

Business meetings



Level B1

1. Meeting jargon



Watch video number 1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8bzule5p0k>

Vocabulary. Many words have more than one meaning. Which words can mean both:

- a piece of furniture and a person who leads a meeting?
- a piece of wood and the governing body of a company?
- movement and proposal?
- a measure of time and a report from a meeting?
- what you do to a door and to a meeting?

Phrases. Below you will find some useful phrases that can come in handy in meetings. Put the words in the correct order.

Opening the meeting

- everyone morning good
- we shall let's begin
- down let's business to get
- declare meeting I opened the

Welcoming and introducing meeting participants

- to Mr.X pleased welcome are we
- introduce to would Mr. Y I like
- pleasure a introduce to Mr. Z is it

Objectives of a meeting

- today here are to we
- meeting this is of the purpose
- objective the to main is

Inviting people to speak at business meeting

- like to discussion open would the you
- you about what
- views what your are that on

Making your point

- see I way it the
- that is me clear to it
- I it as see

Commenting on other opinions

- mean what see I you
- point your get I

Thanking meeting participants for attending

- coming you thank all for
- your for participation thanks

Phrases. Which cells in the table should the phrases go into?

	Strong	Weak
Agreeing		
Disagreeing		

Precisely!

I guess so.

You're perfectly right.

Absolutely!

I don't really agree.

I guess you could be right.

Certainly not.

That's not always the case.

I was just going to say that.

I don't agree.

I suppose there is something in that.

No way.

I totally disagree.

Exactly!

I suppose so.

That's not how I see it.

Well, it depends.

I'm afraid I can't agree with you here.

I couldn't agree with you more.

I'm not sure about that.

Phrases. Fill the gaps with the correct form of the words provided below. Are the sentences questions, requests or proposals?

open	take	smoke	turn
change	have	vote	arrange

- Can I _____ a pen, please?
- What if we _____ the provider?
- Do you mind _____ the window?
- Could you _____ the minutes, John?
- Why don't we _____ now?
- Do you mind if I _____ the air conditioning down?
- Do you think you could _____ this, Peter?
- Is it OK if I _____?

Now rephrase the following sentences, using the constructions shown above.

- Call me a cab.
- I want to leave early today.
- Pass me these documents.
- Let's meet tomorrow to discuss this.
- Let's leave it until the next meeting.
- Leave the door open.
- I want to sit on that chair.

2. The role of the chair

Warm up. Imagine you are going to chair an important formal meeting during which a decision needs to be taken. What elements would this meeting have to have? How would you introduce them?



Watch the first part of video number 2 (0:00-1:48)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_kZT8t75J4

Comprehension. What order do the following elements occur in in the video? Try to write down the phrases that the chairperson uses to introduce them.

Opening the discussion

Putting a proposal to a vote

Opening the meeting

Stating the goal of the meeting

Ensuring everybody knows the agenda

Asking if there are any other issues to be discussed

Closing the meeting

Arranging for minutes to be taken

Summarizing the discussion

Arranging the time for next meeting

Thanking the participants for attending

1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		

Now try to think of a different way to introduce each of these points.



Now watch the reminder of video number 2 (from 1:48)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_kZT8t75J4

3. Let's have a meeting

Role play. There was some renovation at the headquarters of your company and a large room that was previously used as a storage facility has become available. You are members of a committee which must decide how this new room is going to be used. The committee is meeting to discuss the different options. Your teacher will assign you a role.

4. Meetings in different cultures

Warm-up. A friend of yours is coming to Poland from abroad to participate in a series of business meetings. What advice would you give him/her about how to behave? Think about such issues as: how to prepare for meetings, how formal meetings are, punctuality, dress code...



The following are descriptions of business meeting culture in six countries, adapted from www.worldbusinessculture.com. Try to guess which countries are being described. As you read, fill in the missing prepositions.

Country 1. _____ this country, people come _____ meetings very well prepared and think that people who are not prepared are unprofessional. Agendas are prepared _____ the meeting and are closely followed.

