are the meetings run?

Read the statements and choose Yes or No.

		Yes	No
1	I have too many meetings.		
2	The meetings are too long.		
3	We always have an agenda for the meeting.		
4	We usually have just one point for discussion.		
5	We always have a chair to control the meeting.		
6	The chair is always the most senior person present.		
7	We always have clear outcomes from our meetings.		
8	I often don't know what we have agreed at the end of a meeting.		
9	We keep full records of what people said in our meetings.		
10	We only record things we have agreed to do.		

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Briefing

Many business people would say that they have to attend too many meetings and that meetings often last too long. How can we:

- make them shorter?
- get clear results and outcomes?
- ensure participation by everyone who attends?

There are three key factors for a successful meeting:

- Agenda
- Minutes
- Control

Here we'll look at the agenda. We'll deal with minutes and control in 7B.

Agenda

An agenda is a written order of the things you want to discuss, including the details shown here. A clear agenda that you don't change is the simplest way to make a meeting effective.

Staff meeting

Date
Time and duration
Participants

AGENDA

Apologies for absence
Minutes of the last meeting
Matters arising
Agenda items
1
2
3
AOB (any other business)
Date of next meeting

When the meeting is, how long the meeting is, who is invited.

It is important to tell people in advance if you can't attend a meeting.

Participants should receive these before the meeting.

This is an opportunity to check that action points in the minutes have been carried out, and, if not, why not.

These are listed and discussed in order.

Anything else that needs to be discussed.

Agree when the next meeting will take place.

You can also use this format for a conference call. This agenda is quite formal, but even in informal meetings there will usually be a list of agenda items to discuss.

Think of your last meeting. Did it include all these points? If not, was there a good reason to exclude them?

Would meetings be better if you included them all?

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Listening

34 **1** **Listen to a company meeting about organizing a staff party. The Chair, Amy, Frances and Tony are present. Look at the agenda. What decisions were made as a result of the discussion about the agenda items? Make notes on the agenda. At the end of the meeting there are two items of AOB. What are they? When is the date of the next meeting?**

AGENDA

Agenda items – Staff party

1 Where to hold event .....

2 Who to invite .....

3 Budget for event .....

4 Inviting a special guest .....

AOB (any other business)

AOB 1 .....

AOB 2 .....

Date of next meeting .....

34 **2** **Listen again and complete these sentences.**

1 Thank you for ..... .

2 George sends his ..... .

3 Let's take the ..... as read.

4 Any ..... thoughts on that?

5 Everyone ..... then?

Business practice

35 **1** **Listen and repeat these sentences.**

Start the meeting	Thank you for joining the meeting.
	Shall we start the meeting now?
	Let's kick off, shall we? (*informal*)
Introduce participants	Let's go round the table and introduce ourselves. (*if people don't know each other*)
Apologies	Sue sends her apologies.
Minutes	Jan, could you take the minutes?
	Has everyone read the minutes of the last meeting?
Matters arising from the minutes	Are there any matters arising?
	Can we take the minutes as read?

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Agenda items	Let's move on to the agenda. Item 1. Could you speak about that, Tom?
Noting results	Could you minute that? Let's minute that.
AOB	Any other business? Let's go round the table.
Date of next meeting	Let's agree the date of the next meeting. Same time, same place next month?
Close	Thank you very much everybody. Can you send me the minutes and I'll circulate them?

2 **Test yourself. Cover the sentences opposite and then complete these sentences.**

1 Can someone ..... the minutes?
2 Let's go ..... the table and introduce ourselves.
3 Let's ..... off the meeting, shall we?
4 Can you ..... me the minutes and I'll circulate them?
5 Are there any matters .....?

36 **3** **You are chairing a short meeting with your colleagues Elena, Tom and John. Follow the instructions. Then listen to the model conversation.**

You: *Thank everyone for coming. Ask someone to take the minutes.*

Elena: I'll do it.

You: *Thank Elena. Ask John to speak about item 1 on the agenda, last month's sales figures.*

John: Well, we were slightly ahead of budget and took a good order from a big supermarket chain. Nothing else to report really.

You: *Thank John. Ask for what John said to be minuted. Then ask Elena to speak about item 2, the recruitment of the new IT director.*

Elena: Well, it's proving very difficult. We've decided to use a specialist recruitment company to find someone.

You: *Acknowledge and ask when someone will be in place.*

Elena: We hope to have someone in place by the end of next month.

You: *Thank Elena. Suggest a special meeting about this at ten on Monday morning.*

Elena / John / Tom: Good idea. / In my diary. / OK.

You: *Ask if there is any other business.*

Business culture

See page 107 and think about how people's expectations differ between corporate and national cultures about what should happen in meetings.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

LIVEWORKSHEETS