B1/B2

SHORT COURSE SERIES

English for **Today's Workplace**

Cornelsen

Potenziale entfalten

Vorab-Einblick

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THIS UNIT LOOKS AT ...

- virtual and face-to-face interaction and collaboration
- meetings: facilitation and participation
- conversation management

5 Working together

Discuss whether the results from the following snap survey reflect your experience.

Data shows that employees spend an ever-increasing number of their working hours in meetings so we decided to carry out a snap survey among our own employees. This is what we found:

1 Meetings take up at least 30% of my working hours.
2 Too often, meetings take me away from my "real work".
3 I regularly feel overwhelmed by the amount of time I spend taking part in meetings.
4 We waste too much time on synchronous communication. A lot of information-sharing could be done by email.
5 At least 20% of the meetings which take place in the company are poorly organized.
6 Agile methodology depends on frequent short meetings. This way of working has increased the time I spend in meetings.

VOCABULARY

to **carry out sth** etw. durchführen
snap survey Kurzumfrage
to **take part in sth** an etw. teilnehmen
to **take place** stattfinden
to **take so away from sth** jmdn. von etw. abhalten
to **take up (time)** (Zeit) in Anspruch nehmen
overwhelmed *hier:* überlastet

Discuss how to make meetings an effective use of everyone's time to optimize outcomes. Share your opinions in class.

1 An internet search for rules on effective meetings presented these suggestions:

a the 40-20-40 rule
b the 10-10-10 rule
c the rule of 7
d the 5 second rule

Idiomatic expressions: Guessing the right answer
We were spot on! = completely correct
We were miles out! = completely wrong
We were quite close. = more or less correct

In pairs, first discuss what you think the numbers refer to. Afterwards, check the answers in the files.
Partner Files, File 4: Partner A, page 69 | Partner B, page 72

2 What types of meetings have you taken part in recently? Tell your partner the purpose of these meetings and describe your role.

all hands | brainstorming | debriefing | in-person | kick-off | offboarding | onboarding | one-on-one | online | regular | retrospective | stand-up | status update | working

*The term **jour fixe** is not unknown in Europe when using English as a lingua franca, but it is more common to refer to "regular meetings" in English-speaking countries.*

3 Before you listen to some short excerpts from meetings, complete each sentence with one suitable word. Compare your answers with a partner, then listen to check.

15

1 Let's get _____, shall we? We need to _____ up with some new ideas on how we can improve sales.
2 Pedro, I can't see you. Can you _____ on your video, please?
3 As this is our first meeting, shall we start by everyone introducing their _____ in the project?
4 OK, so we've identified a few things we could have done _____. Anything else before we _____ on?

What happened next? Match the excerpts (1–4) above with the most suitable follow-on sentence (a–d).

a Thanks. Now, to everyone – when you're not speaking, please remember to mute your mic.
b Right, so that leads me to my next question – what are we going to do differently next time?
c Any and all ideas are welcome at this point.
d So let me go first. Part of my role will be liaising with everyone about major aspects of the project.

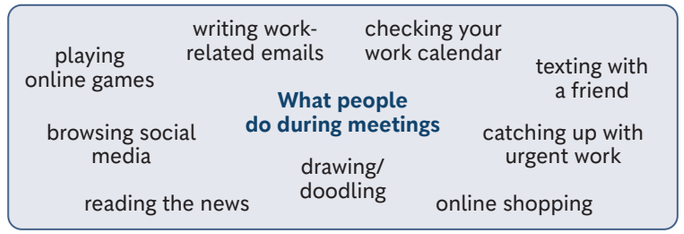
Where would you expect to hear the excerpts (1–4)? Match each one to a meeting type. In pairs, choose one and continue the meeting as you think it could develop.

an online meeting ☐ a kick-off meeting ☐ a debriefing ☐ a brainstorming meeting ☐

4 In pairs, read a comment about multi-tasking in meetings and share your views.

"Everyone thinks they're good at multitasking. They feel more productive when they multi-task during a meeting. It's a golden opportunity to listen to project updates while answering urgent emails – some may not even be work-related ... Seems to be a win-win situation, but studies have shown that most people are not nearly as good at multi-tasking as they think they are."

Look at the word cloud and compare your multi-tasking preferences in class. Which three activities are the most popular?



