

10 WORST THINGS TO DO IN A MEETING

1. SHOW UP LATE

Nothing says “I’m disorganized” like walking into a meeting already in progress. Arriving a few minutes early not only demonstrates that you respect your colleagues’ time, but guarantees you get a good seat as well.

2. BE UNPREPARED

If you’ve been given an agenda or materials beforehand, read them. Think of any questions you have or contributions you could make to the subjects being discussed.

3. MONOPLISE THE CONVERSATION

When discussion ensues, it’s protocol to let more senior figures contribute first. Once they’ve said their piece, concisely make your points. Don’t drone on – or feel compelled to speak at all if you don’t have anything purposeful to say. As the old adage goes, “Better to be thought a fool, than speak and remove all doubt.”

4. MAKE YOUR STATEMENTS SOUND LIKE QUESTIONS

Phrasing your statements as questions invites others to say no, argue or take credit for your ideas. Speak in declarative sentences, such as “Let’s do more research on that.”

5. MISREAD SIGNALS

Try to gauge the needs and mood of those in the room. Listen carefully to what people are saying to discern how receptive they might be to your ideas. You need to make your message relevant to your audience. For example, if everyone is focused on cutting costs, and you’re angling for a system upgrade, you’ll either want to stress how the new software will save money – or table your request for another day.

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6. GET INTIMIDATED

Unfortunately, some of your co-workers may view meetings as a battleground and themselves as verbal gladiators, sparring for the boss's favour. If you become the victim of a put-down or accusation, calmly defend yourself. If you need to buy time to think, do so with a question that will make your attacker accountable. For example: "Andrew, when did you start thinking I don't care about our sales results?"

7. CHEW GUM

The smacking, popping, cracking and cow-like chewing are annoying. Plus, it is rude and unprofessional.

8. KEEP YOUR MOBILE PHONE ON

You turn it off in restaurants and at the movies. Turn it off for your meeting. A ringing phone interrupts the presenter and distracts the audience. Whatever you do, never take a call in the middle of a meeting.

9. WANDER OFF TOPIC

Don't hijack the agenda. Stay focused on what you and your team are trying to accomplish. If you must digress into unrelated areas, make sure it's alright with the others present. A good way to handle important issues not related to the topic at hand is to record them on a flipchart and revisit them at an appropriate time.

10. SKIP IT

Sure, you might get more done if you forgo a meeting to stay at your desk and do your actual work. But, if the meeting was called by someone higher up in the organization, you will miss an opportunity to make yourself known. Remember, in the end, meetings aren't about productivity, they are about projecting a positive image and forming and building relationships that are crucial to your success.