

Meeting Structure Guidelines

Ensure your workplace fosters equal participation and balanced conversations



Equity, psychological safety, and respect are all part of having a successful meeting at work.

However, meetings can often be monopolized by the most senior person or the loudest voice in the room. This can leave people with valuable points-of-view and opinions without the opportunity or confidence to use their voice.

To ensure your workplace fosters equal participation and balanced conversations, we created a few simple guidelines you can use in any type of meeting. Sharing this with leadership can help make sure this is a priority across all levels of your organization.

1. Choose a Facilitator to run your meeting

The Facilitator is someone already attending the meeting that serves as the point person. They are responsible for starting the meeting, keeping an eye on time, and moving conversation forward. Rotate the Facilitator at every meeting. This way, everyone has the opportunity to lead (and not just the senior-most person in the room).

2. Kick off every meeting with a check-in

The Facilitator starts the meeting by posing a question everyone will answer one-by-one. This is a great way to hear each person's voice immediately.

A great question to start with is, "What has your attention coming into this meeting?" This encourages people to be honest about their mindset and allows everyone to be on the same page (perhaps someone is expecting a call in the middle of the meeting. Surfacing that matter gives everyone helpful context for why this person may seem distracted).

3. Set the agenda

After the check-in, the Facilitator should quickly give a run down of the structure of the meeting. For example: "We're going to go over our team metrics, then Sam will give us an update on the office design project, etc. "

Pro tip: *If your meetings don't typically follow an explicit structure, it's fine to build one in the moment! The Facilitator can start with a check-in, then take a minute to ask for discussion topics from the group. Write the topics down, then start to process them from the top (or in the order that makes the most sense).*

4. Formalize how everyone reacts and asks questions

Meetings get sidetracked and conversations dominated by the loudest voices when there's no structure in place. The Facilitator should ask that all questions and reactions be saved for the end of an update. Then, going around the room, the Facilitator asks each person if they have any questions or reactions.

Pro tip: *The Facilitator should remind the group to be respectful and to not talk over each other.*

