

9 Meeting etiquette



Business blog

Some meetings are really unproductive. People bicker – they talk over others and don't listen. Consequently, meetings drag on and on. This wouldn't happen if businesses had a set of meeting rules. Instead, meetings would be useful, productive and short! Here are my suggestions for meeting etiquette.

- Send your apologies if you cannot attend. Your colleagues may be waiting for you so they can start the meeting.
- State your opinion once only. If it's a good idea, people will take note. There's no need to repeat yourself.
- If you disagree with someone, don't interrupt. Wait until the other person finishes speaking, and then state your objection.
- Don't use jargon. Your colleagues may not be specialists in your field, so they will need to keep asking for explanations. This wastes time. Talk in everyday language so that everybody can understand.

Get ready!

Before you read the passage, talk about these questions.

- 1 What are the challenges and responsibilities of running a meeting?
- 2 What are some behaviors that would be considered rude at a meeting?

Reading

Read the blog from a business website. Then, read the summary of the dialogue. Fill in the blanks with the correct words from the word bank.

Word bank

- 1 attend common
- 2 unproductive state

The writer believes that meetings are 1 unproductive because people argue and don't listen. The writer recommends that people say sorry if they cannot 2 attend a meeting. They should 3 state their opinions just once and use 4 common language.

Vocabulary

Choose the word that is closest in meaning to the underlined part.

- 1 Write a message saying sorry if you cannot attend.
 - A State your opinion
 - B Send your apologies
 - C Ask for an explanation
- 2 It is unprofessional to argue in an immature way during meetings.
 - A interrupt
 - B disagree
 - C bicker
- 3 It's rude to talk when other people are talking.
 - A repeat yourself
 - B talk over other people
 - C take note of other people
- 4 During meetings Jane says the same thing again and again.
 - A repeats herself
 - B disagrees
 - C interrupts

Read the sentence pairs. Choose where the words best fit in the blanks.

- 1 objection / jargon
Does anyone have any objection to this suggestion?
should only be used if everyone understands it.
- 2 waste time / take note
2 of any important changes.
Don't 2 arguing.
- 3 ask for an explanation / state your opinion
It is important to 3 if the material is confusing.
Please do not 3 until the chairman invites you to do so.
- 4 Listen and read the text again. What did you learn about meeting etiquette?

Listening

Listen to a conversation between an employee and a manager. Mark the following statements as true (T) or false (F).

- 1 The woman feels the meetings are not productive.
- 2 The man wants people to speak less in meetings.
- 3 The man will write a set of rules for meetings.

Listen again and complete the conversation.

Employee: It's these meetings. They're really getting 1 out of hand.

Manager: What do you mean?

Employee: People always 2 blame and interrupt. It wastes so much time.

Manager: I disagree. I want to 3 encourage people to speak if they have an objection.

Employee: That's good. But they shouldn't 4 talk over other people or repeat themselves over and over.

Manager: Okay, I agree with that.

Employee: Also, it might help if we asked the engineers to use less 5 extra. We lose a lot of time just asking what certain words mean.

Manager: Maybe we need to 6 set out some guidelines for meeting etiquette.

do some dialog

Speaking

With a partner, act out the roles below, based on the dialogue from Task 7. Then switch roles.

USE LANGUAGE SUCH AS:

It wastes so much time.
We lose a lot of time...
Maybe we need to...

Student A: You have ideas to improve meetings. Talk to Student B about:

- use of time
- problems and behaviors
- suggestions

Student B: You are a manager. Talk to Student A about improving meetings.

Writing

You are a manager. Use the conversation from Task 8 and the blog to write new meeting etiquette guidelines for your team (100-120 words). Talk about:

- What staff should do if they cannot attend a meeting
- What staff should do if they have an objection
- What language staff should use in meetings

