Meetings

**Look at the photos. What are people doing ?
What relationships do they have?
What is the difference between these meetings?**

*Well, … It seems to me that ... On the one hand ..., on the other hand ...
For example, ... / For instance, ... Personally, I think that ... From my point of view, ... In my opinion, ...*
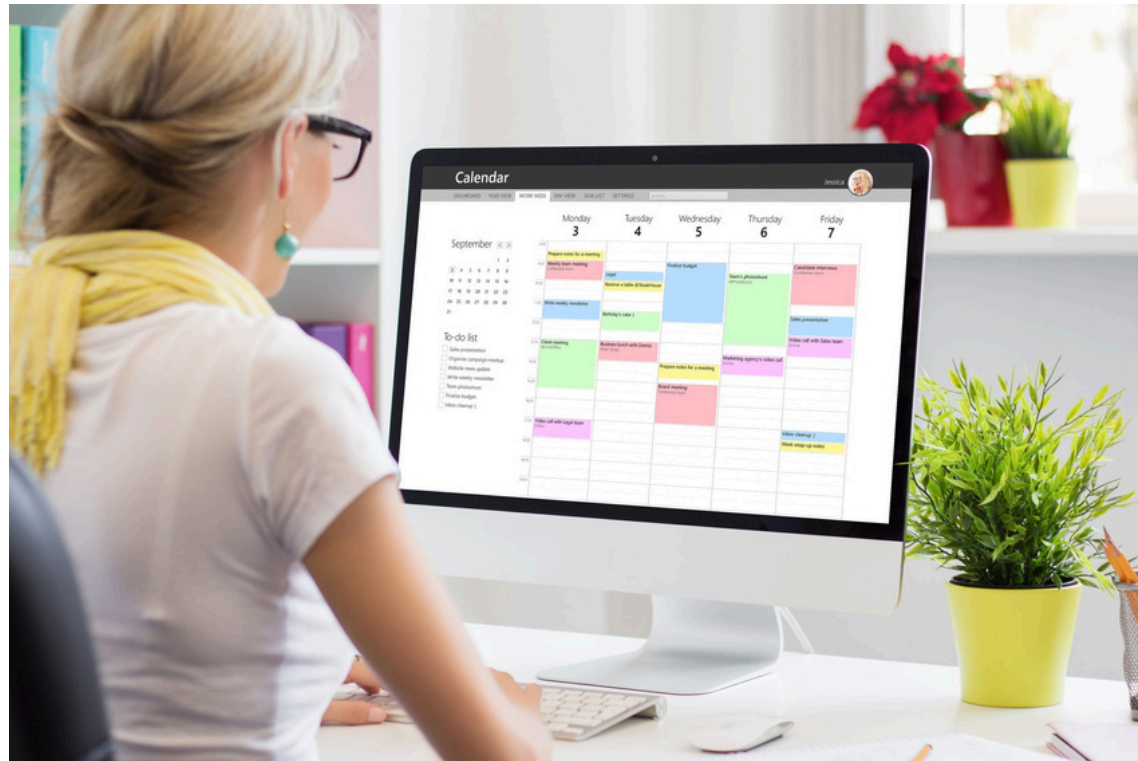
Useful vocabulary

The verbs typically used with "meeting" are "_have_" and "_hold_":

We're going to _have_ another department meeting on Friday.

Let's _hold_ a meeting to discuss the policy changes.

You can also use "*schedule*," "*arrange*" or "*organize*" to talk about having a meeting in the future.

When you participate in a meeting, you "*attend*" the meeting (formal) or "*go to*" the meeting.

Did you *go to* the project team meeting? Several people did not *attend* the development meeting.

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A well-organized meeting will have an _agenda_ – that's a list of topics (often called items) that will be discussed.

In some meetings, one person keeps notes that will be the official record of the meeting – these are called the meeting _minutes._

Why hold a meeting?
There are many different reasons.
One is _to brainstorm_.

"_Brainstorming_" is creating a lot of different ideas, so that they can later be analyzed, evaluated, and the best ones can be selected. Brainstorming is often done as a first step in a project, before there is a definite plan.

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Another reason to hold a meeting is to develop a *strategy* and *allocate tasks*. A strategy is a plan for completing a project, and to "*allocate tasks*" means to assign specific items of work to specific people.

Image Credit: Monkey Business

Meetings are also held to _collaborate_ (work together) on projects and give _updates_ – reports of progress and current status.

Finally, meetings are held _to make decisions_.

