

Opening a meeting

THIS UNIT LOOKS AT:

- welcoming participants
- stating the purpose and aims
- outlining the agenda
- checking understanding



Context 1 Here are some of the elements that might be included in the opening to a meeting. Rank them in the order you think they should be introduced (1–8).

- a Making sure all the participants know each other
- b Saying how long the meeting is going to take
- c Saying how the meeting will be organized
- d Introducing everyone by name and role
- e Inviting questions from participants
- f Giving background information about the reason for the meeting
- g Outlining the expected outcomes of the meeting
- h Going through the agenda for the meeting

2 What qualities do you think are necessary for a good chairperson? How important would you rate the following (1 = unimportant, 5 = very important)?

- listening to people
- being decisive
- managing time well
- being creative
- having good summarizing skills
- making people feel comfortable
- being flexible
- having a loud voice

Presentation

Veracity is a multinational publishing group with its headquarters in New York. Jane Wang, the CEO, is welcoming the Centre Managers from branches around the world to the company's annual review and strategic planning conference.

Welcoming participants, stating the purpose and aims



1 Listen to Jane Wang, the chairperson, opening the meeting. Decide whether the statements are true or false.

	True	False
1 Jane Wang has met all the participants before.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 The meeting will last for three days.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 The meeting will influence the company's future strategy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Jane Wang hopes everyone will agree.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 The meeting will consider the company's results for the last 12 months.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 Jane Wang wants the participants to share positive and negative points.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 Jane Wang introduces all the participants.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 Juanita García works in Mexico City.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2 There is one mistake in each of these extracts from the opening to the meeting. Listen again and correct each mistake.

- 1 I ~~might~~ ^{must} say it's great to see you ...
- 2 I'm really looking for to our time together ...
- 3 This is a terrible opportunity for us to share our ideas and concerns ...
- 4 I don't expect us all to agree in everything.
- 5 ... we're going to review the past year interim how far we have achieved targets set.
- 6 The purpose is evaluating our results ...
- 7 ... to make a realistic assessment of last year's results for that we can use it ...
- 8 I'm going to ask you to say a few words about you by way of introduction.

Outlining the agenda

3 a Complete the sentences from the next part of Jane Wang's introduction using the words and phrases from the box.

after which finally right ~~so~~ so then we'll start
will draw up will reconvene

- 1 So now we all know who we are.
- 2 _____, we've got a lot to get through this morning.
- 3 _____ with a presentation and general discussion of the results, _____ we'll split up into small groups of three or four.
- 4 _____, we _____ as a large group to hear the main points ...
- 5 _____, after the coffee break, you _____ your list of priorities...
- 6 OK, _____ let's get going.

Tip When planning a big meeting, think whether some of it could be carried out in small groups. This can stimulate thinking.

Tip When introducing the agenda for a meeting, it is good time management to give a clear indication of how long each stage is expected to take.

b Listen and check your answers.

4 1.2 Listen again and answer the questions.

- 1 What does Jane Wang suggest first?
- 2 Why does she think it is better for the participants to work first in small groups?
- 3 What will they do after working in small groups?
- 4 How many different groups will the participants work in during the morning?

Checking understanding, pronunciation

Tip By including 'checking understanding' phrases in your meetings, you can make sure that everyone is still following and engaged.

5 a Which of these ways of checking understanding does Jane Wang use?

- 1 Is there anything you don't understand?
- 2 Is that clear?
- 3 So, what have I just said?
- 4 Do you follow me?
- 5 Are there any questions?
- 6 Are you still with me?
- 7 Is there anything you want to raise?
- 8 Is there anything anyone would like to add or comment on?

b 1.2 Listen again and check your answers. Which words does Jane stress?

Practice 1 Choose the correct options.

Welcoming participants, outlining the agenda

Hi, everyone, thanks for coming and ¹ *welcome / welcoming*. First, I'll ² *go under / go over* what we ³ *hope to achieve / like to achieve* in this morning's session. Right, ⁴ *how you know / as you know*, we are discussing ⁵ *ideas to / ideas for* improving quality control. We'll ⁶ *start in / start by* brainstorming ideas for 15 minutes in ⁷ *small groups of three / small groups of threes*. After that, each group will ⁸ *show its ideas / present its ideas*, and then I'll ask ⁹ *you vote / you to vote* for the best three. Finally, we'll ¹⁰ *draw up a plan of action / draw on a plan action*. Is that clear? OK, we'll ¹¹ *get starting / get started*.

2 Complete the sentences with the words from the box. Then put the sentences in the correct order.

after before finally first ~~right~~ so then

- 1 But _____ all that, I suggest we introduce ourselves round the table.
- 1 Right, hello, everyone, and welcome. I'm going to outline this morning's programme.
- _____, I'll ask you to organize yourselves into small groups to discuss the concerns you've raised until coffee.
- _____, we'll decide where to go from here on the basis of the morning's session.
- _____, let's get started. I'm Paul Johnson and you are ...?
- _____, to get the ball rolling, I want you to write down your three main concerns.
- _____ the break, we'll hear what you've decided in your small groups.

