

Cornelsen Corporate Solutions

Trainer's Guide for Blended Learning Courses

English for Meetings

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Module 4: *I'm not sure I agree*

Objectives

In Module 4 *I'm not sure I agree*, the participants learned:

- how to ask for comments and contributions
- how to express strong and tentative opinions
- the language of agreeing and disagreeing
- some diplomatic language
- how to make positive suggestions

In this face-to-face session based on Module 4, the participants will:

- complete a survey on disagreement in meetings
- revise expressions for agreeing and disagreeing
- practise agreeing and disagreeing in a controversial discussion
- review expressions for asking for and giving opinions

A. Expressing agreement and disagreement

Activity A1: Survey on disagreeing in meetings



15 min

Activity type

Class activity

Based on

Disagreement and criticism

Material

Handout 4/1

- 1 Tell the participants they are going to take a survey on disagreement and criticism. After that they are going to discuss the results and their own experiences.
- 2 Distribute one copy of Handout 4/1 to each participant.
- 3 Ask the participants to answer the questions in the survey.
- 4 When they are finished, tally up the number of participants who answered a, b or c.

Give them the following information:

- 'a' answers are typical if open disagreement is to be avoided
 - 'b' answers are typical if open disagreement is considered honest and the basis for a dialogue
 - 'c' answers are typical if disagreement is acceptable when it is not too open
- 5 Start a discussion with the class: Are their answers similar? Can they explain some of their answers? What do they think influences them more with respect to disagreement: their own personality or the culture they grew up in? Has anyone taken part in an international meeting where the people had different attitudes toward disagreement and criticism? Did this cause problems?

Activity A2: The agreement and disagreement puzzle



10 min

Activity type

Partner activity

Based on

Agreeing and disagreeing

Material

Handout 4/2

- 1 Explain to the participants they are going to do a puzzle with expressions for agreeing and disagreeing.
- 2 Have the participants work with a partner and distribute one set of cards from Handout 4/2 to each pair.

- 3 Tell the participants to make a grid 3 squares high and 3 squares wide. The words on the cards should form sentences horizontally and vertically for agreeing and disagreeing. Point out that some of the words are upside down, so they should work at a place where they can stand up and walk around the puzzle. Ask them to leave the cards on the table for Activity A3.

Activity A3: Agreeing and disagreeing at varying strengths



Activity type	10 min
Based on	Partner activity
Material	<i>Expressing agreement/disagreement of varying strengths:</i> <i>listening exercise</i>
	Handout 4/3

- 1 Tell the participants they are going to categorize the expressions from the puzzle in Activity A3 according to their function.
- 2 Have the participants work in the same pairs as in Activity A2. Distribute one copy of Handout 4/3 to each participant.
- 3 Ask the pairs to write down the sentences they created in Activity A2 under the correct headings.

Answers:

Agreeing

- I think you're right.
- That is right.

Agreeing strongly

- Absolutely. I think that's a fantastic idea.
- I agree completely.
- Yes, that's definitely true.

Agreeing tentatively

- I think what you're saying is true up to a point.
- I suppose that might be true.
- I guess I see what you mean.

Disagreeing

- I'm afraid I can't agree with you there.
- No, I think you're wrong there.
- I don't think that's true.
- I completely disagree.

Activity A4: Agreeing and disagreeing during a discussion



Activity type	20 min
Based on	Group activity
Material	<i>Agreeing and disagreeing: useful phrases</i> Handout 4/4

- 1 Tell the participants they are going to have a short discussion to practise the expressions they have learned for agreeing and disagreeing.
- 2 Divide the class into groups of three and distribute Handout 4/4.
- 3 Ask each group to discuss one of the topics using the sentences they wrote down in Activity A3.
- 4 Circulate during the activity and make notes of good/bad language, in particular how the participants agree and disagree with each other.
- 5 Using your notes, hold a feedback session.

B. Asking for and expressing opinions

Activity B1: Asking for opinions



10 min

Activity type

Partner activity

Based on

Asking for opinions

Material

Handout 4/5

- 1 Explain to the participants that they are going to play a dominoes game to review phrases for asking for opinions.
- 2 Have the participants work with a partner and give one set of cards from Handout 4/5 to each pair.
- 3 Ask them to put the domino cards in a line to form sentences for asking for opinions.
- 4 When they have finished, ask the participants which sentences feel the most natural to them. Are there any sentences they have difficulty remembering?

