

Business meetings: overview

COMMUNICATION

LEVEL
Upper-intermediate

NUMBER
EN_BE_3401X

LANGUAGE
English

lingoda





Goals

- Can understand useful structures and forms to organise and schedule a business meeting
- Can use new terminology and understanding to discuss the particulars of a business meeting







Big question

How many business meetings do you have in an average week? Do you find them useful? Why or why not?



Here is a list of typical thoughts about the purpose of meetings. Which ones do you agree with and why?

Business meetings are used to....

communicate and coordinate different parts of a company

allow workers who don't normally work together to meet and discuss topics

waste an employee's time (not always, but sometimes!)

bring employees together in a common space to share ideas

coordinate with teams, managers and other departments



Take a look at the dialogue below. Pay special attention to the words in blue.



Janet: We really need to schedule a meeting to discuss the **upcoming** new product **launch**. Shall we say Tuesday at 11.30 a.m.?



Benjamin: Hmm... Tuesday is **tricky** for me, I'm afraid. I may have a conference call at 11 with our colleagues in South Africa and you know they might **go on and on** like usual.



Alicia: Tuesday might also not work for me. I may have to **take** a new client **around town**, though I personally hope it **falls through**.



Janet: Come on everyone, we need to **get on the ball** with this or we might not be ready on time! Get back to me **ASAP** with a list of times when you're available.



Fill in the gaps

1. _____: to be cancelled; to fail.
2. _____: very quickly; short for as soon as possible.
3. _____: about to happen; forthcoming.
4. _____: to continue talking for a long time to the point of boring and/or annoying your listener.
5. _____: to show a person the sights, take them shopping, etc.
6. _____: to introduce a new product to the public.
7. _____: a situation that needs to be handled carefully because it might be difficult or awkward.
8. _____: to focus, improve performance, do things right; often suggests exasperation.

Fill in the vocabulary words in bold from the previous dialogue next to their definitions.



Write a dialogue

Now build your own dialogue using the vocabulary. The dialogue does not have to match the example dialogue, but keep with the topic of scheduling a meeting.



Benjamin:



Janet: Thank you for getting back to me on this, Ralph!



Alicia:



Benjamin:



Now take a look at the sample dialogue again. What function do the words in blue have?



Janet: We really need to schedule a meeting to discuss the upcoming new product launch. **Shall** we say Tuesday at 11.30 a.m.?



Benjamin: Hmm... Tuesday is tricky for me I'm afraid. I **may** have a conference call at 11 with our colleagues in South Africa and you know they **might** go on and on like usual.



Alicia: Tuesday **might** also not work for me. I **may** have to take a new client around town, though I personally hope it falls through.



Janet: Come on people, we need to get on the ball with this or we **might** not be ready on time! Get back to me ASAP with a list of times when you're available.



May and might

May and might are both **modal verbs**. In the examples from the dialogue, these verbs are used to **express future possibility**; in other words, there's a chance something might happen in the future, but it's not one hundred percent sure.

- **Please note:** Although may and might have the same use and meaning in these sentences, might is often more common in spoken English

possible situation	sentence with may/might
The boss comes late	Our boss may come late to the meeting.
The meeting goes over schedule	The meeting might go longer than planned.
The meeting gets cancelled	The meeting might get cancelled because everyone is very busy.



What may or might happen?

Take a look at the pictures below. Use may or might to describe the future possibilities in each one. Try to think of as many examples as possible.





May for permission

Another important use for the modal verb **may** is to **ask for** or **express permission**. This use is **more polite** and **formal** than **can**. In most cases, you can use **can** in business interactions, but **may** helps when you wish to be extra polite.

Please note: Using the modal verb **might** to ask for or express permission is considered **old-fashioned** and is mostly **no longer used**.

permission asked for	<i>can</i> (less formal)	<i>may</i> (more formal)
You want to sit down next to someone.	Can I sit here?	May I sit here?
You want to borrow someone's pen.	Can I borrow your pen?	May I borrow your pen?
You want to say no one is allowed to come late to the meeting.	None of you can come late to the meeting.	You may under no circumstances come late to the meeting.



May I ask you to be polite?

Use the following prompts to make polite requests using *may*.
Your partner is free to say yes or no!



Example: You want to have a piece of cake.
May I have a piece of cake?

