



Modul B 06/III

# Business English II: „We’re here to decide“ – Business Meetings and Negotiations

Internationale Kompetenzen

Jean Lennox

## Jean Lennox M.A.



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- Business English
- Technical English
- International Studies
- In-company training
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### Lennox, Jean:

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**Herausgeber:** MBA-Fernstudienprogramm  
Prof. Dr. Thomas Mühlencoert / Prof. Dr. Uwe Hansen (Studiengangsleitung)  
Fachbereich Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften  
Hochschule Koblenz, RheinAhrCampus  
Joseph-Rovan-Allee 2 • 53424 Remagen

**Vertrieb:** zfh – Zentrum für Fernstudien im Hochschulverbund - Koblenz

**Leiter:** Prof. Dr. Ralf Haderlein

**Anschrift:** zfh – Zentrum für Fernstudien im Hochschulverbund  
Konrad-Zuse-Straße 1 • 56075 Koblenz • Tel.: 0261/91538-0

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## **Preface**

Welcome to “We’re here to decide...”

We spend much of our lives making decisions – some tiny, some enormous. The quality of these decisions can heavily influence our personal success or the success of our company or organisation. We make some decisions individually, but many are made in a group through discussion and negotiation.

Almost every aspect of business involves some form of group decision making. We meet with others to discuss deals and negotiate the details of contracts, to work on a project to ask for a pay-rise or to decide on which new office equipment we need. Good negotiating skills are crucial to your success in life! And there is no need to worry: people aren’t usually born as good negotiators – these skills can be learned!

This course unit gives you a thorough introduction to the most important aspects of meeting and negotiating in English with people from different cultures.

It is divided into two main parts. In the first part, we look at the framework for setting up a meeting and the skills you need to perform well, whatever your role, in the meeting. You will learn how to organise a meeting, write the agenda and invite the participants. You will also learn about the special functions of the chair and facilitator, and how to take and distribute the minutes.

The second part of the book looks more closely at the theory and practice of negotiating.

In both parts there are sample English phrases and sentences for you to use in meetings and negotiations. They will help you run a well-organised meeting, and to reach your own or your company’s goals. There are also intercultural tips that will help you prepare for meeting with people from around the globe.

I hope you enjoy working with this book, and that it helps you to become even more successful in your business and personal life.

April 2012  
Jean Lennox

### **Recommended Reading**

Brennan, Lynne, *Business Etiquette for the 21st Century*, Judy Piatkus Limited, London 2003.

Fisher, R., Ury, W. and B. Patton, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. Third Edition, Penguin Books, New York, 2012.

Kennedy, Gavin, *Essential Negotiation*, The Economist in Association with Bloomberg Press. Second Edition, New York, 2009.

Lennox, Jean (editor): *Business English Today*, Verlag für die Deutsche Wirtschaft, Bonn, 2012.

Malhotra, Deepak / Max H. Bazerman, *Negotiation Genius*, Bantam Books, New York, 2007.

Richardson, Karen / Rory Bridson, *Basic Training Business English – Meetings*, Langenscheidt, Berlin and Munich, 2004.

Shell, G. Richard, *Bargaining for Advantage, Negotiation Strategies for Reasonable People*. Second Edition, Penguin Books, London, 2006.

### Editor's note

This book has been written in **British English** (BE). Where necessary, alternative **American** spelling or vocabulary is provided (AE).Contents

## 1 Meetings

Here is a list of the vocabulary you will need for this section, in alphabetical order.

annual general meeting  'anjʊəl 'dʒɛn(ə)r(ə)l 'mi:tɪŋ	Jahreshauptversammlung
to blow one's nose  bləʊ wʌnz nəʊz	die Nase putzen
chair  tʃɛː	Vorsitz
comprehensive  kəmprɪ'hensɪv	umfassend
to conduct  'kɒndʌkt	durchführen
distinction  dɪ'stɪŋ(k)ʃ(ə)n	Unterscheidung
to facilitate  fə'sɪlɪteɪt	moderieren
fork  fɔ:k	Gabel
to negotiate  nɪ'gəʊʃɪeɪt	aushandeln
to resolve  rɪ'zɒlv	hier: lösen
to run  rʌn	hier: leiten
straightforward  streɪt'fɔ:wəd	klar, einfach
vast  vɑ:st	enorm