Answers:

- *Would you like to comment on that?*
- *Do you agree?*
- *Tell us what you think about this.*
- *Does anyone want to say anything about that?*
- *What do you think about that?*
- *Does anyone want to give us their views on this?*

Activity B3: Agreeing, disagreeing and giving opinions



30 min

Activity type

Group activity

Based on

Agreeing & disagreeing & Asking for opinions

Material

Handout 4/7

- 1 Tell the participants they are going to discuss some controversial topics to practise the expressions they have learned in the online material. The goal is to use as many of these phrases as possible.
- 2 Divide the class into groups of four. Distribute one set of cards from Handout 4/7 to each group, separated into three piles:
 - 1 the phrases for asking for opinions (in italics)
 - 2 the phrases for giving opinions, agreeing and disagreeing
 - 3 the discussion topics (in boldface)

Tell the participants to place the cards with the discussion topics face down on the table. Have them shuffle the cards with the phrases for giving opinions, agreeing and disagreeing and put them in a separate pile. All the cards for asking for opinions are for the chairperson.

- 3 The participants take it in turns to be the chairperson for each discussion. Set a time limit for each discussion of 5 minutes.
- 4 The chairperson takes all the cards for asking for opinions. He deals the remaining phrase cards to the other members of his group (five per person). He then turns over a topic card, announces the topic and asks the others for their opinions, using his phrase cards. The others in the group give their opinions, and agree and disagree with each other, using the phrase cards they have been dealt. Every time someone uses one of their phrase cards, they place it in the middle of the table.
- 5 At the end of the discussion, the phrase cards for asking for opinions are given to the new chairperson, and the remaining phrase cards are shuffled and distributed again for the next topic.
- 6 Continue until each participant has had the chance to be the chairperson.
- 7 Circulate during the activity and take notes on good/bad language.
- 8 Using your notes, hold a short feedback session.

Note: You can make this activity a competition. After every discussion ask the participants to count the number of phrase cards that they have used and award one point for each card. The person with the most points at the end of the activity wins!

Handout 4/1

Activity A1: Survey on disagreeing in meetings

Answer the following questions and then compare your answers with the class.

- 1 Your boss says something during a meeting that is factually wrong. What would you do?
 - a Nothing.
 - b Interrupt her and explain why what she is saying is wrong.
 - c Let her finish talking and tell her after the meeting that she made a mistake.

- 2 You are chairing a meeting and two of your colleagues have very opposite views on the subject you are discussing. What would you do?
 - a Try to find a consensus.
 - b Encourage them to express their opinions openly.
 - c Tell them they should try to understand each other's opinions.

- 3 During a meeting in your organisation you are giving a presentation on some market research you have done. Based on the information you have presented, you state your opinion. Someone says: "You are wrong." How do you feel?
 - a You are angry. You think it is disrespectful to disagree with you so strongly.
 - b You accept this because the person is giving their honest opinion.
 - c You think the person who disagreed with you doesn't have very good social skills.

Vocabulary

factually wrong = *sachlich falsch*

consensus = *Übereinstimmung*

disrespectful = *respektlos*

Handout 4/2

Activity A2: The agreement and disagreement puzzle

Photocopy and cut out one set of cards for every two participants.



<p>Absolutely. I think</p> <p>you mean</p> <p>wrong there.</p>	<p>that's a</p> <p>I don't</p> <p>right.</p> <p>you're</p>	<p>fantastic idea</p> <p>I think what</p> <p>disagree.</p> <p>I suppose</p> <p>No, I think</p>
<p>I see what</p> <p>I</p> <p>true.</p>	<p>agree</p> <p>think</p> <p>is</p> <p>you're saying is true</p> <p>definitely</p>	<p>completely.</p> <p>completely</p> <p>that might</p> <p>Yes, that's</p>
<p>I'm afraid I can't</p> <p>I guess</p> <p>right.</p>	<p>agree with</p> <p>That</p> <p>up to a point.</p> <p>think you're</p>	<p>you there.</p> <p>I</p> <p>be true.</p> <p>I</p>

Handout 4/3

Activity A3: Agreeing and disagreeing at varying strengths

Work with a partner to write the sentences you made in Activity A2 under the correct heading below:

Agreeing

Agreeing strongly

Agreeing tentatively

Disagreeing

Handout 4/4

Activity A4: Agreeing and disagreeing during a discussion

Choose one of the topics and have a short discussion about it with your group. Feel free to discuss something else if you like. Use the expressions from Activity A3 to agree and disagree with each other.

Germany should have a general speed limit on the Autobahn.

Our country should spend more money on education and less on infrastructure (roads, bridges, rail lines and similar public works).

The biggest problem for businesses in Germany is that there are too many rules and regulations.

Companies that don't train apprentices should have to pay additional tax.