You want to
borrow
someone's
iPhone.

You want a
copy of the
minutes for the
meeting.

You want a
colleague's
phone number.

You want to ask
a question at a
meeting.

You want to
share some
information.

You want to
interrupt the
discussion for a
moment.



Shall

- In the example dialogue, **shall** was used to **offer a suggestion**. This form is also considered **more formal** and **polite**.
- **Shall** we say Tuesday at 11.30 a.m.?
- Here Janet is **suggesting** the meeting be scheduled at this time.

situation	→	suggestion with shall
It's cold in the meeting room	→	Shall I close a window?
Everyone in the room seems tired	→	Shall we break for lunch?
Everyone is in a hurry	→	Shall we arrange the meeting later?
One point is taking too long	→	Shall we move on now?



Rude Richard



Richard Rossmann is a bossy colleague who is sometimes rude to his co-workers. He doesn't offer suggestions, he gives commands!

Take a look at some of his overly direct statements on the next page.



To help Richard sound more polite, transform his direct commands to polite suggestions using *shall*. If necessary, make the second sentence more polite as well.

1. We need to stop now. I have a busy day ahead of me.



Shall we stop now? I'm afraid I'm very busy today.

2. We have to change topics.
This has gone on too long.



3. The next team should present now. I don't have all day!



4. I want to take a look at the figures. They'll provide us with important information.



5. When is the break? I need coffee now!





Scheduling and re-scheduling meetings

**Is it difficult to schedule
meetings at your job?
How often do they need
to be re-scheduled?**



Gabriela and Renee need to schedule an important meeting with their teams. Read their conversation below.



Hi Renee, I'm sorry but I have to **re-schedule** the meeting on Tuesday. **Would** Wednesday morning **suit you**?

Unfortunately Wednesday morning doesn't work for me. My team usually has an internal meeting on Thursdays at 2 p.m. Your team **could** join us **if that works for you**.



Let me check my schedule. Yes, Thursday works great for me. **Shall** we go ahead and set the date for Thursday at 2 then?

Sounds like a plan. I'll let my team know you're coming. See you then. Bye!





Role play

Choose one of the roles below and, together with your teacher, reschedule an important meeting next week (you may have to reschedule several times!) Use some phrases/grammar in bold in the example dialogue.

You are very busy with a project all of next week and only have time for a meeting on Monday afternoon or Friday morning.

Next week your schedule is relatively flexible, but you'd prefer not to meet in the afternoon.

You have no time next week. Try to convince your partner to reschedule in two weeks.

You're not a morning person at all and prefer to work alone first thing. Avoid scheduling anything between 9 and 11 a.m.



What makes an effective meeting?

In your opinion, what makes an effective meeting? What are the goals of a meeting? Are they always the same? When are meetings a waste of time?

Brainstorm your answer to each question by making a list.



The 5 Keys to an Effective Meeting

Now listen to your teacher read a text called **The 5 Keys to an Effective Meeting**.

Can you summarise what was read? Do you agree with the points the article makes?

Ask your teacher to explain any vocabulary you don't understand.





Read and discuss

A manager at BuildingCorp Ltd. read the same article you just heard. She made a plan for how meetings will be run in the future together with her team. Read through the plan below.

Here's our plan to make our meetings more effective in the future:

1. We will always send around an agenda two days before the meeting starts. People will be allowed to suggest changes.
2. We will only invite team members directly involved in the project.
3. We will stick to the agenda and discuss unrelated topics at a later date.
4. We will make sure everyone has a chance to express themselves and give their ideas.
5. We will always be on time (yes Tom, that means you too!)

Now read through the plan again. What function does the word *will* serve in the sentences?



Will for future predictions

- We use **will** to express something we **believe** or **feel** about the **future**. This is sometimes based on a **personal opinion** or **judgement**.
- Since this tense is used to tell your opinion about the future, it is often used with **I think**.

Example: **I think** we will someday have world peace.

However, the sentence can still stand alone: (I think) we will someday have world peace.

- The negative of will is **won't**. Be careful though! If you are expressing an **opinion** using **to think** and the opinion is negative, it is sometimes **to think** that takes a **negative** rather than **will**.

Example: I **don't think** we will ever have world peace.