### 1.1 Different kinds of meetings

There are many different kinds of meetings, and even more reasons for holding one. In business, meetings are usually held for one of these reasons:

- To negotiate an agreement or a contract
- To develop a project
- To resolve conflicts
- To inform others about new developments
- To present a company's financial figures
- To make personnel decisions

The distinction between formal and informal occasions, which was mentioned in the course unit Business English I, also applies to business meetings. Just consider the differences between:

- A small departmental meeting
- A briefing for a specific task
- A committee meeting
- A sales meeting with clients or customers
- A task force meeting to prepare a report to the board of directors

- The annual general meeting (AGM) of a large multinational.
- These illustrate the extremes in size – from small and personal to huge and impersonal.

The size of a meeting and the level of formality have a direct influence on how participants – including the chair or facilitator / moderator – need to prepare themselves, not only from the point of view of content but also regarding how they dress, where they sit, how they introduce themselves, and so on.

## 1.2 Organising meetings

Here is a list of the vocabulary you will need for this section, in alphabetical order.

agenda  ə'dʒɛndə	Tagesordnung
any other business (AOB)   'eni 'ʌðə 'bɪznɪs	Verschiedenes, Sonstiges
co-worker  kəʊ'wɜ:kə	Kollege, Kollegin
to delegate; a delegate  'dɛlɪgət	delegieren; ein/e Delegierte/r
to embark on  ɪm'bɑ:k ɒn	etwas anfangen
entrepreneur  ,ɒnrəprə'nɜ:	Unternehmer
facility  fə'sɪlɪti	Anlage, Standort
guideline  'ɡaɪdlɪn	Richtlinie
hip  hɪp	Hüfte
huge, hugely  hju:dʒ ,  'hju:dʒli	riesig
to justify  'dʒʌstɪfaɪ	rechtfertigen
to maintain  meɪn'teɪn	aufrechterhalten
miscellaneous  ,mɪsə'leɪnɪəs	Verschiedenes
preliminary  pri'lɪmɪn(ə)ri	einleitend, vorbereitend
premise  'premɪs	Gelände, Gebäude
staff  stɑ:f	Personal
to take into consideration  teɪk 'ɪntə kənsɪdə'reɪʃ(ə)n	etwas in die eigene Überlegung einbeziehen
venue  'venju:	Veranstaltungsort

The preparation involved in organising a successful meeting usually goes unnoticed. But if something goes wrong, it *will* be noticed. In the next section you will read about the many aspects you have to take into consideration

when organising a professional business meeting.

### 1.2.1 Purpose

“Meetings are indispensable when you don’t want to achieve anything.”  
*J.K. Galbraith, American diplomat, economist and writer*

Every meeting needs a purpose or an objective. For instance, the meeting might be to report and review, share information and listen to briefings, and be part of a decision-making process. If you don’t have clear objectives, there is no clear purpose in holding a meeting. So either don’t hold one or re-think until you have found a clear objective. This is especially important in the case of international business meetings. The longer the journey, the more important it is to justify the time and effort the participants make to take part in the meeting. If executives from your parent company’s marketing department embark on a seven-hour flight, they really expect to do business.

### 1.2.2 The venue

Many things have to be taken into consideration when you organise a meeting on your own premises or at an outside venue: booking the room or the conference facility on time, arranging refreshments, making sure the participants are welcomed properly and so on.

