



B1-B2 • Business English

# The Hidden Cost of Meetings

## 1. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

1. How many hours do you spend in meetings weekly?
2. What makes a meeting valuable?
3. When should a meeting be an email?
4. What is the most useless meeting you've attended?
5. How do you end meetings on time?

## 2. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

Match the words with their meanings:

- |                         |                                           |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| ___ 1. agenda           | a. minimum number of people needed        |
| ___ 2. facilitator      | b. specific, assigned next step           |
| ___ 3. quorum           | c. not happening at the same time         |
| ___ 4. asynchronous     | d. a list of topics for a meeting         |
| ___ 5. standing meeting | e. growth of number or length of meetings |
| ___ 6. time theft       | f. repeating meeting at regular intervals |
| ___ 7. meeting creep    | g. place to capture off-topic issues      |
| ___ 8. parking lot      | h. written record of what was decided     |
| ___ 9. action item      | i. waste of time that hurts productivity  |
| ___ 10. minutes         | j. person who guides discussion           |

## 3. READING

### Why 'Free' Meetings Cost a Fortune

Meetings feel free, but they are the most expensive line item no one sees. Eight people in a one-hour call is a full workday of attention. Yet many meetings lack a clear agenda, a facilitator, or a decision. The default is invite everyone, talk in circles, and hope consensus



appears.

A better habit: clarify the decision, send materials asynchronously, keep the invite list small, and end with owners and deadlines. Use a parking lot for tangents and kill standing meetings that no longer earn their place. If time is money, treat your calendar like a budget—not a charity.

If you must meet, define a single decision question, a timeboxed agenda, and explicit roles: facilitator, scribe, decider. Start with written briefs so introverts think before debate begins. End five minutes early to assign owners, deadlines, and a follow-up format. Try a 'meeting budget' per team per quarter; when hours run out, leaders must trade. Scarcity sharpens priorities—and calendars.

## 4. COMPREHENSION

1. Why are meetings called the 'most expensive line item no one sees'?
2. What problems do aimless meetings create?
3. How can asynchronous materials help?
4. What should a meeting end with?
5. When should a standing meeting be canceled?

## 5. VOCABULARY REVIEW

Fill in the blanks with words from the vocabulary list:

1. Share the \_\_\_\_\_ in advance so people come prepared.
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ kept discussion focused and fair.
3. We didn't have \_\_\_\_\_, so we couldn't vote.
4. Pre-reads allow \_\_\_\_\_ review of data.
5. This weekly \_\_\_\_\_ stopped adding value months ago.
6. Too many invites feel like \_\_\_\_\_ for focused workers.
7. Watch out for \_\_\_\_\_: more and longer meetings over time.
8. Let's put that tangent in the \_\_\_\_\_ and move on.
9. Each decision needs a clear \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Sarah will write the meeting \_\_\_\_\_.

## 6. WORD FORMATION

One cell is blank in each row. Complete the missing form.

Verb	Noun	Adjective
_____	facilitation	facilitative
decide	_____	decisive



invite	invitation	_____
_____	expansion	expansive
record	_____	recorded

## 7. COLLOCATIONS

Match the words that go together:

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. tight     | a. owner   |
| 2. meeting   | b. agenda  |
| 3. decision  | c. minutes |
| 4. invite    | d. list    |
| 5. follow-up | e. email   |

## 8. ERROR CORRECTION

Find and correct the mistakes:

1. There is not agenda and nobody take minutes.
2. We invited too much people and nothing were decided.
3. If we would prepare, the call ends earlier.
4. The facilitator don't keep focus on outcomes.
5. Action items is not assigned to anyone.

## 9. GRAMMAR REVIEW

Complete the sentences:

1. If the team \_\_\_\_\_ (prepare) a pre-read, the call could be shorter.
2. Only after the decision \_\_\_\_\_ (emerge) did the tension drop.
3. Had we \_\_\_\_\_ (limit) invites, discussion would be faster.
4. If you \_\_\_\_\_ (define) the owner, execution improves.
5. We can't finish on time because the agenda \_\_\_\_\_ (be) unclear.

## 10. PASSIVE VOICE TRANSFORMATIONS

Change to passive voice:

1. Someone booked the room for two hours.
2. They canceled the standing meeting.
3. The assistant will circulate the minutes.

## 11. DISCUSSION

1. Which meetings would you cut and why?
2. How do you keep a meeting on track?
3. What's the minimum number of people for most decisions?
4. How can you make decisions without a meeting?

## 12. CRITICAL THINKING

Audit your last week of meetings. In 150-200 words, propose cuts, replacements with async updates, and a standard for when to invite people.

### Answer Key

Vocabulary Preview: 1-d, 2-j, 3-a, 4-c, 5-f, 6-i, 7-e, 8-g, 9-b, 10-h

Vocabulary Review: 2. agenda; 3. facilitator; 4. quorum; 5. asynchronous; 6. standing meeting; 7. time theft; 8. meeting creep; 9. parking lot; 10. action item; 11. minutes

Word Formation: facilitate/facilitation/facilitative; decide/decision/decisive; invite/invitation/invited; expand/expansion/expansive; record/record/recorded

Collocations: 1-b, 2-c, 3-a, 4-d, 5-e

Error Correction: There is no agenda and nobody takes minutes. | We invited too many people and nothing was decided. | If we had prepared, the call would have ended earlier. | The facilitator doesn't keep focus on outcomes. | Action items are not assigned to anyone.

Grammar Review: 2. prepared; 3. emerged; 4. limited; 5. define; 6. is

Passive Voice: 1. The room was booked for two hours.; 2. The standing meeting was canceled.; 3. The minutes will be circulated.