



The 50 Golden Rules for Good Business Meeting Etiquette

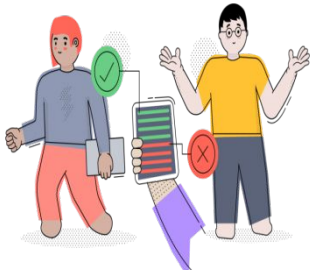
- We've all experienced a 'bad' business meeting. They come in many shapes and forms. There are those where attendees show up 15 minutes late, those with an unclear purpose, and again there are those you don't even feel you need.
- If you're a middle manager, you spend around 35% of your time in meetings. Upper management uses a staggering 50%. Why is that? Could it be that we're trying to multitask – doing too many things at once – when in fact we're not being productive at all? Or are we scheduling meetings simply out of habit?
- Whatever the reason, it's a lot of time is spend trying to bounce ideas, solve problems, and in the end get something done. All those meetings require a successful strategy. That's why we've put together a list of must-know rules on how to run an efficient business meeting, both for meeting leaders and participants.
- These tips aren't universally applicable for all meetings. Some should only be reserved for the most formal. Instead, we hope the reader will look at this as a miscellaneous collection – and where the reader is free to pick and choose what could be relevant to their own environment.

Before a business meeting

What's the most important thing to consider before a meeting? Come prepared. Not just you, the organizer, but the attendees as well. The benefits are enormous when you work smart and prep ahead.

1. Do you really need this business meeting?

Not everything can or should be resolved in a meeting. Perhaps you don't even need to schedule it! That's why the first and most important rule is to have a specific purpose before scheduling a meeting. If you don't have a purpose, don't schedule a meeting. Can the matter be resolved via email or quick chat instead? Then do so instead.



2. Only invite necessary people

Include only the people who are relevant to the discussion or have a say in the matter. Inviting too many people who are not directly involved isn't just wasting their time, it's wasting everyone else's as well. Besides that, if you overcrowd the meeting room, you won't get as much done.

3. Choose the right time

Organizing around multiple time zones or even just a bigger office space can be daunting. Ultimately, it's hard to please everyone. Try to be conscientious of the fact that, if you're organizing a transatlantic meeting, some people are just starting for the day, with the other wrapping up.

This affects the time of the meeting, but also the energy in the respective rooms, and the engagement with whoever is presenting. It's not something you can change, but it's something you should be mindful of and acknowledge.

4. Choose the right meeting room



Choose the meeting room applicable for the amount of people, supplies, and type of meeting you're having. The same room doesn't work for both brainstorming session, sprints, and 1:1s. It's crucial to get the right environment.

Not only does the room have to fit the session you're about to have, it needs to meet the requirements for the right type of equipment too. Think about device compatibility, screens, lighting. And don't roam the hallways ten minutes before to make sure there's a room available.

5. Send an official invite

You can't expect people to show up on time if there is no set date and time booked in their calendar. Make sure to send an official invite in advance via your preferred calendar service, so the people attending can reserve their time.

6. How much time do you need?

Have you ever been in a business meeting that lasted way longer than was necessary? Yes, us too. A lot of meetings are scheduled for a full hour, some even **two**, when they should only be half that time or less. Just as you shouldn't invite a whole list of unnecessary people, the meeting shouldn't go on for longer than what's needed. Ultimately, using more time than you need kills productivity and makes people lose focus.



7. Incorporate minutes/round-up of the previous business meeting in the invite

Is this a recurring meeting? Then chances are you're following up on something from the last round. Include what was discussed in the last meeting and also any accomplishments done in the meantime.

8. Outline what attendees need to bring

Must-haves to bring to a meeting include note-taking gear, such as a notepad and pen or laptop. Both can come in handy, we find. These days, it's usually always alright to bring a laptop for taking notes, but it depends on where you're going.

Having laptops in the business meeting environment breeds procrastination and in some cases even disrespectful meeting conduct, so be mindful of that when scheduling and recommending people to bring them. We couldn't live without ours, just like some businesses never go anywhere without a stack of business cards. But even we like to keep the laptops out of the equation every once in a while.

9. Have an agenda



Detailing what the meeting will cover will help you and the other attendees stay on topic for the duration of the meeting. Keep the agenda simple and send it out several days in advance for people to get a chance to look it over.

10. Set success criteria and calibrate expectations

Increase business meeting effectiveness with success criteria – yes. Set goals and meet them – yes. Reflect on your progress and improve – yes, please! It begins when you organize the meeting. Why are you meeting? What's the objective? What do you hope to accomplish? Start the business meeting with a reminder of what success looks like for the meeting and what you hope to gain from the gathering. Afterwards, it's easier to analyze on the progress you've made and where you can improve.