To get the best out of the conference or meeting venue, make sure the management or staff know exactly what you need. Before you can let them know this, you have to be absolutely sure yourself. When you are booking a conference room at a hotel or conference centre, or reserving a room in your own office building, make sure the following points are clear in your mind:

- The date and time, along with any alternatives
- The number of delegates or participants
- The purpose of the event
- The budget available

- Travel and accommodation requirements for external participants
- Catering requirements
- Contact names for the day itself
- Necessary equipment

When you arrange equipment, make sure you get your terminology right. Do you need a projector, a whiteboard or a flip chart? Make sure your laptop is compatible with the projector, and that you have any necessary adapters.

One element that people often overlook is matching the room to the purpose of the meeting. Think through how the meeting will work. If the purpose is mainly to impart information, like at an AGM, then you might choose a rectangular room, set out in “theatre-style”. If you need to do a lot of discussion, you need “round-table” layout. If you need to be creative, it can help to walk around and be inspired by the sky, so find a suitable large room.



#### *Intercultural tip: Participating in Meetings - Mexico*

- Never put your hands on your hips as this is a sign of aggressiveness.
- Business meetings may be conducted at your hotel over breakfast, which can last two hours.
- Business lunches – which can last from 2-4 pm – are more common than business dinners.
- Mexicans stand close to each other when talking. Stepping back might be regarded as unfriendly.
- Do not use red ink anytime you are writing someone’s name.

### **1.2.3 Participants**

If a meeting is to be effective, you have to invite the right participants and the right number of participants. In some cases the chair may not be able to decide who these are – for example in a departmental meeting where every staff member has to be invited. But if the chair *is* able to determine who joins a meeting, he or she should make a deliberate choice.



***Practical tip***

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**Find out whether you really need to attend**

If you're invited to a meeting and don't know whether it's really relevant to you, contact the person who invited you. Perhaps you don't need to attend after all. If you believe that a co-worker would be able to make a much more active contribution, recommend they go instead. Or go to the meeting and bring that colleague in as specialist on a specific topic. This is a good idea if you have established the contact to a business partner or if the other participants feel that you are the best person to maintain and develop the business relationship. In some cases, team continuity is considered vital to the success of a project.

**1.2.4 Writing the agenda**

The written agenda of a meeting is more than a formality. It can contribute hugely to the success of a meeting. It allows the participants to do preliminary work or make any enquiries that are necessary before the meeting itself, and it keeps the meeting on track.

The formality of the agenda depends on the occasion. Obviously, AGMs are more formalised than simple departmental meetings. Whatever the level of formality, your agenda should always include:

- The name of the meeting or the subject to be discussed
- The date and time the meeting starts and finishes
- The names of the key participants
- A numbered list of items that are to be discussed
- Contact name

The last of the topics on the list is usually:

- AOB (any other business) or “miscellaneous” (*Verschiedenes*)

Here are two sample agendas for you to use as inspiration for your own meeting.

**Example 1:**

**Fifth Annual Conference on Lifelong Learning Initiatives**

Saturday, 04 February 20..., 8.30 – 18.30 hrs  
 Albert Borschette Conference Centre, Room 1A  
 Rue Froissart 36, Brussels

Contact person: Michelle Foucault, Room 003, Tel.: .... email ....

*Please note that you will need the invitation or this agenda to be able to gain access to the conference centre.*

**8.00 - 8.30** Arrival, Registration

**Morning Session**

**8.30 - 9.00** **Official welcome and introduction to the agenda**  
*Mario Cellani, Director, Lifelong Learning Policy Development Unit, European Commission*

**9.00 - 10.30** **Young entrepreneurs in the context of economic policy at European level: A brief introduction**  
*Henry Redman, CEO, Smith&Watson Ltd*

**10.30 - 11.00** **Coffee break**

**11.00 - 12.30** **The background of the European Quality Initiative**  
*Mario Cellani, Director, Lifelong Learning Policy Development Unit, European Commission*

**12.30 - 14.00** **Lunch break**

**Afternoon session**

*Participants will be assigned to one of two working groups according to their language preference (please refer to point 5 of the Registration Form). While the working language of one group will be only English, in the other group simultaneous interpretation into French, German and Italian will be provided.*

