

Effective Meeting Agenda



This is a basic, flexible template illustrating **the building blocks of an effective meeting**. Adapt the timing of the session to your own needs and get started in the journey to make your organization's meetings the best they can be!

For more on facilitating a meeting, find some quick tips and tricks in [this guide](#).

■ setting up
 ■ energizer/icebreaker
 ■ agenda points
 ■ discussion/debriefing

TIME	NAME	DESCRIPTION	ADDITIONAL INFO
09:00 0	Before the start	It's good practice for the person facilitating to be early at the meeting. Set up the room, whether it's in the physical or virtual worlds, and give a friendly welcome to those joining.	Set up the space, take a moment to collect your thoughts, warmly greet those arriving and kick off the meeting! Write down the meeting's agenda on a flipchart and keep it visible for all attendees (or on a slide, or in the meeting chat if online).
09:00 5m	Check-in questions	Checking-in is a simple way for a team to open a session or start a project.	Giving everyone the opportunity to speak in front of the whole group at the beginning encourages participation during the rest of the meeting. Groups go through different stages: when they start; during a project; and when a project ends. You can support the group by asking different questions at different times .
09:05 5m	IDOARRT meeting design	IDOARRT is a simple tool to support you in leading an effective meeting or group process by setting out a clear purpose, structure, and goals at the very beginning.	This process aims to enable all participants to understand every aspect of the meeting or process, which creates the security of common ground to start from . The acronym stands for Intention, Desired Outcome, Agenda, Rules, Roles and Responsibilities, and Time .
09:10 50m	Going through the agenda	Go through the various points in the agenda, whether they are announcements or discussions.	A pragmatic guideline for the order in which to put agenda topics is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • start with announcements and quick updates; • next, introduce the one or two main points of discussion; • have a "parking lot" space to set off-topic conversations aside for another time; • 10/15 minutes before the meeting end time, move to action points. Closing a meeting takes some time!
10:00 10m	Action points	Review decisions taken, action points and next steps.	A common source of conflict in teams is due to misunderstandings concerning whether a decision has been taken or whether it's still under discussion. To avoid this, make sure to close each meeting with a review of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what decisions have been taken today? • what actions are we taking and who is responsible for them? • when is our next meeting? Who will facilitate it?
10:10 5m	Meeting closing round (+ - !)	Continuously improve your organization's meetings with this simple round of closing feedback: what did you enjoy most? What could have been better? Any other ideas on our meetings?	At the end of each meeting, ask for feedback on the meeting process (not on the content!) in three categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (+) what went well / did you most appreciate? (-) what could have gone differently / should we change? (!) any other ideas about improving our meetings? Incorporate this feedback in your next meeting in order to design structures and processes that are tailored to this specific group and work for it!

10:15

TOTAL LENGTH: 1h 15m

MATERIALS

- Flipchart, Slide or Board to write on x 3 in Before the start | IDOARRT meeting design | Going through the agenda
- Markers x 2 in Before the start | Going through the agenda
- Talking piece x 2 in Check-in questions | Meeting closing round (+ - !)
- Minutes (on a shared document) in Action points
- Sticky notes (for large groups) or an online whiteboard (for large groups working remotely) in Meeting closing round (+ - !)

Effective Meeting Agenda - block details

09:00
0

Before the start

It's good practice for the person facilitating to be early at the meeting. Set up the room, whether it's in the physical or virtual worlds, and give a friendly welcome to those joining.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Set up the space, take a moment to collect your thoughts, **warmly greet those arriving** and kick off the meeting!

Write down the meeting's agenda on a flipchart and keep it visible for all attendees (or on a slide, or in the meeting chat if online).

GOALS

Being ready to start.

