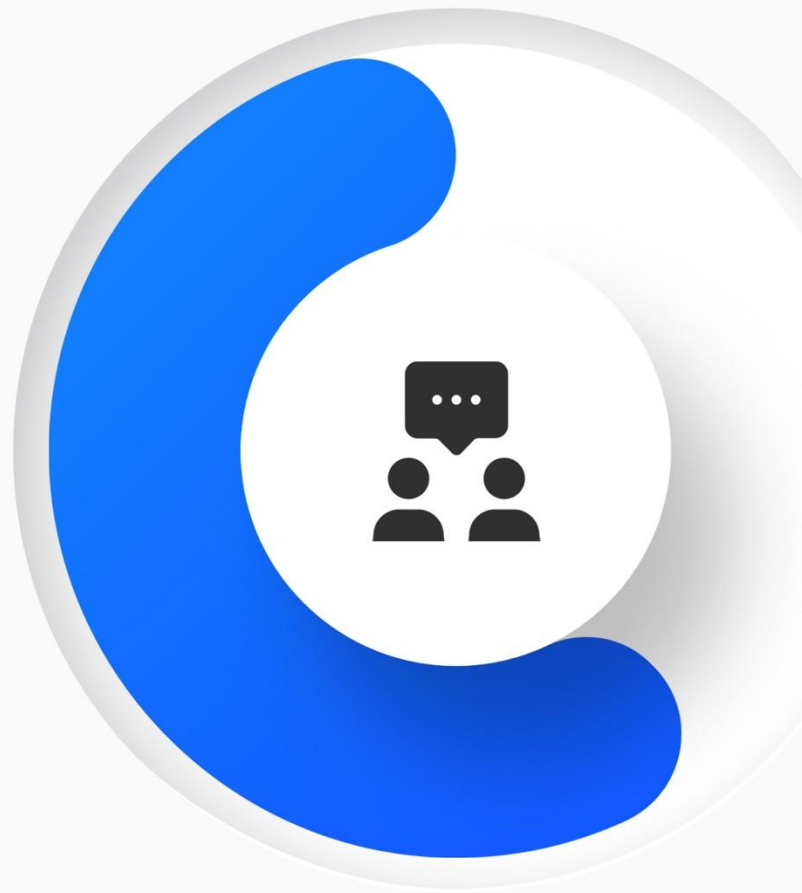


Meeting Essentials

Essential Business English
for Effective Meetings



BUSINESS ENGLISH POD

Meeting Essentials

Essential Business English
for Effective Meetings

3rd Edition

BUSINESS ENGLISH POD

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Introduction

Meetings take many forms, from large formal situations, such as year-end reviews, to small informal discussions, such as a quick team check-in. In this 11-unit audio eBook, you will learn essential business English for participating in a wide range of meetings. The aim is to help you communicate clearly and confidently, whether you are contributing to discussions or leading them.

The 3rd edition of *Meeting Essentials* features updated content across all units, including new explanations and examples. The accompanying audio recordings have been newly produced, along with improved versions of the original dialogs.

The course begins with three lessons on agreeing, disagreeing, and expressing opinions. This is followed by two units on making, accepting, and rejecting suggestions. Next, you will learn how to ask for and provide clarification. In the final four units, the focus shifts to running meetings, including opening a meeting, managing the discussion, handling interruptions, and finishing effectively.

Each lesson starts with an introduction to the topic, followed by a dialog that demonstrates key language and skills. In the debrief section, the main points are explained, along with important vocabulary and example phrases. Finally, each unit includes a practice section to help you apply what you have learned.

To get the most from this course, it is important to study actively. Listen to each unit several times. Start by listening without the transcript, then review it again with the text. Identify and review unfamiliar words. Focus on language in context, including common collocations and typical sentence structures.

Complete the practice activities in each unit more than once. On your second attempt, try using alternative expressions. This will help improve your fluency and flexibility. You may also find it useful to record yourself, write and practice dialogs, or study with a partner.

Meeting Essentials is designed for learners at an intermediate level (CEFR B1-B2), or those with a BULATS score of 40+ or an IELTS score of 4+ or a TOEIC score of 450+. However, the material is suitable for a range of levels. Intermediate learners can focus on building core language skills, while more advanced learners can develop fluency, expand vocabulary, and improve overall communication in professional settings.

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Unit 201 - Expressing Opinions

Hello and welcome back to Business English Pod. My name's Edwin, and I'll be your host for today's lesson on expressing opinions in English.

Imagine you're in a difficult meeting where everyone is disagreeing. Tension is high. And the boss turns to you and says "so what do *you* think?" In this situation, you need to express your opinion. But giving an opinion isn't always easy, as you surely know. You've got to say it the right way.

But the right way has changed a bit. Ten to fifteen years ago business meetings were often quite formal. But many meetings today tend to be more informal. And you can see this change in the different ways of expressing opinions in English. Sometimes we need to be cautious, while at other times we might want to be more direct or stronger. And there's still a difference between giving opinions in a group setting and speaking informally.

When we want to be informal, we are often more direct. We say exactly what we think. But when we're being formal or cautious, we tend to add words and expressions to soften our opinions. We also use words like "might" and "could" instead of "must" and "should." Overall, we try not to sound too strong or direct.

In today's dialog, we'll hear a conversation between Kerry, Nick, Gregory, and Lola. Their company hired a freelance writer to do some work, but the writer hasn't communicated with them lately. Kerry is asking the group for their opinions about what they should do.

As you listen to the dialog, try to answer the following questions:

1. How does Kerry ask Vincent for his opinion near the start of the meeting?
2. What expression does Gregory use to introduce his strong opinion?
3. What is one expression that Lola uses to make her opinion careful or cautious?

Vocabulary

Course of action: a way of dealing with a situation; "We're getting all the managers together to figure out a course of action in response to the budget crisis."

Go to print: be sent to a printer; "We're going to need those business card designs by Thursday if we want to go to print first thing Friday."

To creep up: to develop slowly or become closer in time; "Sorry John, I can't help you today. The deadline on my project report is creeping up and I really need to work on it."

To stand on something: to have an opinion or position on something; "So Fay, where do you stand on this whole hiring issue. Do you agree that Marty is the best candidate?"

Draft: a document or drawing that is not final and may be changed; "The proposal is due next Friday, so I'm hoping you can have a draft for me to look at by Thursday this week."

Crisis: an urgent or difficult situation; "Roger, we've got a major crisis down here at the plant. Big chemical spill."

To stretch a timeline: to decide to take longer than expected to do something; "All this rain means we're going to have to stretch the timeline on construction a bit."

To wait something out: to wait until something ends, especially something bad; "We're big enough to wait out this recession, but some of our small suppliers are not."

To chime in: to join a conversation; "Okay, we've heard from the marketing team... anyone else want to chime in on these latest figures?"

Frank: open and honest; "Come on Tom, let's be frank here. There's no way we can cut costs without laying a few people off."

To take a hard line: to take a strict or serious approach to a problem or negotiation; "Looks like management is taking a hard line with the union and refusing to negotiate salaries."

Legal: the legal department of a company; "If the client won't pay up, contact legal. Get them to write a nasty letter. I'm sure they'll cooperate then."

Angle: approach or way of thinking about something; "We're bringing in a facilitator to help us look at our strategy from a few different angles."

To go down a path: to deal with something in a certain way; "A hostile takeover isn't our preferred approach, but we'll go down that path if we have to."

Copy: the text or words for a document, advertisement, or website; "We've got all the design done for the new brochures. All we need is the photos and the copy."

Revisions: changes or corrections to a text; "I think you did a good job on the proposal, but I'd like to suggest some revisions to the budget."

To cut someone loose: to end a relationship with someone, especially a professional or contractual one; "I like Renata too, but there's not enough work to go around so we'll have to cut her loose."

Refill: another amount of liquid put in an emptied container; "Ink refills on the toner cartridges for this new copier are twice as much as for our last one."

Freelancer: a person who sells his or her services to many companies, rather than working for just one employer; "I used to work for KPMG, but I'm much happier now doing accounting work as a freelancer."

To outsource: to hire someone outside your company to do work; "More and more small business owners are choosing to outsource their bookkeeping to India."

Dialog

Kerry: Okay everyone, we need to figure out a **course of action** today. We haven't heard from this guy in, what, two weeks?

Vincent: That's right. He won't even return my calls now.

Gregory: And we planned to **go to print** on the 24th right? That's **creeping up** fast.

Kerry: Then let's talk options. Vincent, can I start with you? Where do you **stand on** this?

Vincent: Well, in my view, I think we should give it a bit more time. His early **drafts** looked good. You know... maybe he's had a **crisis**, and we just have to **stretch the timeline** a bit.

Kerry: Okay, so just **wait it out**? How long do you think we can do that?

Vincent: I feel we could probably give it another week.

Kerry: Alright... I guess that's one way to go. Anyone else? Gregory, you want to **chime in**?

Gregory: Yeah, to be perfectly **frank**, I think we need to **take a hard line** here. This is a job for **legal**. I think it starts with a formal letter. Then we go from there.

Kerry: Okaaay.., the legal **angle**... that's another possibility. But before we **go down** that **path**, I'd like to hear some other ideas. Lola? What do you think we should do here?

Lola: Yeah, so, it would seem to me the **copy** is pretty close to being finished. I mean, we haven't seen any **revisions** after that last draft, but... to be honest they were pretty close, right? Maybe we could just take it the rest of the way ourselves?

Kerry: So just **cut him loose** and work with what we've got? You know, it might be good for us to have a look at that last draft. Give me a sec... I left some copies on my desk. I'll be right back...

Lola: Okay, I'm going to get a **refill**...

Gregory: You know, this is stupid...

Vincent: Why's that?

Gregory: Well, obviously, using **freelancers** is just asking for trouble. If you ask me, we've got to stop **outsourcing** this kind of stuff in the first place.

Vincent: Yeah, I guess you might be right.

Debrief

Now let's go through the dialog again and look at the language the group used in their meeting.

The group needs to figure out what to do quickly because they need the writer's work so they can "go to print" on the 24th of the month.

Kerry: Okay everyone, we need to figure out a **course of action** today. We haven't heard from this guy in, what, two weeks?

Vincent: That's right. He won't even return my calls now.

Gregory: And we planned to **go to print** on the 24th right? That's **creeping up** fast.

Kerry: Then let's talk options. Vincent, can I start with you? Where do you **stand on this**?

Kerry wants people's opinions about what they should do, or their "course of action." So how do you ask for an opinion? Well, you can ask what people think or feel, or ask for their views, thoughts, or opinions. Another way to do this, as Kerry shows, is to ask where someone "stands" on an issue or question.

Let's practice some of these different ways of asking for opinions.

- What do you think of the new website?
- How do you feel about this issue?
- What's your opinion on the budget problems?
- What are your views on this?
- Where do you stand on the hiring decision?
- What are your thoughts on our new strategy?

Kerry has started out by asking for Vincent's opinion. Let's hear how Vincent gives a basic opinion about the issue.

Vincent: Well, in my view, I think we should give it a bit more time. His early **drafts** looked good. You know... maybe he's had a **crisis**, and we just have to **stretch the timeline** a bit.

At this point in the meeting, there's no tension or conflict. Vincent doesn't have to be so careful about how he gives his opinion. This is just a basic example of saying what you think. And that's how you can do it: you can say what you "think," "feel," or "believe." You can also use other expressions like "in my view," as Vincent has done to express a basic opinion.

Let's run through some of these ways of giving basic opinions in English.

- I think this is the right way to go.
- I believe this is our only real option.
- In my view, we need to change some of our policies.
- Personally speaking, this design doesn't really work well.
- I feel this isn't the right time to spend more money on equipment.

Now let's get back to the dialog, as Kerry asks Gregory for his opinion and Gregory shows that he has a pretty strong opinion about the issue.

Kerry: Okay, so just **wait it out**? How long do you think we can do that?

Vincent: I feel we could probably give it another week.

Kerry: Alright... I guess that's one way to go. Anyone else? Gregory, you want to **chime in**?

Gregory: Yeah, to be perfectly **frank**, I think we need to **take a hard line** here. This is a job for **legal**. I think it starts with a formal letter. Then we go from there.

Vincent didn't sound too worried about the situation, but Gregory is definitely concerned. He's upset about the situation with the writer, and he has a strong opinion about how they should deal with the problem. The expression "to be perfectly frank" helps him introduce his strong opinion. When the others hear that expression, they know that Gregory is serious. He also uses very direct language, like "this is a job for legal," instead of something like "I think *maybe* this is a job for legal."

Let's practice some more ways of giving strong opinions with special expressions and direct language.

- To be perfectly frank, there's no way this will work.
- It's obvious to me that customers are going to hate the change.
- As far as I'm concerned, we're spending too much money on this.
- It's clear to me that people aren't happy with the new system.
- I would argue that we need to sell the building as soon as possible.
- There's no doubt in my mind that James is the right person for the job.
- I'm sure that this is the right decision.
- I believe strongly that we need more time to do this.

Next, let's hear what Lola thinks about the situation. Unlike Gregory, she's going to give a cautious, or careful, opinion. Listen to the difference.

Kerry: Okaaay..., the legal **angle**... that's another possibility. But before we **go down** that **path**, I'd like to hear some other ideas. Lola? What do you think we should do here?

Lola: Yeah, so, it would seem to me the **copy** is pretty close to being finished. I mean, we haven't seen any **revisions** after that last draft, but... to be honest they were pretty close, right? Maybe we could just take it the rest of the way ourselves?

Lola doesn't want to follow Gregory's strong opinion with another strong opinion. That might raise the level of emotion or tension. Instead, she wants to be a bit cautious, or careful.

To do that, she uses indirect language and words that soften her ideas. For example, she says "it would seem to me," and "maybe we could just." While Gregory's language gave the idea of "must" or "should," Lola gives the idea of "might" or "could."

Let's try some of these different ways of giving cautious opinions.

- Well, I tend to think that this is something for management to decide.
- It seems to me that Ryan would be the best person.
- I must admit that I'm not sure two weeks is enough time.
- To the best of my knowledge, our customers don't use social media much.
- I think it's fair to say that this solution would be too expensive.
- I could be wrong, but aren't we too busy to take this on?
- I'm no expert, but the design seems a bit too messy.

Lola mentioned that the "copy," or text that the writer worked on, was almost finished. This makes Kerry think they should look at that copy. Let's listen.

Kerry: So just **cut him loose** and work with what we've got? You know, it might be good for us to have a look at that last draft. Give me a sec... I left some copies on my desk. I'll be right back...

Lola: Okay, I'm going to get a **refill**...

While Lola and Kerry are out of the room, Vincent and Gregory continue the discussion. Now that it's just two colleagues talking privately, they feel more free to give their opinions informally.

Gregory: You know, this is stupid...

Vincent: Why's that?

Gregory: Well, obviously, using **freelancers** is just asking for trouble. If you ask me, we've got to stop **outsourcing** this kind of stuff in the first place.

Vincent: Yeah, I guess you might be right.

We heard Gregory give a strong opinion before. But he still had to be polite and respectful. Now, with only Vincent listening, he can be a bit more informal. And that means expressing his opinions with even stronger language, like "obviously" and "if you ask me."

What are some other ways of giving informal opinions? Let's run through some examples. Pay close attention to the expression at the start of the sentences.

- I'll tell you what I think: this plan is totally impossible.
- The way I see it, we need to cut costs right away.
- If you ask me, we're in big trouble financially.
- Obviously, this is going to hurt sales in a big way.
- Basically, this is the worst time to start a new campaign.

As we've seen, how you give your opinion depends on the situation. Sometimes you want to be careful, sometimes you want to be strong, and sometimes you want to be informal. And other times you might just want to give a basic opinion.

Now let's practice some of the language we learned in today's lesson. First, imagine you are in a meeting about a hiring decision, where you are asked your opinions about different job applicants. You'll hear a cue from the meeting chairperson, then I'll give you a suggestion for what you can say in response. We'll guide you through each step in the practice and provide an example answer for each response.

Ready? Let's give it a go.

Cue 1: All right, let's start with the applicant from LA. What are your views on her?

First, give a basic opinion saying that she doesn't have enough experience.

Answer: _____

Cue 2: Okay, I think I can agree with that. So how about Andy Summers, from Chicago?

Now say strongly that you think he would be perfect for the job.

Answer: _____

Now imagine you are running a meeting about some possible changes to the company's website. You'll hear a cue from someone in the meeting, then I'll give you a suggestion for what you can say in response. Let's begin.

Cue 3: Okay, I think everyone's here.

First, say you'd like to get started and ask for opinions about the new homepage.

Answer: _____

Cue 4: I for one think that the colors are really great. Wouldn't you agree?

Now, cautiously give your opinion that the colors are too dark.

Answer: _____

Answer 1: I believe she doesn't really have enough experience for the job.

Answer 2: Yes, as far as I'm concerned, Andy would be perfect for the job.

Answer 3: All right then, let's get started. What are everyone's thoughts about the new homepage?

Answer 4: Well, I tend to think that the colors are a bit too dark.

To finish off, let's practice some of the vocabulary and expressions we've covered in this lesson. In a moment, you'll hear a series of sentences with a word replaced with a beep. Repeat each sentence, including the missing word.

For example, if you hear:

Example Cue: If Mallory keeps messing up, I think we should cut her <beep>.

You can say:

Example Answer: If Mallory keeps messing up, I think we should cut her loose.

After each response, we'll provide the correct answer. Let's begin.

Cue 1: With these delays, I believe we'll have to stretch the **<beep>** on the project.

Answer: _____

Cue 2: Okay, is there anyone else who wants to **<beep>** in on this issue?

Answer: _____

Cue 3: If the new catalog is finally finished, then we can go to **<beep>** next week.

Answer: _____

Cue 4: Now that we know the problem, we need to decide on the right course of **<beep>**.

Answer: _____

Answer 1: With these delays, I believe we'll have to stretch the **timeline** on the project.

Answer 2: Okay, is there anyone else who wants to **chime** in on this issue?

Answer 3: If the new catalog is finally finished, then we can go to **print** next week.

Answer 4: Now that we know the problem, we need to decide on the right course of **action**.

That's all for this lesson on expressing opinions. We've learned how to ask for opinions and how to give basic opinions. We've also covered how to give strong opinions, cautious opinions, and informal opinions.

Thanks for listening and see you again soon!

Language Review

A. Review Quiz

For each question, you must choose the sentence that best fulfills the given language function or purpose.

1. What is a good way to ask someone for their opinion?
 - a. So, you probably don't have an opinion on this, do you?
 - b. How do you feel about this issue?
 - c. These designs are pretty terrible, aren't they?
2. Which of the following is a basic expression of opinion?
 - a. You know, I'm a bit unsure about this for some reason.
 - b. There is absolutely no way we should accept this proposal.
 - c. In my view, Grant is the best person for the job.
3. How might you give a strong opinion?
 - a. It's clear to me that we need to find a new supplier right away.
 - b. What if we tried finding a new supplier?
 - c. Well, I'm no expert, but maybe a new supplier would be a bit better.
4. Which of the following is an example of giving a cautious opinion?
 - a. To be perfectly frank, we need way more information here.
 - b. I could be wrong here, but maybe we need some more information first?
 - c. It's obvious to me that we need more information.
5. How might you express an opinion informally?
 - a. The way I see it, this whole plan is crazy.
 - b. I wonder if maybe this plan is a little unrealistic.
 - c. In my opinion, we would be wise to give this plan more thought.

