

Preparing for a first meeting: Part 4

by Sara Helm

Aim: To carry out a second (and perfect) meeting in order to consolidate performance in leading and participating in meetings.

Sub-aim: To review the subject of meetings and to extend business vocabulary and general language use.

Level: Pre-intermediate to advanced; adults; pre-experience and job-experienced; small groups / compatible group of one-to-one students.

Materials: Make one copy of Participating in the perfect meeting: Progress review (Worksheet 7) and one copy of Leading the perfect meeting: Progress review (Worksheet 8). If you are combining one-to-one students and trainers, each trainer will need one.

Equipment: Board / one or more audio-recording devices (with time counters, if possible).

The perfect meeting!

Groups

If your group chose to use one of their own scenarios for the previous business meeting, they might like to choose another scenario of their own for this one. Alternatively, you could select one of the other scenarios provided in the Meeting Proposals files. After a thorough performance review and correction (referred to as a learning point) of the language used in the first meeting, the meeting proposal brainstorming activity and meeting can be repeated. Encourage your students to imagine themselves holding the perfect meeting beforehand. You might like to give them a few moments to imagine this. You might wish to change the meeting leader too. This time you should use the Perfect Meetings: Progress review worksheets (Worksheets 7 and 8) to record students' improved accuracy and more appropriate use of meetings language. The meeting can be audio-recorded and reviewed in the same way as after the First Meeting.

Group of one-to-one students

A second business meeting and review could proceed in the same way as in the First Meeting, with monitoring and review of progress by individual students privately.

Variation

Groups

An amusing variation on this exercise can be to allow each student (after they have reviewed their main areas for improvement) to re-record over the main parts of their contribution to the original meeting. This would work as a warm-up exercise to the Perfect Meeting. An audio-recording device with a time counter will facilitate this. This exercise can be set as a self-study task. Each student prepares the perfect (or better!) version of their main contributions to the previous meeting – What I wanted to say, was...! – and then uses the timer to re-record over each part. If this results in small gaps in the recording (due to more succinct delivery), this often simply adds a humorous element. Teacher(s) and students then meet to re-run their recordings simultaneously, turning down their audio devices when it is not their turn to speak. As an added element, a teacher armed with an unchanged recording of the original meeting, can play the 'before' parts before students present their improved version. As none of the students know how other students have improved their meetings performance, this exercise introduces an element of surprise.

A word of warning! Students should only 'improve' parts of the recording where they speak for more than a few moments. Overlapping conversations are a natural part of meetings, particularly in certain cultures, but are difficult to re-record.

Group of one-to-one students

For one-to-one students who don't wish to spend any more time on a group activity, this exercise can simply be carried out and reviewed between student and teacher.

Follow-up activities

A review of business vocabulary specifically relating to, and introduced in, either meeting can be done as a class or individual exercise, using the Business Language Builder (Worksheet S3) provided in the Supplementary Worksheets file. Students could be encouraged to record language chunks for more effective use of specific vocabulary items.

General language-learning points such as repetitive, non-meetings-specific grammar points can be recorded on the Learning points sheet (Worksheet S4) provided in the Supplementary Worksheets file, and reviewed separately.

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Participating in the perfect meeting: Progress Review

Use this worksheet to record your progress since the last meeting as a final learning point.

Presenting information / Reporting on progress

Expressing ideas / opinions

Making suggestions / recommendations

Asking questions / Asking for more information

Asking for clarification / Checking language use

Supporting ideas / Agreeing / Acknowledging

Expressing a different point of view

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Leading the perfect meeting: Progress review

Use this worksheet to record your progress since the last meeting as a final learning point.

Opening the meeting

Managing the agenda

Facilitating participation in the meeting

Closing the meeting
