

How to Host Effective Meetings

Being able to run a great meeting is essential to keeping people engaged and moving our work forward. Meetings are where we build relationships, make decisions together, and get things done. When they're run well, people feel energized, clear on their role, and excited to come back. When they're not, folks leave confused, frustrated, or checked out. Let's try to keep our meetings focused, fun, and full of purpose.

DETERMINING YOUR MEETING

First ask: "Do we need a meeting?"

- *Yes* → We need live debate, joint decision, skill-share, or hands-on work.
- *No* → An email / Slack / 1-on-1 does the trick.

Pick the right meeting type

- **Democratic decision-making** – group chooses direction; define what's up for debate.
- **Work/brainstorming** – surface ideas or draft options for a tough, multi-angle problem.
- **Pitch** – you've chosen the path; the group's job is buy-in and sign-ups.
- **Action/participation** – everyone works (text bank, banner paint, phone calls).
- **Team build or standing check-in** – nurture relationships, track progress.
- **Debrief** – unpack a recent action; harvest lessons.

Create a POP (Purpose • Outcomes • Process)

- **Purpose** – Why are we meeting right now?
- **Outcomes** – What decisions, feelings, or assignments will everyone leave with?
- **Process** – Agenda flow + facilitation roles.
- Info link:
<https://facilitationfirst.com/make-your-meetings-pop-setting-your-meeting-up-for-success/>

GETTING READY

Pre-meeting checklist

- Draft POP and add times for each section in the process.
- Make sure everyone who needs to be there, is there.
 - If needed: Assign roles (facilitator, timekeeper, notetaker, etc)
- Send agenda & pre-reads 24 hrs ahead.
- Nail logistics: room size/layout or Zoom link, flip-chart, snacks, playlists
- Flag for yourself potential dynamics: quiet folks, strong personalities, gremlins.

AGENDA & FACILITATION TIPS

Agenda Tips:

- Open with energy: names + pronouns, quick icebreaker, pump-up song.
- Start with a bite-size win to build momentum.
- Tackle big, urgent items next; break them into mini-questions to stay focused.
- Insert micro-breaks (stretch, water) between heavy sections.
- End with tasks, appreciations, or a chant/song so folks leave buzzing.
- Time-stamp each item. Use a timekeeper to keep the train on the rails.

- Avoid over-packing—better to finish early than drown in leftovers.

Facilitation Tips

- Set the tone: Your energy is contagious.
- Read the room: Eye contact, body language, Zoom squares.
- Boost participation: Call on quieter voices, use “stack,” breakout rooms, or thumbs-up polls.
- Encourage healthy conflict: Paraphrase opposing points, ask follow-ups, spotlight real disagreement.
- Keep people on track: Name tangents, park them, promise when they’ll resurface.
- Summarize often: “So far I’m hearing...” can keep everyone aligned.

Openings & Closings

- Opening ideas: Overview the agenda, land acknowledgment, mission reminder, quick game, music.
- Closing must-dos: recap decisions, list action items, owners, and deadlines, end on a high note (cheer, song, collective clap).

COMMON ISSUES → WHAT TO DO

- **Silence or low energy** → Call on someone kindly, ask aloud, “What does this silence mean?”
- **One voice dominates** → “Let’s hear from two new folks,” remind people to create space, use timed turns.
- **Discussion drifts** → Re-state POP; park off-topic gems for later.
- **Stuck on one issue** → Announce a two-minute wrap-up, straw-poll the room, decide next steps.
- **False consensus** → Voice the tension: “I’m hearing real disagreement between X and Y—let’s surface both.”
- **No clear next steps** → Rapid fire: “Who’s doing what by when?” Write it where all can see.
- **Over-packed agenda** → Slash non-essentials before the meeting or split into two sessions.
- **Participants feel excluded** → Watch jargon, invite varied voices, use visuals for different learners.
- **Bad decisions forming** → Pause, list pros/cons, ensure every viewpoint got airtime, then decide.

Finish every meeting with *clear decisions, named owners, concrete deadlines, and a grin on every face.*