

**2 In pairs, prepare a brief opening statement by the Chair to introduce the meeting above:**

- think about what the opening statement from the Chair needs to say
- use your agenda as a guide
- refer to the Language Checklist
- practice in pairs.

## Role play

**Work in groups of four.**

Ash & Whitebeam is a manufacturing company. The Board has decided to set up a subcommittee to examine the four problems contained in File cards 20–23.

Your group is that subcommittee and you are meeting to discuss these problems and to make recommendations to the Board. Read through the information on the File cards. Decide in groups who should lead the discussion on each of the four topics. Each group member should prepare his/her introduction. When everyone is ready, begin the meeting. If possible, also choose an overall Chair for the meeting.

### TRANSFER

Think about the role play meeting that you have worked on in this unit and your role in it. Evaluate the meeting by considering the following:

- What were the objectives?
- What was your role in the meeting?
- Did you use any visual supports?
- What was the result of the meeting?
- How did you feel about this result?
- What action or follow-up was agreed?

### TRANSFER

If you were the Chair of the meeting, again think about your role. Consider all the above questions but also the following:

- What were the objectives?
- How long did it take – was this too long or too short?
- Were you an effective Chair?
- Did you summarize the meeting?
- How could you have chaired the meeting better?

### TRANSFER

If you know of any meeting that you are going to participate in, think about your preparation for that meeting. What do you need to consider?



## Language Checklist

### Chairing and leading discussion

#### *Opening the meeting*

Thank you for coming ...

(It's ten o'clock). Let's start ...

We've received apologies from ...

Any comments on our previous meeting?

#### *Introducing the agenda*

You've all seen the agenda ...

On the agenda, you'll see there are three items.

There is one main item to discuss ...

#### *Stating objectives*

We're here today to hear about plans for ...

Our objective is to discuss different ideas ...

What we want to do today is to reach a decision ...

#### *Introducing discussion*

The background to the problem is ...

This issue is about ...

The point we have to understand is ...

#### *Calling on a speaker*

I'd like to ask Mary to tell us about ...

Can we hear from Mr. Passas on this?

I know that you've prepared a statement on your Department's views ...

#### *Controlling the meeting*

Sorry Hans, can we let Magda finish?

Er, Henry, we can't talk about that.

#### *Summarizing*

So, what you're saying is ...

Can I summarize that? You mean ...

So, the main point is ...

#### *Moving the discussion on*

Can we go on to think about ...

Let's move on to the next point.

#### *Closing the meeting*

I think we've covered everything.

So, we've decided ...

I think we can close the meeting now.

That's it. The next meeting will be ...

## Skills Checklist

### Preparation for meetings

#### *Chair*

- Decide objectives.
- What type of meeting (formal or informal, short or long, regular or a "one time," internal / external information giving / discussion / decision making)?
- Is a social element required?
- Prepare an agenda.
- Decide time / place / participants / who must attend and who can be notified of decisions.
- Study subjects for discussion.
- Anticipate different opinions.
- Speak to participants.

#### *Secretary*

- Obtain agenda and list of participants.
- Inform participants and check:
  - room, equipment, paper, materials.
  - refreshments, meals, accommodation, travel.

#### *Participants*

- Study subjects on agenda, work out preliminary options.
- If necessary, find out team or department views.
- Prepare own contribution, ideas, visual supports, etc.

#### *The role of the Chair*

- Start and end on time.
- Introduce objectives, agenda.
- Introduce speakers.
- Define time limits for contributions.
- Control discussion, hear all views.
- Summarize discussion at key points.
- Ensure that key decisions are written down by the secretary.
- Ensure that conclusions and decisions are clear and understood.
- Define actions to be taken and individual responsibilities.



# Quick Communication Check

## 1 Meetings vocabulary

Look at the word square below. Find seven words which match the given definitions.

- 1 A written report of what was said in a meeting.
- 2 People who attend a meeting.
- 3 The purpose or intention of the meeting.
- 4 List of items to discuss in a meeting.
- 5 Person who controls a meeting.
- 6 Change the date of a meeting to a later date.
- 7 To have a break in a meeting.

