

Meetings, Negotiations, and Socializing

*Adrian
Wallwork*

*A Guide to
Professional
English*

Guides to Professional English

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A Guide to Professional English



Springer

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INTRODUCTION FOR THE READER

Who is this book for?

This book is a guide to taking part in business meetings and negotiations, and to the socializing required before and after such events.

The book is aimed at non-native English speakers, with an intermediate level and above.

I hope that other trainers like myself in Business English will also find the book a source of useful ideas to pass on to students.

If you work in Academia, a better option for you is to consult Parts 3-6 of my book *English for Academic Correspondence and Socializing* (Springer Science), where some of the subsections in this book are taken from or adapted from.

How is this book organized?

Four main topics are covered

1. Meetings (Chapters 1 - 6)
2. Negotiations (Chapters 7 - 9)
3. Socializing (Chapters 10 - 12)
4. Understanding native English speakers (Chapters 13 - 14)

Within each chapter there are various subsections (see Contents for details), most of which are divided into FAQs (frequently asked questions). The book concludes with a chapter of useful phrases.

This book is designed to be like a manual or user guide – you don't need to read it starting from page 1. Like a manual it has lots of short subsections, and is divided into short paragraphs with many bullet points. This is to help you find what you want quickly and also to assimilate the information as rapidly and as effectively as possible.

You may find that occasionally the same concept is explained more than once but in different sections. This is because the book is not designed to be read from cover to cover, and some concepts may apply, for instance, both to participating in a meeting and in a social situation.

How should I use the table of contents?

The table of contents lists each subsection contained within a chapter. You can use the titles of these subsections not only to find what you want but also as a summary for each chapter.

Other books in this series

There are currently five other books in this *Guides to Professional English* series.

CVs, Resumes, and LinkedIn

<http://www.springer.com/978-1-4939-0646-8/>

Email and Commercial Correspondence

<http://www.springer.com/978-1-4939-0634-5/>

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<http://www.springer.com/978-1-4939-0643-7/>

Telephone and Helpdesk Skills

<http://www.springer.com/978-1-4939-0637-6/>

All the above books are intended for people working in industry rather than academia. The only exception is *CVs, Resumes, Cover Letters and LinkedIn*, which is aimed at both people in industry and academia.

There is also a parallel series of books covering similar skills for those in academia:

English for Presentations at International Conferences

<http://www.springer.com/978-1-4419-6590-5/>

English for Writing Research Papers

<http://www.springer.com/978-1-4419-7921-6/>

English for Academic Correspondence and Socializing

<http://www.springer.com/978-1-4419-9400-4/>

English for Research: Usage, Style, and Grammar

<http://www.springer.com/978-1-4614-1592-3/>

INTRODUCTION FOR THE TEACHER / TRAINER

Teaching Business English

I had two main targets when writing this book:

- non-native speakers (business, sales technical)
- Business English teachers and trainers

My teaching career initially started in general English but I soon moved into Business English, which I found was much more focused and where I could quickly see real results. The strategies I teach are almost totally language-independent, and many of my 'students' follow my guidelines even when speaking and writing in their own language. I am sure you will have found the same in your lessons too.

Typically, my lessons cover how to:

1. participate in meetings
2. write emails
3. make presentations and demos
4. make phone calls
5. socialize

This book is a personal collection of ideas picked up over the last 25 years. It is not intended as a course book, there are plenty of these already. It is more like a reference manual.

How to teach meetings skills

Teaching students how to take part in meetings is a lot of fun. Basically any discussion that you might normally have in your lesson can be transformed into a meeting. The language functions used in a discussion are essentially the same as those used in a meeting:

- expressing opinions
- agreeing and disagreeing
- interrupting and counteracting
- making suggestions
- clarifying misunderstandings
- drawing conclusions

The only difference is that some meetings tend to be more formal, may have a time limit and in some cases may have a chairperson.