B. Vocabulary and Idioms

Fill in the blanks with words from the box below. Be sure to put any verbs in the right tense.

stand	cut	path
stretch	chime	hard

1. If I could just _____ in here with a question: how long have we owned this particular property?
2. Listen Ronaldo, I know you think we should sue these guys, but I don't want to go down that _____ if we really don't have to.
3. The proposal looks good, but I'm wondering if we should _____ the timeline a bit.
4. The sellers are in no hurry and have decided to take a _____ line in negotiations.
5. After 20 years with the company, they _____ me loose without so much as an apology.
6. Sue, we haven't heard from you yet. Where do you _____ on the idea of expansion?

Answers

Listening Questions

1. Kerry asks Vincent where he stands on the issue.
2. To introduce his strong opinion, Gregory uses the expression "to be perfectly frank."
3. Lola uses the expressions "it would seem to me" and "to be honest" to express her opinion cautiously.

Language Review

A. Review Quiz

1. b; 2. c; 3. a; 4. b; 5. a

B. Vocabulary and Idioms

1. If I could just **chime** in here with a question: how long have we owned this particular property?
2. Listen Ronaldo, I know you think we should sue these guys, but I don't want to go down that **path** if we really don't have to.
3. The proposal looks good, but I'm wondering if we should **stretch** the timeline a bit.
4. The sellers are in no hurry and have decided to take a **hard** line in negotiations.
5. After 20 years with the company, they **cut** me loose without so much as an apology.
6. Sue, we haven't heard from you yet. Where do you **stand** on the idea of expansion?

Unit 202 – Agreeing

Hello and welcome back to Business English Pod. Today's lesson is the first in a series about agreeing and disagreeing. This is part of a broader project to take another look at some of our older lessons.

Success in business can depend on how your opinions align with other people's ideas. For this reason, agreeing and disagreeing are essential communication skills. It doesn't matter whether it's the board room, the meeting room, or the staff room, you need to know how to agree and disagree effectively.

Today, we're going to focus on agreeing. In fact, there are many ways to agree with someone! Sometimes we want to use a short expression. Sometimes we need something longer and more polite. Sometimes we want to show energy and enthusiasm. And sometimes we want to use an example or repeat someone else's idea. It really depends on the situation.

In today's dialog, we'll hear a conversation between three people who work for a pharmaceutical, or drug company. Gene, Louis, and Carina are talking about the results of a new trial for a drug called Zorax. In their conversation, they use many different expressions for agreeing.

As you listen to the dialog, try to answer the following questions:

1. How does Louis agree with the idea that the drug will be a "big seller?"
2. What is one word that means "excellent" or "very good" that is used to agree?
3. What idea does Gene repeat with emphasis at the end of the conversation?

Vocabulary

Trial: A test or experiment designed to evaluate the effectiveness or safety of a product or service. "The data from the trial looks good so I think we should move to the next stage."

Big seller: A product that sells very well. "In a year's time, the majority of our revenue could come from sales of this new product, so it's fair to say that it's a big seller."

To carry out something: To conduct or do something. "This drug looks promising, but we need to carry out a trial to be sure."

Amazing: In slang/informal use, this just means very, very good. "My trip to Brazil was amazing!"

Fantastic: In slang/informal use, this means very, very good (like "amazing" above). "We had a fantastic time last night at the party – you should have come!"

To count your chickens before they're hatched: To make plans or act as if something good is certain to happen before it actually happens; "We shouldn't count our chickens before they're hatched and assume the deal is already done."

To have an issue: To experience a problem or difficulty. "We're having issues with the web server at the moment, so we need to get IT support to take a look."

To be coming down the pipeline: Refers to something in the future (usually a product or a new project) that is still in the planning stages. "We have several projects coming down the pipeline that might interest you."

Patient: A person who receives medical treatment or care. "Our hospital is hiring more nurses to improve patient care and reduce wait times."

To come first: To be of highest priority or importance. "Customer satisfaction always comes first in our business."

One-by-one: One at a time. "Let's look at the problems one-by-one."

Dialog

Gene: So, what do you think about the new Zorax **trial**? This could be the drug we've all been waiting for. I think it's going to be a **big seller**.

Louis: So do I.

Carina: I'm sorry, but I really can't agree. After all, so far we've only **carried out** two trials. And don't forget the strange results from the first trial.

Louis: Yes, I admit, the first trial was a little disappointing; but that doesn't take anything away from these new results. Absolutely **amazing**!

Gene: Yes, **fantastic**, aren't they?

Louis: Especially for men over 60.

Carina: Don't you think it's still a little early to be so sure? Perhaps we shouldn't **count our chickens before they're hatched**. I still think there may still be **some issues** with Zorax.

Gene: Do you really think so? Anyway, we don't have anything else **coming down the pipeline** right now. We have to try to make this work.

Carina: Yes, of course, but our **patients** come first.

Gene: The patients always come first. We won't forget that. Now, Carina, let's talk about these issues **one by one**...

Debrief

Now let's go through the dialog again and look at the language our colleagues use to agree with each other. Gene begins by expressing his excitement about the new drug, Zorax.

Gene: So, what do you think about the new Zorax **trial**? This could be the drug we've all been waiting for. I think it's going to be a **big seller**.

Louis: So do I.

Gene is very positive about the new drug. He expresses the opinion that it will be a "big seller," or very popular. And Louis agrees with the short, simple expression "so do I." This is a useful expression when we have the same thought, feeling, or plan that someone else has just stated. "So do I" agrees with the "I think" part of the sentence.

If the statement is *negative*, then instead of "so" we use the word "neither," as in "neither do I."

Let's practice some more ways of agreeing using this approach with some short dialogs.

A: I hate having to work late.

B: So do I.

A: I really don't like this website.

B: Neither do I.

A: We will go to the conference.

B: So will we.

A: I can't understand this spreadsheet.

B: Neither can I.

As you can hear, you need to match the verb and the subject to the original statement. So "we will go" matches with "so will we." And "I can't" matches with "neither can I."

Now let's listen as Carina mentions some concerns.

Carina: I'm sorry, but I really can't agree. After all, so far we've only **carried out** two trials. And don't forget the strange results from the first trial.

Louis: Yes, I admit, the first trial was a little disappointing; but that doesn't take anything away from these new results. Absolutely **amazing**!

Although Louis is still excited about the drug, he wants to agree with Carina's statement about the first trial. To do that, he says "Yes, I admit that the first trial was a little disappointing." In this case, "I admit" means "I agree."

What are some other phrases we can use for agreeing with a statement? Let's try some more examples.

- I completely agree with you.
- You're right about that.
- That's exactly how I feel.
- I couldn't agree with you more.

These are all quite strong ways of agreeing with someone, so only use them when you agree with something 100%! Now remember, after agreeing with Carina about the first trial, Louis emphasized that the new results are "*absolutely* amazing."

Sometimes when we agree with someone, we use these strong adjectives that have the same meaning as "amazing." Let's run through some examples of this kind of adjective.

- Great!
- Wonderful!
- Incredible!
- Perfect!

Now let's hear how Gene responds to Louis's comment that the results are "amazing."

Gene: Yes, **fantastic**, aren't they?

The first thing you might notice is another word meaning "amazing." And this is a good example of how we can agree informally, with very short and simple phrases. Just saying "yes, fantastic" is Gene's way of agreeing with Louis.

There are lots of other short informal, phrases we can use to agree very simply with someone as we can hear in these examples:

- For sure.
- No doubt.
- Absolutely.
- Exactly.

Now, besides his short, informal expression, Gene uses another way of agreeing. Just to remind you, Gene's full statement is "Yes, fantastic, aren't they?" Why does he say "aren't they?" at the end?

Well, this is a tag question. We can use a tag question like this to emphasize agreement. If you tell me the weather is hot, I might say "it sure is, isn't it?" The tag question has to match the thing we're talking about. In my example, it's "the weather," so I say "isn't it?" Let's try some more examples of using these tag questions for agreeing.

- It's incredible, isn't it?
- They're outstanding, aren't they?
- It looks great, doesn't it?

So Gene thinks the test results are amazing. Does Louis have anything to add?

Louis: Especially for men over 60.

Sometimes it's good to show people *why* we agree. And one way to do that is to give evidence or an example. In our dialog, Gene agrees the test results are fantastic. And Louis gives an example of *why* they are especially fantastic.

When we give an example to show exactly why we agree with someone, we often use the word "especially" or "particularly." We use these words to emphasize something that shows why we agree, as you can hear in the following examples.

A: The website looks incredible.

B: Yes, especially the home page.

A: Jonas did a great job on the office design.

B: Particularly the entrance lobby.

Let's get back to the dialog, as Carina and Gene discuss the possibilities for the new drug.

Carina: Don't you think it's still a little early to be so sure? Perhaps we shouldn't **count our chickens before they're hatched**. I still think there may still be **some issues** with Zorax.

Gene: Do you really think so? Anyway, we don't have anything else **coming down the pipeline** right now. We have to try to make this work.

Now, if you think it's strange that Carina is talking about chickens, well, she's using an idiom. She thinks they shouldn't be too sure too soon about the drug. And to express that idea, she says they shouldn't "count their chickens before they're hatched."

Gene responds with another idiom. He says they don't have anything else "coming down the pipeline." He means they don't have anything else planned for the future. And for this reason, he thinks they need to go ahead with the new drug.

Let's hear how Carina responds.

Carina: Yes, of course, but our **patients** come first.

Gene: The patients always come first. We won't forget that. Now, Carina, let's talk about these issues **one by one**...

When Carina says "our patients come first," Gene agrees by saying "the patients *always* come first." Repeating someone's idea with a bit of extra emphasis is a strong way of agreeing.

When we agree by repeating like this, we can add emphasis words like "always," "never," "definitely," "certainly," and "surely" to agree in this way. Let's try a couple of short dialogs for agreeing by repeating with emphasis.

A: I don't think we can afford this.

B: Yes, we definitely can't afford this.

A: We won't finish the project by Friday.

B: No, we certainly won't.

All right, we've heard an interesting conversation with lots of examples of agreeing. Gene, Carina, and Louis have tried to figure out whether to move ahead with their new drug. Along the way, we've learned how to agree using a variety of approaches. Now let's practice some of the language we learned in today's lesson. In a moment, you'll hear a series of statements that you need to express agreement with. Before each statement, I'll explain which approach to use. Then after the beep you can say your answer. Once we've gone through all the examples, we'll hear some model answers to compare to yours.

Ready? Let's give it a go!

Start off by agreeing to this statement using the word "so."

Cue 1: I really think we need to increase sales.

Answer: _____

Now agree to this comment by saying you couldn't agree more.

Cue 2: It's been a difficult week.

Answer: _____

Next, agree by giving the example of the new building downtown.

Cue 3: We've got a lot of exciting projects to work on.

Answer: _____

Finally, agree by repeating the statement with the word "definitely" for emphasis.

Cue 4: This is going to be a busy month.

Answer: _____

How did you do? Let's listen to some example answers. You'll hear each statement followed by a model answer.

Cue 1: I really think we need to increase sales.

Answer 1: So do I.

Cue 2: It's been a difficult week.

Answer 2: I couldn't agree with you more.

Cue 3: We've got a lot of exciting projects to work on.

Answer 3: Especially the new building downtown.

Cue 4: This is going to be a busy month.

Answer 4: Yes, it's definitely going to be busy.

That's all for this lesson on how to agree. We've learned how to agree with a variety of phrases, tag questions, examples, and by repeating and emphasizing. And as we listened to the dialog, you probably noticed that not everyone agreed with each other. So we'll look at how to *disagree* in our next lesson.

Thanks for listening and see you again soon!

Language Review

A. So and neither

When a person makes a statement using "I," like "I like Apple computers," you can agree by saying "so do I." If the person makes a negative statement, you can say "neither do I." And if the person uses a word like "am," "will" or "can," then we need to use that word when we agree, like "so am I." Write a correct agreeing expression using "so" or "neither" for the following statements.

1. I really like the new website! _____
2. I am not going to the conference. _____
3. I think Dave is the best candidate. _____
4. I can support this decision. _____
5. I don't think this is a good strategy. _____

B. Review Quiz

1. Which of the following is NOT a way to agree with someone?
 - a. I couldn't agree with you more.
 - b. That's exactly how I feel.
 - c. No doubt.
 - d. I'm not so sure about that.
2. How could you complete the following statement with a tag question?
They have a lot of great products, _____
 - a. Doesn't it?
 - b. Do I?
 - c. Don't they?
 - d. Aren't they?
3. Which words can we use to give an example when we agree with someone? Select all that apply:
 - a. particularly
 - b. certainly
 - c. incredibly
 - d. especially
4. If someone says "we can't finish the project by Friday," how could you agree?
 - a. We definitely can't.
 - b. We won't, is it?
 - c. No, I'm afraid it's not.
 - d. Especially by Friday.
5. Which of the following adjectives have the same meaning as "amazing?" Select all that apply:
 - a. Wonderful
 - b. Surely
 - c. Complete
 - d. Incredible
 - e. Perfect
 - f. Great

Answers

Listening Questions

1. Louis agrees by saying "So do I."
2. Gene strongly agrees with Louis that the results are excellent using the word "fantastic."
3. Gene agrees by saying "the patients *always* come first." Repeating someone's idea with a bit of extra emphasis is a strong way of agreeing.

Language Review

A. Would and could

1. So do I.
2. Neither am I.
3. So do I.
4. So can I.
5. Neither do I.

B. Review Quiz

1. d; 2. c; 3. a, d; 4. a; 5. a, d, e, f

Unit 203 – Disagreeing

Hello and welcome back to Business English Pod. This lesson is the second part of our series on agreeing and disagreeing. Today we're going to look at how to disagree.

In the board room or the break room, it's great to be able to support other people's ideas by agreeing. But you won't get far in business if you just agree with *everything*. You need to be able to disagree confidently and politely. Only then can you convince people that you have an even better idea.

In this lesson, we're going to talk about how to disagree. Sometimes you'll need formal polite expressions, and sometimes you can use shorter more informal expressions. And to take things to the next level, you can learn how to disagree using the "yes... but" approach. Another effective technique is to use questions to disagree. As you can see, you've got lots of options for disagreeing.

In today's dialog, we're going to listen again to a conversation between Gene, Louis, and Carina. They work for a pharmaceutical, or drug company, and they're talking about the tests of a new drug. During their conversation, they use many different expressions for disagreeing

As you listen to the dialog, try to answer the following questions:

1. How does Carina start her first statement to show she disagrees?
2. What negative question does Carina use to show disagreement about the test results?
3. How does Gene disagree with Carina's statement that there may still be issues with the new drug?

Vocabulary

Trial: A test or experiment designed to evaluate the effectiveness or safety of a product or service. "The data from the trial looks good so I think we should move to the next stage."

Big seller: A product that sells very well. "In a year's time, the majority of our revenue could come from sales of this new product, so it's fair to say that it's a big seller."

To carry out something: To conduct or do something. "This drug looks promising, but we need to carry out a trial to be sure."

Amazing: In slang/informal use, this just means very, very good. "My trip to Brazil was amazing!"

Fantastic: In slang/informal use, this means very, very good (like "amazing" above). "We had a fantastic time last night at the party – you should have come!"

To count your chickens before they're hatched: To make plans or act as if something good is certain to happen before it actually happens; "We shouldn't count our chickens before they're hatched and assume the deal is already done."

To have an issue: To experience a problem or difficulty. "We're having issues with the web server at the moment, so we need to get IT support to take a look."

To be coming down the pipeline: Refers to something in the future (usually a product or a new project) that is still in the planning stages. "We have several projects coming down the pipeline that might interest you."

Patient: A person who receives medical treatment or care. "Our hospital is hiring more nurses to improve patient care and reduce wait times."

To come first: To be of highest priority or importance. "Customer satisfaction always comes first in our business."

One-by-one: One at a time. "Let's look at the problems one-by-one."

Dialog

Gene: So, what do you think about the new Zorax **trial**? This could be the drug we've all been waiting for. I think it's going to be a **big seller**.

Louis: So do I.

Carina: I'm sorry, but I really can't agree. After all, so far we've only **carried out** two trials. And don't forget the strange results from the first trial.

Louis: Yes, I admit, the first trial was a little disappointing; but that doesn't take anything away from these new results. Absolutely **amazing**!

Gene: Yes, **fantastic**, aren't they?

Louis: Especially for men over 60.

Carina: Don't you think it's still a little early to be so sure? Perhaps we shouldn't **count our chickens before they're hatched**. I still think there may still be **some issues** with Zorax.

Gene: Do you really think so? Anyway, we don't have anything else **coming down the pipeline** right now. We have to try to make this work.

Carina: Yes, of course, but our **patients** come first.

Gene: The patients always come first. We won't forget that. Now, Carina, let's talk about these issues **one by one**...

Debrief

Now let's go through the dialog again and look at the language the three colleagues use to disagree. At the start, Gene talks about how he believes the new drug will be "a big seller," or very popular. Let's hear how Louis and Carina react.

Gene: So, what do you think about the new Zorax **trial**? This could be the drug we've all been waiting for. I think it's going to be a **big seller**.

Louis: So do I.

Carina: I'm sorry, but I really can't agree. After all, so far we've only **carried out two trials**. And don't forget the strange results from the first trial.

While Louis agrees with Gene, Carina does not. But it's not very polite to just say "I don't agree." Instead, Carina starts with "I'm sorry but." Adding a polite expression like this at the start, helps to soften the disagreement.

Let's practice some more polite expressions for disagreeing. As you'll see, we often start with an apology like "I'm sorry" or "I'm afraid."

- I'm not so sure, to be honest.
- I'm afraid I don't agree.
- I'm sorry but that's not the way I see it.
- I beg to differ.

In her situation, Carina needs to be quite formal. But sometimes that's not necessary. Sometimes we are debating with people we know well. Or sometimes we want to be very direct to show just how much we disagree. In that case, we can use some shorter more informal expressions.

Let's run through some of these informal expressions for disagreeing. Just remember, these expressions are pretty direct so be careful how you use them.

- No way!
- You've got to be kidding.
- Seriously?
- Come off it.

To explain *why* she disagreed, Carina mentioned the strange results from the first drug "trial," or test. Does Louis agree that the first test means they shouldn't be excited about the results of the new test? Let's listen.

Louis: Yes, I admit, the first trial was a little disappointing; but that doesn't take anything away from these new results. Absolutely **amazing**!

Louis is using a very common and simple way to disagree with someone. He starts by saying "yes," and agreeing with Carina's statement. Then he says "but" before stating why he disagrees.

Sometimes we don't take the time to repeat the other person's statement after "yes." In that case, we just say "yes, but" before saying the reason we disagree.

Let's practice this "yes... but..." method with a couple of short dialogs.

A: I felt the presentation was a bit long.

B: Yes, but it was very informative.

A: This company's quote is too expensive.

B: Yes, it's expensive, but they do quality work.

Now let's get back to the dialog, as we hear Gene and Louis get even more excited about the new drug.

Gene: Yes, **fantastic**, aren't they?

Louis: Especially for men over 60.

Carina: Don't you think it's still a little early to be so sure?

Carina is using another polite way of disagreeing. She could just say "It's still a little early," which is quite direct. But instead she starts with "don't you think" to make a negative question. This is a way to soften our disagreement.

Carina could have said "isn't it still a little early?" for the same effect. But saying "don't you think" is probably the most common way of disagreeing with a negative question, as you can hear in these examples.

A: I'm thinking that maybe we should raise our prices.

B: Don't you think customers would complain?

A: I really like these new ads.

B: Don't you think the colors look strange?

Next, Carina uses an idiom that means they shouldn't get too excited too soon. Listen for that idiom, then you will hear Gene disagree using another type of question.

Carina: Perhaps we shouldn't **count our chickens before they're hatched**. I still think there may still be **some issues** with Zorax.

Gene: Do you really think so? Anyway, we don't have anything else **coming down the pipeline** right now. We have to try to make this work.

