

HOW TO SPEAK UP IN MEETINGS

Watch the [video](#) "How to Speak up in Meetings" by Havard Business Review.

1 LET'S TALK ABOUT MEETINGS

Begin by answering the questions below.

1. In general, how many meetings do you have each day?
2. What do you like about meetings?
3. What do you dislike about meetings?
4. Do you prefer meeting online or in person?
5. Do you always prepare before a meeting?
6. Have you ever had a particularly memorable meeting? If so, can you describe it?

List the three most common types of meetings you attend.

1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.

How would you describe those meetings? Use the words in the box below.

disorganised	professional	time-wasting	focussed	informative
collaborative	strategic	motivating	confusing	argumentative

How do you feel in those meetings? Use the words in the box below.

energised	frustrated	distracted	optimistic	confident
connected	disrespected	overwhelmed	exhausted	empowered



2 TYPES OF BUSINESS MEETING

Match the heading from the box to the correct paragraphs.

Brainstorming	Decision-Making	Catch Up
Status Update	Performance Review	

Performance Review: These meetings assess an employee's work and achievements. These meetings typically involve a review of the employee's goals and objectives, and how well they have been accomplished. Feedback is provided to the employee, and they may be given recommendations for improvement.

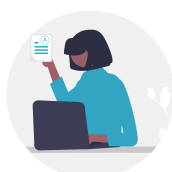
Brainstorming: These meetings are used when a team needs to generate new ideas, solve a problem, or explore new opportunities. Participants are encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas. The goal is to generate a variety of ideas, evaluate them, and then choose the best ones.

Catch up: These meetings keep team members informed and connected. These meetings can be held regularly, such as weekly, and are typically more informal than other types of business meetings. The goal is to provide an opportunity for team members to share updates on their work, discuss any challenges, and stay informed about what is happening within the team or company.

Status Update: These meetings are held to provide progress reports on a project or task. They are typically short and focused, and allow team members to quickly update each other on their progress and any challenges they have.

Decision-making: These meetings are held when a team needs to make an important decision on a particular issue. These meetings typically involve a discussion of the pros and cons of different options, and the team may use tools such as SWOT analysis to help make a final decision.

1. How are performance review meetings different from other types of meetings?
2. What are some common outcomes of a brainstorming meeting?
3. How do catch up meetings help team members stay connected and informed?
4. How can status update meetings help team members overcome challenges?
5. What are some challenges that may arise during decision-making meetings?
6. How does your company use different types of meetings to support a team's and the company's goals?



3 MEETING PHRASES

Complete the sentences by completing the phrases with the words from the box.

ideas	your mind	a consensus	an idea
a say	confrontation	an opinion	a suggestion

- John decided to put forward an **idea** to his team about a new project they could work on together.
- Sarah tried to avoid **confrontation** with her boss by finding a compromise on their disagreement.
- After a long discussion, the group was finally able to reach a **consensus** on the best course of action.
- James wanted to make a **suggestion** to his friend about a better way to study for their upcoming exam.
- Maria wanted to have a **say** in the decision-making process of her company and requested to join the board meetings.
- Mark expressed his **opinion** about the new policy changes that his company was implementing during the meeting.
- It's important to make up your **mind** about your career goals and work towards achieving them.
- The judges are going to evaluate **ideas** submitted by different startups and decide on the best one.

Answer the questions below that use the vocabulary from the video.

- In general, how do you politely put forward ideas during business meetings?
- How can you avoid confrontation when discussing tense topics with colleagues?
- Do you think that sometimes it's impossible to reach a consensus?
- Does your company encourage its employees to make suggestions?
- Do you feel that you have a say in your company's long-term strategic direction?
- Do you express your opinions differently at work than at home? Explain.
- Who can you rely on to help you make up your mind when you are faced with a difficult decision?
- Do you think management at your company effectively evaluates ideas?

4 VIDEO: WHEN TO SPEAK UP

Let's study how to speak up effectively in meetings. Do you agree with the quote?