INSTRUCTIONS

Before the meeting, it's good practice to attend to:

- Space: are the chairs arranged in a way that fits the meeting? Is the lighting ok? If a projector will be used, is it working? **Check that the space is ready to welcome participants.** If online, check that the tech setup works, verify links to whiteboards and so on.
- Personal preparation: take a moment to collect your thoughts and notes, and set your intention for the gathering. What is most important to you today? Is it about collaboration? Effectiveness? **Take a moment to check in with yourself**, what you bring to the meeting contributes to set the tone.

Arrive a bit early to the meeting and be ready to **warmly greet those joining**. A quick chat before the start can reveal a lot about the mood and energy levels of attendees.

Write down the meeting's agenda on a flipchart and keep it visible for all attendees (or on a slide, or in the meeting chat if online).

Remind participants of what your role as facilitator of the meeting will be, by saying something along the lines of "*I'll be facilitating this meeting, this means that I will support us in keeping time, I'll suggest some structure for our discussions, and I'll support the group in making sure different voices and opinions are heard. I'll be asking for your feedback on how this went at the end of the meeting, so that we can make our meetings the best possible for this group. Let's start with a check-in!*".

MATERIALS

- Flipchart, Slide or Board to write on
- Markers

09:00
5m

Check-in questions

Checking-in is a simple way for a team to open a session or start a project.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Giving everyone **the opportunity to speak in front of the whole group** at the beginning encourages participation during the rest of the meeting.

Groups go through different stages: when they start; during a project; and when a project ends. You can support the group by **asking different questions at different times**.

GOALS

Open a session or start a project

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1:

Managing time is crucial for running effective meetings. As a facilitator you can introduce different constraints to a check-in to allow for more or less time. Examples are:

- "In one word..."
- "In two words..."
- "In one sentence..."
- "Think of three things..."
- "Taking as much time as you need..."

Step 2:

Think about what stage the group is at. What would it be useful for them to reflect on and share?

MATERIALS

- Talking piece

Think about the general mood. What has just happened? What are they about to do? Has there been conflict? Is this a celebration? Choose a reflection question that will support the kind of mood and atmosphere that you want to create.

General

- What do I need to share to be present in this session?
- How do I feel right now?
- What am I excited/worried about?
- What animal represents my mood today?
- What song / movie / story represents my mood today?
- One surprising thing that happened to me recently...
- One thing you don't know about me is...

Early in a project

- What am I bringing to this group?
- How do I feel working in this group?
- What is my vision for this group?

During a project

- How do I feel working in this team?
- What metaphor would I use to describe this group?
- What's making me heavy and what's making me lighter right now?

End of a project

- What has been my highest high and lowest low from this project?
- What big insight am I taking with me?
- What am I going to do differently in my next group?
- Who would I like to acknowledge in the group?

BACKGROUND

Source: [Hyper Island toolbox](#)

Hyper Island designs learning experiences that challenge companies and individuals to grow and stay competitive in an increasingly digitized world. With clients such as Google, adidas and IKEA, Hyper Island has been listed by CNN as one of the most innovative schools in the world

09:05
5m

IDOARRT meeting design

IDOARRT is a simple tool to support you in leading an effective meeting or group process by setting out a clear purpose, structure, and goals at the very beginning.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This process aims to enable all participants to understand every aspect of the meeting or process, which creates the security of **common ground to start from**.

The acronym stands for **Intention, Desired Outcome, Agenda, Rules, Roles and Responsibilities, and Time**.

GOALS

Enable all participants to understand every aspect of the meeting or process

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1:

Before the meeting/process, prepare a Flipchart / Slide outlining all the points of IDOARRT. See below:

Intention – What is the intention, or purpose, of the meeting? In other words, why have it?

Desired Outcome(s) – What specific outcomes should be achieved by the end of the meeting?

Agenda – What activities will the group go through, in what order, to move toward the desired outcome?

Roles – What roles or responsibilities need to be in place for the meeting to run smoothly? Who is facilitating, and who is participating? Who is documenting, and who is keeping track of the time? What do you expect of the participants? Find more information [on roles in a meeting in this card from SessionLab's library](#).