P	A	R	T	I	C	I	P	A	N	T	S
F	G	I	O	I	H	P	H	O	V	N	O
A	E	M	J	C	A	Y	S	B	D	N	M
N	N	O	A	Z	I	B	E	J	E	O	I
D	D	C	N	P	R	A	S	E	D	N	M
E	A	K	C	O	B	J	E	C	H	I	N
K	A	B	M	S	O	P	C	T	Y	X	Q
D	A	B	C	T	H	H	O	I	L	T	U
R	D	B	N	P	L	K	P	V	O	O	I
I	A	D	J	O	U	R	N	E	D	J	S
G	D	M	I	N	U	T	E	S	Z	M	T
T	U	N	B	E	A	R	T	S	A	P	P

## 2 Chairing a meeting

A Complete the following sentences with words from the box.

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ to the meeting.
- 2 We have three \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3 The main \_\_\_\_\_ of the meeting is to reach a decision on the Abacus Project.
- 4 I'd like to hear John's \_\_\_\_\_ and then we can have a \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5 I hope we can \_\_\_\_\_ by 4 o'clock.
- 6 John, can you \_\_\_\_\_ your main points?
- 7 Does anyone have any \_\_\_\_\_?
- 8 Let's \_\_\_\_\_ to the next point.
- 9 There is not enough time to discuss this. Can we \_\_\_\_\_ this discussion to a later meeting?
- 10 I think we should \_\_\_\_\_ the meeting now, as it's after 4 o'clock.

report  
finish  
agenda  
purpose  
move on  
items  
close  
summarize  
questions  
postpone  
discussion  
welcome

B Choose the right ending to make the Chair's remarks below.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 I'd like to welcome _____            | a) who is going to present a short report. |
| 2 There are three things _____         | b) comments on Marie's report?             |
| 3 Can I introduce Marie Fischer, _____ | c) all the items on the agenda.            |
| 4 Does anyone have any _____           | d) a date for our next meeting?            |
| 5 Let's move _____                     | e) for coming.                             |
| 6 So, that's completed _____           | f) to the next point.                      |
| 7 Can we set _____                     | g) all for today.                          |
| 8 I think that's _____                 | h) on the agenda.                          |
| 9 Thanks _____                         | i) everyone to the meeting.                |

1 i), 2 h), 3 a), 4 b), 5 f), 6 c), 7 d), 8 g), 9 e)

**B**  
7 questions, 8 move on, 9 postpone, 10 close  
4 report, discussion, 5 finish, 6 summarize,  
1 Welcome, 2 items, agenda, 3 purpose,

**A**  
**2**

E	A	R	T	I	C	I	P	A	N	T	S
F	G	I	O	I	H	P	H	O	V	N	O
A	E	M	J	C	A	Y	S	B	D	N	M
N	N	O	A	Z	I	B	E	J	E	O	I
D	D	C	N	P	R	A	S	E	D	N	M
E	A	K	C	O	B	J	E	C	H	I	N
K	A	B	M	S	O	P	C	T	Y	X	Q
D	A	B	C	T	H	H	O	I	L	T	U
R	D	B	N	P	L	K	P	V	O	O	I
I	A	D	J	O	U	R	N	E	D	J	S
G	D	M	I	N	U	T	E	S	Z	M	T
T	U	N	B	E	A	R	T	S	A	P	P

**Key**

# Sorry to interrupt, but ...

## AIMS

- The structure of decision making
- Stating and asking for opinion
- Interrupting and handling interruptions

## 1 The structure of decision making



1 Read the text on page 104 and answer these questions.

- a) What kind of meetings is the text about?
- b) What *structure* does the text describe?
- c) What key point is made about communication?

2 Read the text again. Do you agree with:

- a) the first sentence? Give reasons for your answer.
- b) Haynes' suggestions for the steps involved in decision making?
- c) the view that communication must be a two-way process?
- d) what the writer says about consensus in the final paragraph?



