

# Some Thoughts About Meeting Etiquette<sup>1</sup>

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Several years ago, I was asked by a CEO to help him improve the effectiveness of his meetings with his middle manager group. He complained that people would arrive late, come unprepared, interrupt people when they were speaking, engage in side conversations, and so on.

After polling the group to make sure I was aware of all of the things that might go wrong during a meeting, I composed a document consisting of ten guidelines for holding an effective meeting. I called it “Meeting Etiquette.” I had it printed on a large poster and hung it on the meeting wall.

I then attended several meetings to train participants how to observe the guidelines. I brought a large gong into the room. Every time someone violated any of the ten guidelines, I hit the gong. As you might expect, it didn’t take very long for everyone to practice good meeting etiquette!

Following are the ten guidelines:

## 1. PUNCTUALITY IS A MUST.



Keeping people waiting to begin a meeting abuses their time. Further, if the meeting starts without you, you may risk missing valuable information and lose the chance to provide your input.

## 2. ABSTAIN FROM ELECTRONICS.

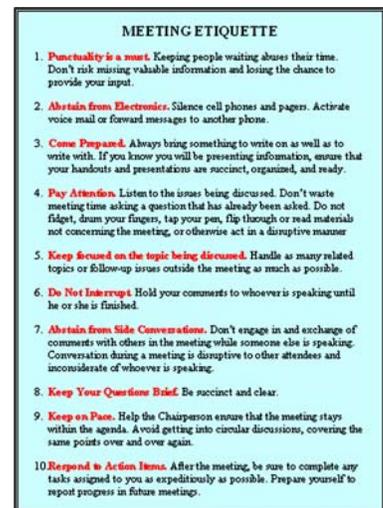


Before you come into the meeting, activate your voice mail or forward messages to another phone. Then, when you enter the meeting, silence your cell phone and or your pager.

## 3. COME PREPARED.

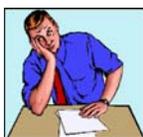


Always bring something to write on as well as to write with. If there are things you want to say, prepare notes in advance. If you know you will be presenting information, ensure that your handouts are succinct, organized, and ready.



<sup>1</sup> From: [http://www.arniedahlke.com/100930\\_Run\\_Effective\\_Meetings.pdf](http://www.arniedahlke.com/100930_Run_Effective_Meetings.pdf)  
Please take a moment to look at Arnie's site: <http://www.arniedahlke.com>

#### 4. PAY ATTENTION.



Pay attention to the issues being discussed. Don't fidget, drum your fingers, tap your pen, flip through or read materials not concerning the meeting, or otherwise act in a disruptive manner. Don't waste meeting time asking a question that has already been asked.

#### 5. KEEP FOCUSED ON THE TOPIC BEING DISCUSSED



Even if you are bored by the topic, resist the temptation to daydream about other issues on your mind—stay focused on the current topic. Don't write notes for something else you are dealing with. Handle as many related topics or follow-up issues outside the meeting as much as possible.

#### 6. DO NOT INTERRUPT



You may be reacting favorably or unfavorably to what is being said and eager to express your opinion. You may be excited by some better ideas that you have that might solve a problem being discussed. Be patient. Hold your comments until whoever is speaking is finished.

#### 7. ABSTAIN FROM SIDE CONVERSATIONS



Don't engage in and exchange comments with others in the meeting while someone else is speaking. There is nothing so distracting as the side conversations of people during a meeting—they show a lack of consideration to others in the meeting, especially to the person who is speaking.

#### 8. KEEP YOUR QUESTIONS BRIEF



Don't waste meeting-time with drawn-out, confusing questions. Be succinct and clear when you are asking a question. Ask one question at a time, instead of combining several questions. Ask questions clearly related to the topic being discussed.

#### 9. KEEP ON PACE



Help the Chairperson ensure that the meeting stays within the agenda. Help fellow meeting attendees stay focused on the agenda. Avoid getting off on other topics not relevant to the agenda. Avoid getting into circular discussions, covering the same points over and over again.

#### 10. RESPOND TO ACTION ITEMS



Before the meeting ends make sure you are clear about what actions will be expected of you afterwards. After the meeting, be sure to complete any tasks assigned to you as expeditiously as possible. Prepare yourself to report progress in future meetings.

**IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR MEETINGS BY OBSERVING MEETING ETIQUETTE!**

