

# How to Plan a Productive and Effective Meeting



Everyone wants productive and effective meetings. They can be a great way to share information or engage in participatory group planning if run correctly. They can also be a massive waste of time if not. How can you ensure that you are planning effective meetings? Keep these tips in mind:

## Choose Your Meetings Wisely

Some people's knee-jerk reaction to any problem is "Let's have a meeting!" But face-to-face meetings are time-consuming, and there may be another more effective way to handle the situation. Ask yourself the following questions before choosing to meet:

- If you need to disseminate information, could you do it with a memo or report?
- If you want to engage in a dialogue, can you set up a phone conference?
- If you are trying to brainstorm, may participants submit their ideas in writing?

If a meeting will most efficiently accomplish your goals, have one! Otherwise, look to the alternatives.

## Select Your Audience

It's important to make sure that the people who attend your meeting need to be there and can contribute meaningfully to the discussion. Resist the temptation to invite more people than are necessary.

## Start and end on Time

One of the biggest challenges for any meeting is controlling how long it takes. Be clear up front about the start time, and don't wait for stragglers. Avoid asking people to gather on Monday mornings or Friday afternoons – you almost guarantee attendees will be running late and low on energy.



Follow these simple principles to make sure you get good results from your meetings:

## 1. Prepare Before

Try to avoid “impromptu” gatherings – you’ll get better results if you plan meetings in advance. This gives participants ample opportunity to clear their schedule and prepare mentally for the task at hand. Ask attendees for any discussion points before the meeting and send out an agenda before the event so that everyone can review it.

## 2. Capture During

Be sure you have a pen and pad to take notes at the meeting. Do not rely on meeting minutes for important information. A tape recorder is helpful if you can’t take good notes, or if there will be a lot of discussion that you want to capture for review at a later time.

## 3. Transfer After

After a meeting, immediately transfer any actionable items to your To-Do Now and To-Do Later lists and mark important follow-up dates on your calendar. Refer to your meeting notes for identifying tasks and due dates.

If you follow these simple guidelines your meetings will be more effective. Participants will feel like their time isn’t being wasted, and everyone will clearly know what is expected as a result of the meeting.