The reason for having a meeting is to make a decision. Information may be given in a presentation followed by questions or discussion, but it is to get a consensus that the meeting has been arranged in the first place. Achieving this in the most time- and cost-effective manner possible is a goal that everyone attending (the meeting) must share.

5 Marion Haynes (1988) maintains that decision making meetings need to follow a specific structure. The rational decision process includes the following steps:

- study / discuss / analyze the situation
- define the problem
- set an objective
- 10 • state imperatives and desirables
- generate alternatives
- establish evaluation criteria
- evaluate alternatives
- choose among alternatives.

15 One other aspect of decision making is the necessity for participants in the meeting to be aware of one another's needs and perceptions. If these are not effectively communicated, if there is an insufficient degree of understanding of one another's requirements, then an acceptable conclusion is unlikely to be reached. There are four essential elements in decision making: awareness, understanding, empathy and perception.

20 It is only when we accept that communications are a two-way process that any form of communication, including decision making, will become genuinely successful and effective.

Decision making is not always an identifiable activity. Frequently the discussion can evolve into a consensus which can be recognized and verbalized by the leader without the need to "put things to the vote."

Adapted from Bernice Hurst *The Handbook of Communication Skills* (London: Kogan Page, 1991).

### 3 Find words or phrases in the text which mean the same as the following:

- a) common agreement
- b) economical use of resources
- c) aim
- d) fix a goal
- e) what one must have
- f) what one would like to have
- g) consider other options
- h) way of seeing things
- i) seeing things as others see them
- j) develop
- k) express through speaking.

## 2 Stating and asking for opinion

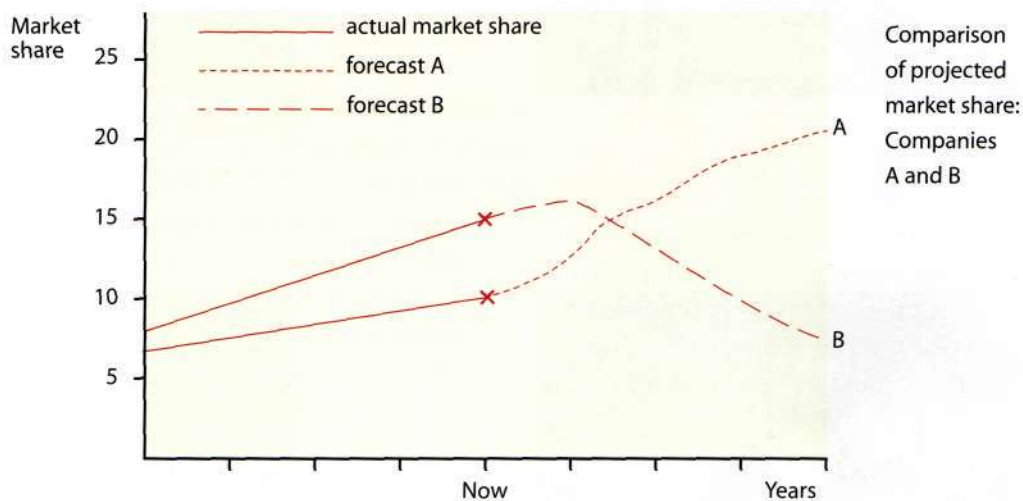
- 1 Quickly suggest as many ways of asking for opinion and stating opinion as you can. Two examples are given here:

*What do you think about ... ? – I think ...*

*Do you have any opinion on ... ? – In my experience ...*



- 2 Listen to a recording of directors of a pharmaceuticals company discussing buying new production control equipment. They have to choose between two alternative suppliers, A and B. As you listen, refer to the graph below which shows the market share development of suppliers A and B.



- In technical terms, which system is the best?
- Which is the cheapest?
- Which system seems to be the best choice? Why?



- 3 Listen again. Identify examples of language used to:
- ask for opinion
  - state opinion.