5 **Rank these behaviours according to how often you encounter them in meetings and how disruptive they are. When attendees ...**

are obviously not listening carefully | arrive late | dominate the discussion | don't contribute | don't show up | have side conversations | seem to be multi-tasking

In pairs, explain your opinion by completing the following sentences as appropriate.

1 To me, the very worst thing is when ...
2 It can be very frustrating when attendees ...
3 When someone ..., it holds up the meeting.
4 At our meetings, attendees tend not to ...
5 One thing I don't encounter often is that ...
6 To be honest, it doesn't worry me if ...

6 **Read about and discuss the pros and cons of different meeting cultures. How would you characterize your own company's meeting culture?**

Our meetings start with chit chat, have a loose structure and a flexible agenda. They often overrun. The next steps are not always clearly formulated, but we have a high level of trust and collaboration.

Our meetings are very results-driven with clear goals, a detailed agenda and strict timekeeping. We don't spend time on informal conversations during meetings, but leave that for chats in the breakroom.

No one spends more than four hours a week sitting in a meeting. In addition, we have regular stand-ups and even spontaneous walking meetings. If another form of communication is more effective, we choose that rather than calling a meeting.

Not everyone likes the tone of ***ground rules*** *when talking about team collaboration. Consider using other terms like* ***guidelines, meeting code of conduct*** *or* ***meeting norms****.*

7 MEDIATION

Imagine you have been given the task of making an English version of your company's meeting ground rules for co-workers who don't speak German.

1 Look at a copy of your company's or project team's meeting guidelines in German or write a list of the rules you personally would like to see. Alternatively, use the rules on page 86.
2 Now write a version in English using as many of the words in the Vocabulary box as you can.
3 Use an app to translate the original German version of the guidelines. Compare the translation with your own set of rules in English. Make any adjustments you like.
4 Share your final version in class and discuss the best way to formulate the rules.

VOCABULARY

agenda item Tagesordnungspunkt
to **allocate roles** Rollen verteilen
to **allow for sth** *hier:* etw. einplanen
to **contribute to sth** *hier:* sich in etw. einbringen
to **determine sth** etw. festlegen
to **ensure sth** *hier:* für etw. sorgen
goal-oriented zielgerichtet
to **hear so out** jmdn. ausreden lassen
leeway Zeitpuffer
to **make sth available** etw. bereitstellen
to **mute a mic** Mikrofon stummschalten
to **stick to sth** bei etw. bleiben
to **overrun (time)** überziehen

8 **Read the Useful Phrases and discuss in what situation the facilitator might use each one.**

USEFUL PHRASES **Telling people what is expected tactfully and professionally**

- I'd like to start by reminding everyone of our meeting guidelines.
- Let's aim to finish the meeting on time by avoiding distractions.
- Please don't forget to click on the raise hand button if you want to contribute.
- We appreciate your input, Jaime. Thanks. Now, let's hear from the others. Tom?
- Assuming that everyone has read the agenda, let's start with our first item.
- Let's come back to this next time when Gillian can explain what she meant.
- I don't think I need to tell you how important it is to stay on topic.
- As you can see, our client has given us a very tight schedule.

VOCABULARY

to **contribute to sth** *hier:* zur Diskussion beitragen
distraction Ablenkung
tight schedule straffer Zeitplan

9 **Imagine you are moderating the next project meeting in English and want to refer to the guidelines you created in exercise 7 in a professional and tactful way. What can you say? Share your ideas with a partner.**

10 **There are situations during a meeting when the facilitator has to intervene. Match the correct category (1–4) with the phrases (a–d).**

1 transitioning to the next point on the agenda
2 handling an interruption
3 keeping the meeting on track
4 asking for input

a That's an interesting point but not our topic today so I'll make a note of it for next week's meeting.
b I'm sorry, Katja, but I'll have to stop you there, we have to move on.
c This would be a good time to share any suggestions you have.
d Stefano has already raised his hand so let's hear from him first, please.

In pairs, come up with at least two more phrases you could use in each category.

11 **In a well-planned and well-run meeting, a good facilitator keeps everyone focused by asking for comments and checking understanding. Complete the phrases below with words from the box.**

concerns | hear | make | mind | position | with

1 Does that _____ sense to you, Amir?
2 Is this your _____, David?
3 I'd like to _____ from you, Xue.
4 Do you have any other _____, Leena?
5 Is there anything on your _____, Anny?
6 Are you all _____ me?

