

Meetings

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Preparing Effective Meetings

A productive meeting starts before the first participant joins. Good preparation helps everyone make the best use of the time together.

Meeting Invitation Template

Purpose: <What should be achieved by the end of the meeting?>

Expected Outcome:

- ☐ Inform
- ☐ Discuss
- ☐ Decide
- ☐ Plan next steps

Agenda:

- 5 min – ...
- 10 min – ...
- 5 min – Summary & action items

Preparation (optional):

- Can I prepare something, e.g., a diagram, as a base for discussion?
- Read: <link>
- Think about: ...

Participants: <Who needs to attend and why?>

After the meeting we should have:

- Decision(s):
- Action item(s):
- Owner(s):

Define the desired outcome

Every meeting should have a clear objective.

Instead of:

- Discuss architecture

Prefer:

- Decide which architecture to implement.
 - Review the design and identify open questions.
 - Agree on the next implementation steps.
-

Share an agenda in advance

A simple agenda helps participants prepare and keeps the discussion focused.

For each agenda item, consider including:

- Topic
 - Goal (Inform, Discuss, Decide)
 - Owner
 - Estimated duration
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Invite the right people

Only invite people who:

- Make decisions
- Provide essential expertise
- Need the information first-hand

Everyone else can often be informed afterwards.

Share relevant material beforehand

If participants need to read a document, specification, or design, send it before the meeting.

Meeting time should be spent discussing—not silently reading slides.

Assign roles

For larger or important meetings, assigning simple roles can improve effectiveness:

- Facilitator – keeps the meeting on track.
 - Note taker – captures decisions and action items.
 - Timekeeper – helps stay within the schedule.
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Finish with clear actions

Before ending the meeting, make sure everyone knows:

- What was decided?
- What are the next actions?
- Who owns each action?
- When is it due?

A meeting is only successful if people leave with a shared understanding of what happens next.

Time Is Our Most Valuable Resource

At the heart of a healthy meeting culture is awareness:

- Meetings consume both time and money.
- Attention is a limited resource.
- Good collaboration does not always require a meeting.

By reminding ourselves of these principles regularly and openly, we create a culture where meetings serve us—not the other way around.

- Does everyone need to attend?
 - It's perfectly acceptable to ask this question—both before and during a meeting.
- 2. Is it okay to leave the meeting?
 - Yes. Leaving a meeting when the discussion is no longer relevant to you is professional.
- 3. Can we end meetings 5–10 minutes early?
 - Reflect on the discussion
 - Capture key takeaways
 - Prepare for the next task
 - Simply take a short break
- 4. Can we cancel meetings in advance?
 - Canceling a meeting that no longer provides value is a sign of respect—not a failure.

So the next time you receive a meeting invitation, take a moment to pause. A clear objective, a concise agenda, a slightly shorter meeting—or even the courage to cancel one—can make everyone's day just a little better.

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