

Business English



English for
business meetings

Holding a business meeting in English

You may be called upon at some time to lead a formal business meeting in English.

The structure of a formal business meeting is usually as follows:

Introduction

Open the meeting
Welcome and introduce the participants
Outline the main objectives of the meeting
Present apologies from those unable to attend

Review past business

Read the minutes of the last meeting
Update on recent developments

Start the meeting

Present the agenda
Nominate a secretary to take minutes
Agree on the ground rules for the meeting (timing, decisions etc.)

Discuss the items on the agenda

Introduce the first item on the agenda
Discuss the first item
Close the first item
Move on to the next item
Hand over to the next person taking part

End the meeting

Summarise the meeting (decisions etc.)
Set time, date and place for next meeting
Thank participants for attending
Close the meeting

Useful phrases for meeting stages:

Opening the meeting

Good morning/afternoon, everyone.
If we are all here, let's get started / let's start the meeting / let's start.

Welcoming and introducing

We're pleased to welcome (name)
I'd like to introduce (name)

Outlining the main objectives

We're here today to ...
Our main aim today is to ...

Apologising for someone unable to attend

Unfortunately, (name) can't be with us today. He/she is in...
I have received apologies for absence from (name), who is in (place).

Reading the minutes of the last meeting

To begin with I'd like to quickly go through the minutes of our last meeting.
Here are the minutes from our last meeting, which was on (date).

Updates on recent developments

Mike, can you update us on progress with the (project name)?
Has everyone received a copy of the report from X on the latest developments?

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Updates on recent developments

Mike, can you update us on progress with the (project name)?
Has everyone received a copy of the report from X on the latest technical developments?

Introducing the agenda

Does everyone have a copy of the agenda?
Shall we take the points in this order?
Let's skip item 1 for now and move on to item 3.
I suggest we take item 2 last.

Nominating a secretary

(name), would you mind taking the minutes?
(name) has agreed to take the minutes.

Introducing participants

(name) has kindly agreed to give us a report on X.
(name) will lead point 1, (name) point 2, and (name) point 3.

Agreeing on the ground rules for the meeting

We'll hear a short report on each point first, followed by a discussion.
Let's make sure we finish by (time)
There will be five minutes for each item.
We'll have to keep each item to 15 minutes.
Otherwise we'll never get through the agenda.

Introducing the an item on the agenda

So, let's start with ...
I suggest we start with...
Why don't we start with...
So, the first item on the agenda is
Shall we start with ...
(name), would you like to introduce this item?

Closing an item

I think that takes care of the first item.
Shall we leave that item?
Why don't we move on to item ...
If nobody has anything else to add, let's move on to item 2.

Next item

Let's move on to the next item
The next item on today's agenda is...
Now we come to the question of...

Handing over to the next participant

I'd like to hand over to (name), who is going to lead the next point.
Now, I'd like to introduce (name) who is going to ...

Summarising

Before we close today's meeting, let me just summarise the main points.
To sum up, ...
In brief, ...
Shall I go over the main points?

Finishing the meeting

Right, it looks as though we've covered the main items.
If there are no other comments, I'd like to close the meeting.

Setting the time, date and place for the next meeting

Can we set the date for the next meeting, please?
So, the next meeting will be at ... (time) on ... (day, month) in ... (place).
What about Friday for our next meeting?

Thanking people for attending

Thank you all for attending.
Thanks for your participation.

Closing the meeting

The meeting is finished, we'll see each other next at ... (time) on ... (day, month) in ... (place).
The meeting is closed.

Useful phrases for expressing your ideas and giving input at a meeting

Expressing an opinion

I'm positive that...
I (really) feel that...
In my opinion...
The way I see things...

Asking for opinions

Are you positive that...
Do you (really) think that...
(name) can we get your input?
What do you think about...?

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Making a comment

That's interesting.
I never thought about it that way before.
Good point!
I get your point.
I see what you mean.

Expressing agreement

I totally agree with you.
Absolutely!
That's (exactly) the way I feel.
I have to agree with (name).

Expressing disagreement

Unfortunately, I see it differently.
I agree with you up to a point, but...
(I'm afraid) I don't agree

Clarifying

Have I made that clear?
Do you see what I'm getting at?
Let me put this another way...
I'd just like to repeat that...

Asking for something to be repeated

I'm afraid I didn't understand that. Could you repeat what you just said?
I didn't catch that. Could you repeat that, please?
I missed that. Could you say it again, please?

Asking for clarification

I don't quite follow you. What exactly do you mean?
I don't quite understand what you're getting at.
Could you explain to me how that is going to work?
I don't see what you mean. Could we have some more details, please?

Asking for spelling

Could you spell that, please?

Asking for contributions

We haven't heard from you yet, (name).
What do you think about this proposal?
Mike, would you like to add anything?
Are there any more comments?

Correcting something that was said

Sorry, I think you misunderstood what I said.
Sorry, that's not quite right.
I'm afraid you don't understand what I'm saying.
That's not quite what I had in mind.
That's not what I meant.

Keeping the meeting on target (time, relevance, decisions)

We're running short of time.
Well, that seems to be all the time we have today.
Please be brief.
I'm afraid we've run out of time.
I'm afraid that's outside the scope of this meeting.
That's not really why we're here today.
Why don't we return to the main focus of today's meeting.
We'll have to leave that for another time.
We're beginning to lose sight of the main point.
Keep to the point, please.
I think we'd better leave that for another meeting.
Are we ready to make a decision?

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