

## Title:

19 Timeless Tips to Keep Meetings Short

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## Summary:

Thorough meeting preparation alleviates anxiety. Good planning guarantees that meetings are relevant, don't overrun and aren't held back by uniformed, boring or disinterested attendees. Follow these 19 timeless tips to keep your meetings on track and on time.

## Keywords:

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## Article Body:

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Thorough meeting preparation alleviates anxiety. Good planning guarantees that meetings are relevant, don't overrun and aren't held back by uniformed, boring or disinterested attendees. Follow these 19 timeless tips to keep your meetings on track and on time.

When preparing your agenda ...

1. Identify the aim of your meeting
2. Put the most important items first
3. Establish a clear outcome for each point
4. Judiciously choose meeting invitees. Ask yourself, "Who should attend?" "Should attendees be present for all or just part of the meeting?"
5. Place controversial points towards the end so the early part of the meeting can flow smoothly
6. If you work for a large organization and not everyone knows each other there may be a need for very short introductions. Schedule time for people to quickly

share, "Who I am, my role in the company and why I'm here."

Distribute a specific agenda at least one week before the meeting. Make sure that everyone attending has all the information they need and that presenters know exactly how much time they are allotted.

When circulating the agenda, state that the meeting will start sharp and end on time. This will subtly set the tone for an efficient meeting. Obviously, it is critical that the meeting chair sticks to the timeline.

The meeting day...

1. Rehearse your presentation (if applicable)
2. Arrive early
3. Double check equipment
4. Serve coffee, tea, water or refreshments before a 30-60 minute meeting. Any meeting longer than 30 minutes should have drinks available throughout.
5. If it's an important meeting, bring a colleague with you to take notes so you can concentrate on the meeting. A discreet alternative is to record the meeting if there are no objections from attendees.
6. Avoid giving all handouts at the beginning because people often leaf through the paperwork instead of being attentive.

Unfortunately, well-planned meetings can be derailed by meeting participants. If you have an assertive meeting chair, s/he can easily get the meeting back on track. However, anyone can step in if they have confidence or organizational clout.

7. An upright and open posture is commanding. You can change the volume, pitch, speed or tone of your voice to keep people's interest and engage them by simply leaning forward.
8. Monitoring other people's body language can keep you on top of the meeting. Involve slouching or disinterested people by asking for their opinions.
9. When it is your turn to present, remind others that your aim is to keep the meeting as short as possible. Your intention can motivate others to do the same.

10. If speakers are long-winded or have a personal agenda, you can take control assuming a moderator's role with a few well-placed interruptions like, "May we address the next item on our agenda?" or "Would it be possible for us to go over the details later? Or "Can we discuss the specifics offline?"

11. Suggest a short toilet break to stretch if the meeting is dragging.

12. If an argument or unresolved item prolongs a meeting, call the formal part of the meeting to an end and organize a separate meeting to address the issue.

13. Before ending the meeting, solidify specific task ownership and action items.

To ensure your valuable time isn't usurped by an endless meeting, communicate in advance that you are only available for the scheduled meeting time and politely excuse yourself if the meeting runs overtime. It is your right to leave.

Start and end your own meetings on time and develop a reputation for short, well-organized gatherings. Your colleagues will respect you and contribute much more when they feel you value their time.