"Meetings provide an opportunity to create an impact, move up in your career, and bring others with you."

Tip 1: Prepare in advance.

Listen to tip one. While listening, complete the quote from the [video](#).

worry

prepare

anxious

"**prepare** a few points in advance instead of waiting for inspiration to strike in a meeting. If public speaking makes you **anxious**, this practice lets you challenge yourself to speak up without the **worry** of what to say."

1. Do you like public speaking? Describe your experiences.
2. How can preparing before a meeting help you feel more confident?
3. What could you prepare for your next meeting?

Tip 2: Ask, "why you?"

Read the quote aloud, then answer the questions.

"Ask, "why you?" before you craft a presentation or walk into a meeting. This means, why do you care about what you do, about your organisation, or your role? Answering this question will help you find purpose and build confidence. It reminds you that you're speaking up not to show off, but because you're committed and passionate".

1. Research the definitions of the words "craft", "show off" and "committed".
2. Do you care about your organisation and role? Describe why and how you show this in your daily behaviours at work.
3. How can companies encourage their employees to be passionate and committed?



Tip 3: Pause and breathe.

Listen to tip three. While listening, complete the quote from the [video](#).

question

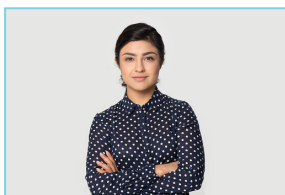
person

confidence

“Pause and breathe to build your **confidence**. Doing so centres you and strengthens your voice so that when you do speak up, you speak with conviction. While you pause, ask yourself, if one other person in this room has the same **question**, am I willing to ask on behalf of the other **person**? The answer will build your confidence.”

1. How can pausing and breathing help you speak up in a meeting?
2. How can thinking if other people have the same question help you speak up?

Read about Jackie, then complete the task.



Jackie is a hardworking professional who can't make her voice heard in business meetings. Despite her valuable knowledge and experience, she is often overlooked by more dominant colleagues. Jackie often feels frustrated and undervalued in business meetings due to her difficulty being heard. Jackie is considering a new career as a result.

1. Research the definitions of the words “overlooked” and “undervalued”. Have you ever experienced something at work? How did you feel?
2. Give advice to Jackie based on the tips from the video.



5 VIDEO: WHEN NOT TO SPEAK

Let's study when it is better to not speak in meetings.

Tip 1

Read the quote aloud then answer the questions.

"Hold back if you're only trying to show how much you know. It's better to let someone else talk or let the meeting run its natural course."

1. In your own words, what does "hold back" mean? Describe a time, personally or professionally, when you had to hold back,
2. Why could only talking to show how much you know be seen as a negative?

Tip 2

Listen to the second tip. While listening, complete the quote from the [video](#).

leadership

support

empower

"If you are a leader trying to **empower** your team, hold back if you're trying to empower others on your team. It's good to let members find their own solution. Letting others speak up in meetings with your clients will help build their **leadership** skills, raise their visibility, and give clients a greater sense of **support** from your whole team."

1. How can holding back empower others? As a leader, is it important to empower others?
2. How do you feel when someone else speaks for you in a meeting?

Tip 3

Read the quote aloud then answer the questions.

"If your comment would be better left for a one-on-one conversation, save it for later to mitigate difficult conversations within the organisation. Email or speak to someone privately rather than addressing the issue in a group where the person will feel defensive."

1. What does "mitigate" mean? Why is it better to mitigate difficult conversations?
2. How would you feel if your manager asked you a difficult question in a meeting of 20 other people?
3. Why is it better to give negative feedback via email or one-to-one?

6 KEY LANGUAGE FOR MEETING

Match the titles from the box to the correct expressions.