Some meetings use a formal system of _voting_, in which a decision is made if it receives the majority (more than 50%) of the votes. Other meetings use a less formal system of decision-making, aiming for the group to come to a _consensus_ (a general agreement)

Match the word with the definition:

1 agenda:

2 minutes:

3 brainstorm:

4 strategy:

5 allocate tasks:

6 collaborate:

7 updates:

8 voting:

9 consensus:

A. reports of progress and current status

B. a formal system in which a decision is made if it receives the majority (more than 50%) of the votes

C. a general agreement

D. a list of topics that will be discussed in a meeting

E. notes that are the official record of a meeting

F. to create a lot of different ideas, so that they can later be analyzed, evaluated, and the best ones can be selected

G. a plan for completing a project

H. to work together

I. to assign specific items of work to specific people

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Beginning a meeting

To start the meeting, the meeting leader (who is called the chairperson) may use one of these phrases:

Hello, everyone. Thank you for coming today.
Since everyone is here, let's get started.
First, I'd like to welcome you all.

If there are new people in the meeting, or people from different departments who might not know each other, the chairperson may introduce them:

I'd like to take a moment to introduce… [name + description]
I'd like to take a moment to introduce Carla, from the public relations department.
Please join me in welcoming [name + description]
Please join me in welcoming Jim, a consultant who will be helping us with project management.
Sheila, would you like to introduce yourself?

Stating the objective

Finally, it's good to state the specific topic or objective of the meeting, in order to focus the discussion:

As you can see from the agenda, we'll be talking about… [topic]
I've called this meeting in order to … [goal]
Our main goal today is to … [goal]
Our main goal today is to determine the budget for 2024.

Asking for opinions

Meetings often begin with the presentation of some information and then a request for opinions. To ask people for their opinions, you can say:

What does everyone think about…?
I'd like to get your feedback on…
What are your thoughts about… ?
What are your views on… ?

After one person has expressed his or her opinion, you can say "Thanks," to acknowledge the opinion, then use these phrases to ask for more people to respond:

What does everyone else think?
Are there any other comments?

If there's a specific person who you would like to hear from, you can ask him or her directly by using these phrases:

Susan, can we get your input?
Would you like to add anything, Susan?

Giving your opinion

Strong

I strongly believe that…
I'm positive that…
I'm convinced that…
I have no doubt whatsoever that…
There's no question that…
(strongest)

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I think / believe / feel that…
*From my point of view…*
In my experience… / I find that…
(use these phrases to base your opinion on your experience)
I'd say that…
If you want my honest opinion, I think that… / To be honest…

(use these phrases when you want to express a negative or critical opinion. The word "honest" is a diplomatic way to signal that you are going to say something negative or unpopular)

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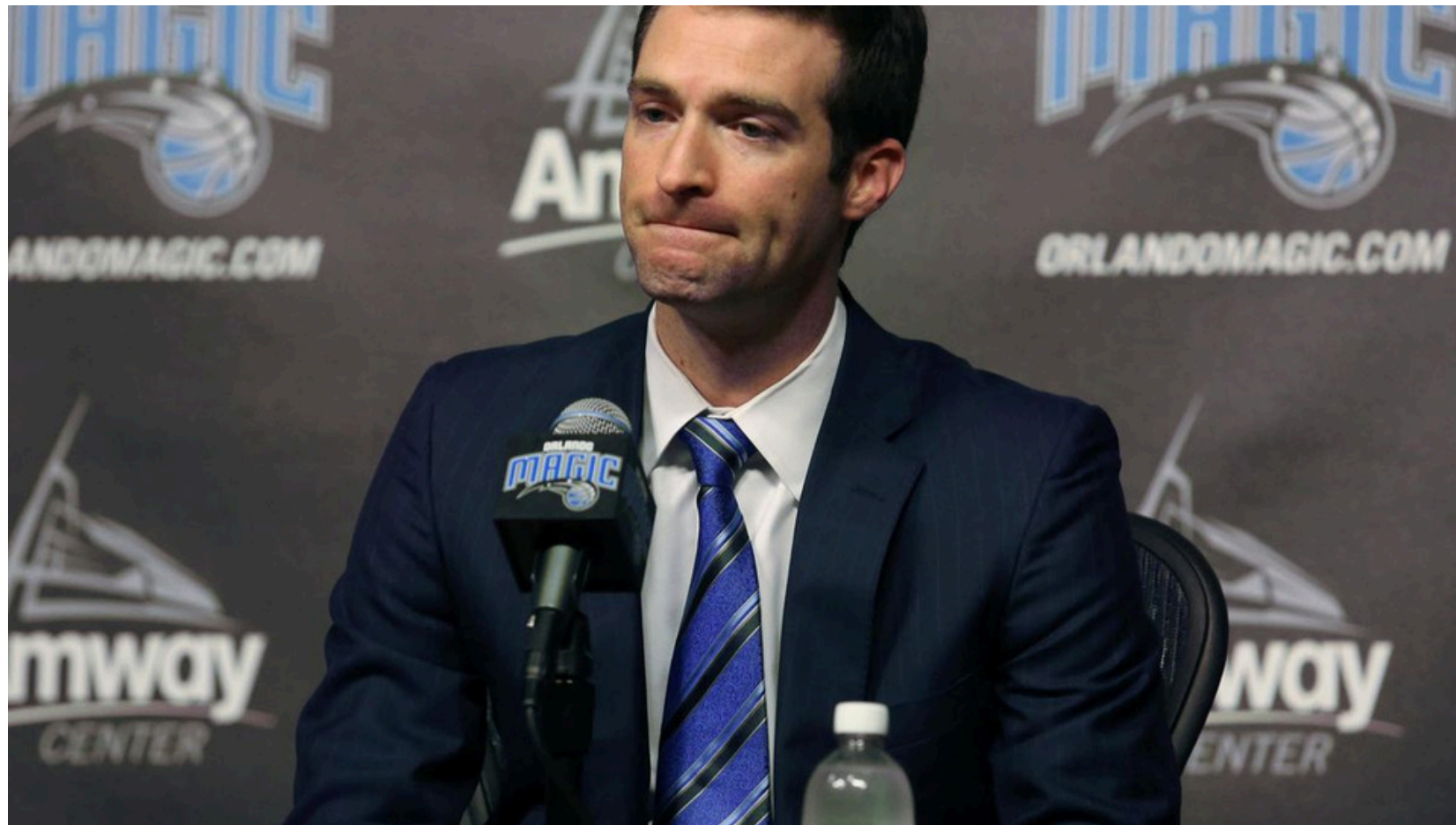
Weak

