

Quick Guide: How To Participate In Meetings

Meetings often fail because participants haven't prepared enough. Consequently, meetings drag on and decisions cannot be made. To make sure you are better prepared for your next meeting, and to create a more professional image to your colleagues, follow the checklist below.

- 1. Be prepared.** Preparation is vital. Spend time looking at the following: the agenda, attached papers and previous minutes. Think about what questions or comments you may be asked. Will there be any contentious issues?
- 2. Consider who will be there.** What sort of common ground will there be between you and the other participants?
- 3. Plan what you want to say or present.** To present effectively state your idea; give a balanced picture by showing positives/advantages and a couple of opposing views; state benefits and possible consequences of not adopting it; add any evidence that will support your idea or give examples of previous success; and then restate it.
- 4. Arrive early.** Make sure you know exactly where the meeting is being held. Don't let yourself be distracted by last-minute phone calls or conversations. Being late will put you at an immediate disadvantage: you will appear disorganised and may have missed important information and therefore spend time having to catch up. Think about who you'd like to sit next to and make sure you get there in time to claim that seat.
- 5. Be positive and alert throughout the meeting.** Your approach will convey to the other participants that you are really paying attention. Then, when you come to speak, they will naturally listen more attentively to your views if they feel you have given them a fair hearing. Make notes of what you need to do and to help your concentration.
- 6. Get involved and participate whenever possible.** The more you put into a meeting the more you will get out. Your participation will enhance your professional image.
- 7. Time your participation carefully.** Do not be tempted to jump in as soon as something occurs to you. You may disrupt the flow of the discussion and your perfectly valid opinions may be stillborn by being introduced before their natural time. Listen to what is being said and add your views at the appropriate time.
- 8. Signal attention to get into the meeting.** When you are ready to participate try to lead into it in such a way that you engage the meeting's attention before you reach your key points. For example, "I'd like to add to that point by saying ...". By using this method you are alerting your audience to listen and then they will hear your key points.
- 9. Present your ideas enthusiastically.** Remember, enthusiasm breeds enthusiasm.
- 10. Do your action points!** Having made a note of the actions with deadlines during the meeting make sure you complete what you've committed to do.

Related Course: [Presenting In Meetings](#)

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