

LESSON 1: MEETINGS

“A productive meeting is one where everyone walks away with clarity, purpose, and a sense of accomplishment.”

Business English

1. Introduction to topic

Acquiring knowledge about meetings in a Business English course is of paramount significance, given that meetings constitute a fundamental aspect of business operations. These meetings serve as the forums where crucial decisions are made, challenges are addressed, and teams converge to collaborate effectively. Mastering the art of clear and confident communication in such settings enhances your ability to articulate ideas, foster productive teamwork, and cultivate strong professional relationships. By honing your skills in the context of meetings, you are not merely refining your English proficiency but also preparing yourself for real-world scenarios where skilled communication can profoundly influence your career path.

2. General Questions

1. In your view, which format—In-person or Online meetings—proves to be more effective, and why?
2. Do you gain any personal satisfaction from participating in meetings, or do you find them a waste of time?
3. How frequently do meetings occur within your organization or department, and what impact does this frequency have on productivity?
4. If you had the authority to alter one aspect of your workplace meetings, what would it be, and what are your reasons for this choice?
5. How do you envision the future of meetings? For instance, do you anticipate a shift toward exclusively online formats, a change in frequency, or other significant trends?
6. In your assessment, does Microsoft TEAMS stand out as the most effective platform for meetings, or do you prefer alternative software?
7. Can you recall a particularly productive meeting? Conversely, have you experienced a meeting that, in hindsight, could have been more efficiently handled through email?

3. Images

- **Can you describe each photo?** (e.g. where are they? What industry could they be working in? etc)
- **Compare and contrast these photos** (What is similar? What is different?)



4. Reading

A recent study conducted by Stanford University delved into the impact of prolonged videoconferencing on our health. Researcher and communications specialist Jeremy Bailenson termed this phenomenon "Zoom fatigue," emphasizing that it is not exclusively associated with Zoom. Over the past few years, many of us have spent substantial time online utilizing various video-conferencing platforms. The COVID-19 pandemic rendered tools like Zoom, FaceTime, Skype, and Google Hangouts indispensable for maintaining connections with loved ones. Numerous businesses have relied on these platforms for meetings, while educators have employed them for virtual instruction. Bailenson identified several factors contributing to the exhausting nature of video-conferencing. He explained that the fatigue extends beyond mere tiredness and eye strain from prolonged screen exposure. It also induces "cognitive overload" and creates a sense of obligation to remain perpetually connected. We frequently feel compelled to maintain constant communication with friends or to be perpetually available to supervisors, clients, or students. Bailenson cautioned that this can result in burnout and stress, thereby elevating the risk of developing moderate to severe depression. He also noted that this anxiety can undermine our self-confidence, as the sensation of being observed by multiple faces in meetings parallels the stress associated with public speaking.

Comprehension Questions

1. What is "Zoom fatigue," and who created this term?
2. Which video-conferencing platforms were vital during the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. According to Jeremy Bailenson, what are some of the main reasons why video-conferencing can be so tiring?
4. How does "Zoom fatigue" affect a person's mental health, according to the study?
5. Why does Bailenson compare video-conferencing to public speaking?

5. Listening

Watch this TED talk:

https://www.ted.com/talks/david_grady_how_to_save_the_world_or_at_least_yourself_from_bad_meetings?subtitle=en&geo=es

- Summarise the video
- Note down the key expressions and any new vocabulary

6. Key Vocabulary

a) Match the business meeting vocabulary to the correct definition

1. Action Item
2. Consensus
3. Follow-up meeting
4. Protocol
5. Chairperson
6. Minutes
7. Agenda
8. Brainstorming

- a. Specific tasks or activities that need to be completed after the meeting.
- b. Rules and behaviour needed to be followed by all members.
- c. General agreement among all participants in the meeting.
- d. A meeting held later to ensure that decisions are implemented.
- e. A method used during meetings to generate ideas or solutions through open discussion.
- f. A list of topics or issues to be discussed during the meeting.
- g. The person who leads the meeting.
- h. A summary of talking points during the meeting.

b) Write an example sentence using each expression

7. Grammar / Common mistakes

Can you guess the missing **preposition** from these common business meeting expressions?

1. "Let's begin by going over what's ___ today's agenda."
2. "Can someone take notes and send them ___ after the meeting?"
3. "We have a few action items to look ___ by the end ___ this meeting."
4. "We need enough people present ___ make any official decisions."
5. "The project proposal is due ___ next Tuesday, so please be ready."
6. "Let's get input ___ the CEO before we finalize the plan."
7. "I'll send a follow-up email ___ confirm the next steps and deadlines."
8. "We'll start ___ a brainstorming session to create ideas ___ the campaign."
9. "Alex will now give a presentation ___ the market research findings."
10. "The goal ___ today's meeting is to finalize the contract with our new client."**

8. Writing task

Explain which 3 ideas are the **most productive (150-200 words)**

1. All meetings should have a chairperson.
2. All meetings in Europe should be conducted in English.
3. There should be a 2 meeting limit every day.
4. All meetings should have a 30-minute time limit.
5. All meetings should be recorded for the other employees.
6. All meetings should be conducted standing up.

Upload your writing

ANSWER KEY

4. Reading

1. Zoom fatigue is the affect on our health from spending long periods of time videoconferencing. This term was created by Jeremy Bailenson from Stamford University.
2. Essential platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic were ZOOM, Facetime, Skype, and Google Hangouts.
3. According to Bailenson, some reasons why videoconferencing is tiring include eye strain and cognitive overload.
4. Zoom fatigue affects a person's mental health by making them feel pressure to always feel connected and can lead to burnout and stress.
5. Bailenson compares public speaking to videoconferencing because with both you have many faces watching you,

6. Key Vocabulary

- Action Item **A**
- Consensus **C**
- Follow-up meeting **D**
- Protocol **B**
- Chairperson **G**
- Minutes **H**
- Agenda **F**
- Brainstorming **E**

7. Grammar

1. on
2. out
3. at - of
4. to
5. by
6. from
7. to
8. with - for
9. on
10. for