

How to improvise in a meeting

17

In this lesson you will learn useful phrases for speaking about a familiar topic without preparation.

Starter

- 1 Have you ever been called upon unexpectedly to give a short talk in a meeting? What was your talk about? Was the topic familiar?
- 2 What advice would you offer to someone about giving an effective impromptu talk?



"CLERK, WOULD YOU LIKE TO SAY A FEW WORDS?."

Expressions

1 The staff of the English Department at the Free International University in Moldova are having a regular departmental meeting. Listen to two extracts from the meeting.

- 1 What are the main ideas of the two talks?
- 2 What does each speaker want their listeners to do?
- 3 What does the second speaker discover at the end of the meeting?

2 Put the words from the conversation in the correct order. Then listen again to check.

- 1 already / sure / much / I'm / know / how / not / you.
- 2 an / idea / give / to / you
- 3 I / I'm / going / before / someone / that / ground / not / covered / hope / over / else / has.
- 4 saying / was / I / what?
- 5 can / I / think / there's / don't / at / anything / I / else / the / add / moment.
- 6 somewhere / it / got / here / I've / some / about / information.
- 7 thing / it's / small / really / a / just.
- 8 sure / I'm / know / you
- 9 say / wanted / to / I
- 10 it / about / really / that's.

Speaking

- 1 You are the office manager in charge of security and building issues. Unexpectedly, in a meeting, your boss asks you to outline the forthcoming construction works at your company. Use your notes below to give a brief overview. Use phrases from Expressions to help.

- Renovation of east wing: starts mid-June, due to be finished early August
- 20th May - deadline for completion of office-sharing details for summer period
- 10th June - deadline for all staff to move out of their offices. Packing boxes will arrive by 1st June
- Valuables: don't leave anything around during this period

Language box

Many verbs are followed by a verb in the gerund or infinitive. Some verbs, however, can take either a gerund or infinitive, but the meaning changes.

Go on to do: change the activity by starting a new one. **Go on doing:** continue with same activity:

She started talking about the new project. She **went on to say** that there would also be management changes.

They'll **go on practising** until they get it right.

Mean to do: intend. **Mean doing:** result in:

I **meant to tell** you about it last week.

Going to the USA will **mean working** hard.

Hint

off the top of my head – without thinking very much
Off the top of my head, there are about 250 new students.
offhand, off the cuff – without preparation or checking details or facts
I can't remember any of the details offhand, but I'll email them after the meeting.
He gave a really good presentation off the cuff.

- 3 Match the expressions in 2 with the functions below.

playing for time

offering a disclaimer

introducing a point

finishing

- 4 Look again at the expressions in 2. Which could you use in a more formal situation, and which in a less formal one?



Writing

- 1 George emailed Kristina after the meeting in Expressions. Correct the mistakes in his email.

Dear Kristina,

Could you talk us through the grant project again at the faculty meeting next month? Ellie needs giving a talk too, but her supervisor wouldn't permit missing her classes, so if you wouldn't mind, could you give her talk too?

I'd like to start the meeting with the exam issues, and then you could go on mentioning the EU project. I think they will allow us spending about half an hour on our talk.

I guess it'll mean to prepare a PowerPoint presentation too.

Thanks,
George

Look

Look at listening script 17.1 on page 128. Find more examples of verbs taking the infinitive or gerund. What is the meaning of each verb used?

Regret to do: used for giving bad news or making announcements. **Regret doing:** refers back to the past to apologize for a past action:

- I regret to inform you that I can't attend.
I regret telling her about the offer.

Need doing gives a passive meaning.

- It needs changing.
(= it needs to be changed)

With the verbs *advise*, *allow*, *forbid*, and *permit*, use *-ing* if there is no personal object.

I wouldn't advise taking the car.

With an object, or if the verb is in the passive, use the infinitive.

- I wouldn't advise you to take the car.
You are not advised to take the car.

Lesson record

3 new words from this lesson

3 useful phrases from this lesson

- 1 1
2 2
3 3

Things to remember

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