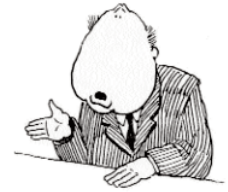


# Business meetings in the UK

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.