In this case, Gene just wants to cast doubt on Carina's statement that there may still be problems or "issues" with Zorax. He isn't giving his reasons for disagreeing, he just wants to show he doesn't agree.

To do that, Gene just asks "do you really think so?" He knows she thinks so, but asking a simple question like this just says "I don't think so."

Let's try some more questions for showing disagreement.

- Do you really think so?
- Are you sure about that?
- Is that right?

In Gene’s opinion, they don’t have any other promising new drugs in development, so they should focus on Zorax. Let’s listen to the end of the dialog, as Carina disagrees by using one of the approaches we’ve already learned.

Carina: Yes, of course, but our **patients** come first.

Gene: The patients always come first. We won’t forget that. Now, Carina, let’s talk about these issues **one by one...**

Clearly, the “yes... but...” way of disagreeing is pretty popular! And Gene clearly agrees with Carina’s point about patients coming first. That’s all part of the back and forth of agreement and disagreement in conversations like this.

Now let’s practice some of the language we learned in today’s lesson. In a moment, you’ll hear a series of statements that you need to express agreement with. Before each statement, I’ll explain which approach to use. Then after the beep you can say your answer. Once we’ve gone through all the examples, we’ll hear some model answers to compare to yours.

Ready? Let’s give it a go!

Start by disagreeing with this statement using the expression “I’m afraid.”

Cue 1: I think the candidate from New York is the best.

Answer: _____

Now use a simple question to show that you disagree with this comment.

Cue 2: I think we can finish everything today.

Answer: _____

Next, disagree using the “yes... but” approach and say it’s helping to increase sales.

Cue 3: We’re spending a lot of money on marketing.

Answer: _____

Finally, use a negative question to ask if she thinks the new laptops are a bit slow.

Cue 4: These new laptops are amazing.

Answer: _____

How did you do? Let's listen to some example answers. You'll hear each statement followed by a model answer.

Cue 1: I think the candidate from New York is the best.

Answer 1: I'm afraid I don't agree.

Cue 2: I think we can finish everything today.

Answer 2: Seriously?

Cue 3: We're spending a lot of money on marketing.

Answer 3: Yes we are, but it's helping to increase sales.

Cue 4: These new laptops are amazing.

Answer 4: Don't you think they're a bit slow?

That's all for this lesson on how to disagree. We've learned how to disagree both formally and informally. We've also looked at how to use the "yes... but..." approach. And finally, we've covered using questions and negative questions to show we disagree.

Thanks for listening and see you again soon!

Language Review

A. Yes... but...

Sometimes disagreeing means agreeing with one idea before giving another idea that disagrees. We use a "yes... but..." pattern to do this. Write a response to the following statements that uses a "yes... but..." pattern. Start by agreeing with the statement, then using the given words to show disagreement.

1. I think this new website is really nicely designed.

Yes, _____, but _____. (hard to use)

2. Ryan is a really smart guy.

Yes, _____, but _____. (kind of lazy)

3. This software could be very useful for us.

Yes, _____, but _____. (expensive)

B. Review Quiz

1. Read the sentence and choose the expression that can NOT be used in the blank.
_____ I don't really agree with you.
 - a. I'm sorry but
 - b. To be honest
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. I'm afraid
2. More informal expressions for disagreeing are usually _____ than more polite expressions.
 - a. shorter
 - b. longer
 - c. louder
 - d. wordier
3. How can you complete the given sentence?
A: This new laptop is really fast.
B: _____ it's fast, _____ the battery is poor.
 - a. Well / so
 - b. Although / but
 - c. No / because
 - d. Yes / but
4. Which of the following is a correct way of disagreeing with a negative question?
[Choose 2]
 - a. Isn't James a bit too inexperienced?
 - b. Wouldn't it be that James is too inexperienced?
 - c. Is James perhaps too inexperienced?
 - d. Don't you think James is a bit too inexperienced?
5. Which of the following could mean "I don't think so" in the context of a conversation? [Select all that apply]
 - a. Do you really think so?
 - b. I think so too.
 - c. Are you sure about that?
 - d. Could you explain that a bit more?
 - e. Is that right?
 - f. Why do you think so?

Answers

Listening Questions

1. Carina starts with "I'm sorry but." Adding a polite expression like this at the start, helps to soften the disagreement.
2. Carina starts with "don't you think" to make a negative question.
3. Gene asks a question "do you really think so?" Questioning the validity of a statement is a polite way of disagreeing.

Language Review

A. Yes... but...

1. Yes it's nicely designed but it's hard to use.
2. Yes he's smart but he's kind of lazy.
3. Yes it could be useful but it's expensive.

B. Review Quiz

1. c; 2. a; 3. d; 4. A, d; 5. a, c, e

Unit 204 - Making Suggestions

Hello and welcome back to Business English Pod. Today's lesson is the first in a series about making and responding to suggestions in meetings. This is part of a broader project to take another look at some of our older lessons.

Solving problems and coming up with ideas in groups is a big part of work. Succeeding in business means participating effectively in these kinds of group meetings. And to do that, you need to know how to make and respond to suggestions. It's no use having a good idea if you can't express it!

In this lesson, we're going to focus on how to make suggestions. We'll look at several different expressions we use to suggest ideas. Expressions like "one possibility," and "maybe," and "how about" are essential when you want to make suggestions in a meeting. And it's good to have lots of different expressions for different situations.

In today's dialog, we'll hear a conversation between four people who work in marketing for a sports shoe company. They are discussing a new ad campaign and coming up with ideas for a "spokesperson," or a famous person to advertise their new shoes. In their conversation, they use lots of expressions for making suggestions.

As you listen to the dialog, try to answer the following questions:

1. What words does Sven use to introduce his suggestion of using a famous business executive?
2. What suggestion does Miguel introduce with the word "perhaps?"
3. How does Charles introduce his suggestion of choosing someone from a sport where it's normal to be heavy?

Vocabulary

Spokesperson: A famous person who represents a company or helps sell a product. "Nike usually gets famous spokespersons to sponsor their products."

To go around the table: To hear everybody's opinion one at a time. "Let's go around the table to see if we all agree."

Overweight: Heavy, for a person. "I was a little bit overweight until I started eating better and going to the gym every day."

Fit: Slim and healthy. "Sure I'd like to start playing soccer again, but I don't think I'm fit enough."

If it isn't broken, don't fix it: If something is working well, don't change it; also "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" (American slang). "Let's stop looking for things to change and just release the product on time... I mean, if it isn't broken, don't fix it."

Target market: The market a company is trying to sell something to. "The target market for this new kind of sports car is urban professionals with an income over 80,000 euros per year."

Target customer: Similar to target market, but target customer refers to a specific group of customers you are trying to sell something to. "Our target customers are women in their early 30s with children."

Heavy: Large in size or weight, for a person. "Sumo wrestlers and weightlifters are some of the heaviest athletes in the world."

Agile: Adjective. Able to move flexibly and quickly. "In this business environment, only agile companies with the ability to make quick decisions will succeed."

To kill two birds with one stone: To solve two problems with one solution, or achieve two goals with one activity. "We can kill two birds with one stone by improving our training system - the number of staff who leave the company will decrease and our sales will improve."

Dialog

Karen: Okay. Now, let's talk about who we want to use as a **spokesperson** for this product. Let's **go around the table**. Shall we use a sports star? Or someone else? Sven, what do you think?

Sven: Well, one possibility would be to use a famous **overweight** business executive or CEO. Someone who is really successful.

Miguel: Sorry, can I come in here?

Karen: Yes, go ahead, Miguel.

Miguel: That's a good idea, but I'm not sure it would work.

Karen: Why not?

Miguel: Well, for one thing, our customers want to be **fit**, not fat.

Karen: Well, then what do you suggest?

Miguel: Perhaps we should just use a famous sports star like we usually do. **If it isn't broken, don't fix it**, you know what I mean? We could try getting Rooney, or Nadal.

Karen: Good suggestion. But I can see one or two problems with that, to be honest.

Miguel: Oh?

Karen: First off, our **target markets** are the UK and the US. We need someone who both Americans and Britons really like. Secondly, our **target customer** is kind of special...

Charles: I've got a suggestion.

Karen: Go ahead, Charles.

Charles: It's just an idea, but how about choosing someone from a sport where it's normal to be **heavy**. American football, for example. Heavy, but **agile**; overweight, but strong and fast. You know what I mean?

Karen: Right, I can see what you mean. What do others think?

Miguel: Yes, that might be worth trying.

Sven: Okay, but what about the UK? Who are we going to use on this side of the Atlantic?

Karen: Hmm... let me think about this. Shall we try to find someone in golf? That's popular in the US and in the UK. That way, we can **kill two birds with one stone**.

Everybody: That's not a bad idea! Good idea! Yes, I think that's worth trying.

Debrief

Now let's go through the dialog again and look at the language used to make suggestions. We begin with Karen, the manager of the marketing team.

Karen: Okay. Now, let's talk about who we want to use as a **spokesperson** for this product. Let's **go around the table**. Shall we use a sports star? Or someone else? Sven, what do you think?

Karen wants to "go around the table," or hear from each person in turn about who they should use as a celebrity spokesperson. Let's hear how Sven responds with a suggestion.

Sven: Well, one possibility would be to use a famous **overweight** business executive or CEO. Someone who is really successful.

Sven starts off by suggesting a famous business executive. To make this suggestion, he uses the expression "one possibility would be." We can modify this slightly to say "one possibility is" or "one possibility could be."

These are all ways to say that your idea is just one possible idea among many. Let's try this way of making suggestions with a few more examples.

- One possibility is to hire more people.
- One possibility would be to upgrade the laptops.
- One possibility could be asking Toni for help.

Now let's get back to the dialog, as Miguel has a different suggestion.

Miguel: Sorry, can I come in here?

Karen: Yes, go ahead, Miguel.

Miguel: That's a good idea, but I'm not sure it would work.

Karen: Why not?

Miguel: Well, for one thing, our customers want to be **fit**, not fat.

Karen: Well, then what do you suggest?

Miguel: Perhaps we should just use a famous sports star like we usually do. **If it isn't broken, don't fix it**, you know what I mean? We could try getting Rooney, or Nadal.

Miguel uses the expression "if it isn't broken, don't fix it," to say that what they usually do already works so they shouldn't change. And what they usually do is hire a famous sports star.

To make this suggestion, Miguel uses a very useful word: "perhaps." "Perhaps" has the same meaning as "maybe," and you can use either of these words to make a suggestion. Let's try a few more ways of making suggestions with "perhaps" and "maybe."

- Perhaps we should talk to marketing about this.
- Maybe we can run some Facebook ads.
- Perhaps we need a different type of software.

One thing to notice is that when we say “maybe” or “perhaps,” we usually use a helping verb like “should,” “can,” or “could.”

Miguel mentioned a couple of specific names: Rooney, a famous soccer player in England, and Nadal, a famous Spanish tennis star. What does Karen think of these suggestions?

Karen: Good suggestion. But I can see one or two problems with that, to be honest.

Miguel: Oh?

Karen: First off, our **target markets** are the UK and the US. We need someone who both Americans and Britons really like. Secondly, our **target customer** is kind of special...

Charles: I’ve got a suggestion.

Karen: Go ahead, Charles.

Before Charles tells the group about his idea, he tells them that he *has* an idea. And Karen invites him to share it. Let’s hear how he makes his suggestion.

Charles: It’s just an idea, but how about choosing someone from a sport where it’s normal to be **heavy**. American football, for example. Heavy, but **agile**; overweight, but strong and fast. You know what I mean?

First, notice that Charles introduces his suggestion by saying “It’s just an idea, but...” That is a very gentle approach to suggesting ideas. Then he says “how about choosing...”

This expression “how about” is very common. It can be followed by an -ing verb form, or by a sentence. Let’s try these two different ways of using “how about” with two short dialogs.

A: Who do you think might help us with this?

B: How about calling Ned for advice?

A: We really need to understand our customers better.

B: How about we do a customer survey?

Before we return to the dialog, I should mention that instead of “how about” you can also say “what if” to make a suggestion. And if you say “what if,” then the verb you use will be in the past tense.

Let’s run through some different examples of using “what if” to make a suggestion.

- What if we talked to staff about the idea?
- What if we tried opening a new store downtown?
- What if we held the event at the Sheraton Hotel?

Now let's hear what the group thinks about the idea of using an American football player.

Karen: Right, I can see what you mean. What do others think?

Miguel: Yes, that might be worth trying.

Sven: Okay, but what about the UK? Who are we going to use on this side of the Atlantic?

An American football player would work for advertising in North America. But in the United Kingdom, or UK, the person wouldn't be well-known. So what is Karen's suggestion? Let's listen.

Karen: Hmm... let me think about this. Shall we try to find someone in golf? That's popular in the US and in the UK. That way, we can **kill two birds with one stone**.

Everybody: That's not a bad idea! Good idea! Yes, I think that's worth trying.

Karen suggests "killing two birds with one stone," which means achieving two goals with one action. She says "shall we try to find someone in golf," because golf is popular in both countries.

That expression "shall we" is a bit of an old expression, but it's still pretty useful for making suggestions with "I" or "we." So you might say "shall we go to the café for lunch" or "shall I call tech support?"

All right, we've heard lots of examples of making suggestions. The group has been trying to figure out who to choose for a spokesperson for their new line of shoes. And it sounds like they might have figured it out. But figuring it out meant that some suggestions were rejected while others were accepted. And in a follow-up lesson, we'll look at these different ways of responding to suggestions.

Now let's practice some of the language we learned in today's lesson. In a moment, you'll hear a series of statements that you need to respond to with a suggestion. Before each statement, I'll explain which approach to use. Then after the beep you can say your answer. Once we've gone through all the examples, we'll hear some model answers to compare to yours.

Ready? Let's give it a go!

Cue 1: It seems like most staff don't understand the policy.

Use the word "perhaps" to suggest a special training session.

Answer: _____

Cue 2: There has to be another way to increase profits.

Now use "one possibility" to suggest raising prices.

Answer: _____

Cue 3: Any ideas about where we can host the event?

Next, say "how about" to suggest holding it at the Stanley Hotel.

Answer: _____

Cue 4: Anyone have suggestions for the website redesign?

Finally, use "what if" to suggest adding a membership section for elite customers.

Answer: _____

How did you do? Let's listen to some example answers. You'll hear each statement followed by a model answer.

Cue 1: It seems like most staff don't understand the policy.

Answer 1: Perhaps we should do a special training session.

Cue 2: There has to be another way to increase profits.

Answer 2: One possibility would be to raise our prices.

Cue 3: Any ideas about where we can host the event?

Answer 3: How about holding it at the Stanley Hotel?

Cue 4: Anyone have suggestions for the website redesign?

Answer 4: What if we added a membership section for elite customers?

That's all for this lesson on how to make suggestions. We've learned how to make suggestions with several expressions, including "one possibility," "perhaps," "how about," and "what if." But a conversation like this isn't just about making suggestions, it's also about *responding* to suggestions. And we'll have a closer look at how the team responds to suggestions in a following lesson.

Thanks for listening and see you again soon!

Language Review

A. “Maybe” and “How about”

Two common ways of making a suggestion are with “maybe” and “how about.” With “maybe,” we usually use a helping verb like “could.” And with “how about” we use an -ing form or a full sentence. Look at the following sentences and put “maybe” or “how about” in the blank, depending on what fits.

1. _____ we should buy the more expensive laptops.
2. _____ trying the new place for lunch today?
3. _____ we take a quick survey of the staff?
4. _____ we can ask the CFO what she thinks we should do.
5. _____ hiring a new operations assistant?

B. Review Quiz

1. Which of the following is NOT a correct sentence with “one possibility?”
 - a. One possibility could be to test each of the cars.
 - b. One possibility is what if we built both products.
 - c. One possibility is to study the market more closely.
 - d. One possibility could be asking the research team to help.
2. Which of the following two words have basically the same meaning? [choose 2]
 - a. Possible
 - b. Maybe
 - c. Perhaps
 - d. Could
3. Which of the following could come after “what if” in a suggestion?
 - a. we can take the train?
 - b. we took the train?
 - c. maybe we take the train?
 - d. taking the train?
4. Which words go in the blank to create a correct idiom?
If it isn't _____, don't _____ it.
 - a. Problem / touch
 - b. Working / use
 - c. Good / buy
 - d. Broken / fix
5. Which expression for making suggestions can only be used with “I” or “we?”
 - a. What if
 - b. How about
 - c. Shall
 - d. Perhaps

Answers

Listening Questions

1. Sven uses the expression "one possibility would be to..." to make his suggestion.
2. Miguel suggests they "should just use a famous sports star like we usually do."
3. Charles introduces his suggestion by saying "It's just an idea, but..." This is a careful way to suggest an idea.

Language Review

A. Would and could

1. Maybe
2. How about
3. How about
4. Maybe
5. How about

B. Review Quiz

1. b; 2. B, c; 3. b; 4. d; 5. c

Unit 205 - Responding to Suggestions

Hello and welcome back to Business English Pod. Today's lesson is the second in a series about handling suggestions in meetings. Last time we looked at how to make suggestions. And this time we're going to look at how to respond to suggestions.

Business is a team sport. And behind every successful team is a healthy internal dialog and debate. If you want to succeed in business and be a good team player, you need opinions and the skills to express them effectively. But that doesn't only mean making your own suggestions. It also means responding to other people's suggestions.

So in this lesson, we'll learn different ways of responding to suggestions. That includes responding positively, by accepting or praising the idea. It also includes rejecting ideas or casting doubt on them.

In today's dialog, we'll listen to a marketing team meeting at a sports shoe company. The four colleagues are talking about a new ad campaign. They are making suggestions for a "spokesperson," or recognizable figure to promote their shoes. During the discussion they use a variety of techniques and language to respond to suggestions.

As you listen to the dialog, try to answer the following questions:

1. What does Miguel think of Sven's idea to hire an overweight business executive as a spokesperson?
2. How does Karen react to Miguel's suggestion of hiring a famous sports star?
3. What is the group's response to Karen's final suggestion of hiring a golfer?

Vocabulary

Spokesperson: A famous person who represents a company or helps sell a product. "Nike usually gets famous spokespersons to sponsor their products."

To go around the table: To hear everybody's opinion one at a time. "Let's go around the table to see if we all agree."

Overweight: Heavy, for a person. "I was a little bit overweight until I started eating better and going to the gym every day."

Fit: Slim and healthy. "Sure I'd like to start playing soccer again, but I don't think I'm fit enough."

If it isn't broken, don't fix it: If something is working well, don't change it; also "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" (American slang). "Let's stop looking for things to change and just release the product on time... I mean, if it isn't broken, don't fix it."

Target market: The market a company is trying to sell something to. "The target market for this new kind of sports car is urban professionals with an income over 80,000 euros per year."

Target customer: Similar to target market, but target customer refers to a specific group of customers you are trying to sell something to. "Our target customers are women in their early 30s with children."

Heavy: Large in size or weight, for a person. "Sumo wrestlers and weightlifters are some of the heaviest athletes in the world."

Agile: Adjective. Able to move flexibly and quickly. "In this business environment, only agile companies with the ability to make quick decisions will succeed."

To kill two birds with one stone: To solve two problems with one solution, or achieve two goals with one activity. "We can kill two birds with one stone by improving our training system - the number of staff who leave the company will decrease and our sales will improve."

Dialog

Karen: Okay. Now, let's talk about who we want to use as a **spokesperson** for this product. Let's **go around the table**. Shall we use a sports star? Or someone else? Sven, what do you think?

Sven: Well, one possibility would be to use a famous **overweight** business executive or CEO. Someone who is really successful.

Miguel: Sorry, can I come in here?

Karen: Yes, go ahead, Miguel.