Top managers should be required to disclose their salaries.

The stock market is a good place to invest money.

Handout 4/5

Activity B1: Asking for opinions

Before meeting the participants for the face-to-face session, make one set of the domino cards below for each pair of participants by cutting along the dotted lines.



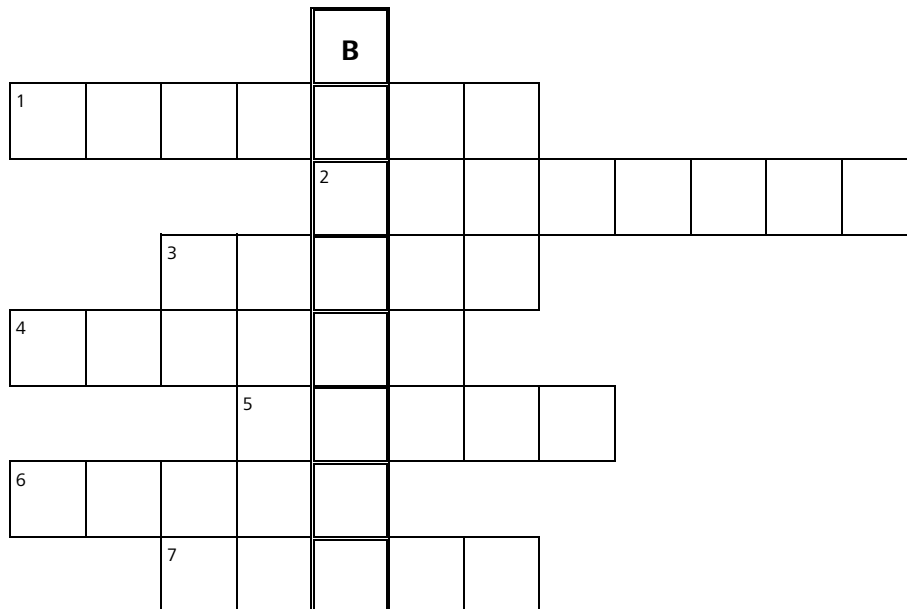
<i>Start</i>	Would you like ...
... to comment on that?	Do you ...
... agree?	Tell us what ...
... you think about this.	Does anyone want to ...
... say anything about that?	What do you ...
... think about that?	Does anyone want ...
... to give us their views on this?	<i>Finish</i>

Handout 4/6

Activity B2: Expressing opinions

Work with a partner. Use the clues to complete the crossword puzzle.

- 1 to give an opinion
- 2 the opposite of impossible
- 3 the opposite of right
- 4 you can use this word to give advice
- 5 this word is often used to make a polite suggestion
- 6 the opposite of certainty
- 7 an opinion on something (plural)



The vertical words tell you what you should remember when giving your opinion:

_____ !

Complete the sentences with the words from the crossword puzzle:

- a I could be _____, but don't we need to spend more time with our customers?
- b We _____ need an additional engineer for this project.
- c Does anyone want to give us their _____ on this?
- d We _____ take a break for lunch at half past twelve.
- e Would you like to _____ on that point?
- f There's no _____ in my mind that we should put more effort into new product development.
- g Is it _____ for her to spend less time on writing reports?

Handout 4/7

Activity B3: Agreeing, disagreeing and giving opinions

Before meeting the participants for the face-to-face session, make one set of the cards below for each group of four participants by cutting along the dotted lines. The first five phrase cards on the left (in italics) are always for the chairperson.



<i>Would you like to comment on that?</i>	Smoking should not be allowed at the workplace.
<i>Do you agree?</i>	
<i>Tell us what you think about this.</i>	
<i>Does anyone want to say anything about that?</i>	
<i>Does anyone want to give us their views on this?</i>	
I think you're right.	We should raise the retirement age to 70.
Absolutely. I think that's a fantastic idea.	Teleworking (working from a home office) is a good idea.
I agree completely.	
I think what you're saying is true up to a point.	Trade unions aren't as necessary now as they were 75 years ago.
I suppose that might be true.	
I guess I see what you mean.	
I'm afraid I can't agree with you there.	Wild card: propose a topic (or draw another card if you prefer).
No, I think you're wrong there.	
I don't think that's true.	
I completely disagree.	
I could be wrong, but ...	There are more advantages to genetically modified food than disadvantages.
There's no doubt in my mind that ...	Using first names in business helps create a friendly working atmosphere.
We might ...	
Is it possible for ...?	For German-speakers English is the easiest foreign language to learn.
There can be no doubt that ...	
	In 20 years, English will be the company language in most German firms.
	Email has made life easier for business people.