Did you think of these in Exercise 1?



## Practice 1

Below are a series of topics. Ask colleagues for their views and note if their opinions are weak, strong or neutral. If asked, give your views on the subjects – either quite strongly or fairly weakly.



### 1 Arms trade

Your opinion .....

Others' opinion .....



### 3 Expenditure on space research

Your opinion .....

Others' opinion .....



### 5 The quality of television broadcasting

Your opinion .....

Others' opinion .....



### 2 Testing cosmetic products on animals

Your opinion .....

Others' opinion .....



### 4 Exploitation of the rain forests

Your opinion .....

Others' opinion .....



### 6 Nuclear power

Your opinion .....

Others' opinion .....

### 3 Interrupting and handling interruptions



- 1 Listen to the recording of a discussion in the European sales office of an American sport utility vehicle (SUV) manufacturer, Amass. It concerns the advertising plans for the launch of a new truck, the Amass 4 PLUS. The marketing manager, Matt Haslam, is explaining his ideas. Mark the following statements as True (T) or False (F).



- a) The truck will be sold to professional users of SUVs.
- b) It is not going to be used as a mass market SUV.
- c) Matt wants to keep the same agency they have always used.
- d) Matt used his own research to help him make decisions.
- e) Changing advertising agencies would cost 50% more.



- 2 Listen again. Number the following interrupting phrases in the order in which you hear them.

- a) Yes, but Matt, if I can interrupt you again. We're talking serious money here. We've got to be careful ...
- b) Er, excuse me, Matt, just a moment. That's a big claim ...
- c) It's the most important thing ...
- d) One moment! Can we start with a few basics?
- e) Yes, so, a select, professional market first, then the mass market SUV.
- f) But why? CMA have been okay in the past.
- g) Let's just clarify where ... who the audience is, what's the target group ...
- h) What! Most agencies charge a lot more than CMA.
- i) You plan to use our usual agency, CMA?

- 3
- a) Discuss the style of the Amass meeting.
  - b) How does Matt handle the interruptions? Does his approach change at any point during the extract?
  - c) Did you think the interruptions are appropriate?



**4 Interruptions can have different intentions:**

- a) In pairs, suggest examples of each of these.
- 1 ask for clarification
  - 2 add opinion
  - 3 ask for more details
  - 4 change direction of the discussion
  - 5 disagree.
- b) Below is part of a discussion between directors of an oil company talking about a fall in sales. In pairs, suggest appropriate interruptions to complete the dialogue.
- a:** The fall in sales is mainly due to the recession affecting world markets.
- b:** \_\_\_\_\_
- a:** Well, it's a general fall of around 5% in sales for most product areas. Also, specifically in the oil processing sector, we have much lower sales, mainly because we sold our UK subsidiary, Anglo Oils.
- b:** \_\_\_\_\_
- a:** Well, no, I'd rather not go into that. We discussed that in previous meetings. I'd prefer to talk about future prospects. The outlook is very good right now ...
- b:** \_\_\_\_\_
- a:** I'm very surprised you say that. In fact, sales forecasts are much better now. Anyway, let me tell you ...
- b:** \_\_\_\_\_
- a:** New markets? Yes, but can we talk about new markets later? I have some important information on that. But first ...
- b:** \_\_\_\_\_
- a:** Take a break? We've only just started!