**14.00 – 17.30** **Workshop Session**  
**Workshop A:** New perspectives for life-long learning in corporate environments (in English)  
*(José Linyas, European Commission)*  
**Workshop B:** Assessing learning progress in

	corporate environments (in English with simultaneous French, German and Italian interpreting) <i>(Hannah Klein, European Commission)</i>
<b>17.30 – 18.00</b>	<b>Plenary Sessions - Evaluation</b>
<b>18.00 – 18.30</b>	<b>Miscellaneous</b>
<b>19:00</b>	<b>Conference Dinner</b>

### Example 2:

Invitation  
to all members of the  
**Anglo-German Friendship Society Frankfurt/Main e.V.**  
to attend the  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
on 07 March 20... from 5 – 6:30 p.m.

1. Election of the AGM Chair
2. Chair's Report for 20... *(Chris)*
3. Questions to the 20... Committee
4. Treasurer's Report *(Cheryl)*
5. Approval of Accounts
6. Discharge of the 20... Committee
7. Election of the 20... Committee
8. AOB

[chair@agfs-frankfurt.de](mailto:chair@agfs-frankfurt.de)

### 1.2.5 How to invite the participants

The method you choose to invite people will depend on the kind of meeting you are holding. But whether you invite someone by formal letter, email, telephone or face-to-face, your invitation should be both friendly and professional.

If you use a letter or email, include the agenda so the participants will know what to expect, and so they can prepare.

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There are guidelines on writing business letters in Appendix A.



### *Typisch Deutsch!*

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Avoid this typical German mistake

Many Germans say “date” when they mean “appointment”. For example, they say “I have a date with my doctor.” This is fine, if you have a romantic relationship with him or her, and are going out to dinner or to the movies! But if you are going because you are ill, you have an “appointment”.

You can, however, talk about the date of a meeting.

Here are some examples.

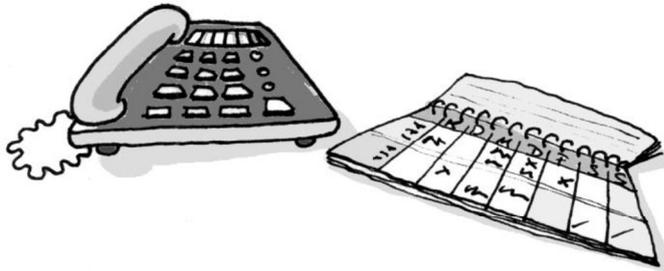
- I can't come to the meeting. I have a dentist's appointment.
- I have a doctor's appointment next week but I'm not sure what date it's on.
- I'm calling to make an appointment with the human resources manager.
- I'm trying to find a suitable date for a meeting.

### **Here are some useful phrases for written and spoken invitations**

#### **Useful phrases**

##### *Written invitations*

- I have pleasure in inviting you to our next AGM.
- I am enclosing / attaching a copy of the agenda.
- I am looking forward to seeing you there.
- I have arranged a meeting in Cologne on 12 August. I hope this suits you.
- Please confirm your attendance by... (date).



### *Telephone invitations*

- I'm calling about our next meeting.
- I'm calling to fix a date for our next meeting.
- I'm trying to arrange a meeting for September twenty-nine (AE) / the twenty-ninth of September (BE).
- Are you free then?
- Would you be available for a meeting on August eight (AE) /the eighth of August (BE)?

### *Answering a telephone invitation*

- Let me check my diary. Just a minute...
- Yes, that's fine.
- I'm afraid I can't make it. I have another appointment that day.
- I'm afraid I won't be able to attend the meeting after all because ...

### *Example of a telephone conversation*

Anna: Would you be able to come to a meeting here next Tuesday?  
Ben: Let me just check my diary. What time?  
Anna: From ten to about twelve-thirty.  
Ben: Yes that's fine.  
Anna: Good. I'll look forward to seeing you then.