Miguel: That's a good idea, but I'm not sure it would work.

Karen: Why not?

Miguel: Well, for one thing, our customers want to be **fit**, not fat.

Karen: Well, then what do you suggest?

Miguel: Perhaps we should just use a famous sports star like we usually do. **If it isn't broken, don't fix it**, you know what I mean? We could try getting Rooney, or Nadal.

Karen: Good suggestion. But I can see one or two problems with that, to be honest.

Miguel: Oh?

Karen: First off, our **target markets** are the UK and the US. We need someone who both Americans and Britons really like. Secondly, our **target customer** is kind of special...

Charles: I've got a suggestion.

Karen: Go ahead, Charles.

Charles: It's just an idea, but how about choosing someone from a sport where it's normal to be **heavy**. American football, for example. Heavy, but **agile**; overweight, but strong and fast. You know what I mean?

Karen: Right, I can see what you mean. What do others think?

Miguel: Yes, that might be worth trying.

Sven: Okay, but what about the UK? Who are we going to use on this side of the Atlantic?

Karen: Hmm... let me think about this. Shall we try to find someone in golf? That's popular in the US and in the UK. That way, we can **kill two birds with one stone**.

Everybody: That's not a bad idea! Good idea! Yes, I think that's worth trying.

Debrief

Now let's go through the dialog again and look at the language used to respond to different suggestions. At the start, Karen invites ideas for a spokesperson.

Karen: Okay. Now, let's talk about who we want to use as a **spokesperson** for this product. Let's **go around the table**. Shall we use a sports star? Or someone else? Sven, what do you think?

Sven: Well, one possibility would be to use a famous **overweight** business executive or CEO. Someone who is really successful.

Sven's suggestion of using an "overweight," or heavy person, hints that the new shoe is for large people. Let's hear what Miguel thinks of this idea.

Miguel: Sorry, can I come in here?

Karen: Yes, go ahead, Miguel.

Miguel: That's a good idea, but I'm not sure it would work.

You might notice that Miguel's approach is quite careful. First he asks if he can speak, before responding to the suggestion. He doesn't say directly that he doesn't like the idea. In fact, he says it's a *good* idea.

But Miguel then casts doubt on the suggestion. He wants people to question whether it is good or not. He does this by saying "I'm not sure it would work." By saying he's not sure about it, he's carefully rejecting the idea.

Let's try some more ways of rejecting an idea by casting doubt on it.

- I'm not really sure about that.
- Do you think that would solve the problem?
- I wonder if other people would like that.

Next, Miguel is asked to explain his opinion. Let's listen.

Karen: Why not?

Miguel: Well, for one thing, our customers want to be **fit**, not fat.

Karen: Well, then what do you suggest?

This is a good reminder that if you're going to criticize or cast doubt on other people's ideas, you'd better be ready to make your own suggestions! Let's hear Miguel's suggestion and how Karen responds.

Miguel: Perhaps we should just use a famous sports star like we usually do. **If it isn't broken, don't fix it**, you know what I mean? We could try getting Rooney, or Nadal.

Karen: Good suggestion. But I can see one or two problems with that, to be honest.

Miguel thinks their old approach was good enough. He suggests using a sports star like Rooney – an English soccer player, or Nadal – a Spanish tennis star.

Karen begins her response with a compliment, "good suggestion," before saying "but." This approach is a soft way of introducing a rejection. We start by saying "yes" or "good idea," then say "but" before explaining our reasons for rejecting the idea.

Karen doesn't explain her reasons yet but just says there are "one or two problems." Karen also softens her reaction with the expression "to be honest." That's a simple way to make it clear you're about to give your true opinion.

Let's practice using this "yes, but" approach to reject ideas with a couple of short dialogs.

A: How about asking Carol to do this?

B: Carol would be great, but I think she's too busy.

A: What if we moved into a smaller space?

B: That could work, but there's not much available right now.

Now let's hear Karen explain the problems she sees with Miguel's idea. She focuses on their "target markets" and "target customers." These expressions refer to the regions and groups of people they are trying to appeal to.

Miguel: Oh?

Karen: First off, our target markets are the UK and the US. We need someone who both Americans and Britons really like. Secondly, our target customer is kind of special...

Charles: I've got a suggestion.

Karen: Go ahead, Charles.

As we can hear, Charles tells everyone he has a suggestion before he actually says what it is. In this way, he's preparing people for his idea. Let's hear what that idea is, and how Miguel responds.

Charles: It's just an idea, but how about choosing someone from a sport where it's normal to be heavy. American football, for example. Heavy, but agile; overweight, but strong and fast. You know what I mean?

Karen: Right, I can see what you mean. What do others think?

Miguel: Yes, that might be worth trying.

Miguel doesn't reject the suggestion. But he doesn't seem really excited about it either. He accepts it, but with some hesitation. To accept the idea cautiously, Miguel says it "might" be worth trying. That word "might" is like saying "maybe."

To show cautious acceptance, we often use words like "might" or "could," or expressions like "I guess" or "I suppose." Let's run through some more examples of this kind of cautious acceptance.

- Well, that could be good.
- Yeah, that's one idea.
- I guess that might work.

Miguel tentatively accepted Charles' idea, but Sven has some doubts, as we can hear.

Sven: Okay, but what about the UK? Who are we going to use on this side of the Atlantic?

Karen: Hmm... let me think about this. Shall we try to find someone in golf? That's popular in the US and in the UK. That way, we can **kill two birds with one stone**.

Everybody: That's not a bad idea! Good idea! Yes, I think that's worth trying.

The problem with Charles' idea is that American football isn't popular in the UK. Fortunately, Karen has another idea. Her suggestion is to find someone in golf, which is popular in both countries.

The group thinks this idea is great. As you can hear, they praise the suggestion with strong language. If someone suggests an idea you think is really good, you can express this directly and clearly.

Let's practice some more ways of accepting a suggestion by praising it.

- That's a brilliant idea!
- I think that could really work!
- Great idea, let's do it!

All right, we've heard lots of examples of responding to suggestions. In their discussion about who to choose as a spokesperson, there have been many suggestions. Some were rejected, one was cautiously accepted, and the last one provoked a very positive response.

Now let's practice some of the language we learned in today's lesson. In a moment, you'll hear a series of suggestions. I'll explain how you can respond to each of these suggestions. Then after the beep you can say your answer. Once we've gone through all the examples, we'll hear some model answers to compare to yours.

Ready? Let's give it a go!

Cue 1: To save money, why don't we reduce our marketing budget?

Respond by saying you understand but that sales might go down.

Answer: _____

Cue 2: Well, we could eliminate staff mobile plans.

Now respond by saying you're not sure that would work, to be honest.

Answer: _____

Cue 3: So how about we try to reduce energy consumption?

Respond to this suggestion cautiously by saying you guess that might work.

Answer: _____

Cue 4: Okay, I know, why don't we move to a smaller office?

Respond to this last suggestion very positively by praising it as a great idea and saying let's do it.

Answer: _____

How did you do? Let's listen to some example answers. You'll hear each suggestion followed by a model answer.

Cue 1: To save money, why don't we reduce our marketing budget?

Answer 1: I understand what you're saying, but sales might go down.

Cue 2: Well, we could eliminate staff mobile plans.

Answer 2: I'm not so sure that would work, to be honest.

Cue 3: So how about we try to reduce energy consumption?

Answer 3: I guess that might work.

Cue 4: Okay, I know, why don't we move to a smaller office?

Answer 4: Great idea, let's do it!

That's all for this lesson on how to respond to suggestions. We've learned how to cast doubt on a suggestion and to carefully reject an idea. We've also looked at how to cautiously accept a suggestion and how to praise a good idea.

Thanks for listening and see you again soon!

Language Review

A. “yes... but...”

One very useful way to reject someone’s suggestion is to use the “yes... but...” pattern. With this pattern, we start by saying something we like about the suggestion, then say something we don’t like about the suggestion. Below you will see a suggestion. Think of something positive and something negative about the suggestion, then write a “yes... but...” statement to respond.

1. Suggestion: I think New York would be a great place for our conference.
Response: Yes, _____, but _____.
2. Suggestion: To save money, why don’t we hire a student do customer service?
Response: Yes, _____, but _____.
3. Suggestion: How about we spend more time marketing on social media?
Response: Yes, _____, but _____.

B. Review Quiz

1. Which of the following is NOT a way of casting doubt on an idea?
 - a. I wonder if people would really like that.
 - b. Do you really think that would work?
 - c. I'm not so sure about that idea.
 - d. That's certainly something we could consider.
2. If you are going to reject or criticize other people's suggestions, then it's a good idea to...
 - a. ... do it when they are not in the room.
 - b. ... make some of your own suggestions.
 - c. ... ask the person first if you can reject their idea.
 - d. ... smile.
3. Which expression helps to soften your true opinion if it is negative?
 - a. By the way
 - b. I'm absolutely positive
 - c. To be honest
 - d. I seriously doubt
4. Which of the following show cautious or careful acceptance of an idea? [choose 2]
 - a. I guess that's one way to do it.
 - b. That could work.
 - c. I really don't think so.
 - d. But would it really work?
5. Which of the following is NOT an example of a clear and direct way of praising an idea to accept it?
 - a. That's such a great idea!
 - b. I really think that would work!
 - c. I guess that might work!
 - d. Great idea, let's do it!

Answers

Listening Questions

1. Miguel rejects Sven's idea by saying "I'm not sure it would work" to cast doubt on the suggestion.
2. Karen responds with a compliment, "good suggestion," before saying "but." This approach is a soft way of introducing a rejection.
3. Everybody agrees with Karen's final suggestion of hiring a golfer.

Language Review

A. "yes... but..." example answers

1. Yes, New York is nice, but it's very expensive.
2. Sure we could save money, but they might make mistakes.
3. Yes, social media is useful, but it takes time to do it well.

B. Review Quiz

1. d; 2. b; 3. c; 4. a, b; 5. c

Unit 206 - Clarifying What Was Said

Hello and welcome back to Business English Pod for today's lesson on how to clarify what was said during a conversation.

Communication is rarely easy. There's so much that can go wrong in a conversation, especially on the phone. We might not hear someone well, we might hear them incorrectly, and we might not understand words or expressions in the same way. For that reason, we need to be able to clarify what was said.

There are a few basic ways to clarify that are extremely useful. We can use "WH" questions, like who, what, where, when, and why. We can ask people to repeat what they said and repeat things for people when they haven't understood us. And we can use tag questions to confirm that we've heard correctly.

Today we'll listen to a telephone conversation between three colleagues: Benny, Wim, and Andre. They are speaking on the phone for the first time in a while. During their conversation, they use several expressions to clarify what was said.

As you listen to the dialog, try to answer the following questions:

1. What does the receptionist say that Benny doesn't understand right away?
2. What question does Benny ask that Wim needs repeated?
3. What question does Benny restate about the river in Rotterdam?

Vocabulary

On the line: On the telephone. "Hello, Ms. Smith? I've got a Mr. Wagner on the line. He's calling about the new supertanker project."

To put someone through: To connect someone in a phone call to the person they want to speak to. "Let me put you through to our customer service department so they can answer your question."

To be holding up: If you ask someone how they are "holding up," you are asking them how they are doing. "A: How are you holding up Dave? B: Oh, pretty good, though I'm too busy."

Freezing: Extremely cold temperatures. "The freezing weather conditions delayed the construction project."

Shipping: The process of transporting goods or products from one place to another. "Our shipping department takes care of deliveries to our customers."

On mute: If you are "on mute" on the phone or a videoconferencing meeting, you have clicked a button to stop your microphone. "During the conference call, please remember to put your microphone on mute when you're not speaking."

No worries: No problem. "A: I'm sorry for being late! B: No worries, I understand you're busy."

Seagoing vessels: Ships or boats designed and used for travel or transportation on the sea. "The company has several large seagoing vessels to meet the increasing demand for international shipping."

Dialog

Benny: Benny speaking. How can I help you?

Receptionist: Hi Benny. This is Anna. I've got a Mr. Zeldenhuis **on the line** from Rotterdam.

Benny: Sorry, who did you say?

Receptionist: Mr. Zeldenhuis. Z-E-L-D...

Benny: Oh, I know.

Receptionist: He's calling together with a Mr. De Vries.

Benny: Great. **Put them right through...** Wim? Andre?

Wim: Yes! Hello Benny! This is Wim.

Andre: Hi Benny! This is Andre.

Benny: Wow, it's great to hear you two! How have you been **holding up**?

Wim: Sorry, Benny, I missed that. Could you say that again?

Benny: No problem. I said how have you two been doing? I hear it's cold there!

Wim: It sure is. It's **freezing**. There's ice everywhere.

Benny: Oh my goodness!

Andre: But it's not much better in Boston, right Benny?

Benny: No, it's not. We haven't seen weather like this for years. So... is ice slowing down shipping on the river any? Hello? Wim? Andre? Maybe your phone is **on mute**?

Wim: Oh, sorry about that.

Benny: That's okay.

Wim: Sorry, what did you just say?

Benny: Yeah, **no worries**. I said, is the weather affecting shipping on the river?

Wim: Well, I think Andre can tell you about that.

Andre: You wouldn't believe it! Of course, it doesn't affect the **seagoing vessels**. But on the river, we're seeing...

Debrief

Now let's go through the dialog again and talk about some of the ways the group clarifies what was said. We start with Benny answering the phone and speaking with the receptionist.

Benny: Benny speaking. How can I help you?

Receptionist: Hi Benny. This is Anna. I've got a Mr. Zeldenhuis **on the line** from Rotterdam.

Benny: Sorry, who did you say?

The receptionist has someone "on the line," or on the phone, who wants to speak with Benny. Benny doesn't understand right away who it is, because the name is a bit difficult. To clarify, Benny uses a "WH" question, asking "sorry, who did you say?"

The "WH" question you use will depend on what you don't understand. It could be a question with "when," "who," "where," "why," or "what." Let's try some examples of using these "WH" questions to clarify.

- Could you tell me again who said that?
- When is the event happening?
- I'm sorry, where did you say it's located?
- What is the purpose of the meeting again?

Now let's continue, as the receptionist begins to spell the person's name and Benny quickly understands who it is.

Receptionist: Mr. Zeldenhuis. Z-E-L-D...

Benny: Oh, I know.

Receptionist: He's calling together with a Mr. De Vries.

Benny: Great. **Put them right through...** Wim? Andre?

Wim: Yes! Hello Benny! This is Wim.

Andre: Hi Benny! This is Andre.

Benny: Wow, it's great to hear you two! How have you been **holding up**?

Wim: Sorry, Benny, I missed that. Could you say that again?

After the group says their hellos, Benny asks a question: "how have you been holding up?" This is just another way of asking how someone is doing. But Wim doesn't quite understand. It could be that he didn't *hear* Benny correctly. Or it could be that he's not familiar with the expression *holding up*.

Whatever the reason, Wim wants Benny to repeat the question. He starts by saying he missed what Benny says, then asks politely "could you say that again?" This is a common and polite way to ask for clarification. Let's try some more ways to politely ask someone to repeat themselves.

- I'm sorry, what was that?
- Could you repeat that, please?
- I didn't catch that, could you say it again?
- One more time if you can?

You'll notice that "could you" is a polite way of making a request. And if we don't use "could you," we might say "I'm sorry" instead, just to be polite.

Now, listen as Benny repeats the question but he doesn't use the expression "holding up," just in case it's the expression that is confusing.

Benny: No problem. I said how have you two been doing? I hear it's cold there!

Wim: It sure is. It's **freezing**. There's ice everywhere.

Benny: Oh my goodness!

Andre: But it's not much better in Boston, right Benny?

We just heard Andre use a very helpful piece of language: a tag question. Andre started by making a statement: "it's not much better in Boston." Then he put a little question on the end: "right Benny?" We can use these tag questions to confirm that someone understands.

Tag questions are useful when you want to make sure something is clear, or when you want to confirm that you've heard correctly. All you do is make a statement then add the tag question at the end. Let's run through some examples of tag questions for confirming.

- We don't have a very big budget, do we?
- It's been a difficult project, hasn't it?
- You're leaving on Tuesday, aren't you?
- Sales have gone up, haven't they?

Now let's get back to the dialog, as Benny connects the topic of weather with the topic of business. In particular, Benny asks about "shipping," or moving goods and products by ship.

Benny: No, it's not. We haven't seen weather like this for years. So... is ice slowing down shipping on the river any? Hello? Wim? Andre? Maybe your phone is **on mute**?

Wim: Oh, sorry about that.

Benny: That's okay.

Wim: Sorry, what did you just say?

Benny: Yeah, **no worries**. I said, is the weather affecting shipping on the river?

Here we have two clarifying expressions. First, Wim asks Benny to repeat himself, just like we learned before. Next, we hear Benny *restate* what he said to be clear. That means he says it again.

Sometimes we restate using the same words. And sometimes we restate using different words, just in case it was the vocabulary that confused someone. Let's practice some more examples of restating what we said to be clear.

- What I said was that we need to finish this by Friday.
- Once again: this is our last staff meeting of the year.
- Just to be clear, I said that we won't have time to discuss the schedule.
- As I mentioned: we need to hire three more people.

As you might notice, when we restate something we often tell the other person that's what we're doing. We do this with expressions like "what I said was" or "just to be clear" or "as I mentioned."

All right, let's hear Wim and Andre's response about shipping on the river.

Wim: Well, I think Andre can tell you about that.

Andre: You wouldn't believe it! Of course, it doesn't affect the **seagoing vessels**. But on the river, we're seeing

Now that Benny clarified his question, Andre can begin explaining how weather has impacted shipping. Throughout this conversation, you've heard the three colleagues use various expressions for asking for and giving clarification. And this is especially important on the phone, when you can't see the person you're talking to.

Now let's practice some of the language we learned in today's lesson. Imagine you're talking on the phone with your boss, who is giving you instructions about a meeting. You'll hear a cue from your boss, then I'll tell you how to respond. We'll guide you through each step in the practice and provide an example answer for each response.

Ready? Let's give it a go!

Cue 1: We'll have to see how that goes, but I'd like you to get together with them this week.

Start by asking the person if they can repeat what they said.

Answer: _____

Cue 2: I was saying let's set up a meeting with John and his team downtown for next week.

Answer: _____

Now use a "WH" question to clarify where the meeting will be.

Cue 3: At their downtown office on Maddison Street. I think it's important to meet in person.

Finish off by using a statement and a tag question to confirm that the meeting is with entire John's team.

Answer: _____

Answer 1: I'm sorry, what was that?

Answer 2: Okay... John... and where did you say we should meet?

Answer 3: Right, and the meeting is with John's entire team, isn't it?

That's all for this lesson on clarifying what was said. We've learned how to use "WH" questions and tag questions to clarify. We've also covered how to ask someone to repeat what they said. And finally, we looked at restating something *you* said in order to be clear.

Thanks for listening and see you again soon!

Language Review

A. Tag Questions

When we use a tag question, we need to make sure the question fits the statement we are making. We need to make sure we have the correct verb, the correct verb tense, and the correct pronoun. Look at the following sentences. Add a correct tag question at the end of each one. The first one is done for you.

1. You applied for that job in sales, **didn't you?**
2. Paul is going to transfer to the Chicago office, _____?
3. The report is ready to be sent, _____?
4. The new products have been tested, _____?
5. We don't need to work this Saturday, _____?