As in a classroom discussion, you need to lay out some basic ground rules to make the discussion / meeting effective. The most important is that no one is allowed to dominate the conversation. Those students who are more extrovert should be encouraged to involve the more reticent students.

You can pre-teach all the useful phrases they will need in order to interrupt each other, make suggestions, clarify positions etc. You can even make it competitive by giving each student five useful phrases that they have to use in a natural way during the meeting. The first student to use all five is the 'winner'. However, bear in mind, that it is perfectly possible to have a meeting only using very few of the useful phrases listed in Chapter 15. But it is worth students learning them - even if they don't use them, they will at least be able to understand them when they hear them.

To learn more about conducting effective discussions and for ideas on what to talk about, see my books for Cambridge University Press: *Discussions AZ Intermediate* and *Discussions AZ Advanced*. These two books were not written specifically for a business audience, but given that the aim of your lessons will be to teach students how to participate in a discussion, the actual topic of the discussion does not necessarily have to be business related.

See also my publications section on LinkedIn, where you will find more books on discussions that you can buy on iTunes and Amazon.

How to teach negotiating skills

Basically we negotiate every day of our lives with bosses, colleagues, children, family members etc. A negotiation, in EFL terms, is not much different from a meeting, except that it will contain a lot more conditional sentences (first and second forms), e.g.

If you *lower* your price, we *will increase* our order.

If you *lowered* your price, then we *would increase* our order.

So you need to make sure that your students have mastered the difference between these two conditional forms. Then you need to set up discussions based on hypotheses such as what if: your boss was a woman rather than a man (or vice versa), your company was bought by an American company, you were forced to take a pay cut, your company relocated to China etc. There are endless hypothetical situations you can think of. You can even get your students to practise writing second conditional sentences containing interesting work-related scenarios.

To get more ideas, see the chapter on *Negotiations* in my book *Business Options* (OUP).

How to teach socializing skills

I find that many students, especially technical experts, have difficulties socializing effectively even in their own language. Typical issues are:

- talking too much and dominating the conversation (this is made even worse when talking in English, as they have more control over what is being said)
- not asking questions (may be due the fact that questions are quite difficult to form in English, but more often due to a lack of curiosity)
- being silent (i.e. as a result of poor English, or being too shy and embarrassed)

Chapter 10 should help you to help your students on the above issues.

Brainstorm your students on typical situations where they have to use their socializing skills. Then for each scenario build up dialogs that incorporate the strategies outlined in Chapter 11.

Also, you really need to work on stimulating your students curiosity about other people and places.

There are also many skills books available from the major EFL publishers (OUP, CUP, Longman and Macmillan) which cover meetings, negotiations and socializing. I suggest you dip into these books rather than following them exercise by exercise. Just pick out the exercises that you think students will find most interesting.

If you work in-house, get involved with the company / companies where you teach. You will find your work much more satisfying!

Contents

1	ARRANGING A MEETING VIA EMAIL	1
1.1	How should I email an existing client / supplier to arrange a meeting?.....	1
1.2	What's the best way to email a potential client to arrange a meeting?	2
1.3	I want to set up a 1-1 meeting with someone I already know. What email should I write?	3
1.4	How can I arrange a meeting via telephone?	4
1.5	I need to cancel / change the time of my meeting. How can I do this politely?	6
2	PREPARING FOR A MEETING	7
2.1	How should I prepare for the meeting?.....	7
2.2	How can I increase the chances of the meeting being useful for me?	7
2.3	I will be chair of the meeting. What guidelines should I follow?	8
2.4	What is brainstorming? How should it be conducted?.....	8
3	USING ENGLISH BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER A MEETING OR NEGOTIATION	9
3.1	What are native speakers likely to think about my English?.....	9
3.2	What typical phrases will I need during the meeting or negotiation?	9
3.3	How important is it for me to see the agenda before the meeting?	10
3.4	Is it a good idea to arrive early to the meeting?.....	10
3.5	What can I do if the native speakers or fluent speakers dominate the meeting?	11
3.6	My English is not great. How can I optimize it for the purposes of the meeting?	12