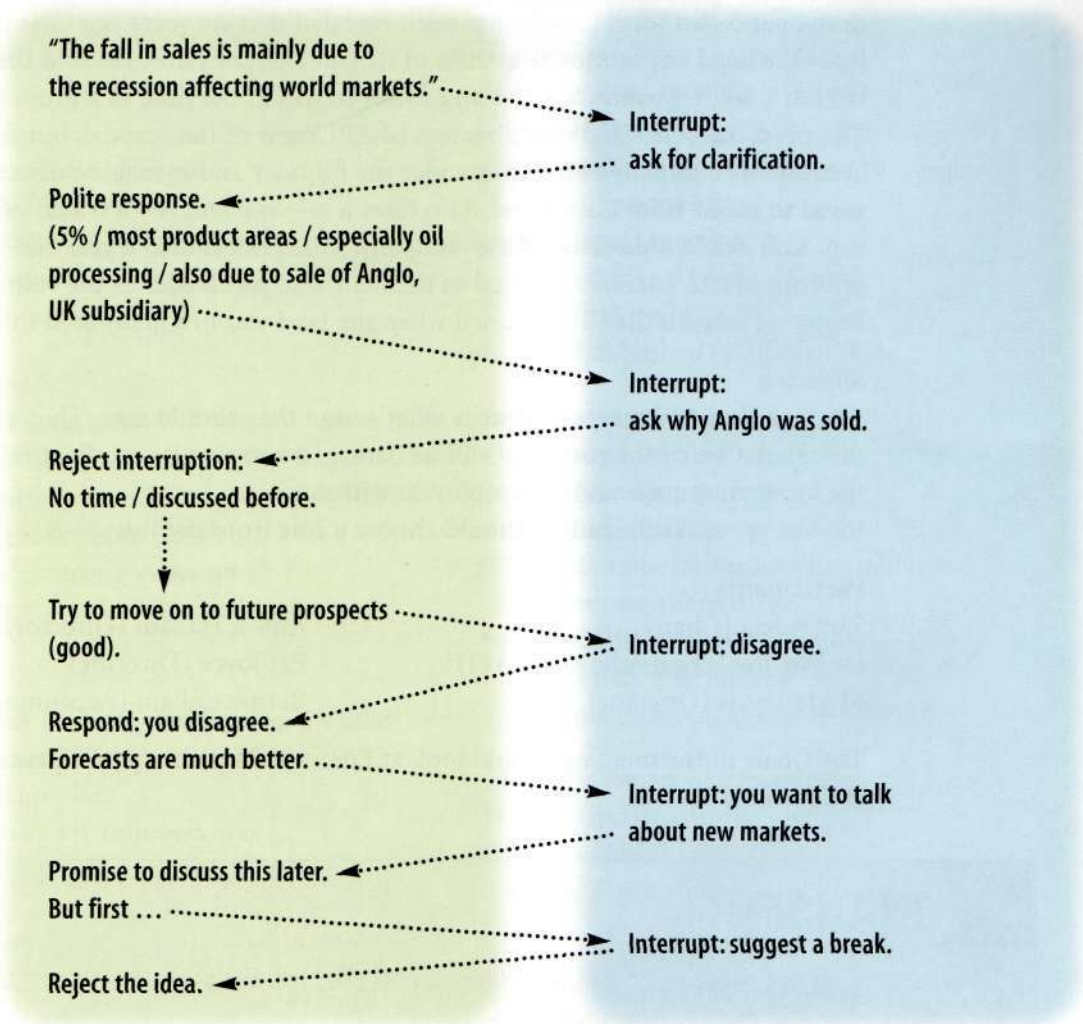
**5 There are different ways of handling interruptions.**

- a) In pairs, suggest one or two appropriate phrases for the following:
- 1 promise to come back to a point later
  - 2 politely disagree with an interruption
  - 3 say the interruption is not relevant or that time is short
  - 4 politely accept the interruption and respond to it before continuing
  - 5 rejecting a suggestion.



- b) Listen to a complete model version of the dialogue in Exercise 4 above. In pairs, match each of the five examples of handling an interruption to one of the ways listed above (1–5).

- 6 Use the skeleton outline below to recreate the entire dialogue with a partner. Choose alternative interruptions and ways of handling interruptions.



## Practice 2

This task is based on a discussion about investment in public transportation. Work in pairs, A and B. Student A should look at File card 13A. Student B should read File card 13B.

## Role play

This role play consists of an internal company meeting. It is designed to cover the objectives of this unit and also chairing meetings and leading discussion from Unit 10. Work in groups of between four and six.