## **1.2.6 Aspects of intercultural meetings**

*"Americans are motivated by the fear of missing an opportunity. Germans tend to avoid risk for fear of making the wrong decision."*

Dan Weiler, consultant for German and American companies.

Looking at the challenges you face in international business meetings fills books. There are vast differences in matters such as punctuality, who sits where, the use of first names, handshaking and small talk, and in negotiating style. The cross-cultural tips in the special boxes in this book will give you some idea of how varied these challenges can be. Of course, they are by no means comprehensive. If you are invited to a meeting in a foreign country, or if you are attending an international business meeting in your own country, find out what to expect. You can find out most of what you need to know on the internet. Go to your favourite search engine, type the country you are dealing with “+ etiquette” into the search box.

### Example

The image shows a search engine interface. The search bar contains the text "Saudi Arabia + etiquette". To the right of the search bar is a "FIND" button. Further right are links for "Advanced Search" and "Settings". Below the search bar, there are two sections: "SEARCH:" with a radio button selected for "Worldwide or Select a country", and "RESULTS IN:" with radio buttons for "All languages" and "English".

You will be given a comprehensive list of sites where you can find out everything you need, from business dress to dining etiquette to who sits where in a meeting.



### *Exercise: Test your international business etiquette!*

To show you some of the things you need to prepare for when you do business internationally, here are some statements about business etiquette in different countries. Do you think they are true or false?

	<b>BUSINESS ETIQUETTE: TRUE OR FALSE?</b>	TRUE	FALSE
1	In Japan, women usually wear trousers (BE) / pants (AE) to business meetings.		
2	In China, gifts are always exchanged at the start of business meetings.		
3	In China, it is very important to use titles (Doctor, Director, Professor) before people's names.		

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4	Never blow your nose in public in Japan.		
5	When shaking hands with an American, look at his or her mouth, and not at the eyes.		
6	In Indonesia, you should always leave some food on your plate at the end of a meal to show you have had enough.		
7	In Mexico, business is often conducted over a long lunch.		
8	In Britain, always address people using their full title (Doctor Jones, Professor Smith) and so on.		
9	In Britain, business is often conducted over dinner in a restaurant.		
10	At business lunches, Americans eat with their fork in their right hand.		
11	If you are invited to a social event in Russia, arrive 10 minutes early.		
12	In Indonesia, present a small gift to business partners at the start of negotiations.		

You can't be expected to remember every bit of this, but the exercise illustrates how difficult it can be to deal with different cultures, and emphasises the importance of good preparation next time you have an international meeting. Check your answers in the answer key in the Appendix at the end of the book.



### *Typisch Deutsch!*

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#### **Avoid this typical German mistake**

#### **Don't say "until" when you mean "by"**

The German preposition "bis" can be translated two different ways in English, and both have different meanings.

- **by** means "bis spätestens"
- **until** means "bis einschließlich"

Here are some examples

- Please get here **by** ten so we can start on time.
- If they haven't arrived **by** ten we shall have to start without them.
- You will be expected to stay here **until** 5 p.m.
- They said the meeting would be over **by** 5, but we didn't finish **until** 7.



*Exercise: Is it “by” or “until”?*

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Insert the correct preposition, “by” or “until” to complete these sentences. If you’re not sure, check the Answer Key at the end of the book.

- 1) We need to get the agenda written \_\_\_\_\_ the end of the week so we can include it in the invitations.
- 2) If you can’t come to the meeting, please let me know \_\_\_\_\_ Wednesday.
- 3) The meeting didn’t end \_\_\_\_\_ midnight.
- 4) We started late because some people didn’t arrive \_\_\_\_\_ midday.
- 5) When he hadn’t arrived \_\_\_\_\_ midday, we started without him.
- 6) Come early, because I’ll only be in the office \_\_\_\_\_ 10 a.m.
- 7) If my plane’s on time and I get a taxi, I should be able to get there \_\_\_\_\_ 10 a.m.

Check your answers in the appendix at the back of the book.