- 3.7 How should I use stress and intonation?..... 13
- 3.8 Should I follow up the meeting with an email?..... 15

- 4 HOW TO MEET KEY PEOPLE AT NETWORKING EVENTS AND TRADE FAIRS 17**
 - 4.1 How can I improve my chances of meeting key people at a networking event or trade fair? 17
 - 4.2 Before the event, should I email people I want to meet?..... 18
 - 4.3 How can I motivate someone to meet me? 19
 - 4.4 How can I find out about someone in a discreet way? 19
 - 4.5 How should I introduce myself face-to-face to someone I have never contacted before? 20
 - 4.6 How can I introduce myself to a group of people?..... 21
 - 4.7 What can I say if I see a useful potential contact at the coffee machine? 23

- 5 MANAGING AND PARTICIPATING IN A FACE TO FACE MEETING 25**
 - 5.1 Exploiting the few minutes before the meeting begins 25
 - 5.2 Announcing the start of the meeting 25
 - 5.3 Introducing the attendees 26
 - 5.4 Referring to the agenda, outlining objectives, talking about breaks 27
 - 5.5 Announcing the time schedule and breaks 28
 - 5.6 Opening the discussion 28
 - 5.7 Bringing other people into the discussion 29
 - 5.8 Moving on to the next item in the agenda..... 29
 - 5.9 Interrupting and handling interruptions 30
 - 5.10 Eliciting opinions from silent attendees 31
 - 5.11 Expressing opinions..... 32
 - 5.12 Making mini summaries..... 33
 - 5.13 Taking votes in formal meetings 33
 - 5.14 Summarizing and winding up the meeting..... 34
 - 5.15 Informing attendees of the next steps 35
 - 5.16 Thanking and saying goodbye..... 35

- 6 MEETINGS VIA CONFERENCE CALL AND VIDEO CALL 37**
 - 6.1 Preparing for the call..... 37
 - 6.2 Knowing how the call functions and the difficulties involved..... 38
 - 6.3 Being a moderator 39
 - 6.4 Checking the sound quality..... 39
 - 6.5 Establishing ground rules 40
 - 6.6 Using chat facilities 40
 - 6.7 Tuning in 41

6.8	Reminding participants about the agenda and ensuring they have all the documents required.....	41
6.9	Beginning the meeting.....	42
6.10	Dealing with latecomers.....	42
6.11	Ensuring you are clear when you are taking participants through a presentation or document.....	43
6.12	Admitting that you are having difficulty following the conversation.....	43
6.13	Concluding the call.....	44
6.14	Videoconferences.....	45
6.15	Skype calls.....	46
7	PREPARING FOR A NEGOTIATION.....	47
7.1	What skills does negotiating involve?.....	47
7.2	How can you improve the chances of success of a negotiation even before it starts?.....	47
7.3	How should I conduct a pre-negotiation over the phone?.....	48
7.4	Is it worth simulating important telephone calls and negotiations in preparation for the real thing?.....	50
8	MANAGING A NEGOTIATION.....	51
8.1	Stating your position and outlining your goal.....	51
8.2	Clarifying expectations and interpretations.....	52
8.3	Making a convincing case for your product or service.....	53
8.4	Giving concessions: use of <i>although</i> , <i>however</i> , <i>despite</i> etc.....	54
8.5	Trying to get a better deal.....	55
8.6	Concluding the negotiation.....	56
9	KEY TENSES WHEN NEGOTIATING AND WHEN DESCRIBING YOUR COMPANY.....	57
9.1	Present simple.....	57
9.2	Present continuous.....	59
9.3	Non use of continuous forms.....	60
9.4	Will.....	61
9.5	Be going to.....	62
9.6	Future continuous.....	63
9.7	Present perfect simple.....	64
9.8	Present perfect continuous.....	65
9.9	Non use of present perfect continuous.....	66
9.10	Past simple.....	67
9.11	Conditional forms.....	68