Giving someone else's opinion Agreeing / disagreeing Reaching a decision	Acknowledging what someone else says Checking understanding Giving your opinion
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● Giving your opinion. ● From my point of view... ● As far as I'm concerned... ● Personally, I feel...
● Giving someone else's opinion ● John is certain that... ● According to John,.... ● John says that we should...
● Agree / disagree ● I couldn't agree more. ● I'm not sure about that because... ● I'm with you on that / I'm not with you on that.
● Acknowledging what someone else says. ● I hear what you're saying. ● Yes, got you. ● Yes, that's fair enough.
● Checking understanding ● If I understand correctly... ● What you're saying is... ● Ok, so what I've got to do is...
● Reaching a decision ● Ok, is everyone happy with that? ● Does anyone have anything else to add? ● Are we all agreed on those points?

7 ROLE PLAY

Work in small groups. Have a meeting with your colleagues to reach an agreement on each topic. During each meeting, you must:

1. Use the language from exercise 5.
2. Discuss each pro and con in detail.
3. Reach a consensus.

**Video conference calls should be banned for all internal meetings.
Instead, all meetings should be done face-to-face.**

Pros:

- Face-to-face meetings allow team members to build relationships and improve communication.
- In-person meetings eliminate technical difficulties that disrupt virtual meetings.
- Face-to-face meetings can lead to more creative and innovative solutions.

Cons:

- In-person meetings require travel time and expense, which can be costly.
- Time Constraints: In-person meetings may have time constraints due to the availability of meeting rooms or participants' schedules.
- Accessibility: Face-to-face meetings can be difficult or impossible for team members with disabilities or mobility issues.

**New Waves is a marketing agency in London.
The new marketing director wants all employees in the office to wear a uniform.**

Pros:

- Uniforms can create a sense of unity and belonging among employees.
- Uniforms can also help to establish a professional image for the company, which can improve its reputation with clients and customers.
- Uniforms can simplify the process of getting ready for work each day, reducing stress and streamlining the morning routine.

Cons:

- Can be seen as taking away employees personal freedom.
- Uniforms can be expensive to purchase and maintain.
- Some employees may feel uncomfortable or self-conscious wearing a uniform, which could negatively impact their confidence and job performance.

**Norden News is a media organisation in Chicago.
The new CEO wants to introduce a four-day work week.**

Pros:

- Research has shown that a shorter workweek can increase productivity as employees can focus more effectively.
- An extra day off each week results in a better work-life balance for employees.
- A four-day workweek shows the company cares about employee wellbeing and can boost satisfaction and retention rates.

Cons:

- A shorter workweek may impact the company's ability to provide timely customer service or support.
- Employees may feel pressure to cram the same amount of work into fewer hours, leading to burnout.
- It may take time for employees and the company to adjust to a new work schedule, causing disruptions in the short term.

Email should be banned

Pros:

- Significantly improve employee satisfaction and morale.
- save employees time and money, allowing them to focus more on their work and increasing their productivity levels.
- This benefit could attract top talent to the company.

Cons:

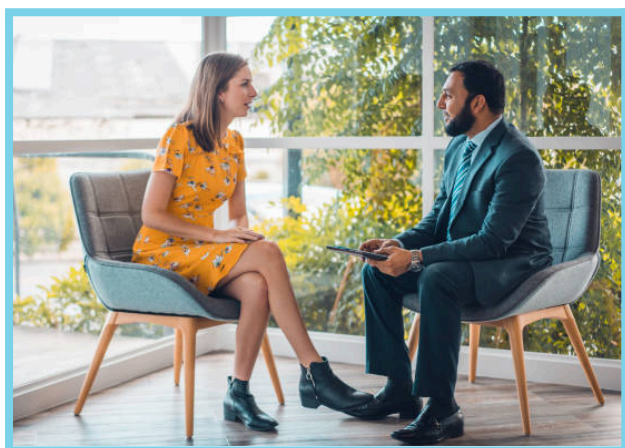
- This benefit could be expensive for the company, especially if the number of employees is high.
- The company would need to consider the logistics of providing and managing the meals and coffee, which may require additional resources and time.
- There is a risk of food and drink waste, which can be harmful to the environment and be a further cost for the company.



