



# Speaking with Confidence During a Meeting

Meeting participants themselves have an obligation to respect others' time, to contribute meaningfully and appropriately, and to be well-prepared for a meeting.

Here are some tips to help you avoid the most common problems in meetings – and to help you get the most from them.

## 1. Agenda

Make sure you see a copy of the meeting agenda well ahead of the meeting. This will help you prepare for the meeting, and to make sure the previous action points have been addressed. Seeing the agenda in advance also means you can work out what you want to say, and to make notes on how to say it. You can also think about any questions people might ask you, and prepare possible answers.

## 2. Make sure the chairperson can see you during the meeting.

Keep eye contact with the chairperson where necessary so that he / she can see if you don't understand something. Hopefully the chairperson will clarify items with you, but be prepared to ask for clarification if necessary. Use phrases such as:

- Would you mind clarifying this point?
- Sorry, but could you outline the main points again?
- I'm not sure I understood your point about...
- Sorry, could you repeat that please?

You can also ask the chairperson to summarize the discussion or to provide more information on a point:

- Can you summarize the main points for me please?
- Can you go into further detail on this please?
- I'm not sure if I've fully understood the main points here...

## 3. Learn how to handle interruptions

One of the most effective ways to interrupt someone is to maintain eye contact with them. Wait until there's a natural pause and then come in with a phrase that shows you have something to say:

- Can I say something here?

- I'd like to make a point.
- Can I come in here?
- Could I interrupt you for a moment?
- May I just add something here?
- Do you mind if I just come in 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, you can hold them off with a phrase like:

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

#### **4. Develop your note-taking skills**

It can be difficult to understand people – especially if they talk too fast, make jokes, or go off the subject. Taking notes will help you focus on the key ideas and points, and help you tune out irrelevant information. Listen for the key information words, and don't worry too much about writing down grammatical words, such as articles, auxiliary verbs, prepositions, etc.

If you find that you're getting lost in a technical discussion, ask for clarification – or a summary. Use phrases like:

- Could you summarise the main points of this discussion, please?
- Would you mind summing up what you've just said?
- So, in a nutshell, what you're saying is..... (and let someone come in and itemise the main points)

#### **5. Bite the bullet!**

If you're a naturally shy person, it can be hard to speak confidently in public. Fortunately, there are plenty of confidence tricks you can use to make sure your shyness doesn't prevent you from taking part fully in a meeting:

- ✓ prepare what you want to say well in advance so you know what you are going to say is concise yet relevant and you don't forget anything important
- ✓ practice in front of a mirror the day before
- ✓ jot down notes about what you want to say so you feel better prepared
- ✓ know what phrases you can use to introduce your main points
- ✓ prepare answers to possible questions people could ask you
- ✓ worry less about perfect English, but more on your content

- ✓ maintain eye contact with all meeting participants
- ✓ remember the importance of body language: nod to show you agree, frown if you don't understand, and smile when you meet people
- ✓ ask the chairperson for help, if necessary
- ✓ check and confirm important information with other meeting participants:
  - Did you say...?
  - Do you mean...

It's a lot to remember, but try one of these ideas per meeting, and you'll soon find you get more out of business meetings.

Source: <http://www.theenglishweb.com/articles/getting-the-most-out-of-an-english-business-meeting.php>