- 10 GENERAL RULES OF SOCIALIZING**..... 69
 - 10.1 What skills do I need to have a successful conversation?..... 69
 - 10.2 What makes a successful conversation?..... 70
 - 10.3 What can I talk about when I have just met someone for the first time?..... 73
 - 10.4 What are the typical safe topics that involve cultural similarities rather than differences?..... 74
 - 10.5 Are there some topics of conversation that are not acceptable for particular nationalities?..... 75
 - 10.6 What kind of topics are generally not of interest to the interlocutor?..... 76
 - 10.7 If my company is hosting visitors, what are the typical non-work questions that guests might ask me?..... 76
 - 10.8 How can I prepare for the social conversations over business lunch / dinner?..... 77
 - 10.9 How do I decide how formal or informal to be?..... 78
 - 10.10 How can I practise my English grammar in a social context?..... 79
 - 10.11 I am too shy and embarrassed to have a conversation in English, what can I do?..... 80
 - 10.12 My English vocabulary only extends to a limited number of topics—what can I do?..... 82
 - 10.13 I find it more difficult to understand English than to speak it? Is it a good tactic to talk rather than listen?..... 83

- 11 MANAGING A CONVERSATION**..... 85
 - 11.1 How should I introduce myself?..... 85
 - 11.2 Should I address my interlocutor with his/her title?..... 87
 - 11.3 How do I move on from small talk?..... 87
 - 11.4 How can I show interest in the person I am talking to?..... 88
 - 11.5 Is it OK to ask very direct questions?..... 90
 - 11.6 Can I ask personal questions relating to information I have found on the Internet about them?..... 91
 - 11.7 Can I offer personal information about myself as a means to ask personal questions?..... 91
 - 11.8 What kind of questions are most effective at generating detailed answers?..... 92
 - 11.9 How can I avoid jumping from topic to topic?..... 93
 - 11.10 What can I do if I find I am asking all the questions?..... 95
 - 11.11 What if I find that I am dominating the conversation?..... 95
 - 11.12 How should I react to the announcements and statements that my interlocutor makes?..... 96
 - 11.13 Should I just reply precisely to the question I am asked, or should I provide additional information?..... 96
 - 11.14 If I am in a group of people, how can I involve the others in the conversation?..... 97

11.15	What do I do when there is a long silence in the conversation?	97
11.16	Is it rude to interrupt the other person, especially when they are doing all the talking?	98
11.17	Is it impolite to express my disagreement?.....	99
11.18	What do I do if someone says something I don't agree with? How can I be diplomatic in my response?	100
11.19	How should I deal with questions that I do not want to answer?	101
11.20	How can I check that my question will not offend or embarrass my interlocutor?	101
11.21	How should I formulate an invitation?.....	102
11.22	How should I respond to an invitation?.....	102
11.23	What are the best ways to end a conversation that is not moving forward?.....	103
12	ASKING WORK-RELATED QUESTIONS	105
12.1	How can I learn useful information about someone in a non-work situation?	105
12.2	How can I avoid seeming too direct in my quest	106
12.3	What questions can I ask to find out about my interlocutor's current work position	106
12.4	How can I find out about my interlocutor's past-present work situation?.....	107
12.5	Are there any tricks for avoiding grammar mistakes when I respond to questions?	108
12.6	What company-related questions could I ask?.....	109
13	UNDERSTANDING WHY YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS	111
13.1	I get frustrated when listening to native speakers, because I try to understand everything. What is the best strategy?.....	111
13.2	Why do I find listening to spoken English so difficult but reading so easy?	112
13.3	Why does spoken English sound so different from the English I learned at school?.....	113
13.4	Do all native English speakers understand each other?	114
13.5	Is it OK to tell my interlocutor that I am having difficulty in understanding him / her?	115
13.6	How can I concentrate more when I am listening?	116
13.7	How can I prepare for a conversation so that I am likely to understand more of it?.....	117