Stating the purpose and aims 3 Rewrite the sentences using a to- clause of purpose.

- 1 At this meeting, we will consider the proposals to cut costs.
The aim of this meeting is to consider the proposals to cut costs.
- 2 The meeting today is about agreeing on a strategy for the next 12 months.
The purpose of today's meeting _____ a strategy for the next 12 months.
- 3 We are doing this because we need to review our company policy.
This _____ our company policy.
- 4 This morning, we are considering the priorities and drawing up a plan of action.
Our goals this morning _____ the priorities and _____ a plan of action.
- 5 We are meeting today because we need to deal with this crisis quickly.
The reason for meeting today _____ this crisis quickly.

Tip We can use a to- clause to say clearly why we are doing something.

Pronunciation 4 a 1.3 Listen to the sentences and underline the words that are stressed. Notice how quickly the unstressed words are said.

- 1 Right, good morning, everyone, and welcome.
- 2 I must say it's great to see you again.
- 3 This morning, we are going to review the past year.
- 4 First, I suggest that we divide into small groups.
- 5 The purpose is to evaluate our results.
- 6 Are there any questions?
- 7 Is there anything anyone would like to add?
- 8 First things first, though.

b 1.4 Listen to the same sentences broken down into smaller parts and repeat them.

Consolidation 1 Practise what you might say at the opening of a meeting. Cut out the cards on page 44 and place them upside down on a table. Choose a card. What would you say in that situation?

2 If you have to chair a meeting at work, prepare for your next meeting by completing the checklist on page 45 with useful language and phrases. When you next attend the opening of a meeting, look back at the checklist. After the meeting, reflect on how well the opening was handled.

➔ NOW TURN TO YOUR LEARNING JOURNAL AND MAKE NOTES ON THIS UNIT.

Reference Useful phrases

Welcoming participants

Thanks for coming and welcome.
 It's great to see you (all again).
 I'm really looking forward to our time together.
 This is a terrific opportunity for us to share our ideas and concerns.
 First things first.

Do you all know each other?
 I'm going to ask you to say a few words ...
 ... by way of introduction
 My name's ...
 ... and I've been working as ... for the past ... years.
 This is to enable you to (get to know ... your colleagues a little better).
 So, now we all know who we are.

Stating the purpose and aims

We are going to ...
 ... in terms of ...
 The purpose is to ...
 So, by the end of ... , we will be in a position to ...
 ... so that we can ...

Outlining the agenda

We've got a lot to get through.
 I'll go over the outline.
 I suggest that we ...
 This is to ...
 This will be done (in new groupings).
 So, let's get going.
 We need to start by (getting ...)
 Right, let's (get the ball rolling).
 First, we are going to ...
 Then, we will ...
 Finally, you will ...

Checking understanding

Is that clear?
 Are there any questions?
 Is there anything anyone would like to add or comment on?
 Is there anything you don't understand?
 Do you follow me?
 Is there anything you want to raise?

Vocabulary

Strategic planning

assessment
 concerns
 to conduct (a discussion)
 costs
 to draw up (a plan)
 to enable
 to evaluate
 groupings
 honesty
 input
 openness
 planning process
 priorities
 proposal
 purpose
 to raise (e.g. a concern)
 to reconvene
 to set (targets)
 to shape
 to share
 strategy
 successes

Study suggestion When you learn a new phrase, underline the stressed words, so that you have a record of how we say it, e.g. *We've got a lot to get through.* You can check by listening to the audio again.

Review

Skills 1 **What should you do when opening a meeting?**

2 **What does a chairperson do, and what skills should a chairperson use in a meeting?**

Useful phrases 1 **What language could you use when outlining the agenda?**

2 **Add words or phrases to make three sentences in each box.**

1	This is Let me introduce My name's	Huang Lee.
2		we're going to draw up a list of priorities.
3		to consider the proposals for cost reduction.
4	Let's get	

Vocabulary Use the verbs in the correct form to complete the sentences.

conduct draw up enable evaluate raise shape share

- We _____ the meeting in secret.
- At the end of the meeting, we _____ a plan of action.
- The reason for the loan is _____ us to invest in new hardware.
- Does anyone have any issues they would like _____ ?
- The results allow us _____ our performance over the last six months.
- The meeting will help _____ company strategy going forward.
- The real value of this meeting is in _____ our ideas and concerns.

Pronunciation 1.5 **Mark the words you think are stressed. Then listen and check.**

- Hello, everybody, and welcome to this morning's meeting.
- Is that clear?
- Right, let's get the ball rolling.
- Then, after the break, we're going to study the results in more detail.
- I suggest that we take ten minutes just to collect our thoughts.
- Do we all agree on that?
- Finally, we need to summarize what we've decided in terms of going forward.