11. Be prepared

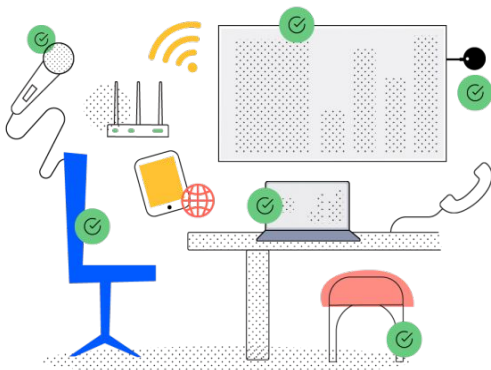
Are your slides in order, your software up to date? Practice and revise your presentation to fit your audience and make sure everything is in order technically beforehand.

If you're presenting in the meeting, but not hosting, and need extra aids such as a pointer, certain projector or audio, make sure the meeting environment you'll be at has the necessary equipment ready. It's easier to use something from the native environment rather than bringing your own, although sometimes you want to bring extras anyway.

12. Provide copies of essential documents

Send important documents prior to the business meetings instead of handing them out as the meeting starts. It creates less of a distraction if the items have already been sent out for reference. And yes, it's useless if you send important documents 20 minutes before the meeting starts.

13. Check equipment



Make sure all attendees have access to the program you attend to use if the business meeting will be held online. Let them know in advance if they need to install an app or program for the meeting to go smoothly.

A wireless presenting solution helps relieve some of the stress in the situation – all attendees have to do is download the app and they are good to start presenting wirelessly.

14. Confirm the business meeting

If you've scheduled the meeting some time in advance, follow up with participants a day ahead to let them know that the meeting is coming up. Especially visitors will appreciate the reminder. When confirming the meeting, you also have the chance to share new info or documents that pertain to the set agenda, and that's often valuable at this point. Of course, this is only relevant for some business meetings, in particular ones that are large and planned way out in advance.

15. Cancel if you have a conflict

Unless it's an emergency, there's no excuse for canceling a meeting minutes before it begins. Plan ahead and call in advance if you see a conflict arises.

16. Rehearse your presentation

Don't assume you can wing a presentation on the spot. There's no good answer to how many times you should rehearse because it depends on you, the venue, the audience, the attendees, basically the whole shebang. It's never out of place to look over your slides a few times, correct whatever errors might still be in there, and go over what you want to say.

Additionally, rehearsing your presentation or the points of an agenda can help solidify your good arguments and cut the bad ones.

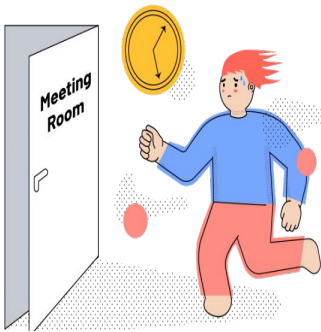
17. Consider all technical efforts ahead of time

Mostly, this comes down to preparation on the meeting leader's behalf. Don't assume you have enough battery on your laptop or phone to go through the meeting, don't assume a video will load, don't assume everything is in place ... Check your setup and test it before showtime.

During a business meeting

Business meeting attendees could be calling in from the same office or from anywhere else in the world. It's your job, as the organizer, to make sure everyone feels welcome. Use technologies that improve the visual experience and team collaboration and work on your presentation skills.

18. Don't be late



Show up on time. There's no excuse for being late for a business meeting, no matter what your role in it is. If you are, a simple apology to the organizer and the rest of the attendees is always appreciated, just don't make a big fuss of it.

Even if you usually tend to arrive late for personal appointments, make an effort of always arriving a little bit early for business meetings.

We all have different personality types, and while being late for personal arrangements isn't a problem in your surroundings, arriving on time is generally perceived as mandatory in professional settings.

19. Assign a leader

Someone is in charge of the business meeting, and it's most likely the person who organized it, excluding PAs and the like. Every business meeting needs a leader, someone who knows they're in charge of running it. Meeting leaders are key to successful meetings and make sure that actions are taken before, during and after.

The meeting leader is responsible for organizing, planning, and carrying out the meeting. That includes sending out invites, checking up on attendees, booking a room, testing equipment, ensuring that the meeting progresses in an orderly fashion and reaches its goals.

20. Assign a note-taker

While the meeting leader is in charge of communication, the agenda, even icebreaking, they might not be the right person to do the minutes as well. Because the meeting leader is frequently speaking or being extra attentive to other attendees, it can be a good idea to assign a note-taker. The meeting leader can then sum up the notes after the meeting and send out a summary. It can also be valuable to video or simply audio record the meeting, to make more detailed minutes later. If you're doing this, please ask and notify the rest of the attendees ahead of time.