It seems to me that…
It's possible that…
I tend to think that…
My initial reaction is…
(use this phrase to show that this is an opinion you haven't thought very deeply about)

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Agreeing

Strong agreement:

I completely agree.
I couldn't agree more.
You're absolutely right.

Normal agreement:

Exactly!
That's just how I see it.
I'm with Peter on this.
(you can use this phrase to refer to another colleague's opinion)

Partial agreement:

Well, it depends.
I agree with you up to a point, but…
(this means that you agree with some of the opinion, but not all of it)
I agree with you in principle, but…
(this means you agree with the opinion in theory, but not in practice)

Disagreement

I'm afraid I disagree.
I'm not so sure about that.
I see it differently.
Yes, but...
Not necessarily.

I'm sorry, but I completely disagree.
I'm sorry, but I don't agree with that at all.

Settling a disagreement

We don't seem to be getting anywhere with this, so maybe we could discuss it further at another time.

Let's move on. I think we're going to have to agree to disagree.

Making suggestions

Weak:

We could…
Why don't you/we….?
How about…?
What about…?

Strong:

I suggest…
I recommend…
We should…
Let's…

Note:

We could / Why don't we / We should / Let's are followed by the base form of the verb:
We could invest in new technology.

How about / What about / I suggest / I recommend are followed by the -ING form:

How about investing in new technology?

Closing a meeting

It looks like we've covered the main items on the agenda.
That will be all for today.
If no one has anything else to add, then I think we'll wrap this up.

Let me quickly summarize the main points.

You can also set a date for the next meeting:

Our next meeting will be… / Let's get together…
on January 29th.
on the first Monday of next month.
two weeks from today.

I'll let you know the date of our next meeting.

Listening 🔊 7.04

B Complete the text using the words in the box. Then listen again to check.

enough   generate   lose   share   ways

So I want to hear your ideas about how we can ¹_____ more ideas, and how we can ²_____ them with each other. But it's not ³_____ just to have good ideas. What I want to do in this session is to brainstorm ⁴_____ we can capture those ideas to make sure we don't ⁵_____ them.

Listening 🔊 7.04

Discussing and presenting ideas

5A Match the beginnings (1–10) with the endings (a–j) to make sentences from the audio.

1 We think **the first thing we need to do is** to

2 **So we should** brainstorm

3 **We suggest everyone needs to** get into

4 **Another way is to** use

5 The thing is, it's got to be easy,

6 Our team would like to push the idea of

7 **Basically,** starting with

8 **So it's a bit like**

9 **Our team came up with** the idea

10 What we want to do is make sure that

a a word or phrase, and then simply writing down all the ideas that come from that phrase.

b make lists.

c we really think through the issues.

d the habit of carrying a small notebook.

e the recorders on our smartphones.

f as many ideas as possible, and write them all down.

g mind mapping.

h otherwise we won't do it.

i brainstorming, which the first group mentioned.

j of visualisation.

7.4 ❯❘ Business skills: Generating and presenting ideas

Thank you!

Resources

Managing meetings

Meetings are essential for team working and getting things done. But done badly, they can feel like a waste of time and energy. Read on for six tips for successful meetings.

LearnEnglish / Feb 16

Making a decision

Listen to a meeting in which colleagues make a decision to practise and improve your listening skills.

LearnEnglish / Apr 21