Which of the questions or statements mean the following?

Tell us what you are worried about. ☐ ☐
Did I make myself clear? ☐ ☐
Tell us your opinion. ☐ ☐

12 **Find pairs of verbs which have the same meaning when talking about meetings. In one case, there are four verbs with the same meaning. Check the words in a dictionary if necessary.**

attend | chair | circulate | compile | draw up | facilitate | hold | host | join | log in to | moderate | run | send round | solve | sort out | take part in

Take turns to use verbs from the box to tell your partner about your recent meetings.

"At the last meeting I chaired, the attendees complained that I hadn't circulated the relevant data in time."

"Ellen drew up a list of meeting guidelines. Number one was to be sure to log in on time!"

13 **Look at some tasks involved in planning and running a meeting. Match the tasks (1–6) with what the facilitator might say (a–l) by writing the letters in the boxes.**

1 Establishing the ground rules
2 Explaining timing of meeting
3 Building rapport
4 Outlining meeting objectives/outcomes
5 Encouraging participation
6 Communicating action points

a Let's have a quick update from everyone on what they've been doing.
b Our goal today is to identify the obstacles to delivering the project on time.
c We need input from the software developers, so that's your task, Marcus.
d Can I ask everyone to share their concerns about the project?
e OK, that's agreed. Alyssa will contact our suppliers immediately.
f We need to be 100% ready to report to the board by Friday.
g If you want to contribute, please use the raise hand button.
h We should aim to finish on time.
i Thank you all for logging in on time. How are you all?
j I'd like to hear from each of you on this.
k Activate the mute button, when you're not speaking.
l We've scheduled this meeting to last 50 minutes.

Watch out!
In *time = before it's too late*
On *time = punctually, at the agreed time*

With a partner, think of what else you could say to deal with tasks 1–6. Then compare your ideas with another pair. Which of the tasks do you feel most confident about dealing with in English?

14 **Think about a meeting you took part in recently and make notes under these headings.**

Type of meeting	My role	What went well	What went less well	Lessons learned

Share your thoughts in a group.

15 **Share your experience of stand-up meetings with your partner. What are the main benefits of this format?**

*A **(daily) stand-up** or **scrum** refers to any short meeting which is called to give updates or make a quick decision.*

Listen to part of a stand-up meeting and answer the questions. Jessica is the scrum master.

16

1 Why doesn't Jessica wait for Maxim to join the meeting?
2 What positive news does Rohan have for the team?
3 Rohan talks about "takeaways", "bringing the team up to speed" and "more problems down the line". What do these expressions mean?
4 What obstacle is Rohan facing?
5 Does Marta mention the same problem as Rohan?
6 Why does Jessica interrupt Marta?

Daily scrum agenda:
What did you accomplish yesterday?
What are you working on today?
What obstacles are you facing?

16 **Match some of the verbs you heard with their meanings in the context of the meeting. Listen again to check.**

1 to block so or sth	a to stay in a place or stay online
2 to double-check sth	b to make contact
3 to hang around	c to delay dealing with an issue
4 to hold so or sth up	d to look at something again
5 to reach out to so	e to prevent work from going ahead
6 to sidebar sth	f to create a delay

Read the Transcript on page 79 (Track 16) and make a note of the phrases you can use in your meetings.

17 SIMULATION

Imagine you are taking part in a stand-up with your partner to report on the present status of your work.

*Make what you say more listener-friendly by breaking up your sentences into small, understandable **chunks** (usually a few words) and **pausing** after each chunk.*

1 Choose one option:
- Base your status update on the three questions in the daily scrum agenda.
- Widen the scope and consider these questions: What have you accomplished recently? What are you working on at present? What obstacles are you facing?

2 Think about and make notes on how you can answer each question. Check or look up any vocabulary which you might need.

3 Take turns to report to your partner.

4 Don't talk for more than two to three minutes each.

5 Debriefing:
- Were you each able to give your partner a good idea of the status of your work?
- Was it easy to stick to the time frame and limit yourself to just answering the three questions?
- Did you use chunking and pausing effectively?
- Ask your partner one question, based on what you now know about their work.