I think he	will	get	the job.
The meeting	will	go over	as usual.
He thinks we	won't	agree	with him.
She doesn't think I	will	finish	by the deadline.

will for future predictions with adverbs of certainty

- Since *will* for future predictions is used to express your **personal opinion** or certainty, it can be helpful to use **adverbs of certainty** to demonstrate how strong your opinion is.
- Some examples of adverbs of certainty are: **definitely, surely, probably, certainly.**
- If you use an adverb of certainty in a sentence with **will**, the adverb goes **between will** and the **main verb**:
 - He thinks we **will** definitely get the account.
- If you use these words in a sentence with **won't**, the adverb goes **before** won't:
 - He **probably** won't get there on time.

Mike **definitely won't lead** the meeting.

We **will certainly go** to the meeting tomorrow, or else we might lose our jobs.



Will for future predictions with adverbs of certainty

- Examine some more examples of sentences using **will** and **won't** with adverbs of certainty.
- Think about the effect the different **adverbs of certainty** have on the opinion being expressed. How do they change the sentence?

We **probably won't have** a break.

Surely she won't argue with his plan.

I think we **will probably focus** on the marketing budget.

Wendy **will certainly never** come unprepared to a meeting again!





Examine the following sentences. Do they have the correct word order? Correct any mistakes you see!

1. I will definitely see him tomorrow.



_____.

2. He won't write about surely her.



3. I think it will probably rain tomorrow.



4. Definitely will she come.



5. She will certainly see him.





What will the future bring?

Now it's your turn to think about the future. Make predictions using the following prompts for life in the future. Feel free to use adverbs of certainty (definitely, probably, etc.) but don't forget the word order rules!



meetings

job

your family

your boss

next holiday

your hometown

European
Union

promotion

the world



Reflect on the lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!





Answer key

Exercise p. 7

1. fall through, 2. ASAP, 3. upcoming, 4. go on and on, 5. take someone around town, 6. launch, 7. tricky, 8. get on the ball

Exercise p. 16

Different answers possible, but here are some suggestions:

1. Shall we move on to another topic? We've spent a lot of time on this one.
2. Shall we let the next team present now? I'd like to wrap this up soon.
3. Shall we take a look at the figures? They'll provide us with important information.
4. Shall we take a coffee break? I could really use a cup!

Exercise p. 26

1. correct, 2. He surely won't write about her, 3. correct, 4. She will definitely come, 5. correct



Transcription (1/2)

[transcription continues on next page]

Exercise p. 21

Today, we'd like to talk to you about the five keys to an effective meeting based on the research we've conducted across hundreds of companies. So, listen carefully:

Key number one: Agree on an agenda beforehand

A lot of time can be lost at meetings if you agree on the agenda at the meeting. Deciding on the agenda and main points before the meeting starts can save you valuable time.

Key number two: Make sure meetings are relevant

Almost everyone has been forced to sit through a meeting that was not at all relevant to their work or position. Not only is this boring, it's also a waste of time. Make sure the people sitting in the meeting are only the ones who really need to be there.

