

Business meetings in English: Part 2 – Discussing the Agenda



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In the second of this three-part series on business meetings, we focus on discussing items on the agenda. A meeting agenda is usually provided ahead of time to let people know what to expect at the meeting. Reading the agenda allows participants to prepare for any discussions related to the items on it. The agenda acts as a guide as to how the meeting should progress and reminds people what is left to cover if there is limited time. Therefore, after preliminary introductions have been made at the meeting, there should be a run through of the items on the agenda.

Here are some suggestions on how to start discussions:

Introducing the agenda

Have you all received a copy of the agenda?

On the agenda today is firstly,...secondly,...

Could we deal with the points in this order?

If you don't mind, I'd like to go through them in this order... item 2...

Can we skip item 1 and move on to item 3 then discuss item 2 last?

Starting with the first item

So, let's start with...

Shall we begin with...

So, the first item on the agenda is...

[Name], would you like to kick off?

[Name], would you like to introduce this item?

During the course of discussion about a particular item, you may want to interrupt the speaker to give or comment about an opinion, or agree or disagree about opinions offered by participants in the meeting. An effective way to interrupt someone or to be heard in a meeting is to maintain eye contact with the speaker who has the floor, wait until there is a natural pause and then use one of these phrases to make your point. You could try starting with one of the following phrases:

Interrupting

Sorry to interrupt but...

Just a minute...

Hang on a sec...

Can I say something here?

I'd like to make a point.



Could I interrupt you for a moment?
May I just add something here?
While we're on the subject, I'd like to say...

If, on the other hand, you want to prevent someone from interrupting, you can hold them off with one of the following phrases:

Preventing interruptions

Actually, if you could just let me finish...
Just let me finish, if you wouldn't mind...
Actually, I've nearly finished...

Here are some suggestions on how to start stating your opinions:

Giving opinions

In my opinion...
From my point of view, I think...
I (really) feel that...
If you ask me... I think that...
Well, I think that...

Agreeing with other opinions

I totally agree.
I completely agree with you on that point.
I have to agree with [name].
I agree with what [name] said.

Disagreeing with other opinions

I kind of agree with you but...
I don't think that's the main point...
I understand what you're saying but...
No, I don't think I can agree with you on this point.

If you have trouble understanding what has been discussed you may want to ask for clarification or asking for something to be repeated again.

Asking for clarification

Sorry, you've lost me. I'm not following.
What do you mean exactly?
I'm afraid I don't quite understand what you're getting at.
Do you mean...[say how you understand it in your own words]?

Asking for repetition

Sorry. I didn't catch that. Could you say it again, please?

Could you go over that again please?
You're speaking too fast, would you mind repeating that again?

In the next issue, we will focus on moving on to the next item on the agenda and on closing the business meeting.