18 **Match the terms (1–4) with their definitions (a–d). How would you translate each term into German?**

1 technical dinosaur
2 steep learning curve
3 tech-savvy
4 tech host

a having good knowledge and understanding of modern technology
b someone who provides technical support alongside a meeting moderator
c the situation of having to learn challenging new skills quickly
d someone who isn't up to date in terms of technological advances

In pairs, read and discuss the comments about online meetings. To what extent do they reflect your own experience? What percentage of your work meetings and workshops take place online?

1 I'd always considered myself to be a technical dinosaur until I started working remotely.
2 Having to suddenly work from home meant a very steep learning curve for many of us.
3 Most people in my company have become surprisingly tech-savvy – because they had to!
4 I'm grateful that we have a tech host in our online workshops to help us when we need it.

19 **Victoria was interviewed about her role as tech host. Complete her answer with words from the box.**

breakout | individual | function | monitor | platforms | sessions | support | thread

"In online workshops, it's my role to give technical _____[1] to the facilitator and the attendees. I prepare tools like collaboration _____[2] that we plan to use. Attendees are often very tech-savvy themselves, but some need more help. During the workshops, if technical difficulties arise, I can help _____[3] participants by using the chat _____[4] or _____[5] rooms. It's also my job to _____[6] the chat and document discussions and brainstorming _____[7]. I also add files and links to the chat _____[8] at the appropriate time."

Do you have experience of being a tech host or asking a tech host for help? Talk about this in pairs.

20 **During the interview, Victoria mentioned some of the most common questions she is asked. How would you respond in each case?**

1 What do I have to do to share my presentation?
2 The font is too small on the document I want to share. How can I zoom in to make it easier to read?
3 How can I just share one window instead of my screen?
4 How can I customize my background image?
5 What can I do so that multiple people can collaborate on one file?

USEFUL PHRASES **Giving instructions**

If you're sure
- First click on … Then select …
- Make sure … is turned on.
- Right-click … on your desktop and select …
- Click on … and a drop-down menu will appear.
- Click on the … icon in the toolbar.
- … then select "Apply".

If you're not sure
- I would try to … or you could try …
- I think you do it by going to the top of your screen and then select …
- I always restart my computer and try again.
- First you have to upload the file then I think you can …
- To be honest, I can't really help you.

21 **Giving evidence of their green agenda is important for businesses nowadays. One way is by referring to their sustainability Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Look at this list of environmental KPIs and discuss their relevance to your company's business activities.**

carbon footprint | energy efficiency | recycling rates | waste management | water usage | supply chain sustainability

22 **A meeting often includes short presentations. Share your advice for presenting effectively – and what to avoid.**

23 17 **Listen to an internal online meeting and presentation and answer the questions.**

1 Where has Rosa joined the meeting from?
2 What two reasons does Liam mention for the company's interest in this potential new supplier?
3 What kind of background image is Rosa using for this meeting?
4 What does Liam offer to do while Rosa is speaking?
5 What three topics is Rosa going to cover in her presentation?
6 Which of the KPIs in exercise 21 do Rosa and Liam refer to?

Read through the Useful Phrases. Listen again and underline the phrases you hear in the Transcript on page 79.

USEFUL PHRASES **Presenting to colleagues during a meeting**

Giving an overview of the presentation topics
- I'd like to cover a number of topics related to …
- I'd like to give you a breakdown of the opportunities …

Describing the structure of a presentation
- I'll start with …
- I'd like to walk you through …
- Then I'll move on to …
- Then finally, I'll talk about …

Describing content
- OK, so let me outline …
- I think it's important to highlight the fact that …

Presenting in an online meeting
- Let me know if the sound quality isn't so good.
- I'm going to share my screen …
- Let me share the document so that you can …
- I'll adjust the zoom settings to make it easier to read.
- Roman will be monitoring the chat for any comments or questions you have.

Transitioning
- OK, let's move on to the next point.
- This brings me to …
- Right, now for …

Ending a presentation
- Let me finish by answering any questions you may have.
- That brings me to the end of …

Choose a topic connected to your work and give a mini-presentation to the group. Use phrases from the box to signpost your talk.

24 **Thinking about your own industry, company or team, use the phrases below to discuss any challenges you face.**

USEFUL PHRASES **Talking about potential risks**

- It's highly likely that ...
- It's pretty unlikely that ... unless ...
- It's possible that ...
- There's a slight chance that ...
- We have to take into account that ...
- There some hope that ...
- There's a great risk of ...
- There's very little hope of ...