It is also expected that people arrive _____ meetings _____ time and that meetings end _____ the scheduled time. _____ the start of the meeting, business cards are usually exchanged. Because people pay a lot of attention _____ titles and education, it is a good idea to put this information _____ your card.

Participants tend to speak one _____ a time and interruptions are rarely allowed. It may seem that people show little or no reaction _____ what they hear, but this does not mean they are not interested. If they need to, they ask questions.

A meeting often starts _____ some small talk, which is a normal part of the relationship-building process.

Country 2. Meetings in this country are usually very long and often end without a decision. The people in this country themselves often complain _____ how many long meetings they have to attend.

Compared _____ many other countries, people do relatively little preparation _____ meetings (except _____ meeting _____ clients). This is because meetings are seen as a forum for open debate, _____ which a solution should be found. In fact, people in this country do not like to work _____ those who over-prepare for meetings.

Agendas are not followed very strictly. If a new topic appears _____ the discussion, it will not be excluded simply because it is not _____ the agenda.

People in this country like to think that they are punctual, but in fact arriving 5-10 minutes late _____ meetings is now quite common.

Country 3. People often say that meetings _____ this country are 'aggressive' or 'confrontational'. This means that all relevant issues can be discussed openly _____ paying too much attention to personal relationships or diplomacy. People

_____ other cultures often think that this is a sign of personal animosity between participants, but it is not.

Meetings often include formal presentations _____ one or more of the participants. The presentations are seen as a proof of the presenter's professionalism, and must be well-researched, relevant, and delivered _____ a positive and enthusiastic manner. They are often an occasion to impress.

Many meetings _____ this country are now virtual, _____ conference call or video link. This may lead to communication difficulties.

Country 4. Meetings _____ this country tend to be very long, because they are a forum for open debate where everybody is expected to contribute. The goal is to reach a consensus, which is very highly valued _____ this culture.

People in this country do not like when somebody lobbies _____ a certain solution before the meeting, which is normal _____ some cultures.

Even though discussions tend to be very open, agendas are respected and each person waits _____ their turn to speak rather than interrupting the current speaker.

Country 5. _____ this country, managers tend to be autocratic. Therefore, meetings are often used to simply pass _____ information _____ decisions which have already been taken elsewhere.

As a result, there is usually very little real, open debate _____ formal meetings. These meetings tend to be very structured and serious. Humour is seldom used _____ such situations.

Country 6. _____ this country, it is very important to show respect _____ older people and people _____ senior positions, as well as _____ the history and traditions of the country itself. When you show respect, you show that you are worthy _____ respect as well. When a senior person walks _____ a room, you should stand _____ and listen closely even if their English is weak.

Business cards are always exchanged when two people meet _____ the first time. You should always hold the card _____ both hands and read it closely. Your own card should always have a version _____ the local language _____ the other side.

Handshaking is the norm, but the local handshake is usually light and long. It is impolite to look the other person straight _____ the eye. You should lower your eyes as a sign of respect.

It is common to be involved _____ a series of meetings rather than one big meeting. In any case, the main goal of the meetings is relationship building and exchanging information. Real decisions are usually taken outside of formal meetings.

Discussion. How accurate do you think these descriptions are (with respect to Poland and other countries whose business culture you might know)?

What do you agree/disagree with?

Grammar. The descriptions of the six countries contain many sentences in the passive voice. Look at some of them. How can you change them into the active voice?

- Agendas are prepared before the meeting and are closely followed.
- At the start of the meeting, business cards are usually exchanged.
- This is because meetings are seen as a forum for open debate, during which a solution should be found.
- This means that all relevant issues can be discussed openly without paying too much attention to personal relationships or diplomacy.
- The goal is to reach a consensus, which is very highly valued in this culture.
- Therefore, meetings are often used to simply pass on information about decisions which have already been taken elsewhere.
- Business cards are always exchanged when two people meet for the first time.

5. Another kind of meeting



Watch video number 3

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKorP55Aqvg>

Discussion. Do you find this scene funny? Why? What aspects of corporate life is it making fun of?