8 LET'S TALK!

Study the pictures below related to speaking up in meetings. Take time to consider the questions and prepare an answer. Once you have prepared an answer, you have 2-3 minutes to share your thoughts with the class.

1. Discuss the benefits and challenges of speaking up in each of the meetings pictured below. Consider the following points:
 - a. Does the seniority of the people affect the situation?
 - b. Does the gender of the people affect the situation?
 - c. Does the age or experience of the people affect the situation?
 - d. How do personal relationships affect the situation?
 - e. How does the location of the meeting affect the situation?



9 LET'S TALK!

Discuss the following questions as a class. This is your time to practise speaking and improve your English level, so say as much as possible and have fun!

1. If you could have a meeting with any business leader, who would it be and why?
2. What's the most unexpected outcome you've experienced from a business meeting?
3. If you could have a meeting in any location, where would it be and why?
4. If you could choose any celebrity to attend your next business meeting, who would it be and what role would they play?
5. What's the most unique meeting format you've ever experienced? Did it work well?



HOMework

Read the following article, then complete the exercises on the next page.

1 TIPS ON WHEN TO SPEAK UP IN BUSINESS MEETING

Business meetings are an essential part of any organisation. They provide a platform for exchanging ideas, making decisions, and taking action. However, it is not always easy to know when to speak up and when to stay quiet during these meetings. Here are some tips on when to speak up and when to remain silent during a business meeting.

Firstly, it is important to speak up when you have something valuable to contribute to the discussion. Your opinion and input may be critical in the decision-making process. If you have experience, expertise, or knowledge on the subject, do not hesitate to share it. It is important to ensure that your contribution is relevant to the topic under discussion and will add value to the meeting.

Additionally, if you have a question or need clarification on a point, it is appropriate to speak up. Asking for clarification shows that you are paying attention and engaged in the discussion. It also helps to ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of the topic under discussion.

If you have an idea or suggestion that can benefit the organisation, it is important to speak up. Your idea may be the solution to a problem that the organisation is facing. It may also be a new way of doing things that can improve efficiency, productivity, or profitability.

However, there are times when it is best to remain silent during a business meeting. For example, if the topic under discussion does not concern you or your area of expertise, it is better to stay quiet and listen. This shows respect for others' opinions and expertise and allows you to learn something new.

If you disagree with an opinion, it is best to express your disagreement in a professional manner. Interrupting or speaking over someone is not appropriate and can be seen as rude. Instead, wait for your turn to speak and express your opinion in a clear manner.

Furthermore, if you do not have anything meaningful to contribute to the discussion, it is best to remain silent. Speaking just for the sake of it can be counterproductive and waste everyone's time. It is better to use the time to listen, learn and observe.

In conclusion, knowing when to speak up and when to remain silent during a business meeting is essential. Speaking up when you have something valuable to contribute, asking for clarification, and sharing new ideas can be beneficial to the organisation. However, it is important to listen to others, respect their opinions, and stay quiet when necessary. A successful business meeting requires a balance between active participation and respectful listening.



Research the definitions of the words and phrases, then use them in example sentences.

1. contribute.
2. critical.
3. hesitate.
4. expertise.
5. speaking over someone.
6. interrupting.
7. just for the sake of it.
8. counterproductive.



On a separate piece of paper, write detailed answers to the following questions.

- a. When should you speak up during a business meeting?
- b. What should you consider before contributing to a discussion during a business meeting?
- c. What is the importance of asking questions during a business meeting?
- d. What are some benefits of sharing new ideas during a business meeting?
- e. When is it appropriate to remain silent during a business meeting?
- f. Why is it important to respect others' opinions during a business meeting?
- g. How can you express disagreement with a colleague's opinion in a professional manner during a business meeting?
- h. What is the key to a successful business meeting, according to the text?