B. Review Quiz

1. If you want to confirm the location of a meeting, what WH question could you ask?
 - a. Where is the meeting taking place?
 - b. What's the purpose of this meeting?
 - c. Who do you think will be at the meeting?
 - d. Why are we meeting?
2. What is a polite way to ask someone to repeat something?
 - a. What?
 - b. I'm sorry but I don't agree.
 - c. Could you say that again please?
 - d. What did you say?
3. Which of the following contains a correct tag question for confirming information?
 - a. Aren't you going to the office?
 - b. You're going to the office, aren't you?
 - c. Is it going to the office, are you?
 - d. Going to the office is what you're doing?
4. How might you restate something to be clear?
 - a. As I mentioned, the whole staff is invited.
 - b. Is this going to be for the whole staff?
 - c. The entire staff is welcome to come if they want.
 - d. Nevertheless, the whole staff can come.

Answers

Listening Questions

1. The receptionist responds by stating the caller's name again and then starting to spell it out.
2. Benny asks a question "how have you been holding up?"
3. Benny initially asks a question "is ice slowing down shipping on the river any?" And then restates it as "is the weather affecting shipping on the river?"

Language Review

A. Tag Questions

1. You applied for that job in sales, **didn't you?**
2. Paul is going to transfer to the Chicago office, **isn't he?**
3. The report is ready to be sent, **isn't it?**
4. The new products have been tested, **haven't they?**
5. We don't need to work this Saturday, **do we?**

B. Review Quiz

1. a; 2. c; 3. b; 4. a

Unit 207 – Clarifying What Was Meant

Hello and welcome back to Business English Pod for today's lesson on clarifying. Previously we looked at how to clarify what was said when you didn't hear properly. Today we're going to look at how to clarify what someone means in order to avoid misunderstandings.

Life would be simple if everyone said what they meant clearly and directly. But that's not the way things work. People often speak indirectly or use words that are a bit confusing. For this reason, we often need to clarify what people mean.

There are several ways to do this. You can tell someone you don't understand. Or you might confirm an idea or restate what someone says if you think you *might* understand. And it may take some time to work out the general meaning or the meaning of a specific word.

Today we'll listen to a meeting between Michael, Rachel, and Ryan. Michael is leading the meeting and talking about the disappointing launch of a new product. During the conversation, it's not always clear what people mean. For this reason, they use several different expressions for clarifying what was meant.

As you listen to the dialog, try to answer the following questions:

1. What expression does Michael use about the "numbers" that Ryan tries to clarify?
2. What does Ryan ask about that Michael wants to clarify?
3. What word does Michael use that Rachel asks about near the end of the conversation?

Vocabulary

High expectations: Expecting or hoping for excellent outcomes or results. "With the new product launch, we have high expectations for increased sales."

To come to grips with: To understand or accept a challenging or difficult situation. "It took me some time to come to grips with the company's new restructuring plan."

Numbers: Data or numerical information. "The quarterly sales numbers show that we've had a big increase in revenue."

Not pretty: Unpleasant or bad, often used to describe situations, outcomes, or results. "The financial report for the quarter was not pretty, showing a decrease in profits and market share."

To salvage: To rescue or save something from failure or loss. "The marketing team worked hard to salvage the ad campaign after the initial negative feedback."

To have your work cut out for you: To face a difficult task or situation that requires a lot of effort or skill. "With the upcoming project, the project manager has her work cut out for her in organizing the work."

To scrap: To abandon or get rid of something, often because it doesn't work. "The company decided to scrap the outdated software project and focus on more innovative projects."

Afloat: In a positive financial position, not in debt or financial trouble. "Despite the economic downturn, the company managed to stay afloat through cost-cutting measures."

Investor: A person or company that buys into another company in the hopes of earning profit. "The investor was pleased with the company's quarterly earnings report, leading to an increase in stock value."

Enthusiastic: Showing strong excitement, interest, or eagerness about something. "The team members were enthusiastic about the new project and eager to get started."

Mess: A disorganized situation. "The accounting department was in a mess after the unexpected data problem."

Redundancies: Having staff that are not necessary anymore. "When we tried to reduce costs, we found that we had a lot of redundancies in the marketing department."

Dialog

Michael: The news isn't great I'm afraid. I know all of us had very **high expectations** for the launch, but we're going to have **come to grips** with the situation.

Rachel: Sorry, but I don't quite see what you mean. What are you **getting at**?

Michael: Well, Rachel, what I'm saying is... we've had a closer look at the **numbers**, and it **isn't pretty**.

Ryan: I see. So in other words, you're saying it's been a complete failure? Is that right?

Michael: That would be one way of looking at it. I prefer to see it as a challenge. But to **salvage** this situation, we really have our **work cut out** for us.

Rachel: What exactly do you mean by "salvage?" Do you think we are going to have to **scrap** the whole product line?

Michael: I'm afraid so. Actually, I'm thinking about how to salvage the company. It's going to take everything we have just to keep this company **afloat**.

Ryan: Is it really that bad? I mean, we do have strong **investor** support don't we?

Michael: Let me make sure I understand what you mean. You're asking if our investors will stay with us through this, is that right?

Ryan: Yeah, that's right. I mean, they've been very **enthusiastic** from the beginning. There's always going to be a few problems along the way.

Michael: Well, unfortunately, it's not that simple. They want to know who is going to take responsibility for this **mess**. They want to see some major adjustments, you see.

Rachel: Wait a second. What do you mean by "adjustment"? We're not talking about **redundancies** here, are we?

Michael: Actually, it's funny you should mention that, Rachel. You know, no one has contributed more to this project than you have. And we all really appreciate that...

Debrief

Now let's go through the dialog again and look at how the group clarifies what people mean during the conversation. Michael begins by talking about some bad news related to a "launch," or the release of a new product.

Michael: The news isn't great I'm afraid. I know all of us had very **high expectations** for the launch, but we're going to have **come to grips** with the situation.

Rachel: Sorry, but I don't quite see what you mean. What are you **getting at**?

What bad news is Michael talking about? It's not totally clear. He says they have to deal with or "come to grips with" the situation. But Rachel doesn't understand exactly what he's talking about.

To clarify Michael's meaning, Rachel starts with an apology and an explanation. She says "sorry" and explains that she doesn't understand. Then she asks, "what are you getting at?" To "get at" something is similar to "what do you mean?"

When someone isn't clear, you can apologize, you can state that you don't understand, and you can ask directly what someone means. Let's go through some more ways to do this.

- I'm not sure I understand what you mean.
- I'm a bit confused... could you run that by me again?
- Sorry, what exactly do you mean?
- I don't quite understand, could you clarify that for me?

Now let's hear how Michael responds to Rachel's efforts to clarify his meaning.

Michael: Well, Rachel, what I'm saying is... we've had a closer look at the **numbers**, and it **isn't pretty**.

Ryan: I see. So in other words, you're saying it's been a complete failure? Is that right?

Sometimes, especially when people discuss bad news, they speak indirectly. In his explanation, Michael says the situation "isn't pretty" when they look at the "numbers." In this case, the "numbers" are probably related to sales figures of the new product.

Now, what does it mean if the numbers "aren't pretty?" Ryan guesses this means the product launch has been a failure. But he wants to confirm this idea. He wants to check with Michael that he understands correctly. So Ryan states what he *thinks* Michael means and then checks if it's correct by asking "is that right?"

What are some other ways to check back and confirm the meaning? Let's try some more examples.

- So you're saying that the delivery will be late?
- You mean that we can't afford to hire someone right now, is that right?
- What I'm hearing is that you need to finish next week?
- Am I right in understanding that Dave won't be joining us?

So, has Ryan understood Michael's meaning correctly? Let's listen.

Michael: That would be one way of looking at it. I prefer to see it as a challenge. But to **salvage** this situation, we really have our **work cut out** for us.

Rachel: What exactly do you mean by "salvage?" Do you think we are going to have to **scrap** the whole product line?

It's still not totally clear what Michael's meaning is. He says they need to "salvage," or save, the situation. Rachel wants to understand exactly what he means by this.

She asks about the specific word he uses and then gives one possible meaning. More specifically, she wonders if Michael means they need to "scrap," or get rid of, the new product.

When someone's meaning isn't clear, you may have to ask questions about possible meanings. Through questions, you can try to work out what they are saying. Let's run through some more examples of trying to work out someone's meaning.

- When you say you'll be late, do you mean to the event?
- So is this "issue" you mentioned a big problem?
- What do you mean when you say we have to cut costs?
- I'm having trouble understanding whether you think the report is positive?

Next, we hear Michael speak much more directly about how serious the problem is.

Michael: I'm afraid so. Actually, I'm thinking about how to salvage the company. It's going to take everything we have just to keep this company **afloat**.

Ryan: Is it really that bad? I mean, we do have strong **investor** support don't we?

Michael: Let me make sure I understand what you mean. You're asking if our investors will stay with us through this, is that right?

We now learn that Michael isn't just worried about the product line. He's worried about keeping the company "afloat," or in business. And Ryan is surprised by how serious this sounds. He asks about having strong "investor" support. Investors are the people who have bought shares in the company. They have a lot of control over the company.

Now it's Michael's turn to clarify someone else's meaning. He wants to understand what Ryan is asking, so he restates what he thinks Ryan means. He asks if Ryan is wondering if the investors will stay with the company through the crisis. The alternative would be that the investors sell their interest in the company.

What are some other ways we can confirm meaning by restating, or using different words that have a similar meaning? Let's try some more examples.

- You said we need to spend more on marketing. Is that right?
- You mentioned a “big change to the budget,” didn’t you?
- Okay, you say there’s no extra time. Does that mean we have to finish today?
- By saying it’s “possible,” you mean there’s no guarantee it’ll happen?

Has Michael understood Ryan’s question correctly? Let’s listen.

Ryan: Yeah, that’s right. I mean, they’ve been very **enthusiastic** from the beginning. There’s always going to be a few problems along the way.

Michael: Well, unfortunately, it’s not that simple. They want to know who is going to take responsibility for this **mess**. They want to see some major adjustments, you see.

Rachel: Wait a second. What do you mean by “adjustment”? We’re not talking about **redundancies** here, are we?

We’ve heard Michael speak indirectly before. It isn’t always clear what he means. And sometimes he uses specific words that could have a few different meanings. In this case, he says the investors want to see some “adjustments.”

Adjustments are changes. And if you learn that the company you work for is going to make big “adjustments,” you might worry they mean staffing changes. This is why Rachel asks for clarity on the word “adjustment.”

Rachel asks very directly “what do you mean by adjustment?” She also asks if this means “redundancies,” which means that people will lose their jobs. Rachel is trying to understand very clearly what Michael means by this one important word. Let’s try some more ways of asking about a single word or phrase.

- What exactly do you mean by “unintentional?”
- When you say “it’s about time,” what are you saying?
- Can you explain what “critical” means in this case?
- I’m curious what you mean by “let’s play it by ear.”

Now let’s hear the end of this part of the conversation, as Michael begins to explain what he means by “adjustments.”

Michael: Actually, it’s funny you should mention that, Rachel. You know, no one has contributed more to this project than you have. And we all really appreciate that...

We don’t know what happens next, but it sounds like Michael might be preparing Rachel for bad news! In this case, her questions about Michael’s meaning might lead to some big surprises! And we have seen throughout the conversation how important it is to clarify what someone means.

Now let’s practice some of the language we learned in today’s lesson. Imagine you’re talking to a colleague about a big project. The colleague’s meaning isn’t always clear. You’ll hear a cue from your colleague, then I’ll tell you how to respond. We’ll guide you through each step in the practice and provide an example answer for each response.

Ready? Let's give it a go!

Cue 1: I find myself wishing we'd never taken this on.

Start by saying that you don't understand and ask him to clarify.

Answer: _____

Cue 2: Well, given our workload, I'm not sure we can do a good job.

Now check back and confirm that he is saying that there's just not enough time for the project.

Answer: _____

Cue 3: That's exactly what I'm saying. Maybe if we'd have staffed up, but we didn't.

Now ask if he means you should have hired more people.

Answer: _____

Cue 4: Precisely. But we didn't, and now we're under the gun.

Finally, ask him to explain what he means by "under the gun."

Answer: _____

Answer 1: I'm sorry, I don't quite understand, could you clarify?

Answer 2: Okay, are you saying that we don't have enough time for the project?

Answer 3: Do you mean we should've hired more people?

Answer 4: What exactly do you mean by "under the gun?"

That's all for this lesson on clarifying what was meant. We've learned how to clarify when something isn't clear and how to check back and confirm meaning. We've also learned how to try to figure out what someone means, restate to confirm meaning, and ask about the meaning of a single word or phrase.

Thanks for listening and see you again soon!

Language Review

A. Prepositions and Idioms

Below you will see several prepositions that are part of idioms or phrasal verbs from this lesson. Look at the sentences and insert the correct preposition.

at	with	out
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1. It looks like we have our work cut _____ for us on this big project!
2. It's taken me quite a while to come to grips _____ the company's situation.
3. I'm really not sure what you're getting _____ when you say "the situation is dire."

B. Review Quiz

1. How could you tell someone you don't understand the meaning of what they are saying?
 - a. Sorry but I'm a bit confused here.
 - b. Okay... I think I see what you're getting at.
 - c. Do you mind repeating that?
2. How can you check whether your understanding is correct?
 - a. Okay, I think I get it now.
 - b. I really don't see the point of that.
 - c. So, you're saying we need to work harder, right?
3. How can you negotiate the meaning of something that you don't quite understand?
 - a. Are you talking about the financial situation when you say that?
 - b. I'm not really sure that's the best way to go about this.
 - c. I really don't know what that even means.
4. How might you restate something to confirm the meaning?
 - a. Do you mind saying that again for us?
 - b. What you're saying is that we need to increase sales?
 - c. Is there another way of looking at this problem?
5. How might you ask about the meaning of a single word or phrase?
 - a. Can you explain that again for me?
 - b. Is it necessary to use such difficult words to describe the problem?
 - c. When you say "get over it," what exactly do you mean?

Answers

Listening Questions

1. Michael says the situation “isn’t pretty” as a way of indicating the results were not positive.
2. Ryan asks about having strong “investor” support.
3. The specific word Rachel wants Michael to clarify is “adjustments.”

Language Review

A. Prepositions

1. It looks like we have our work cut **out** for us on this big project!
2. It’s taken me quite a while to come to grips **with** the company’s situation.
3. I’m really not sure what you’re getting **at** when you say “the situation is dire.”

B. Review Quiz

1. a; 2. c; 3. a; 4. b; 5. c

Unit 208 - Starting a Meeting

Hello and welcome back to Business English Pod for today's lesson on how to start a meeting.

Many jobs require us to spend a lot of time in meetings. Sometimes we might think there are *too many* meetings. In part, we might feel this way because a lot of meetings aren't run very well or *facilitated* effectively.

There's a good chance that you will have to run meetings some day, if you don't already. You have a chance to make sure those meetings are effective by running the meeting well. Fortunately, running a meeting involves skills that you can learn.

Today we'll focus on *starting* a meeting, which begins with getting people's attention and acknowledging them. Next, you might clearly state the purpose or goals of the meeting before reviewing the agenda with everyone. Then you may invite someone to begin speaking about the first item on the agenda.

In this lesson, we'll hear the start of a meeting about budget cuts at an international shipping company. The meeting is being led by Martin, the General Manager. We'll also hear Sandra, David, and Sam, employees who are attending the meeting.

As you listen to the dialog, try to answer the following questions:

1. What does Martin apologize for as he is acknowledging the meeting attendees?
2. What does Martin say is the objective of the meeting?
3. What does Martin invite Sandra to do at the end of the conversation?

Vocabulary

Short notice: Very little time before something happens. "Sorry for the short notice, but we need to meet today at 3 PM."

Agenda: A list of topics to talk about in a meeting. "Let's review the agenda before we begin the meeting."

Objective: The goal or purpose of something. "The main objective of this meeting is to find ways to save money."

Budget shortfall: When there is not enough money to cover costs. "We're facing a budget shortfall this quarter."

To face: To deal with a problem or situation. "We are facing some serious financial challenges."

Belt tightening: Spending less money to save costs. "The company is doing some belt tightening to manage the budget."

To cut: To reduce or remove something. "They plan to cut travel expenses next month."

Gym membership: A paid plan to use a gym or fitness center. "The company may stop paying for employee gym memberships."

Demotivating: Making someone feel less interested or excited to work. "Losing bonuses can be very demotivating for staff."

To cover: To talk about or deal with a topic. "We need to cover all the main points before we end."

Identified: Found or recognized. "We've identified some areas where we can reduce spending."

Potential: Possible or likely to happen. "There are potential savings in marketing."

Cuts: Reductions in spending or resources. "Management is discussing possible cuts to staff training."

To run through: To quickly explain or review something. "Let's run through the list of ideas before we decide."

To break for: To stop temporarily, usually for a reason like lunch. "We'll break for coffee at 11:00."

Outsourcing: Paying another company to do work instead of doing it in-house. "They are outsourcing their customer service to a company abroad."

To kick off: To start something, usually a meeting or project. "Let's kick off the meeting by reviewing the agenda."

Dialog

Martin: All right. Is everybody here? Great. I think we can get started. Well, good morning everyone.

I'm sorry I had to call this meeting at such **short notice**. Did you all get a copy of the **agenda**?

Sandra: Sorry, Martin, do you have an extra copy?

David: Here, you can have look at mine.

Sandra: Thanks, Dave.

Martin: Okay. As you know, the main **objective** of this meeting is to agree on ways to make up the **budget shortfall** of \$154,000 we're **facing**. I hate to say it, but it's **belt tightening** time.

Sam: Speaking of belt tightening, whatever we do we can't **cut** the free **gym memberships**. That would be totally **demotivating**, don't you think?

Martin: Let's get to that in a moment, Sam. Let me first go through the agenda. As you can see, we have a lot to **cover**. From the agenda, there are 10 areas we've **identified** for **potential cuts**. We'll **run through** them in order. Any questions before we start?

Sandra: No.

Martin: We'll **break for** lunch at 11:30, if that's okay with you guys.

Sam: That's fine.

Sandra: Fine by me.

Martin: Good. Okay, let's move straight to the first point on the agenda: **Outsourcing** cleaning. Sandra, could you please **kick off**?

Debrief

Now let's go through the dialog again and look at how Martin begins the meeting. As we can hear, the first step is to get everyone's attention.

Martin: All right. Is everybody here? Great. I think we can get started.

Some people or workplaces like to start meetings right on time. Others prefer to wait until everyone is present before beginning. Either way, you will have to signal to everyone that the meeting is starting.

Martin begins simply by saying "all right" and stating clearly and directly that they will start the meeting. What are some other ways to get everyone's attention to begin a meeting? Let's try some more examples.

- Can I have your attention, please?
- If we're all ready, I'd like to begin now.
- Thanks for settling in. Let's get started so we can stay on schedule.
- Okay, everyone. Time to get started.

So after getting everyone's attention, what does Martin do next?

Martin: Well, good morning everyone. I'm sorry I had to call this meeting at such **short notice**. Did you all get a copy of the **agenda**?

After getting people's attention, Martin wants to acknowledge the people attending. Acknowledging people shows respect for their time and increases their willingness to participate.

Martin acknowledges people with a nice "good morning" and by apologizing for calling the meeting at "short notice." This means that he didn't tell people far ahead of time about the meeting. Some people might be annoyed by that. By acknowledging this fact, Martin can improve their participation in the meeting.

Let's practice some other ways of acknowledging attendees at the beginning of a meeting.

- Thanks everyone for attending today.
- I know everyone's busy, so I really appreciate you taking the time to join us.
- I'd like to start by welcoming the team and any guests joining us today.
- Thank you all for making time to be here.

Now, after acknowledging attendees, Martin asked if everyone has a copy of the agenda. Let's listen to how they respond.

Sandra: Sorry, Martin, do you have an extra copy?

David: Here, you can have look at mine.

Sandra: Thanks, Dave.

Martin: Okay. As you know, the main **objective** of this meeting is to agree on ways to make up the **budget shortfall** of \$154,000 we're **facing**. I hate to say it, but it's **belt tightening** time.

