



Too informal for most business meetings

What is wrong with all of these phrases?

- "In here please."
- "Sit (here)"/ "You can't sit there."/ "You have to sit here."
- "You look hungover."/ "Are you okay?"
- "Quiet please."/ "Stop chatting."
- "Right, let's start."
- "Alex isn't coming."/ "Alex has more important things to do."
- "Take the minutes please, Jane."
- "You should all have brought your copies of the agenda with you."/ "You got the agenda, right?"
- "Right. First item on the agenda. Comments?"
- "No interruptions during presentations."
- "We have loads to get through, so stick to the timings on the agenda."
- "You all have to say something, starting here and moving clockwise."
- "Someone say something."/ "Hello. Anyone there?"/ "I'm waiting!"
- "That's irrelevant."/ "That's completely unrelated to what we are speaking about."/ "That's not what we are speaking about."
- "This is not the time to speak about that."
- "Let me speak."/ "If I can get a word in edgeways..."
- "Shut up."/ "Zip it."
- "Will you all stop speaking at once!"
- "Please give other people a chance to speak!"
- "Stop arguing."/ "Break it up."/ "Now, now children."
- "Go outside and calm down."
- "That's quite enough from you."/ "Okay. Okay. We get the point."
- "Time's up."
- "This is a waste of time, so let's take a break/ move onto the next point."
- "No kidding."/ "Damn right!"
- "Rubbish!"/ "Nonsense!"
- "No criticism of ideas is allowed during the brainstorming stage."
- "That's it."/ "We're done."
- "That was one kick ass meeting."/ "Wow, great meeting!"

Apart from when you are trying to be humorous, the language above is too informal and/ or too impolite for most business meetings. Are there any examples which you think you could use in any of your own business meetings?

Change the phrases above to make them more polite/ formal. They don't have to be very formal, just suitable for at least some of your own business meetings.

What are the general differences between formal and informal language?

Suggested answers

- “In here please.” – “This way please.” “After you.” “Please come in and take a seat.”
- “Sit (here)!”/ “You can’t sit there.”/ “You have to sit here.” – “Please take a seat.” “Could you sit over here?” “Here is better, if you could.” “I’ve saved this seat for you.”
- “You look hungover.”/ “Are you okay?” – “How are you?” “How’s it going”
- “Quiet please.”/ “Stop chatting.” – “Can I have your attention please?” (cough cough)
- “Right, let’s start.” – “Shall we get started?” “I guess it’s time we made a start.”
- “Alex isn’t coming.” – “Alex sends his apologies” “Alex can’t attend because...”
- “Take the minutes please, Jane.” – “Could you take minutes today, Jane?” “I think it’s your turn to take minutes, isn’t it, Jane?”
- “You should all have brought your copies of the agenda with you.” – “Do you all have the agenda (with you)?” “Does anyone need a copy of the agenda?”
- “Right. First item on the agenda. Comments?” – “The first thing on the agenda is... Who would like to start the discussion on this?”
- “No interruptions during presentations.” – “Could you leave any questions/ comments until the end of the presentations?”
- “We have loads to get through, so stick to the timings on the agenda.” – “Can we try and stick to the timings on the agenda?” “If you could stick to the timings on the agenda, that would be a great help?”
- “You all have to say something, starting here and moving clockwise.” – “Let’s go around the table and see what everyone thinks.”
- “Someone say something.”/ “Hello. Anyone there?”/ “I’m waiting!” – “Anyone?”
- “That’s irrelevant.”/ “That’s completely unrelated to what we are speaking about.”/ “That’s not what we are speaking about.” – “We seem to be going off topic.”
- “This is not the time to speak about that.” – “Can we leave that discussion until later/ another meeting/ AOB?”
- “Let me speak.”/ “If I can get a word in edgeways...” – “If I may...”
- “Shut up.”/ “Zip it.” – “Perhaps someone else can have their say before we come back to you again.”
- “Will you all stop speaking at once!” – “Can we each state our positions before we debate the point?”
- “Please give other people a chance to speak!” – “Perhaps someone else can have their say before we come back to you again.”
- “Stop arguing.”/ “Break it up.”/ “Now, now children.” – “Can anyone else give their opinion on the point that ... and ... are discussing?”
- “Go outside and calm down.” – “Let’s take a break to clear our heads.”
- “Okay. Okay. We get the point.” – “Thank you for your contribution.”
- “Time’s up.” – “We seem to be running out of time.”
- “This is a waste of time, so let’s take a break/ move onto the next point.” – “We don’t seem to be making much progress, so...”
- “No kidding.”/ “Damn right!” – “You took the words right out of my mouth.”
- “Rubbish!”/ “Nonsense” – “I find it difficult to agree with you there.”
- “No criticism of ideas is allowed during the brainstorming stage.” – “Please leave discussion of the points raised until later.”
- “That’s it.”/ “We’re done.” – “I think we’ve covered everything.”
- “Wow, great meeting!” – “Thank you, that was a very productive.”