- 14 WHAT TO DO IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND**
- WHAT SOMEONE SAYS TO YOU** 119
 - 14.1 Identify the specific word that you did not understand 119
 - 14.2 Identify the part of the phrase that you did not understand 122
 - 14.3 Avoid confusion between similar sounding words 123
 - 14.4 Make frequent summaries of what your interlocutor has said 124
 - 14.5 Dealing with colloquialisms 124
 - 14.6 Business jargon 125
- 15 USEFUL PHRASES** 127
 - 15.1 Making arrangements via email for meetings and teleconferences 127
 - 15.2 Chairing a formal meeting 127
 - 15.3 Chairing an informal project progress meeting 128
 - 15.4 Negotiating 128
 - 15.5 Asking for and giving opinions, suggestions etc 128
 - 15.6 Checking understanding and clarifying 129
 - 15.7 Trade fairs 130
 - 15.8 At the office 130
 - 15.9 Socializing 131
 - 15.10 Traveling 132
 - 15.11 Hotels 132
 - 15.12 Restaurants 132
 - 15.13 Bars 133
- THE AUTHOR** 175
- Index** 177

1 ARRANGING A MEETING VIA EMAIL

1.1 How should I email an existing client / supplier to arrange a meeting?

When emailing people you already know, you can follow this structure:

1. announce that you want to arrange a meeting (possibly also suggesting the time)
2. explain the need for the meeting
3. say who should attend and why
4. state the time and place of the meeting (if not mentioned earlier)
5. say whether you are attaching an agenda in the current email, or whether you will be sending one later (if so, when)
6. reiterate the importance of the meeting
7. ask for confirmation of attendance

Below is an example email to a group of people who already know each other:

Dear all,

Can we arrange a conference call for 15.00 on Monday 21 October?

I would like us to discuss the xyz project.

The following people would benefit from attending as they will be an integral part of the project: Yohannes, Sergei, Brigitte and Wei.

I will be sending you an agenda within the next two days, and I would appreciate your feedback on this agenda by the end of next week.

I would like to stress that this call should help us to move forward our plans for the project and ensure its success.

Please could you confirm your attendance by tomorrow evening.

Thank you.

1.2 What's the best way to email a potential client to arrange a meeting?

When emailing people you do not already know, you can follow this structure:

1. introduce yourself / explain how you got the recipient's email address
2. announce that you want a meeting
3. explain the purpose of the meeting
4. suggest a possible date / time
5. motivate the recipient to agree to the meeting

Below is an example email to a person that the sender does not know or does not know very well:

Your name was given to me by Sergei Kapkov who though you might be interested in ...
... I am the sales manager at and as you can see from our website (www.xxx.yyy), we specialize in ...

Next month I plan to be in your are area and I was wondering whether you might find the time to meet, so that I can give your more details about ...

The meeting should not take up more than 30 minutes of your valuable time. Please let me know whether you might be free in the first or second weeks of next month.

From what Mr Kapkov has told me, I am sure we could save you up to 25 % in your budget for ...

I look forward to hearing from you.

1.3 I want to set up a 1-1 meeting with someone I already know. What email should I write?

Emails to people who you already know or who work for the same company tend to be much shorter and less formal. The email below is to a colleague who the sender already knows.

I'm in London w/c 30 August so this might be a good time to meet up and discuss anything you might have in mind regarding ...

Let me know when would be a good time for you, though my preference would be for early afternoon so that I can get the late afternoon flight back.

Best

The next email is from a person in one branch of a company who is trying to find out who is the appropriate person to talk to in another branch of the same company.

Next week I will be in NY and I would like to meet to discuss our recruitment process. Are you the right person to be talking directly to the recruitment agencies and give them any details they might need?

If you could get back to me by the end of today that would be great.

Best regards