



Principles of Effective Meetings

1. Prepare an agenda	Prepare an agenda outlining exactly what will be discussed in the meeting. Allocate times to each part, and indicate who will lead that part (if not you).
2. Give people notice	Give people proper notice of the meeting, and circulate the agenda in advance to help them to prepare for it.
3. Invite only those who need to be there	Meetings are often disliked because they waste a lot of people's time. Think about who really needs to be there. Do they need to be there the whole time?
4. Start and finish on time	Show respect for your meeting and for the schedules of those attending. Start on time and do not recap for late comers unless absolutely necessary. Remember, people may have other commitments after the meeting so finish on time.
5. Use the agenda to keep on track	Good meetings get things done. To do this, you need to stick to the points in hand and handle any side-tracks firmly. Maybe note them down for discussion at a different meeting, or suggest they be addressed elsewhere.
6. Involve everyone	If you have invited someone to a meeting, it must be because you want to hear what they have to say. Make sure that everyone has the chance to contribute.
7. Control discussions	Make sure that a few people don't dominate, and handle any conflict early on. Thank people for their contributions and select people individually to speak if they are having difficulty being heard.
8. Seek clarification	If there is a conflict of opinion, or misunderstandings, use questions to fully explore the situation.
9. Make notes and summarise	Write things down as you go, or things will get forgotten. Also, take the time to summarise what has been discussed/agreed to check that everyone is happy. This is also a great way to move the discussion along to the next point on the agenda.
10. Circulate minutes and action points soon after the meeting	If meetings are not followed up, things will not be done. Aim to circulate minutes within 3 days of the meeting, and make sure that any actions agreed have been assigned to an individual (with their permission), and has a deadline attached to it.

See also 'Tips for Managing Meetings' which has more great ideas to make meetings successful.