21. Look professional

Looking confident encourages acting confident. You shouldn't feel like you have to dress up for a meeting, but there is a difference between meeting with colleagues and out-of-office clients. As a general thumb rule for presenters, try not to draw attention to one specific detail in your outfit via graphic prints or colors, like popping nail color or t-shirt slogans, but instead make the overall image that of a neutral, blended, and put together individual.

22. Wait for everyone to arrive

You're on time, but your colleagues aren't. Do you dive in? No. Give them a couple of minutes more and wait until everyone has arrived or dialed in before you start with anything else than introductions. That said, though, don't wait forever for late-comers. Just like you should be on time, they should too, and you don't have to encourage impoliteness.

23. Know where to sit

This might seem like an oddity to mention, but the seating position in a meeting room actually says something about people's perception of you, your relationship with others in the room, and what you want to convey in the situation of the meeting. Research shows you should use your boss as a compass in a meeting – if you want to be heard, sit close to them. If you want to go unnoticed, sit far away from them, but not opposite.

24. Make introductions

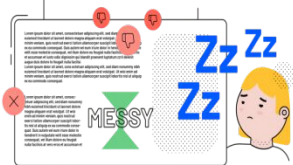
Welcome all attendees as they show up either in person or online. If it's a business meeting with externals or new members of the team, be sure to take a turn around the room for everyone to introduce themselves and their role so they can all become acquainted.

25. Be polite with your smart devices

It's not always necessary to turn your mobile device completely off but if you're in doubt whether or not it's appropriate (it almost never is), turn it off just to be sure. Or put in on silent, flight mode or anything non-disturbing that won't suddenly flare up in a flash of sound and noise. Even better – don't bring it into the business meeting at all.

The same goes for laptops. Are laptops approved devices for taking notes? Do you need it for presenting? If not, close it or stow it away entirely. If you start using your phone or laptop to check emails or other irrelevant stuff, other people will likely follow suit.

26. Limit clutter on your slides



Why is this important? The answer is that anyone can read something without the need for a meeting. Make sure your presentation offers new insights that can be digested at a glance.

27. Don't interrupt

Even business meeting situations can create an excitable or animated environment, with passionate discussions and heated debate. Keep your cool and let others finish talking before speaking yourself.

28. Be mindful of different personalities

Not everyone thrives in business meeting environments, which is a big challenge for managers in charge of a mixed team. There are the outgoing, gregarious folk that love open discussions and presenting, versus those perhaps more meditative in thought, precise and reserved.

29. Listen!

Listening to what others say is crucial to any business meeting situation. But not only that, showing that you listen can make a difference too. Adjust your body language to show enthusiasm, even if you're participating via video chat.

30. Don't dominate discussions

You're clever, you're smart, you have something brilliant to say. But as with interruptions, dominating the business meeting isn't a welcome approach unless you're the meeting leader and it serves a specific purpose.

31. Don't procrastinate

Right, so we all procrastinate from time to time, and that's okay. In business meetings, not so much. It's up to the organizer to make sure the meeting is well thought out, not too long and has a clear purpose. It's easy for attendees to drift or want to focus on other items if things feel scrambled.

32. Make eye contact

Don't be awkward: eye contact is a crucial factor in any good meeting. It's a powerful way to engage others, either by inviting them into the conversation, letting them know they're next in line to talk or gesture to someone that they should participate in the conversation.

33. Follow good online conference etiquette

If you're in an online conference call, you should make sure your profile picture and username are both appropriate. Test volume levels right away and mute when not speaking.

If you're sharing your screen, close all other irrelevant programs and tabs on your computer.

34. Stay on topic

If you stray off topic from time to time – it happens in most business meetings – try to lead the conversation back to the main purpose.

35. To humor or not to humor?

Using humor is tricky and not always well-received. In a setting with closer teammates, it can be relatable and even help release tension, whereas it can cause unnecessary tension if used towards clients or people you don't know well. If you decide to go down the joking road, make sure it's appropriate enough to suit your audience, no matter how well you know them.

36. Know your audience

There are several relevant points to make adherent to the audience. First of all, use a tone that is appropriate. Think about age, demographics, background, etc. Secondly, choose a topic that is relevant. People are not likely to listen to you if you're not catering your message to them.

37. Follow time constraints

Rule 5 was a big one: when you've booked the right timeframe, be sure to stick to it. Follow the timeline you set up for the meeting and end the meeting on time. Don't simply run overtime. It is at the very least unprofessional, demotivating, and can have a knock-on effect on any meeting that follows.