Rules – What guidelines will be in place during the meeting? These could relate to agreed group norms. They could also relate to use of laptops/mobiles, or practical rules related to a space. Let the participants add rules to ensure that they have ownership of them.

Time – What is the expected time for the meeting, including breaks, and at what time will the meeting end?

Step 2:

MATERIALS

- Flipchart, Slide or Board to write on

At the beginning of the meeting, introduce the IDOARRT, going through point by point. Invite participants to ask questions or make suggestions for changes. Once the group is happy with the plan, go ahead with the rest of the meeting.

Tips for running this activity online

- Pick an [online whiteboard tool](#) that allows to use a large, zoomable canvas.
- Set up each topic at a different area of the board, spread them out just like you would do it on the walls of a room.
- Invite participants to zoom in and visit each section and add their ideas as sticky notes once you reach that section of the exercise.
- If you're not using an online whiteboard, we'd recommend using a collaboration tool such as Google Docs to collect the information for each step under a separate heading. Invite everyone into the document but be very clear in regards to editing rights.
- Prepare each point of the process in either your online whiteboard or Google Doc.
- When facilitating group discussion, we'd recommend that participants use non-verbal means to indicate they'd like to speak. You can use tools like Zoom's nonverbal feedback tools, a reaction emoji, or just have people put their hands up. The facilitator can then invite that person to talk.

BACKGROUND

Source: [Hyper Island toolbox](#)

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09:10
50m

Going through the agenda

Go through the various points in the agenda, whether they are announcements or discussions.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A pragmatic guideline for the order in which to put agenda topics is:

- **start with announcements** and quick updates;
- next, **introduce the one or two main points of discussion**;
- have a "**parking lot**" space to set off-topic conversations aside for another time;
- 10/15 minutes before the meeting end time, move to action points. **Closing a meeting takes some time!**

GOALS

Getting the day's work done effectively; making sure all voices are heard.

INSTRUCTIONS

Exactly how you will guide the group through the day's agenda can vary greatly depending on your situation. Here are a few useful tips:

- **Start with quick updates and announcements**, it can be an open floor "*does anyone have something to share?*" or a round in which everyone is invited to speak or pass. If applicable, this can include referencing the previous meeting's notes for updates on the action points.
- Insofar as possible, **try not to merge the role of facilitator with that of presenter** or lead for a topic. If you have an important topic to bring to a meeting, check if someone else might take the facilitation role.
- When moderating the discussion, aim to avoid people getting into 1:1 discussions (aka "ping-pong"). **Invite different voices in**, or if there is a conversation two people need to have on their own, invite them to park it for later.
- If the conversation becomes confusing or heated, **slow the group down by reflecting back what has been said**, in your understanding: "*So what I hear so far is that there are two views of how this should go, one like this and one like that, do I have it right?*".
- If a point needs more time than is available, switch the conversation from topic to process: "*Can we set a different time to discuss this, maybe with only these people who are directly involved?*" **Write down such topics on the parking lot.**
- Mark on the board when a topic is completed and **move on to the next.**

Timekeeping tips

Facilitation is a lot of work! **Make it easier by sharing the load.** You can ask a person in the group to be the timekeeper, and remind the group of when time for a conversation point is almost up. There are also apps you can use for this, including [SessionLab's facilitation model](#).

Personal style and local culture determine how strict or flexible your timekeeping will be. Personally, I keep the end time sacred, as ending on time is a sign of respect for everyone who is attending. but am quite flexible with what happens in between.

Things that I have found helpful with timekeeping are:

- assigning a **timekeeping role**;
- not expecting perfection, but **improving based on end-of-meeting feedback**;
- including in the initial IDOARRT point on rules a **collective commitment to being on time**, and warning speakers of what will happen if they run late (will you, for example, warn them 3 min before the end?)

