

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!

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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.