Once it's clear that everyone can see the agenda, Martin states the "objective" of the meeting. An objective is a goal. Every meeting should have one. If a meeting *doesn't* have a clear objective, then why should people participate?

As Martin says, their objective in this meeting is to agree on how to deal with a "budget shortfall." This means they don't have enough money for all their expenses and they will have to "tighten their belts," or cut costs.

Stating the meeting objectives is key to beginning a meeting effectively, so let's run through some more ways of stating the purpose.

- Today, we're here to talk about the project timeline.
- The goal of this meeting is to plan next steps on our marketing campaign.
- Our main objective today is to review progress on the new product.
- I'd like to make sure we leave today with a clear decision on the way forward.

As we can hear, Sam has one very specific opinion about cutting costs.

Sam: Speaking of belt tightening, whatever we do we can't **cut** the free **gym memberships**. That would be totally **demotivating**, don't you think?

Martin: Let's get to that in a moment, Sam. Let me first go through the agenda. As you can see, we have a lot to **cover**. From the agenda, there are 10 areas we've **identified** for **potential cuts**. We'll **run through** them in order. Any questions before we start?

When you run a meeting, people are relying on you to keep the group focused on the agenda. That includes asking people to wait for the right time to talk about certain topics, just as Martin does when Sam wants to discuss gym memberships.

Instead of diving into the details, Martin wants to begin by explaining the agenda. As he says, there's a lot to "cover," or discuss. This makes it especially important to focus the discussion. And if people understand what is covered in the agenda, then they will be more open to letting the facilitator do his job.

How else can we briefly explain an agenda at the beginning of a meeting? Let's try some more examples.

- First, we'll do a quick round of updates. Then we can discuss the schedule.
- We have three things to cover today: budget, timeline, and next steps.
- I'll give a short update, then we'll hear from each region.
- We'll start with a quick report, then go through each department individually.

After reviewing the agenda, Martin asked if anyone has any questions. Let's get back to the dialog as the conversation continues from there.

Sandra: No.

Martin: We'll **break for** lunch at 11:30, if that's okay with you guys.

Sam: That's fine.

Sandra: Fine by me.

Martin: Good. Okay, let's move straight to the first point on the agenda: **Outsourcing** cleaning. Sandra, could you please **kick off**?

The start of a meeting is also the time to discuss any logistical matters. This may include timing of the meeting or the schedule for the day's activities. On this topic, Martin lets everyone know they'll "break," or pause, for lunch at 11:30.

Now that everyone understands the agenda and how much time they have before a break, Martin begins with the first item. In fact, he just introduces the first topic, before asking Sandra to "kick off." "To kick off" means to begin something. This expression comes from football, a sport where each game begins with a kickoff.

It's important to remember that running the meeting doesn't mean you do *all* the talking. Other people will have opinions and important information to share. And it may be appropriate to invite specific people to speak about certain topics, as Martin has done.

Let's practice more ways of asking someone to start on an agenda item.

- Alex, can you start with your update?
- Let's begin with your report, Maria.
- Sarah, would you mind starting off with a quick update on your end?
- John, can you begin by giving us a rundown on the numbers from last quarter?

Once you're discussing the first agenda item, then the meeting has really begun. At this point, you've successfully opened the meeting and now your job is to manage the discussion. And that involves a different set of skills as we'll see in our next lesson.

Now let's practice some of the language we learned in today's lesson. Imagine you are a manager at an engineering company. You have called a meeting to discuss new project proposals. Now you have to open the meeting. I'll give you some suggestions for what you can say to start the meeting, and we'll provide an example answer for each response.

Ready? Let's give it a go!

Start by asking if you can have everyone's attention to begin the meeting.

Answer: _____

Now thank everyone for their time and say you understand they're all busy.

Answer: _____

Next, state that the goal today is to discuss the new project proposals.

Answer: _____

Now say that after a report from engineering, you'll discuss one proposal from each region.

Answer: _____

Finally, ask Sue to begin with some updates from the engineering team.

Answer: _____

Answer 1: Okay, can I have everyone's attention so we can begin the meeting?

Answer 2: Thanks so much for your time today. I know you're all very busy.

Answer 3: Our goal today is to discuss new project proposals.

Answer 4: After a report from engineering, we'll discuss one proposal for each region.

Answer 5: So, Sue could you begin with an update from the engineering team?

That's all for this lesson on how to start a meeting. We've learned how to get people's attention and acknowledge their participation. We've also covered how to state the meeting objective, explain the agenda, and invite someone to begin with the first topic.

Thanks for listening and see you again soon!

Language Review

A. Verbs and Verb Expressions

In this lesson, the speakers use several verbs that have idiomatic or special meanings. They may have one common meaning in most contexts, but then have a different meaning in a business context. Choose the appropriate verb to complete each sentence.

face	kick	run	cut	break
1. Okay, I'd like to _____ this meeting off by welcoming everyone from our Chicago office.				
2. I think we should _____ for 20 minutes before we continue with the second half of the agenda.				
3. Before we make this decision, how about we _____ through last year's sales figures?				
4. I'm not sure we'll improve profits unless we find a way to _____ expenses.				
5. I'm sorry Dave, but the situation we're currently _____ is a very serious one.				

B. Review Quiz

For each question, choose the sentence that best fulfills the given language function or purpose.

1. How would you get everyone's attention to begin the meeting?
 - a. So the first point on the agenda relates to the training budget.
 - b. If we could have your attention, I'd like to get started now.
 - c. Could everyone stop talking? We need to start now.
2. How would you acknowledge attendees at the start of the meeting?
 - a. I'm not sure what happened to the finance folks, they were supposed to be here today.
 - b. I'm happy to see you all today, especially as I know you're very busy.
 - c. A special thanks today to my assistant for organizing the meeting.
3. How would you state the objectives of the meeting?
 - a. I'd be curious to know if anyone has items they'd like to discuss?
 - b. Let's just talk about the project and see where we go.
 - c. The goal for today's meeting is to finalize the project timeline and review the budget.
4. How would you briefly explain the agenda?
 - a. The agenda includes a review of the timeline, budget updates, and discussion of upcoming tasks.
 - b. We have a lot to cover today, so let's get started.
 - c. I think it's best to start with a round of check-ins.
5. How would you ask someone to start on an agenda item?
 - a. I'd like to start with John's update on the budget. John, could you begin?
 - b. Anyone have any questions about the first item here, regarding the budget?
 - c. John, what are your thoughts on the budget?

Answers

Listening Questions

1. Martin apologizes for giving very little notice of the meeting.
2. Martin says the objective is to decide how to make up for a big budget shortfall.
3. Martin invites Sandra to begin by talking about the first agenda item.

Language Review

Verbs and Verb Expressions

1. Okay, I'd like to **kick** this meeting off by welcoming everyone from our Chicago office.
2. I think we should **break** for 20 minutes before we continue with the second half of the agenda.
3. Before we make this decision, how about we **run** through last year's sales figures?
4. I'm not sure we'll improve profits unless we find a way to **cut** expenses.
5. I'm sorry Dave, but the situation we're currently **facing** is a very serious one.

B. Review Quiz

1. b; 2. b; 3. c; 4. a; 5. a

Unit 209 - Managing the Discussion

Hello and welcome back to Business English Pod for today's lesson on how to manage the discussion during a meeting.

Bad meetings can waste time and leave everyone confused. But a well-run meeting can help create new ideas, solve problems, and move a project forward. Running a great meeting is about more than just following an agenda. It means guiding the conversation effectively.

If you're running formal meetings as a manager or team leader, this skill is essential. But even if just you're a team member who wants to make sure your team has good discussions, it's good to understand what's behind running a meeting. And you never know when it might be your job to facilitate.

Good meeting management often means keeping the discussion focused and inviting different viewpoints or opinions. It also means widening the discussion, moving to a new agenda item, and checking for agreement.

In this lesson, we'll rejoin a meeting about budget cuts at an international shipping company. Martin, the General Manager, is facilitating the meeting. We'll also hear Sandra, Sam, and David, three employees in the meeting.

As you listen to the dialog, try to answer the following questions:

1. How does Martin respond to Sam's comment about pizza?
2. What does Martin say once they have finished talking about the outsourcing issue?
3. At the end of the conversation, what question does Martin ask everyone if they agree on?

Vocabulary

To kick off: To start something, like a meeting or event. "Let's kick off the meeting by reviewing last month's numbers."

To cut fat: To remove things that are not necessary or useful. "We need to cut fat from our budget to stay profitable."

Figures: Numbers used to show data, like sales or costs. "The sales figures for March are better than expected."

Side-track: To move away from the main topic. "Let's not get side-tracked; please stick to the topic."

Agenda: The list of topics for a meeting. "Can we follow the agenda so we don't run out of time?"

Outsourcing: Paying another company to do work for your business. "They are outsourcing IT support to reduce costs."

No-brainer: A decision that is very easy or obvious. "Cancelling the unused software license is a no-brainer."

Harsh: Very strong or too strict. "The new rules on breaks seem a bit harsh."

To let go people: To stop employing people; to lay off staff. "The company had to let go ten people last month."

Morale: The mood or feeling of a group of people. "Team morale is low after the recent budget cuts."

Brochure: A small booklet or flyer that gives information. "The marketing team made a new brochure for the product launch."

To budget: To plan how to spend money. "We need to budget carefully for the next quarter."

Area of expertise: The topic someone knows a lot about. "HR is not my area of expertise, so I'll ask Sarah."

Shortfall: A lack or shortage, usually of money or resources. "There's a shortfall in the marketing budget this year."

To make cuts: To reduce spending or remove things. "We had to make cuts to travel and training expenses."

To prioritize: To decide what is most important and focus on that. "We must prioritize safety and quality in every project."

Limited: Small in number or scope. "We have limited time, so please keep your comments short."

Speaking of: A phrase used to link to a new but related topic. "Speaking of the budget, have we paid the contractor yet?"

Vendor: A company or person that sells goods or services. "We're meeting with a new software vendor next week."

To have a point: To say someone made a good or true comment. "I think Jason has a point about the delivery delays."

To cover: To talk about or include something in a discussion. "We still need to cover staffing plans before we finish."

To be in favor: To support or agree with something. "I'm in favor of outsourcing the design work."

To be against: To not support or agree with something. "Some team members are against cutting the training budget."

Dialog

Martin: ...Sandra, would you please **kick off**?

Sandra: Well, this is a great way to **cut a lot of fat**. My **figures** show that we can save almost \$50,000 dollars with this one.

Sam: Can I just come in here? That reminds me, we really can't have pizza for lunch again. It's unhealthy.

Martin: Sorry, Sam, but I think this is a bit of a **side-track**. Let's try to keep to the **agenda**, ok? I want to get everyone out of here on time.

Sam: Of course.

Sandra: So as I was saying, **outsourcing** the cleaning can really save a lot of money. It's a **no-brainer** if you ask me.

Martin: Uh huh. What do others think? Is there anything else we should consider?

Dave: Well, frankly, I think it's a little **harsh** just to **let go people**. After all, we've been working with them side by side for years. And we have to think about how it will affect **morale**.

Martin: Right, we seem to have dealt with the outsourcing issue. Now, let's move on to the **brochures**.

Martin: We've **budgeted** \$68,500 to redesign and reprint all the sales and marketing brochures. Dave, this is your **area of expertise**. What do you think?

Dave: Well, obviously, if we're facing a **shortfall**, we need to **make cuts**. And this cut would be less painful than many of the others. But we really have to **prioritize** sales. Perhaps we can consider a **limited** redesign?

Sam: I agree.

Sandra: I do too. You know, Dave, **speaking of** the brochure, you should really consider using a different **vendor** for the brochures this time. I didn't think they did a good job on the last ones at all.

Martin: You may **have a point** there Sandra, but let's leave that for the regular team meeting on Thursday. We still have a lot to cover.

Sandra: Okay.

Martin: All right, can we go around the table to make sure everyone agrees? All those **in favor of** a limited redesign of the brochure? All those **against**?

Debrief

Now let's go through the dialog again and look at how Martin manages the discussion about budget cuts. The first topic on the agenda is "outsourcing cleaning." This means paying another company to do the cleaning, rather than using your own employees.

Martin: ...Sandra, would you please **kick off**?

Sandra: Well, this is a great way to **cut a lot of fat**. My **figures** show that we can save almost \$50,000 dollars with this one.

Sandra likes the idea of outsourcing cleaning because it could save a lot of money. Or, as she says, it could "cut a lot of fat." Let's hear how Sam responds to this expression.

Sam: Can I just come in here? That reminds me, we really can't have pizza for lunch again. It's unhealthy.

Martin: Sorry, Sam, but I think this is a bit of a **side-track**. Let's try to keep to the **agenda**, ok? I want to get everyone out of here on time.

Sandra used the expression "cut a lot of fat" to talk about saving money. But this idiom reminds Sam of their unhealthy lunch. So he takes the opportunity to comment on the food choices.

Of course, the topic of pizza isn't on the agenda. And as the facilitator, Martin's job is to keep everyone focused on the points for discussion. Right away, he tells Sam that his comment is a "side-track," or a topic that isn't important to the discussion.

Martin emphasizes that keeping to the agenda will help everyone finish on time. And that's a great way to keep the discussion focused. Let's try some more ways of doing this:

- Let's come back to the main topic for a moment.
- That's interesting, but can we save it for later and stick with the agenda?
- I think we're getting off track, so let's return to the issue at hand.
- Just to refocus, we're trying to agree on the budget today.

All right, let's get back to the dialog and to the topic of outsourcing the cleaning.

Sam: Of course.

Sandra: So as I was saying, **outsourcing** the cleaning can really save a lot of money. It's a **no-brainer** if you ask me.

Martin: Uh huh. What do others think? Is there anything else we should consider?

Martin asked Sandra to talk about this first topic. And it's clear that she thinks outsourcing cleaning is an easy decision, or a "no-brainer." But she's the only one who has given an opinion about the issue so far.

When you run a meeting, you want to make sure there's broad participation. In fact, there's no point in having a meeting if you can't get more than one person's opinion. So Martin asks what other people think. He asks a very open question about "anything else we should consider?"

What are some other ways of widening the discussion and getting input from more than one person? Let's practice some more examples.

- Let's open this up. Are there other ideas we haven't considered yet?
- I'd like to hear from others on this before we move forward.
- What do other teams think about this approach?
- Are there other options we should be looking at here?

Martin has invited others to give their opinion, and Dave is happy to share his. Let's listen.

Dave: Well, frankly, I think it's a little **harsh** just to **let go people**; after all, we've been working with them side by side for years. And we have to think about how it will affect **morale**.

Dave doesn't really agree with Sandra. For him, it's not just about saving money. They also have to think about how people will feel if they "let people go," or fire them.

Now that they've had a couple of opinions on the issue of outsourcing cleaning, Martin wants to move on to the next topic on the agenda.

Martin: Right, we seem to have dealt with the outsourcing issue. Now, let's move on to the **brochures**.

Martin says they are finished with outsourcing and asks them to "move on," or continue, with the topic of "brochures," or printed marketing materials.

Changing the topic to new agenda items is a skill that everyone running a meeting must have. Let's try some more ways of moving the discussion on.

- Let's move ahead and look at the issue of employee benefits.
- Okay, I think we've said about all we can on that so let's move on.
- If there's nothing else to discuss on this for now, let's look at the next item.
- Thanks, everyone, now let's talk about the project timeline.

Once Martin has introduced the general topic of brochures, he states the exact issue.

Martin: We've **budgeted** \$68,500 to redesign and reprint all the sales and marketing brochures. Dave, this is your **area of expertise**. What do you think?

As you can hear, the group is planning to change the brochures. And while many people might have opinions about this, Martin invites input from Dave in particular.

Martin says the marketing materials are Dave's "area of expertise." This means that Dave is an "expert" on the topic. His opinion on the issue is very important. Martin wants the expert opinion first, so he identifies Dave clearly and asks him to speak first.

Let's run through some more ways of inviting input from one particular person.

- Sarah, what's your opinion on this?
- Mark, can you give us an idea about the financial situation here?
- Lena, do you have anything to add?
- Tom, I'd be interested to hear your perspective.

Now let's hear Dave's opinion about redesigning and reprinting the brochures.

Dave: Well, obviously, if we're facing a **shortfall**, we need to **make cuts**. And this cut would be less painful than many of the others. But we really have to **prioritize** sales. Perhaps we can consider a **limited** redesign?

Sam: I agree.

Sandra: I do too. You know, Dave, **speaking of** the brochure, you should really consider using a different **vendor** for the brochures this time. I didn't think they did a good job on the last ones at all.

Dave has suggested a "limited" redesign. This means that the design of the brochures wouldn't be completely changed. It would be simpler than a complete redesign and help them save money.

Sam and Sandra agree with this idea. And Sandra goes on to suggest a "vendor," or printing company, with better quality. This particular issue of the vendor for the brochures isn't exactly what they're supposed to be talking about, as you can hear.

Martin: You may **have a point** there Sandra, but let's leave that for the regular team meeting on Thursday. We still have a lot to cover.

Sandra: Okay.

Martin: All right, can we go around the table to make sure everyone agrees? All those **in favor of** a limited redesign of the brochure? All those **against**?

After letting Sandra know that her suggestion is best for another meeting, Martin wants to refocus on the idea of a limited redesign. And on this issue, the group really needs a decision. Sometimes a meeting is just to come up with ideas. But sometimes, a decision needs to be made.

As the person running the meeting, Martin wants to make sure everyone agrees. He's already heard agreement from a couple of people, but good decisions have full support of everyone. So he wants to go around the table and everyone will say if they are "in favor of" or "against" the idea. That means they support it or they oppose it.

How else can we ask for agreement from a group of people in a meeting? Let's practice a few examples.

- Does everyone agree with that approach?
- Are we all on the same page here?
- Anyone not okay with this before we move on?
- Just to check, are we all okay with this decision?

Asking for everyone's agreement like this is critical when group decisions have to be made. Sometimes teams might take a vote on certain decisions. But often the best

decisions are made by “consensus,” meaning that everyone agrees on the right way to move forward.

Now let’s practice some of the language we learned in today’s lesson. Imagine you are a manager at a manufacturing company. You have called a meeting to discuss the budget and timeline for a project. You’ll hear a cue from a meeting participant, then I’ll give you a suggestion for what you can say in response. We’ll guide you through each step in the practice and provide an example answer for each response.

Ready? Let’s give it a go!

Cue 1: Sorry, I just wanted to mention that I really don’t like the new office signs.

Start by saying that’s a good point but that you want to focus on budget planning for now.

Answer: _____

Cue 2: Right, sorry, back to the numbers then. They look pretty good, in my opinion.

Now say that’s great, and ask if anyone else has some input.

Answer: _____

Cue 3: Seems like everyone is pretty happy with it.

Now say that you agree and move on to the topic of the project timeline.

Answer: _____

Cue 4: Sounds good to me.

Now ask Robin to give an opinion about whether the current timeline looks possible.

Answer: _____

Cue 5: Yes, well it should be fine as long as there are no production delays.

Finally, tell the group you want to check whether everyone agrees with Robin’s opinion.

Answer: _____

Answer 1: That’s a good point, but let’s stay focused on the budget planning for now.

Answer 2: That’s great, and does anyone else have input on this?

Answer 3: Okay then, let’s move on to the next topic, which is the project timeline.

Answer 4: So Robin, can you tell us whether the current timeline looks possible?

Answer 5: Okay, and just to check: does everyone agree with Robin’s opinion?

That’s all for this lesson on managing a meeting. We’ve learned how to keep the discussion focused and how to widen the discussion if needed. We’ve also looked at moving on to a new agenda item, inviting input from a specific individual, and checking that everyone agrees.

