



Overview

When you need to use technology for meetings, you also need to increase interaction. These guidelines are based on research on group dynamics and effective collaboration and should help your virtual meetings be more interactive, collaborative, productive, and positive.

Before the Meeting



Know Your Technology

- If you aren't familiar with the technology you're going to use for a virtual meeting, test it in advance with a colleague. Ensure you know how to use all the major software features.
- If the bandwidth is available, consider using video to make attendees feel like they're all in the same place. If you'd like attendees to use video, communicate this expectation before the meeting.



Track Your Time

- Virtual meetings should be short to maintain attention and focus—no more than one hour—or have breaks. Meet more frequently if you have a lot to cover.
- Based on your meeting agenda, offer attendees the option to only join for portions of the meeting relevant to their interests and responsibilities.



Plan the Flow

- When people aren't co-located, it's more important than ever to prepare and plan a structure for the meeting.
- State clear outcomes that you want from the meeting.
- If you're the meeting host, create an agenda based on the outcomes, with allotted discussion times for each item.
- Determine which visuals you need for the meeting (e.g., PowerPoint deck, Word document, etc.) and how they will be shared, or which online tools are needed for decision making (e.g., polling, whiteboards, etc.).
- Email or post the agenda and materials where they can be accessible to all attendees one to three days in advance.

During the Meeting



Set the Stage

- Start the meeting early to confirm your software, microphone, and camera are working.
- Choose a quiet space to join the meeting.
- Conduct a roll call at the beginning of the meeting to ensure all attendees are present. Ask attendees to state their own names so people can associate voices with names.
- Introduce anyone new to the group by describing the value they bring to the discussion.
- Use positive language and reinforcement, such as "sounds good" and "interesting idea." If video isn't being used in your meeting, remember that attendees cannot see your nonverbal gestures (e.g., smiling and head nodding).





Pay Attention

- Reinforce others' contributions (e.g., "thanks for the update" or "I appreciate your careful review of the data").
- Use more inflection and feeling words (e.g., "I'm frustrated by..." or "I'm excited to share..."). Attendees cannot readily decode your intent, emotions, or attitude.
- Avoid attendee zone-out by periodically calling on others for input (e.g., "John, what was your experience with...").
- Slow down. Give people time to interject if they did not hear or understand what you said.
- Instead of asking, "Any comments?" call on people specifically and in order, if you want specific input.



Include Others

- Avoid dominating the conversation.
- Make sure everyone's voices can be heard by calling on those not speaking.
- Quickly paraphrase what an attendee said, especially if they spoke quickly or are difficult to understand.
- Let people know if you missed their comment due to technical or other disruptions.



Ensure Progression

- Start and end the meeting on time.
- Say your name before speaking (e.g., "This is Jane and I would like to add..."). Ask others to do the same.
- When using materials that aren't on the screen, reference the page or slide heading or number.
- Ask clarifying questions to ensure understanding (e.g., "What part of the process should I explain more clearly?"). Silence does not equal understanding or agreement.
- Encourage one-off conversations to be held after the meeting when a topic becomes a distraction.
- Interrupt if necessary; don't let people ramble.
- Recap any decisions made.



Do Your Housekeeping

- Optional: Assign a scribe for meeting notes.
- Inform the meeting organizer at the start of the meeting or before the meeting if you need to depart early.
- Mute your line when you aren't speaking. (Unmute when you need to speak!)
- Inform the team if you need to briefly step away from the meeting.



- Contact the meeting organizer if, you are running late.

After the Meeting



- If you're the meeting host, send meeting notes and clearly defined next steps or assigned tasks to attendees.
- Follow up with each attendee to ensure tasks are being completed on time.