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# Business Language

Faculty of Business and Economics

## Chapter 3 – Section 4

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# Chapter-3



# Meetings in English

## Following the Agenda



### Taking the Minutes

Anyone, including you, may be assigned to take the minutes at a meeting. Often someone who is not participating in the meeting will be called upon to be the minute-taker. Before a meeting the minute-taker should review the following:

- The minutes from previous meeting
- All of the names of the attendees (if possible)
- The items on the agenda

It also helps to create an outline before going to the meeting. An outline should include the following:

- A title for the meeting
- The location of the meeting
- A blank spot to write the time the meeting started and ended
- The name of the chairperson
- A list of attendees that can be checked off (or a blank list for attendees to sign)
- A blank spot for any attendees who arrive late or leave early

Sample Minutes Outline:

Supervisor's Meeting

Friday, May 5

Room 3

Start: \_\_\_\_\_ Finish: \_\_\_\_\_

Chair: Pierre

Attendees:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

Late to arrive: \_\_\_\_\_

Early to depart: \_\_\_\_\_

The minute-taker can use a pen and paper or a laptop computer and does not need to include every word that is spoken. It is necessary to include important points and any votes and results. Indicating who said what is also necessary, which is why the minute-taker should make sure to know the names of the attendees. If you cannot remember someone's name, take a brief note of their seating position and find out their name after the meeting. A minute-taker should type out the minutes immediately after the meeting so that nothing is forgotten.

## **Watching the Time**

One of the most difficult things about holding an effective meeting is staying within the time limits. A good agenda will outline how long each item should take. A good chairperson will do his or her best to stay within the limits. Here are some expressions that can be used to keep the meeting flowing at the appropriate pace.

- I think we've spent enough time on this topic.
- We're running short on time, so let's move on.
- We're running behind schedule, so we'll have to skip the next item.
- We only have fifteen minutes remaining and there's a lot left to cover.
- If we don't move on, we'll run right into lunch.
- We've spent too long on this issue, so we'll leave it for now.
- We'll have to come back to this at a later time.
- We could spend all day discussing this, but we have to get to the next item.



## **Regaining Focus**

It is easy to get off topic when you get a number of people in the same room. It is the chairperson's responsibility to keep the discussion focused. Here are some expressions to keep the meeting centred on the items as they appear on the agenda.

- Let's stick to the task at hand, shall we?
- I think we're steering off topic a bit with this.
- I'm afraid we've strayed from the matter at hand.
- You can discuss this among yourselves at another time.
- We've lost sight of the point here.
- This matter is not on today's agenda.
- Let's save this for another meeting.
- Getting back to item number 5...
- Now where were we? Oh yes, let's vote.

## Voting

When issues cannot be resolved or decisions cannot be easily made, they are often put to a vote. Most votes occur during meetings. Votes can be *open*, where people raise their hands in favour or in opposition of the issue. In an open vote, the results are evident immediately. Other votes, such as who should be elected to take on a certain role, are private or *closed*. During private votes, attendees fill out ballots and place them in a box to be counted. The results may not be counted until after the meeting. Here are some specific expressions used during open voting:

- All in favour?  
(Those who agree raise their hands or say "Aye".)
- All opposed?
- Motion to hire more tour guides, moved by Thomas.  
(Suggestions or ideas that are put to a vote are called *motions*. When a person makes a suggestion, the term to use both during the meeting and in the minutes is *moved*.)
- Motion to hire more tour guides seconded by Nolan.  
(When another person agrees with the motion, it is *seconded*.)

When a motion is voted and agreed upon it is *carried*. When it is voted and disagreed upon it is *failed*. Most often votes are put to a majority. If there is a tie vote, the chairperson will often cast the deciding vote.

## Sample Voting Session:

**Pierre:** Okay, now that we've covered most of the business, it's time to vote on the staff picnic. Jane and I have come up with two different ideas. I'll give Jane the floor now, and she'll outline these two options. After that we'll vote. I don't think there is any reason to have a private vote, so I'll just ask to see a show of hands. Jane, would you do the honours?

