

TEACHER'S NOTES

Preparing for a first meeting

by Sara Helm

Aim: To allow both work-experienced and pre-experience students to explore and review good meetings practice and procedure through brainstorming sessions and interviews.

Level: Pre-intermediate to advanced, pre-experience and experienced learners

Grammar: *should / shouldn't* for talking about good meetings procedures

Age: Young adults and adults

Materials: One copy of Worksheet 1A and Worksheet 2A for every student. Make a copy of each of the suggestions sheets (Worksheets 1B and 2B) for yourself if required.

Supplementary materials: Meetings vocabulary builder (Worksheet S1); Vocabulary suggestions (Worksheet S2) plus a general 'Business vocabulary builder' template (Worksheet S3) and a 'Language points review sheet' (Worksheet S4) can be found in the Supplementary Worksheets file.

Experienced learners

Good meetings

- 1 Ask the class what sort of meetings they participate in. Elicit different types of meetings. Examples might include:
 - reporting on the progress of a project
 - decision-making meeting
 - negotiation
 - brainstorming new ideas
 - problem-solving meeting
- 2 Elicit details about the usual number of participants, formal / informal procedure, who leads the meeting, who contributes to the discussion, etc. It could be useful to focus attention on the specific nature and difficulties associated with meetings between different nationalities, native speakers and non-native speakers. This should focus the students' attention on their own experience, which will help them to relate to the activities in these lessons.
- 3 Distribute Worksheet 1A to each student. Ask student pairs to brainstorm and note down a few ideas about what makes a good meeting. Give them a few minutes to do this. Then ask each student to

compare their ideas with someone from a different pair for a few minutes. Finally, go round the class, collecting all the ideas and writing them up on the board. At this point it could be useful to encourage a class discussion and give your students the opportunity to relate examples from their own experience. Allow students time to write all the ideas down on their worksheets for review later.

Stages of a good meeting

Repeat this exercise with Worksheet 2A. This stage will give you the opportunity to pre-teach any relevant meetings vocabulary items, such as *agenda*. See the suggested stages of a good meeting on the following page for further ideas and vocabulary.

Pre-experience learners

Good meetings

- 1 A week before this lesson you could instruct your students to ask friends and relatives who have participated in meetings to explain the nature and type of these meetings and what makes a good meeting. Students can collect their information on Worksheet 1A. They can then report back to the class on their findings.
- 2 As with experienced students, allowing time for class discussion will help to set the next few challenges in a meaningful context. It is also a good opportunity to pre-teach meetings vocabulary items.

Pre or follow-up language activities

For the **Good meetings** activity, review the use of modals such as *should / shouldn't* for giving opinions.

For the **Stages of a good meeting** activity, review the use of passives.

Preparing for a first meeting
by Sara Helm**What makes a good meeting?**

Note down your ideas about the important elements in a good meeting under these headings.

Preparation and organization

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Timing

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Leading

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Participating

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Language

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General behaviour

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What makes a good meeting?

Note: the following are suggested responses only – there are no correct answers.

Preparation and organization

- organizer should allow participants to contribute to agenda
- organizer should arrange good meeting location/facilities
- organizer should distribute agenda information before meeting

Timing

- meeting should have clear time limit
- enough time should be allocated to deal with each item
- participants should have fair amount of time to speak

Leading

- leader should introduce participants
- leader should open meeting clearly
- leader should stress need for slow, clear communication and checking and clarifying by participants
- leader should remain impartial
- leader should facilitate participation by all participants
- leader should make sure everyone understands correctly
- leader should close meeting clearly

Participating

- participants should check and clarify information
- participants shouldn't go off the subject
- participants shouldn't interrupt each other constantly

Language

- participants should speak slowly and clearly
- participants should use language everyone understands

General behaviour

- participants should behave respectfully towards each other
- there should be an atmosphere of cooperation
- there should be awareness of time constraints
- participants should aim to achieve objectives

Preparing for a first meeting
by Sara Helm**Stages of a good meeting**

Write down the various stages which might be followed in a good meeting.

Before the meeting

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Opening the meeting

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During the meeting

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Closing the meeting

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After the meeting

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Preparing for a first meeting

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Stages of a good meeting

Note: the following are suggested responses only – there are no correct answers.

Before the meeting

- participants invited to contribute items for agenda
- meeting agenda prepared
- preliminary agenda for confirmation by participants distributed
- agenda updated
- final agenda/relevant information distributed to participants
- suitable meeting location: size and facilities checked
- time/date and meeting location confirmed with participants
- participants reminded to familiarize themselves with agenda/supporting documentation shortly before meeting

Opening the meeting

- participants welcomed and introduced by leader
- receipt of and reading of pre-meeting documentation by participants
- minutes-taker elected
- meeting objectives clearly stated
- good multi-national meetings behaviour encouraged
- time limit stated
- items on the agenda introduced

During the meeting

- individual items on the agenda introduced
- participants invited to contribute ideas/opinions by leader
- ideas/opinions given by participants
- decisions taken
- outcomes/decisions/action points clarified by leader after each item
- direction and time for each point monitored and controlled by leader
- possibly request for mention of Any Other Business made by leader

Closing the meeting

- call to close the meeting made by leader
- summary of items/decisions/outcomes/action points given by leader
- information concerning distribution of minutes and post-meeting documentation given
- participants thanked for their contribution and successful outcome

After the meeting

- minutes and post-meeting documentation distributed to participants promptly
- action points carried out, monitored and reported on