MATERIALS

- Flipchart, Slide or Board to write on
- Markers

Next steps into facilitation

If you have time to design the meeting beforehand, you can also consider **introducing specific facilitation methods** through which to process a topic. You could, for example, use [dot voting](#) to prioritize, [1-2-4-all](#) to take the group in the direction of a consensus, or [World Café](#) to explore options. In [SessionLab's library](#) you can find a rich array of methods and tools to choose from.

10:00
10m

Action points

Review decisions taken, action points and next steps.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A common source of conflict in teams is due to **misunderstandings concerning whether a decision has been taken or whether it's still under discussion.**

To avoid this, make sure to close each meeting with a review of:

- what **decisions** have been taken today?
- what **actions** are we taking and **who is responsible** for them?
- when is our **next meeting**? Who will facilitate it?

GOALS

Clarity and ensuring actions are taken after the meeting

INSTRUCTIONS

A common source of conflict in teams is due to **misunderstandings concerning whether a decision has been taken or whether it's still under discussion.**

To avoid this, make sure to close each meeting with a review of:

- what **decisions** have been taken today?
- what **actions** are now needed and **who is responsible** for them?
- when is our **next meeting**? (if you are rotating facilitation) Who is facilitating it?

Facilitator's tips

- **Assign a note-taker** at the start of the meeting. If possible, rotate this role so that it's not always the same person taking notes!
- Keep all the notes related to a certain project or department in the same place/document (a "single source of truth").
- To make it easier to find the notes you need, put them in **reverse chronological order** (the latest meeting is first)
- Start the minutes for the day with a very visible section (I highlight it in yellow) **listing decisions taken and action points.**

MATERIALS

- Minutes (on a shared document)

10:10
5m

Meeting closing round (+ - !)

Continuously improve your organization's meetings with this simple round of closing feedback: what did you enjoy most? What could have been better? Any other ideas on our meetings?

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

At the end of each meeting, ask for **feedback on the meeting process** (not on the content!) in three categories:

(+) what went well / did you most appreciate?

(-) what could have gone differently / should we change?

(!) any other ideas about improving our meetings?

Incorporate this feedback in your next meeting in order to design structures and processes that are tailored to this specific group and work for it!

GOALS

Shift the group's attention to observing the process; continuous improvement of meetings

INSTRUCTIONS

At the end of each meeting, ask for **feedback on the meeting process** (not on the content!) in three categories:

(+) what went well / did you most appreciate?

(-) what could have gone differently / should we change?

(!) any other ideas about improving our meetings?

Incorporate this feedback in your next meeting in order to design structures and processes that are tailored to this specific group and work for it!

MATERIALS

- Talking piece
- Sticky notes (for large groups) or an online whiteboard (for large groups working remotely)

If the group is small enough, do this in rounds. If there is not enough time for rounds, collect sticky notes on a board with the three categories written up.

Facilitator's notes

This basic tool invites everyone to **look at what just happened from the point of view of process** (*how* we work together rather than *what* we are working on). It can be extremely helpful in getting team members on board in co-designing collaborative meetings!

Sometimes people are shy about talking about what does not work and answer something vague like "nothing, it was great!". **Sometimes it's worth gently asking twice** and reassuring participants that you are asking in order to support everyone's learning.

The third point (!) is a space for extra ideas that do not immediately fit the mold of "best" and "to be improved". Sometimes there is nothing to say here, but sometimes there is a gold nugget.

If you are not having another meeting with this particular group of people, this is still a good structure for you to get feedback you can apply to future events.

Remote and hybrid meetings

This structure works just as well for remote and hybrid meetings. If a round is not possible, **online you can ask for reflections in the chat box, in a shared minutes document, or on a virtual whiteboard.**

In hybrid settings, either

(1) **do a round** (here are [tips](#) on how);

(2) **have everyone work from personal devices** on shared documents or a poll or

(3) **collect insights on virtual and in-person whiteboards** and then share the key points out loud in plenary.

In all cases, **learning what worked and didn't work for the different cohorts can certainly raise participants' awareness** of how to make the space more inclusive for all!
