

Business meetings in the UK

Consider the comments below on business meetings in the UK. Discuss with your teacher your experiences elsewhere.



Punctuality

The British like to be punctual, perhaps not as precise as say in Germany, but lateness should be avoided.

Starting a meeting

Meetings in Britain may start with the offer of a cup of tea or coffee, and a chat about the weather or football or other news. If time is short, these preliminary exchanges will be brought to an end by someone saying, for example, **'Let me get straight to the point'**. But generally the British like to start meetings slowly.

A meeting is a way of bonding a team

People come together to share views and arrive at a consensus. Discussion is good, argument is not (for it divides the team).

British people avoid a conflict

This often means an issue is left unresolved – at least in the group meeting. People talk around a problem, identify it maybe, but step back from proposing the solution. British people prefer to go away and think about it, have quiet one-to-one conversations, exchange an email or two, and then plan a solution.

British people avoid saying 'no'

Expressions like **'yes, but...'**, 'I'm not entirely sure I go along with that' and 'yes, that's an idea for the future' are all expressions that mean 'no'.

The British say 'sorry' a lot

The British say **'sorry'** a lot. Not just when they are sorry, but also to catch people's attention, to start a complaint or if they disagree with you.

Managers prefer their authority to be understated

Managers like to have everyone's views **'on board'** and for the team **'to go forward together'**. Managers are seldom authoritarian or openly hierarchical. They will of course exercise their influence in a quieter, less noticed way. This is a gentler approach than in some cultures. Some have thought this a little **'two-faced'**.

Formality

Meetings in the UK are sometimes quite informal. Business might be discussed in the corridor, or over a pint in the pub. The British like to **mix business with pleasure**.

Planning

The British generally do not draw up detailed plans in a meeting. They exchange views and introduce solutions in a deliberately (or culturally natural) vague way. Approximation and vagueness is a part of the idiom: **'see it through'**, **'sort it out'** and **'roughly speaking'** are among the typical expressions you will hear in a meeting.

Review the words in bold with your teacher.