Thanks for listening and see you again soon!

Language Review

B. Verbs and Verb Expressions

In this lesson, the speakers use several common expressions with specific meanings in a business context. Look at the expressions below. Then read the sentences and put the right word in each blank.

Cuts	Point	Go	Fat	Favor
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1. Due to the budget cuts, we may have to let people _____ in order to reduce costs.
2. The CEO didn't agree with the proposal, but she did make a good _____ when she said we need to focus on long-term goals.
3. The company had to cut _____ after the merger, which led to the loss of several positions.
4. In order to streamline operations, we need to make _____ in some of our departments.
5. Most of the team seems to be in _____ of the new strategy to expand into international markets.

Review Quiz

For each question, choose the sentence that best fulfills the given language function or purpose.

1. How might you refocus the discussion on the main topic after a side conversation?
 - a. Let's move ahead with the next topic.
 - b. That's interesting, but can we save it for later and stick with the agenda?
 - c. I think we need to figure out exactly what this is about.
2. How might you widen the discussion and encourage others to share their ideas and contribute more perspectives?
 - a. Let's open this up. Are there other ideas we haven't considered yet?
 - b. We've talked about this enough. Let's move forward now.
 - c. This seems good, but let's stick to what we know for now.
3. How would you transition to the next item on the agenda after finishing a discussion?
 - a. Okay, I think we've said about all we can on that, so let's move on.
 - b. Let's talk about the budget next.
 - c. This has been a great discussion.
4. How would you ask an individual for their opinion on a specific agenda topic?
 - a. Sarah, could you give us your thoughts on this issue?
 - b. Kevin, I'm wondering if there's another time that would be better for this.
 - c. Now, I believe that Joan has already taken care of this.
5. How can you check if everyone agrees with a proposed way of dealing with something before moving on?
 - a. Could I just check to see if everyone understands?
 - b. Any questions about this before we go on?
 - c. Is everyone okay with this approach?

Answers

Listening Questions

1. Martin responds to the pizza comment by asking that they stay on the agenda topics.
2. After the outsourcing issue is finished, Martin wants to move on to talk about the brochures.
3. Martin asks if everyone agrees to a limited redesign of the brochures.

Language Review

Verbs and Verb Expressions

1. Due to the budget cuts, we may have to let people **go** in order to reduce costs.
2. The CEO didn't agree with the proposal, but she did make a good **point** when she said we need to focus on long-term goals.
3. The company had to cut **fat** after the merger, which led to the loss of several positions.
4. In order to streamline operations, we need to make **cuts** in some of our departments.
5. Most of the team seems to be in **favor** of the new strategy to expand into international markets.

B. Review Quiz

1. b; 2. a; 3. b; 4. a; 5. c

Unit 210 - Dealing with Interruptions

Hello and welcome back to Business English Pod for today's lesson on how to deal with interruptions during a meeting.

Meetings are a very important part of work life. They are where decisions are made, relationships are built, and work is coordinated. When meetings go smoothly, they can feel very productive. But meetings can easily become messy and unfocused.

In many cases, people compete for time and attention during meetings. They interrupt each other to give new ideas, disagree, or try to get their way. Knowing how to deal with interruptions is a critical skill if you want to participate fully in a meeting.

Interrupting people is easier if you learn some useful phrases. You can also learn language to help you stop an interruption and finish what you were saying. In some cases, you might need to concede someone else's point, either partly or fully. When we concede a point, we are saying "okay, you're right." Sometimes that's the key to moving on after an interruption.

In today's dialog, we'll join a meeting at a manufacturing company. Bill is the production manager and Mei Lin and Sam work in HR. They are discussing staffing and recruiting for a new production line. Bill is keen to hire new staff, but Sam and Mei Lin want to explore alternative approaches so there's a lot of disagreement and interrupting during the meeting.

As you listen to the dialog, try to answer the following questions:

1. What does Bill say is the purpose of the meeting?
2. What is one of the expressions Mei Lin uses to interrupt Bill when he's speaking?
3. What does Bill say to get back to what he was trying to say after being interrupted?

Vocabulary

To work out: To find a solution to a problem. "Let's discuss the issue and see if we can work out a plan."

Kinks: Small problems that need fixing. "We still have a few kinks to fix before the system runs smoothly."

Recruitment: The process of finding and hiring new employees. "Our recruitment team is busy looking for new technicians."

To interrupt: To stop someone while they are talking. "Sorry to interrupt, but I need to clarify one point."

Headcount: The number of people working in a company or team. "We don't have enough headcount to start the new project."

Production line: Machines or processes used to make products in a factory. "If one of the production lines stops, the whole schedule is delayed."

Critical: Very important and necessary. "It's critical that we finish testing before the launch date."

Key customer: An important customer that brings a lot of business. "We need to handle this carefully because they are a key customer."

Stamped aluminum: Aluminum shaped by pressing it in a machine. "This part is made from stamped aluminum for better strength."

Material: The physical substance used to make something. "We can't start work until the material arrives."

Skill set: The abilities and knowledge needed to do a job. "She has the right skill set for the new engineering role."

On the fly: Done quickly without planning. "We had to change the schedule on the fly during the meeting."

To go into production: To start making a product in a factory. "The new model will go into production next month."

To come off half-assed: To look unprepared or low quality. "We need to rehearse; otherwise the presentation will come off half-assed."

To retool: To change or adjust equipment for a new purpose. "The plant needs to retool before we can make the new parts."

All well and good: Acceptable, but still not enough. "More orders are all well and good, but we need more staff to handle them."

To commit: To promise to do something or give resources. "We can't commit to a date until we review the timeline."

Resources: People, money, or materials needed for a project. "We don't have the resources to take on extra work right now."

Recruitment drive: A strong effort to hire many workers. "The company launched a recruitment drive to fill 50 new positions."

Short-staffed: Not having enough workers. "We're short-staffed this week, so please expect some delays."

Qualification: A skill, certificate, or experience that shows someone is fit for a job. "A safety certification is a required qualification for this role."

Candidate: A person applying for a job. "We interviewed three candidates for the manager position."

Dialog

Bill: ...So the reason I called this meeting is to **work out** any...shall we say “**kinks**” in the approval process so that we can get **recruitment** started immediately. As you know, we’ve been working very closely with Trilogy on their new MP3 player launch...

Mei Lin: Sorry, Bill, excuse me for **interrupting** you there, but we’ve been looking at your **headcount** request...

Bill: Yes.

Mei Lin: And it didn’t really clarify for us exactly why you need to increase headcount.

Sam: Yeah, don’t you have engineers you could transfer from other **production lines**?

Bill: Well, as I was saying, Trilogy’s new product is absolutely **critical** to our business. They are a **key customer** – you could say *the* key customer.

Mei Lin: We know that. But it still doesn’t tell us why...

Bill: Just a moment. I haven’t finished what I was saying. I’m pretty busy, and maybe we weren’t totally clear in the original request. Look, this is a completely different technology.

Sam: What do you mean?

Bill: Instead of plastic cases, we’re using **stamped aluminum** cases. It’s a totally different **material**, so we need engineers with a different **skill set**.

Mei Lin: Can’t you just have them learn what they need to know **on the fly**? You’ve got a lot of smart people.

Bill: Sure, they’re smart. But we are supposed **to go in to production** by October. We need experienced people otherwise it’s gonna **come off half-assed**. There are all sorts of questions about **retooling** the machines, how to work with the material, how...

Mei Lin: Just a moment Bill. Let me just **come in** here for a second. That’s **all well and good**; I think Sam and I can both appreciate now that there is a real business need here. But there’s still the question of who **commits** the **resources** to find the engineers you need.

Bill: What do you mean?

Sam: Well, as you know, we’re just about to go into our fall **recruiting drive**, and we’re **short-staffed** too. Plus, you know best what **qualifications** you’re looking for.

Bill: You mean you want us to do the search for **candidates** ourselves?

Mei Lin: Well not entirely. Recruiting can provide support, but...

Debrief

Now let's go through the dialog again and look at the language and techniques used to deal with interruptions. The meeting starts with Bill explaining why he's called, or asked for, the meeting.

Bill: So the reason I called this meeting is to **work out** any...shall we say "**kinks**" in the approval process so that we can get **recruitment** started immediately. As you know, we've been working very closely with Trilogy on their new MP3 player launch...

You've probably been in meetings where the purpose was quite unclear. You can't really blame people for getting off topic if they don't even know what the topic is! That's why Bill clearly states the purpose of the meeting right at the beginning.

As Bill explains, they need to sort out any problems, or "kinks," with approving new staff so they can start "recruitment." Recruitment is when a company actively looks for new employees. Bill adds some detail about a specific project to emphasize how important this conversation is.

What are some other ways we can encourage focus by stating the meeting purpose? Let's practice some more examples.

- What we need to deal with today is the issue of staffing.
- Today I'd like to focus on updates to our strategic plan.
- I called this meeting to work out details of our new marketing plan.
- The purpose of this meeting is to make a decision on the benefits package.

Now let's listen, as the interruptions begin right at the start of the meeting!

Mei Lin: Sorry, Bill, excuse me for **interrupting** you there, but we've been looking at your **headcount** request...

Mei Lin wants to highlight her concerns about "headcount," or the number of staff that Bill thinks he needs. As this is an important concern for HR, she interrupts Bill to make her point.

Mei Lin is careful to say that she's interrupting, which is a good idea if you want people to listen to you. She says "sorry" and "excuse me" to make her interruption more polite. There are other things we say to make a polite interruption, as you can hear in these examples.

- Can I come in here?
- Could I just interrupt you there...?
- Could I add something here?
- Sorry to interrupt, but hasn't this been agreed already?

Now let's get back to the dialog, as Bill shows one way of dealing with an interruption.

Bill: Yes.

Mei Lin: And it didn't really clarify for us exactly why you need to increase headcount.

Sam: Yeah, don't you have engineers you could transfer from other **production lines**?

Bill: Well, as I was saying, Trilogy's new product is absolutely **critical** to our business. They are a **key customer** – you could say *the* key customer.

At the start of the meeting, Bill mentioned a new product they're making for a company called Trilogy. He had more to say about this when Mei Lin interrupted with her concerns. But this new development is key to Bill's argument that they need to hire new staff so he wants to finish making his point.

Notice that Bill uses the expression "as I was saying" to return to his point. We use this expression when we were interrupted in the middle of talking about something. Let's try some more ways of stopping an interruption and finishing what you wanted to say.

- Hold on, let me just finish what I was saying.
- Let me come back to that point later.
- I'll get to that in a moment. So as I was saying...
- Sorry, I haven't finished my point.

As you can hear next, Mei Lin is determined to discuss *why* Bill needs to hire new staff.

Mei Lin: We know that. But it still doesn't tell us why...

Bill: Just a moment. I haven't finished what I was saying. I'm pretty busy, and maybe we weren't totally clear in the original request. Look, this is a completely different technology.

Bill uses another expression to stop Mei Lin's interruption, saying that he hasn't finished what he was saying. But Bill also recognizes that he needs to acknowledge Mei Lin's concerns, or the interrupting is likely to go on forever!

For this reason, we can hear Bill show *some* understanding for Mei Lin's concerns. He says maybe he wasn't totally clear in his request. Admitting this, or partly conceding that there's some confusion, is another way to deal with someone's interruption. Especially when they are very determined to make a point.

Let's run through some more ways to partly concede a point when someone is interrupting.

- I can see what you mean, but...
- There may be something to that. However...
- Well, that may be the case sometimes.
- There's some truth to that, but it's not the whole story.

Now let's listen, as Bill is finally able to explain how the new product is connected to his reason for needing additional staff.

Sam: What do you mean?

Bill: Instead of plastic cases, we're using **stamped aluminum** cases. It's a totally different **material**, so we need engineers with a different **skill set**.

Mei Lin: Can't you just have them learn what they need to know **on the fly**? You've got a lot of smart people.

Bill: Sure, they're smart. But we are supposed **to go in to production** by October. We need experienced people otherwise it's gonna **come off half-assed**. There are all sorts of questions about **retooling** the machines, how to work with the material, how.

As Bill explains, the new product requires people with a different "skill set," or combination of abilities. And when Mei Lin suggests that the current staff can learn how to do it, Bill states clearly that they need experienced people to really do a good job. But, as we can hear, Bill can't finish his explanation because he's interrupted again.

Mei Lin: Just a moment Bill. Let me just **come in** here for a second. That's **all well and good**; I think Sam and I can both appreciate now that there is a real business need here. But there's still the question of who **commits** the **resources** to find the engineers you need.

Mei Lin uses another interrupting phrase before showing that she understands Bill's point. She says that it is "all well and good," meaning it is reasonable. And she emphasizes that she and Sam understand the need for the staff. In this way, Mei Lin is completely conceding Bill's point. That is, she is admitting that he's right.

Of course, Mei Lin goes on to introduce another problem, about who's going to pay for the new engineers. But still, Bill has successfully made his point. Let's try a few more ways of completely conceding a point.

- Yes, I think that makes perfect sense.
- Okay, I think you've really got an important point there.
- That's definitely something we need to consider.
- Right, well, it seems pretty clear if you put it that way.

As we come to the end of the dialog, let's find out a bit more about this issue that Mei Lin has brought up.

Bill: What do you mean?

Sam: Well, as you know, we're just about to go into our fall **recruiting drive**, and we're **short-staffed** too. Plus, you know best what **qualifications** you're looking for.

Bill: You mean you want us to do the search for **candidates** ourselves?

Mei Lin: Well not entirely. Recruiting can provide support, but...

Bill is trying to understand what Sam and Mei Lin are really trying to say. They seem to be suggesting that Bill has to recruit his own engineers, rather than the usual process. This kind of indirect strategy is another thing that can make meetings very difficult. All in all, sorting out what people want and dealing with interruptions is very tricky work!

Now let's practice some of the language we learned in today's lesson. Imagine you are leading a meeting with a project team. You've called the meeting to talk about

delays on a big project, and you need to deal with interruptions. You'll hear a cue from one of the team members, then I'll give you a suggestion for what you can say in response. We'll guide you through each step in the practice and provide an example answer for each response.

Ready? Let's give it a go.

Cue 1: All right, looks like we're all here.

Start by thanking everyone for coming and say that you've called the meeting to deal with the project delays.

Answer: _____

Cue 2: Delays are one thing, but we're also dealing with some pretty important issues with finance.

Now say you'll get to that in a moment and continue by saying you want to look at how to deal with the delays.

Answer: _____

Cue 3: Fair enough. But can I just point out that it's not our fault? The client hasn't kept us up to date.

Next, partly concede the point by saying there's some truth to that, but it's not the whole story.

Answer: _____

Cue 4: No, it's not everything. But they did say that they'd have feedback to us within three days.

Now concede this idea by saying they have a very important point there.

Answer: _____

Answer 1: Great. Thanks for coming everyone. I've called this meeting to deal with the project delays.

Answer 2: I'll get to that in a moment. First, I want to look at how we can deal with the delays.

Answer 3: Well, there's some truth to that, but it's not the whole story.

Answer 4: Indeed, I think you've got a really important point there.

We've reached the end of this lesson on dealing with interruptions. We've looked at how to state the meeting purpose clearly, and how to make an interruption. We've also covered finishing what you're saying and conceding other people's points.

Thanks for listening and see you again soon!

Language Review

A. Expressing Certainty

When we concede a point or tell someone they are correct, we can do it partly or completely. We can tell them they're sort of correct, or we can strongly agree with them. And the words we use for these two degrees of agreement are different. Look at the following words. Put them in the correct sentences based on whether the sentence is *partly* conceding a point or *completely* conceding a point.

may	definitely	some	very	could
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1. PARTLY CONCEDE: Yes, I suppose we _____ try that new approach.
2. COMPLETELY CONCEDE: Okay, it seems _____ clear that's the way it has to be.
3. PARTLY CONCEDE: Well, I think you _____ have a good idea there.
4. COMPLETELY CONCEDE: In my opinion, that's _____ something we need to do in the future.
5. PARTLY CONCEDE: There is _____ truth to that, but it's not the whole story.

B. Review Quiz

For each question, choose the sentence that best fulfills the given language function or purpose.

1. How might you declare the purpose of a meeting?
 - a. What we need to do today is make a decision about the new position.
 - b. One thing to remember here is the opinion of the CFO.
 - c. c) I think we should make sure we've got a clear goal for our time.
2. Which of the following is a useful expression for making an interruption?
 - a. That's a good point, isn't it Ryan?
 - b. Can I just come in here?
 - c. Could I ask a point of clarification?
3. Which of the following is a useful expression for finishing what you were saying before being interrupted?
 - a. Let me just get back to what I was saying.
 - b. What was I just saying?
 - c. c) Do you really think that's important right now?
4. How can you partly concede a point that someone makes?
 - a. Yes, that's exactly what we need to do.
 - b. Do you mind just explaining why you think we should do that?
 - c. Okay, that might be the case sometimes.
5. How can you completely concede a point that someone makes?
 - a. Well, I am not so sure that's the right approach.
 - b. Hmm... I would say that makes very good sense.
 - c. I'm sorry but this just isn't going to work.

Answers

Listening Question

1. Bill says the purpose of the meeting is to make decisions about the approval process for recruiting.
2. "Excuse me for interrupting you there..." / "Just a moment bill."
3. Bill says "just a moment, I haven't finished what I was saying."

Language Review

Expressing Certainty

1. PARTLY CONCEDE: Yes, I suppose we **could** try that new approach.
2. COMPLETELY CONCEDE: Okay, it seems **very** clear that's the way it has to be.
3. PARTLY CONCEDE: Well, I think you **may** have a good idea there.
4. COMPLETELY CONCEDE: In my opinion, that's **definitely** something we need to do in the future.
5. PARTLY CONCEDE: There is **some** truth to that, but it's not the whole story.

B. Review Quiz

1. a; 2. b; 3. a; 4. c; 5. b

Unit 211 - Finishing a Meeting

Hello and welcome back to Business English Pod for today's lesson on finishing a meeting. We'll learn how to summarize action points and wrap up the meeting.

A well-run meeting can be productive and useful. But a poorly run meeting can leave everyone feeling like their time has been wasted. And one of the big differences between good and bad meetings is how they end.

A good meeting doesn't slowly run out of energy. Instead, there's a clear ending to it. And people come out of the meeting with a strong sense of purpose and a clear idea of what they need to do. Without a sense of purpose, people might feel like the meeting generated a lot of discussion but nothing more.

Giving a strong finish to a meeting isn't actually that hard to do. First off, you need to be clear that the meeting is about to end. That gives people a chance to collect their thoughts. Next, you can summarize the action points and assign tasks. You may also want to emphasize how important they are to give some extra motivation. Then you can wrap up the meeting with some closing thoughts.

In today's dialog, we'll join a meeting at a bank. The team has been discussing some recent issues and future plans. You will hear Lisa provide a strong finish to the meeting with James, Bryan, Charles, and Cecilia.

As you listen to the dialog, try to answer the following questions:

1. What question does Lisa ask the group before stating the action items?
2. What does Lisa emphasize about James planned action?
3. What does Lisa say to officially end the meeting?

Vocabulary

To cover: To discuss or deal with certain topics. "Before we finish, let's cover the last two items on the agenda."

Any other business: A time at the end of a meeting for extra topics not on the agenda. "Before we close the meeting, is there any other business?"

Action points: Tasks that people agree to do after a meeting. "Please write down the action points so everyone knows what they need to do."

Round of: A series of something, often comments or questions from a group. "Let's do a round of updates from each team member."

See how things go: To wait and observe the situation before making a decision. "Let's try this plan for a week and see how things go."