25 **In order to deal with a problem, it's necessary to understand it thoroughly. Complete the phrases with verbs from the box. You may have to change the form of the verb.**

follow | get | mean | misunderstand | put | say | understand

1 If I _____ you correctly, the project launch is going to be delayed again.
2 So you're _____ that we're already over budget?
3 Just to be sure I haven't _____, could you explain the last point again, please?
4 Could you _____ that in other words for me? I think I missed the point.
5 I'm sorry, I didn't quite _____ your reasoning on that. Could you explain it again?
6 What I _____ to point out was that the system isn't working as we had hoped.
7 What I'm _____ at is that the deadline for submitting the report is very soon.

26 **Match the sentence halves to make suggestions for dealing with problems.**

1 Unfortunately we didn't anticipate that there would be so much disruption to the supply chain	a to discuss postponing the rollout.
2 As inflation is going to be high for the foreseeable future, I suggest	b implement our contingency plan and reassign the work to another factory.
3 As we've fallen behind schedule, let's talk to the product owner	c would be to tighten up our marketing messages.
4 One way to improve our communication strategy	d so we'll have to agree very quickly on how to work around the problem.
5 In the worst case scenario, we'll have to	e revisiting our budget plan asap.
6 We're dealing with too many tasks at once so I suggest	f we reprioritize and leave the least important tasks for later.

VOCABULARY

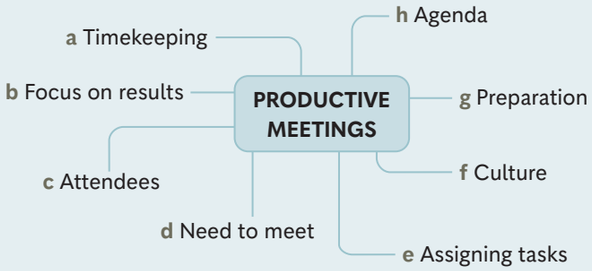
to **anticipate sth** etw. voraussehen
to **reassign sth** *hier:* etw. neu zuweisen
to **reprioritize sth** neue Prioritäten setzen
to **revisit sth** etw. überdenken
to **tighten sth up** etw. verschärfen, festigen

*When potential risks are identified, a **contingency plan** is developed to deal with them if necessary.*
*A **workaround** is not a planned response. It's a way of dealing with an unexpected problem.*

In pairs, take turns to tell your partner how you have addressed problems at work. Ask your partner to clarify anything you're not clear about. Use the expressions in exercises 25 and 26 for help.

OVER TO YOU

1 **In pairs, discuss the items shown in the mind map and formulate a useful tip for each one. Keep your tips short and to the point.**



Share your tips with all other pairs.

2 **Match the excerpts from a meeting with the items in the mind map they reflect.**

1 "Miriam, please circulate the minutes to everyone by tomorrow afternoon."
2 "Let's get started so that we don't run the risk of overrunning."
3 "My first principle is that everyone should have a voice and I'm always open to your feedback."
4 "I know you're all busy but I'm assuming everyone is ready to give their opinion on each agenda item."
5 "Is everyone in agreement with that? Great, so let's finalize our action plan."
6 "I called the meeting today because we need input from everyone before we start the first round of testing."
7 "Everyone here can contribute constructively to the items on our agenda."
8 "We can't dive too deeply into the technical issues now. That would go beyond the scope of this meeting."

3 **SIMULATION**

1 In groups, use the following steps to plan the simulation.
- Decide whether you want to work on an in-person, online or hybrid meeting scenario.
- Agree on the kind of meeting culture you have.
- Assign roles according to the number of people in your group: facilitator, online participant, on-site participant, new team member, notetaker, etc.
- Think of a topic which interests you and is worth discussing in a meeting. Keep it simple!
- Write an agenda and formulate the goal of your meeting.

2 Look back through this unit and Unit 4 to check phrases you need to facilitate and participate in a meeting.

3 Check any industry-specific vocabulary you may need.

4 Debriefing
- Did everyone keep focused on the agenda topics and meeting goal?
- Did you feel confident using appropriate meeting language?
- Did you achieve your meeting goal? Why / Why not?

B1/B2

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