38. Stay calm

It's natural to be nervous in a business meeting, but try to make an effort to keep your cool. Staying calm and presentable – i.e. how you carry yourself – is very important and can help lead the way for clear content and communications thereof.

39. Talk confidently

See point 28 – not everyone is a natural in a business meeting setting, and that's okay. Even the shyest people will find that talking confidently can convince themselves and the audience they're talking to. In fact, public speaking can even provide quite a rush because the adrenaline is pumping and you're pushing yourself.

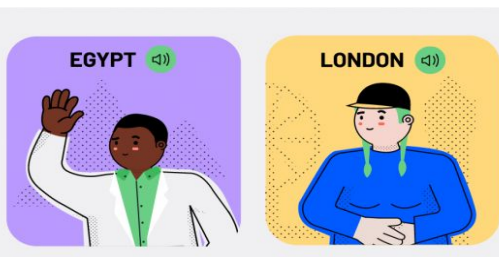
40. Stay present

Your [body language](#) isn't just important for active listening. You're always able to tell if people want to be in the room or if they'd rather be somewhere else. Not every business meeting is a party, but it would be offensive to show that you're bored and feel like your time is wasted. Likewise, you're also able to tell from the body language of other meeting participants how they feel. That can often be a good hint as to how the meeting's going.

41. Help others stay present

Whether you're the meeting organizer or a participant, don't be afraid to call out others present that you feel are disengaged, talking, or in any way distracting the flow. Even the most ineffective of meeting presenters deserves the respect of active engagement from their audience.

42. Give space to different types of workers



More and more companies are choosing to board the remote train, encouraging a global focus in the workplace, and people working from all over the world. Include remote workers or those in secondary office locations as often as possible to ensure visibility into each other's activities. They are as much part of the team as you are, and keeping them in the loop will help you all stay focused.

43. Schedule time for breaks

During lengthy business meetings of more than an hour, schedule time for breaks and let people know about them as part of the agenda. This will help them stay focused. It also demonstrates a degree of empathy, highlighting that you know a toilet break, coffee run or quick clearing of the air is important to keep the energy up.

44. Move around

Meeting room arrangements don't have to be old-school, boardroom style seating. No seriously, it's not all knights of the round table and nothing else. Different kinds of rooms heavy on technology and dynamic presentations are taking over, fostering collaboration and freedom to share ideas.

45. Leave time for questions

It's an essential closing for every business meeting – and an amazing way for you to both clarify any discrepancies and improve for next time. You'll probably find that having a dedicated time slot for questions at the end is more productive than people constantly raising their hand and interrupting during the meeting.

After a business meeting

Business meetings are more often part of a larger project or strategy. Stop thinking of them as events that have a definite beginning and end. Keep yourself and your files in order to make sure you're always ready to pick up where you left off.

46. Thank everyone for attending



If you called the business meeting, make sure to thank everyone for attending. It makes a difference and doesn't cost you anything.

47. Follow up with notes/minutes

Share notes and reminders after the business meeting. If no notes were taken, thank everyone for attending by sending a quick email where you let them know you appreciated their time.

48. Follow up on action items

Action items should be sent around after the business meeting as a reminder of its focal points.

49. Ask for – and give – feedback



It's imperative in a working environment to master the skill of giving feedback, both positive and negative, and you'd be surprised at how many actually want it. This feedback can, of course, be submitted in person, but there are also some great feedback apps that allow for anonymous communication.

50. Assess and adjust

Following up on the first item in this post, consider if you need the meetings at all. Not all recurring business meetings are productive, and you shouldn't schedule meetings just for the sake of meetings. Can something be changed to make your meetings more successful? Try to change things up every once in a while and see if you can make them even better.

Complete the gaps in the dialogue with the words in a–g below.

Production Director. So you see, Peter, if we don't approve this programme...

Chairman: Excuse me, could I remind you to (1) your remarks to the chair?

Production Director. Certainly. Mr Chairman, I can assure the members of the Board that when this programme is finished our production capacity will be doubled.

Board Member. Excuse me, Mr Chairman; on a point of order, I don't think that the Production Director should be talking about "when this programme is finished" before the Board has had the opportunity to vote on whether to (2) the programme or not.

Chairman: Yes, indeed, Mr Morris, would you like to propose a motion?

Production Director. Yes, Mr Chairman. I (3) that the capital expenditure programme as presented to the Board be adopted in its present form.

Chairman: Who will second the motion?

Board Member I'll (4) the motion.

Chairman: Those in favour? Those against? Any abstentions? Eight in favour, and no-one against. I declare the motion (5) . You know, in all my time as Chairman I have never been able to use my (6) vote. The capital expenditure programme is now adopted. Can we go (7) to the next item on the Agenda? This item ...

a) second b) casting c) address d) on e) move f) carried g) approve