To conduct: To organize and carry out an activity such as research or analysis. "We need to conduct a review of our financial processes."

Risk analysis: A study of what could go wrong and how serious the problems might be. "We always do a risk analysis before starting a big project."

Revolving credit: A credit line that a company can use, repay, and use again up to a limit. "Our bank approved a revolving credit line to help with cash flow."

Proposal: A written suggestion or plan for others to consider. "The team will prepare a proposal for the new service."

Non-performing loan: A loan that the borrower is not paying back on time. "The bank had to report several non-performing loans this quarter."

To get to the bottom of: To find the real cause or truth of a problem. "We need to get to the bottom of these missing payments."

To wrap up: To finish or close a meeting or activity. "Okay, let's wrap up and meet again next Tuesday."

Dialog

Lisa: All right, I think that just about **covers** everything we wanted to get to today. Is there **any other business**? No? All right. Let's just go through the **action points** to finish off.

James: Quick question: When exactly is our next **round of** meetings going to be?

Lisa: Let's **see how things go**; I expect we'll be ready to look at the results by the middle of next month.

James: Thanks.

Lisa: Sure. Okay. Bryan, your team is going to **conduct a risk analysis** on our new **revolving credit** products and send me a report by next Friday.

Bryan: Yep.

Lisa: Great. Cecilia and Charles, you're meeting with Telos next week to discuss the possibilities for cooperation.

Charles: Right.

Lisa: And you'll be writing a **proposal** based on that meeting.

Cecilia: And giving it to you for your comments.

Lisa: Good. Finally, James, your team is going to **look into** the issue of **non-performing** short-term **loans**.

James: Uh huh.

Lisa: It's extremely important that we **get to the bottom of** this.

James: I understand.

Lisa: Good. Well, I think that just about **wraps it up**. Any final questions? No? Great. That's all for today. Everyone get busy. We've got the best team in the...

Debrief

Now let's go through the dialog again and look at the language and techniques Lisa used to end the meeting.

Lisa: All right, I think that just about **covers** everything we wanted to get to today. Is there **any other business**? No? All right. Let's just go through the **action points** to finish off.

Lisa is letting people know that the meeting is about to end. This gives people a chance to mention any "other business," or other issues, before they actually finish. This will help prevent people from feeling the meeting was incomplete or they didn't get a chance to bring up things they wanted to talk about.

You'll notice that Lisa signals the end when they've "covered" or talked about everything they wanted to. Sometimes a meeting runs out of time. And sometimes you can end a meeting when you've finished the agenda. People *a/ways* love it when a meeting finishes early.

Let's try some more ways to signal the end of a meeting.

- How about we hold it there for now. Any questions before we wrap up?
- All good points, but we'll have to end it here.
- We're getting short on time so let's look at some action points.
- Okay, I think that's about everything we wanted to get through today.

So, does anyone have any other business before Lisa summarizes the action points? Let's listen.

James: Quick question: When exactly is our next **round of** meetings going to be?

Lisa: Let's **see how things go**; I expect we'll be ready to look at the results by the middle of next month.

James: Thanks.

Lisa: Sure. Okay. Bryan, your team is going to **conduct a risk analysis** on our new **revolving credit** products and send me a report by next Friday.

As you can hear, James has one quick question, which Lisa deals with clearly and quickly. There's no long discussion, just a simple statement about when she expects to be ready for the next "round," or series, of meetings.

After dealing with the question, Lisa can go on to talk about action points. Action points are basically the things that people have to do after the meeting. Lisa states Bryan's action point clearly and directly. His job is to analyze risks in one of their financial products and write a report.

Stating action points clearly and directly is a great way to help people end with a sense of purpose. Let's run through some more ways of doing this.

- Frank, you're going to follow up on that order and report back to me.

- Okay, so Sandra you're going to talk to finance about this next week.
- All right, our next step will be to review the document for any more errors.
- So you're going to talk to Anne first and then get back to me.

As we can hear, Lisa has some more action points for the group. Let's listen.

Bryan: Yep.

Lisa: Great. Cecilia and Charles, you're meeting with Telos next week to discuss the possibilities for cooperation.

Charles: Right.

Lisa: And you'll be writing a **proposal** based on that meeting.

Cecilia: And giving it to you for your comments.

Lisa: Good. Finally, James, your team is going to **look into** the issue of **non-performing** short-term loans.

James: Uh huh.

Lisa: It's extremely important that we **get to the bottom of** this.

The danger with meetings is that people use them to *avoid* doing work. But it's clear for this team that meetings are about making decisions and agreeing on new work activities.

Lisa has stated the action points, but she wants to go one step further and emphasize how important they are. That's why she says it's extremely important to "get to the bottom of" the loans issue. As a manager, or a team leader, this kind of emphasis can help ensure accountability. Basically, you need to make sure people do what they say they'll do.

What are some other ways of emphasizing action points to enhance accountability? Let's practice some more examples.

- I can't stress enough how important this is.
- It's critical that we solve this problem.
- These things really need to get done before the next meeting.
- It's of the utmost importance we all follow through on this.

All right, let's finish off by hearing how Lisa finally ends the meeting.

James: I understand.

Lisa: Good. Well, I think that just about **wraps it up**. Any final questions? No? Great. That's all for today. Everyone get busy. We've got the best team in the...

If something "wraps up," it comes to an end. Lisa is wrapping this meeting up by asking one last time if there are any questions, then stating clearly that they're finished. Asking if there are any final questions is a good idea because you want everyone to be clear about what has been decided and what they will do.

Hearing no questions, Lisa says simply “That’s all for today.” If you’re confident that everyone is clear about action points and there are no questions, then a simple statement like this is enough. Let’s try some other ways to call a meeting to a close.

- That’s it for today folks.
- Thanks everyone, I think that about covers it.
- That’s a wrap. Thanks for coming everyone.
- Okay, we’ll end it here for today. Let’s get busy!

As we’ve heard, Lisa is a very skilled facilitator. And these skills allow her to make a very strong finish to the meeting. She’s been clear and direct, made space for comments and questions, and reminded everyone of what they need to do following the meeting.

Now let’s practice some of the language we learned in today’s lesson. Imagine you are leading a team meeting. At the end of the meeting, you want to finish strong by stating action points and calling it to a close. You’ll hear a cue from one of the team members, then I’ll give you a suggestion for what you can say in response. We’ll guide you through each step in the practice and provide an example answer for each response.

Ready? Let’s give it a go.

Cue 1: We’ll that’s all I wanted to say on that...

Start by signalling the end of the meeting by suggesting holding it there and looking at action points.

Answer: _____

Cue 2: Okay. And noted here that I’m going to review the budget.

Acknowledge and state that Kelly is going to talk to marketing next week.

Answer: _____

Cue 3: Super, and Kelly can you just let me know once you’ve done that?

Now emphasize that is critical that everyone follows through on this.

Answer: _____

Cue 4: Got it. I’m keen to get this whole issue behind us.

Now wrap up by saying that covers it for today and thank people for coming.

Answer: _____

Answer 1: Great, so let's hold it there and look at action points.

Answer 2: Yes, and Kelly is going to talk to marketing next week.

Answer 3: Right, and I just want to emphasize how critical it is that we follow through on this.

Answer 4: Okay, so that covers it for today. Thanks for coming everyone.

We've reached the end of this lesson on how to finish a meeting. We've looked at signaling the end of the meeting and stating action points. We've also covered how to emphasize the importance of actions and call the meeting to a close.

Thanks for listening and see you again soon!

Language Review

A. Being Direct

Rewrite the following sentences so the language is more direct using “going to.”

1. John, I wonder if you could call marketing to ask about the budget?

2. So, someone will need to revise the report. Maybe that could be you Sarah?

3. I’m thinking that Ronny might be a good person to speak with the CFO.

4. As I mentioned, it would be nice if you could get quotes for the office renovations Stella.

B. Review Quiz

For each question, choose the sentence that best fulfills the given language function or purpose.

1. How can you signal the end of a meeting?
 - a. Well, I think we should hold it there for now.
 - b. How does everyone feel about things at this point?
 - c. Have a good day everyone.
2. Which of the following illustrates stating an action point directly?
 - a. Aaron, do you think you can send the report to the client tomorrow?
 - b. Send the report Aaron.
 - c. Okay Aaron, you are going to send the report to the client.
3. How might you emphasize a certain action point?
 - a. I hope everyone sees what I’m saying here.
 - b. It’s absolutely critical that we get this done.
 - c. I’m worried what will happen if we don’t do this.
4. How can you wrap up the meeting when you’re completely finished with everything?
 - a. All right, any other business to take care of?
 - b. Thanks everyone, that’s all for today.
 - c. Now I just want to summarize what we’ve decided.

Answers

Listening Question

1. Lisa asks the group if there is “any other business.”
2. Lisa says it is very important to “get to the bottom” of the issue that James is working on.
3. At the end of the meeting, Lisa says “That’s all for today.”

Language Review

Expressing Certainty

1. John, you’re going to call marketing to ask about the budget.
2. So, Sarah, you’re going to revise the report.
3. Ronny, you are going to speak with the CFO.
4. Stella is going to get quotes for the office renovations.

B. Review Quiz

1. a; 2. c; 3. b; 4. b

Language Reference

Unit 201 – Expressing Opinions

Asking for opinions

- What do you think of the new website?
- How do you feel about this issue?
- What's your opinion on the budget problems?
- What are your views on this?
- Where do you stand on the hiring decision?
- What are your thoughts on our new strategy?

Giving basic opinions

- I think this is the right way to go.
- I believe this is our only real option.
- In my view, we need to change some of our policies.
- Personally speaking, this design doesn't really work well.
- I feel this isn't the right time to spend more money on equipment.

Giving strong opinions

- To be perfectly frank, there's no way this will work.
- It's obvious to me that customers are going to hate the change.
- As far as I'm concerned, we're spending too much money on this.
- It's clear to me that people aren't happy with the new system.
- I would argue that we need to sell the building as soon as possible.
- There's no doubt in my mind that James is the right person for the job.
- I'm sure that this is the right decision.
- I believe strongly that we need more time to do this.

Giving cautious opinions

- Well, I tend to think that this is something for management to decide.
- It seems to me that Ryan would be the best person.
- I must admit that I'm not sure two weeks is enough time.
- To the best of my knowledge, our customers don't use social media much.
- I think it's fair to say that this solution would be too expensive.
- I could be wrong, but aren't we too busy to take this on?
- I'm no expert, but the design seems a bit too messy.

Giving opinions informally

- I'll tell you what I think: this plan is totally impossible.
- The way I see it, we need to cut costs right away.
- If you ask me, we're in big trouble financially.
- Obviously, this is going to hurt sales in a big way.
- Basically, this is the worst time to start a new campaign.
- If you ask me, this will be really effective.

Unit 202 – Agreeing

Short agreement

A: I hate having to work late.

B: So do I.

A: I really don't like this website.

B: Neither do I.

A: We will go to the conference.

B: So will we.

A: I can't understand this spreadsheet.

B: Neither can I.

Phrases for agreeing

- I completely agree with you.
- You're right about that.
- That's exactly how I feel.
- I couldn't agree with you more.

Informal phrases for agreeing

- For sure.
- No doubt.
- Absolutely.
- Exactly.

Words meaning very good

- Great!
- Wonderful!
- Incredible!
- Perfect!

Using tag question

- It's incredible, isn't it?
- They're outstanding, aren't they?
- It looks great, doesn't it?

Agreeing using an example

A: The website looks incredible.

B: Yes, especially the home page.

A: Jonas did a great job on the office design.

B: Particularly the entrance lobby.

Repeating with emphasis

A: I don't think we can afford this.

B: Yes, we definitely can't afford this.

A: We won't finish the project by Friday.

B: No, we certainly won't.

Unit 203 – Disagreeing

Formal phrases for disagreeing

- I'm not so sure, to be honest.
- I'm afraid I don't agree.
- I'm sorry but that's not the way I see it.
- I beg to differ.

Informal phrases for disagreeing

- No way!
- You've got to be kidding.
- Seriously?
- Come off it.

Yes, but responses

A: I felt the presentation was a bit long.

B: Yes, but it was very informative.

A: This company's quote is too expensive.

B: Yes, it's expensive, but they do quality work.

Negative questions

A: I'm thinking that maybe we should raise our prices.

B: Don't you think customers would complain?

A: I really like these new ads.

B: Don't you think the colors look strange?

Disagreeing by asking a question

- Do you really think so?
- Are you sure about that?
- Is that right?

Unit 204 – Making Suggestions

Making a suggestion using “One possibility...”

- One possibility is to hire more people.
- One possibility would be to upgrade the laptops.
- One possibility could be asking Toni for help.

Making a suggestion using “Perhaps or Maybe...”

- Perhaps we should talk to marketing about this.
- Maybe we can run some Facebook ads.
- Perhaps we need a different type of software.

Making a suggestion using “How about or What about...”

A: Who do you think might help us with this?

B: How about calling Ned for advice?

A: We really need to understand our customers better.

B: How about we do a customer survey?

Making a suggestion using “What if...”

- What if we talked to staff about the idea?
- What if we tried opening a new store downtown?
- What if we held the event at the Sheraton Hotel?

Unit 205 – Responding to Suggestions

Casting doubt on an idea

- I'm not really sure about that.
- Do you think that would solve the problem?
- I wonder if other people would like that.

Careful rejection using the “Yes, but...” approach

A: How about asking Carol to do this?

B: Carol would be great, but I think she's too busy.

A: What if we moved into a smaller space?

B: That could work, but there's not much available right now.

Tentative acceptance

- Well, that could be good.
- Yeah, that's one idea.
- I guess that might work.

Praising an idea to accept it

- That's a brilliant idea!
- I think that could really work!
- Great idea, let's do it!

Unit 206 – Clarifying What Was Said

Clarifying with 5 Ws

- Could you tell me again who said that?
- When is the event happening?
- I'm sorry, where did you say it's located?
- What is the purpose of the meeting again?

Asking someone to repeat something

- I'm sorry, what was that?
- Could you repeat that, please?
- I didn't catch that, could you say it again?
- One more time if you can?

Confirming with tag questions

- We don't have a very big budget, do we?
- It's been a difficult project, hasn't it?
- You're leaving on Tuesday, aren't you?
- Sales have gone up, haven't they?

Restating for clarification

- What I said was that we need to finish this by Friday.
- Once again: this is our last staff meeting of the year.
- Just to be clear, I said that we won't have time to discuss the schedule.
- As I mentioned: we need to hire three more people.

Unit 207 – Clarifying What Was Meant

Clarifying meaning when something is vague

- I'm not sure I understand what you mean.
- I'm a bit confused... could you run that by me again?
- Sorry, what exactly do you mean?
- I don't quite understand, could you clarify that for me?

Checking back and confirming

- So you're saying that the delivery will be late?
- You mean that we can't afford to hire someone right now, is that right?
- What I'm hearing is that you need to finish next week?
- Am I right in understanding that Dave won't be joining us?

Negotiating the meaning

- When you say you'll be late, do you mean to the event?
- So is this "issue" you mentioned a big problem?
- What do you mean when you say we have to cut costs?
- I'm having trouble understanding whether you think the report is positive?

Restating to confirm meaning

- You said we need to spend more on marketing. Is that right?
- You mentioned a "big change to the budget," didn't you?
- Okay, you say there's no extra time. Does that mean we have to finish today?
- By saying it's "possible," you mean there's no guarantee it'll happen?

Asking about a single word or phrase

- What exactly do you mean by "unintentional?"
- When you say "it's about time," what are you saying?
- Can you explain what "critical" means in this case?
- I'm curious what you mean by "let's play it by ear."

Unit 208 – Starting a Meeting

Getting everyone's attention to begin

- Can I have your attention, please?
- If we're all ready, I'd like to begin now.
- Thanks for settling in. Let's get started so we can stay on schedule.
- Okay, everyone. Time to get started.

Acknowledging attendees

- Thanks everyone for attending today.
- I know everyone's busy, so I really appreciate you taking the time to join us.
- I'd like to start by welcoming the team and any guests joining us today.
- Thank you all for making time to be here.

Stating the objectives of the meeting

- Today, we're here to talk about the project timeline.
- The goal of this meeting is to plan next steps on our marketing campaign.
- Our main objective today is to review progress on the new product.
- I'd like to make sure we leave today with a clear decision on the way forward.

Briefly explaining the agenda

- First, we'll do a quick round of updates. Then we can discuss the schedule.
- We have three things to cover today: budget, timeline, and next steps.
- I'll give a short update, then we'll hear from each region.
- We'll start with a quick report, then go through each department individually.

Asking someone to start on an agenda item

- Alex, can you start with your update?
- Let's begin with your report, Maria.
- Sarah, would you mind starting off with a quick update on your end?
- John, can you begin by giving us a rundown on the numbers from last quarter?

Unit 209 – Managing the Discussion

Keeping the discussion focused

- Let's come back to the main topic for a moment.
- That's interesting, but can we save it for later and stick with the agenda?
- I think we're getting off track, so let's return to the issue at hand.
- Just to refocus, we're trying to agree on the budget today.

Widening the discussion

- Let's open this up. Are there other ideas we haven't considered yet?
- I'd like to hear from others on this before we move forward.
- What do other teams think about this approach?
- Are there other options we should be looking at here?

Transitioning to a new agenda item

- Let's move ahead and look at the issue of employee benefits.
- Okay, I think we've said about all we can on that so let's move on.
- If there's nothing else to discuss on this for now, let's look at the next item.
- Thanks, everyone, now let's talk about the project timeline.

Asking for input from an individual

- Sarah, what's your opinion on this?
- Mark, can you give us an idea about the financial situation here?
- Lena, do you have anything to add?
- Tom, I'd be interested to hear your perspective.

Checking everyone agrees

- Does everyone agree with that approach?
- Are we all on the same page here?
- Anyone not okay with this before we move on?
- Just to check, are we all okay with this decision?

Unit 210 – Dealing with Interruptions

Declaring the purpose of a meeting

- What we need to deal with today is the issue of staffing.
- Today I'd like to focus on updates to our strategic plan.
- I called this meeting to work out details of our new marketing plan.
- The purpose of this meeting is to make a decision on the benefits package.

Phrases to make an interruption

- Can I come in here?
- Could I just interrupt you there...?
- Could I add something here?
- Sorry to interrupt, but hasn't this been agreed already?

Finishing what you were just saying

- Hold on, let me just finish what I was saying.
- Let me come back to that point later.
- I'll get to that in a moment. So as I was saying...
- Sorry, I haven't finished my point.

Partly conceding a point

- I can see what you mean, but...
- There may be something to that. However...
- Well, that may be the case sometimes.
- There's some truth to that, but it's not the whole story.

Completely conceding a point

- Yes, I think that makes perfect sense.
- Okay, I think you've really got an important point there.
- That's definitely something we need to consider.
- Right, well, it seems pretty clear if you put it that way.

Unit 211 – Finishing a Meeting

Signaling the end of the meeting

- How about we hold it there for now. Any questions before we wrap up?
- All good points, but we'll have to end it here.
- We're getting short on time so let's look at some action points.
- Okay, I think that's about everything we wanted to get through today.

Stating action points

- Frank, you're going to follow up on that order and report back to me.
- Okay, so Sandra you're going to talk to finance about this next week.
- All right, our next step will be to review the document for any more errors.
- So you're going to talk to Anne first and then get back to me.

Emphasizing action points

- I can't stress enough how important this is.
- It's critical that we solve this problem.
- These things really need to get done before the next meeting.
- It's of the utmost importance we all follow through on this.

Wrapping up the meeting

- That's it for today folks.
- Thanks everyone, I think that about covers it.
- That's a wrap. Thanks for coming everyone.
- Okay, we'll end it here for today. Let's get busy!