**Jane:** Thanks Pierre. Okay, so, as you all probably assumed, we are going to wait until most of the tours have passed through before we have the staff picnic. That way most of you should be able to attend. So we've chosen the last Sunday of September. I hope that works out for all of you. Now, the first option is to have a BBQ at Mariposa Beach. We would do this on the last Sunday of September. The second option is to have a potluck dinner/pool party in Pierre's backyard. The only problem with this is if it rains, there isn't much in the way of shelter there. I don't think Pierre and his wife will want all of us dashing inside in a thunderstorm.

**Pierre:** Well, if we had to we could probably squeeze everyone in the basement. Anyhow, those are the options, so let's put it to a vote. All in favour of option number one? Raise your hands please...okay, one vote. And, all in favour of option number two? That's four. Okay, so it looks like a pool party at my house.

**Jane:** Great. I'll put up a sign up sheet and everyone can write down what they plan to bring.

## Comments and Feedback

During the meeting, participants will comment, provide feedback, or ask questions. Here are some ways to do so politely:

- If I could just come in here...
- I'm afraid I'd have to disagree about that.
- Could I just say one thing?
- I'm really glad you brought that up, Kana.
- I couldn't agree with you more. (I agree)
- Jane, could you please speak up. We can't hear you at the back.
- If I could have the floor (chance to speak) for a moment...

- We don't seem to be getting anywhere with this.
- Perhaps we should come back to this at another time?

## Closing a Meeting

### Wrapping Up



There are different reasons why a meeting comes to an end. Time may run out, or all of the items in the agenda may be checked off. Some meetings will end earlier than expected and others will run late. The odd time, a meeting may be cut short due to an unexpected problem or circumstance. Here are a variety of ways to adjourn a meeting:

- It looks like we've run out of time, so I guess we'll finish here.
- I think we've covered everything on the list.
- I guess that will be all for today.
- Well, look at that...we've finished ahead of schedule for once.
- If no one has anything else to add, then I think we'll wrap this up.
- I'm afraid we're going to have to cut this meeting short. I've just been informed of a problem that needs my immediate attention.

### Reminders

There is almost always one last thing to say, even after the closing remarks. A chairperson might close the meeting and then make a last-minute reminder. Instructions for tidying up the room may also be mentioned.

- Oh, before you leave, please make sure to sign the attendance sheet.
- I almost forgot to mention that we're planning a staff banquet next month.
- Don't forget to put your ballot in the box on your way out.
- If I didn't already say this, please remember to introduce yourself to the new trainees.
- Could I have your attention again? I neglected to mention that anyone who wants to take home some of this leftover food is welcome to.

- If you could all return your chair to Room 7 that would be appreciated.
- Please take all of your papers with you and throw out any garbage on your way out.

## **Thank You's and Congratulations**

The end of the meeting is also the time to thank anyone who has not been thanked at the beginning of the meeting, or anyone who deserves a second thank you. Congratulations or Good-luck can also be offered here to someone who has experienced something new, such as receiving a promotion, getting married, or having a baby.

- Before I let you go let's all give a big thank you (*everyone claps*) to Thomas for baking these delicious cookies.
- Again, I want to thank you all for taking time out of your busy schedules to be here today.
- Most of you probably already know this, but Nolan's wife just gave birth to a baby boy.
- As you leave today, don't forget to wish Stella luck on the weekend. The next time you see her she will be happily married.

## **Follow Up**

In the closing remarks, the chairperson, or participants may want to discuss the date and time for the next meeting, when the minutes will be available, or when a decision should be made by. This is also the time to give contact information, such as how to send a question by e-mail or who to call regarding a certain issue.

- We'll meet again on the first of next month.
- Next time we meet I'll be sure to have those contacts for you.
- If anyone has any questions about anything we discussed today, feel free to send me an e-mail.
- The minutes from today's meeting will be posted as of tomorrow afternoon.
- I'll send out a group e-mail with the voting results.