

# UNIT 4



## Chairing meetings

### Getting started

Discuss these questions in small groups.

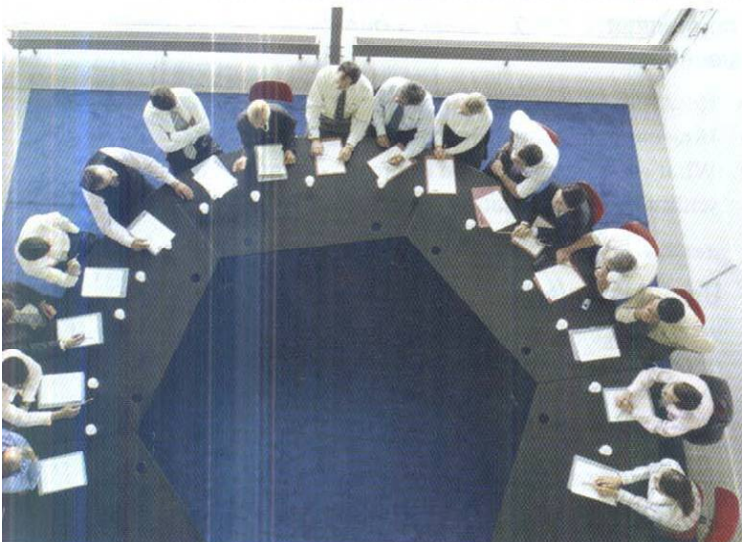
- What is the function of the chair (or chairperson) at a meeting?
- What personal qualities should a good chair have?
- What things should a chair do to make sure a meeting achieves its aims?
- Does every meeting need a chair?

### Advice for chairs

#### Reading

You will read some advice for people chairing meetings. The advice comes under four headings: *impartiality*, *assertiveness*, *staying on course* and *summarising*.

- 1 Before you read, discuss in small groups: what advice would you give about these four aspects of being a chair?
- 2 Read this advice for chairing meetings (ignore the gaps for the moment). Was the advice the same as yours or different?



Chairing a meeting means ensuring that a meeting 1 ..... its aims. The meeting should have been 2 ..... for a specific purpose, and all discussion at the meeting must be conducted to this end. These are some of the skills required:

#### Impartiality

A chairman should ensure that all participants have an opportunity to express their point of view.

#### Assertiveness

Ensuring that everyone gets a(n) 3 ..... will almost certainly involve stopping someone from dominating the 4 ..... . The more 5 ..... the issue, the more likely you are to require firmness, although phrases such as 'I think we should hear from Ms. Smith on this' or 'Can we have some comments from the engineering department on this?' should be sufficient in most cases. Once you provide this opening, however, you need to ensure that there are no interruptions while the next speaker has their 6 ..... .

#### Staying on course

A chair must 7 ..... the importance of each item on the agenda, and 8 ..... time to each topic as required. If one issue begins to dominate, the chair must take control. You might 9 ..... a further meeting to discuss the issue at a later date, or that the main parties concerned could continue the discussion at the end of the meeting.

#### Summarising

Summarising can be used at the end of a meeting to ensure that everyone has a clear 10 ..... of what took place or what action is now required. It is a skill which is 11 ..... for a chair and which requires active 12 ..... . You have to state concisely what was said and end with a clear statement about what is expected to happen next and what each participant has agreed to do.

From <http://www.meetingwizard.org>



3 Read the text again and choose the best alternative, A, B, C or D, for each gap. This will help you to study a number of useful collocations connected with meetings.

- |                 |                 |                |                |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1 A meets       | B achieves      | C arrives      | D manages      |
| 2 A summoned    | B required      | C called       | D gathered     |
| 3 A listening   | B attention     | C notice       | D hearing      |
| 4 A procedure   | B proceedings   | C dealings     | D undertakings |
| 5 A contentious | B argumentative | C disagreeable | D quarrelsome  |
| 6 A speak       | B say           | C state        | D opinion      |
| 7 A assess      | B advise        | C weigh        | D appraise     |
| 8 A share       | B set           | C budget       | D allot        |
| 9 A suggest     | B advise        | C indicate     | D move         |
| 10 A insight    | B preview       | C hindsight    | D overview     |
| 11 A valueless  | B invaluable    | C valued       | D priceless    |
| 12 A hearing    | B audition      | C attention    | D listening    |

4 Compare your answers with a partner and discuss the following.

- Which do you think is the best advice? Is there anything you disagree with?
- What training could you give someone to become a good chair?

## Key phrases for chairs

### Listening

You will hear five different extracts from business meetings where people are discussing problems.

1 Listen and for each meeting (1–5), decide which problem (A–H) is being discussed.

Meeting 1: ..... Meeting 2: .....  
Meeting 3: ..... Meeting 4: .....  
Meeting 5: .....

- A How to deal with a late payer
- B How to improve timekeeping
- C Whether a product is suitable
- D Who would be the best person for the job
- E Which would be the best hotel to use
- F How to treat a potential customer
- G When to hold an event
- H Why a deadline can't be met

2 Complete these sentences (1–14), used by the chairs of the meetings, with the words from the box.

about break copy get have look  
minutes other purpose sum summary  
to views what

- OK, let's *get* started.
- Has everyone got a ..... of the agenda?
- Would anyone like to take ....., or shall we just keep a list of action points?
- Thank you all for coming. The ..... of this meeting's to ...

5 Jane, could you give us your ..... on this?

6 So, if I could just ..... up, what you think is that ...

7 Thanks very much for that. Now can we hear what other people ..... to say?

8 Look that's all very interesting, but can we keep ..... the issue in hand?

9 So, in a nutshell, ..... you think is that ...

10 Well, we don't have to decide on this today. Let's think ..... it a bit more and come back to it next week.

11 Now, let's take a five-minute ..... and then start on point number 6.

12 So we need more information on this issue. Sandra, can you ..... into it for the next meeting?

13 So, in ....., we've agreed about where we're going to stay ...

14 Well, thanks all of you for your time. I think this has been very profitable, and we'll meet again to talk about the ..... points on Wednesday 4th at the same time. See you all then.

3 Listen to the conversations again to check your answers.

4 Classify each of the sentences from Exercise 2 by writing a number in the table below.

Starting and managing a meeting	Asking for other opinions	Keeping the meeting focused	Summarising
1			