Key number three: Stay on topic

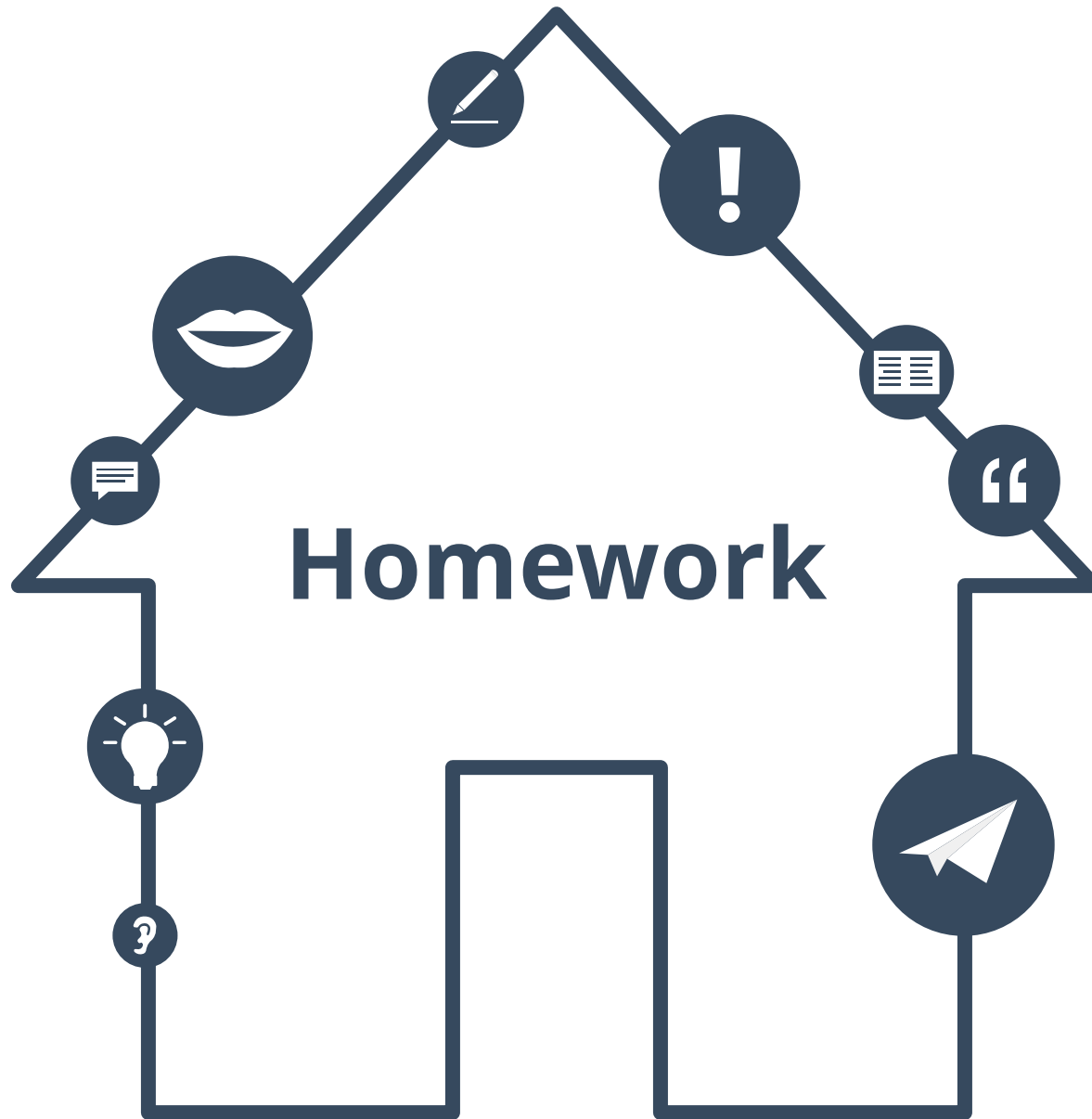
Many interesting ideas may come up during a meeting, and you might be tempted to veer off track. However, it's far more effective to stay on topic and focus on the goals the meeting was supposed to achieve. Jot down the interesting ideas so you can discuss them at a future meeting.



Transcription (2/2)

Exercise p. 21 continued

Key number four: Don't let any one person dominate
We've all been to meetings where a colleague or manager goes on and on. But
meetings are only effective if everyone gets the chance to say what they need to
say. Therefore, managing the discussion is important.
Key number five: Always be on time
This might sound like a no-brainer, but trust us, it's not. Companies lose lots of time
for the simple reason that people are always running late to meetings. Make it a
priority that you and your staff always get there on time!





Put the sentences in the correct list describing their function.

Amy will definitely become team lead.

I think he will become president someday.

May I interrupt you here?

Should we maybe take a break?

May I make a suggestion?

Shall we get started?

May I?

Could I say something?

Can I borrow your pen?

Jonathan probably won't get back to me.

We won't start the project until January.

Shall we move on to the next point?

asking for permission

making suggestions

making future predictions



Meeting plan

Write several things you will discuss and several things you might suggest discuss at your next meeting.



Example: We will discuss the new product launch in December, and we might discuss our Christmas bonuses.



Homework answer key

Exercise p. 33

Asking for permission: May I?, May I make a suggestion?, Can I borrow your pen?
Could I say something?, May I interrupt you here?

Making suggestions: Shall we get started?, Should we maybe take a break?, Shall we move on to the next point?

Making future predictions: Amy will definitely become team lead, I think he will become president someday, Jonathan probably won't get back to me, We won't start the project until January.,



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