

How to start a meeting and 7 ways to engage your audience



When organising a virtual meeting, first impressions matter just as much as always. Therefore it is crucial to plan your meeting from minute one and engage the audience.



Objective

Starting your meeting in the right way is crucial to leave a good first impression with the audience.

Process

At the start of a virtual meeting, there are a few things that usually need to happen. Here's a quick run through of how you might start a virtual meeting, including 7 ways to engage your audience from the get go. The start of a virtual meeting can be chaotic with people joining late, but it's great if you can start on time. Tip: First impressions matter! Especially if this is the first time you interact with people, the first few minutes of your meeting will be crucial in establishing trust. Try to keep things simple and smooth. The below run through can last anywhere between 5 - 20 minutes, depending on the length and purpose of your meeting.

Few elements to start a meeting:

- **Introduce the moderator:** A quick introduction typically works well
- **Set ground rules:** What rules should participants follow in the meeting? How will people interact? How will you ensure that people respect each others' ideas? How will questions be handled?
- **Introduce the objectives and the agenda:** Make sure that everyone understands their role, and what the group is seeking to achieve. Establish clear goals and expectations.
- **Introduce the speakers:** It can be helpful to have a slide up with their photo and a bio at hand. Alternatively, you can invite speakers to introduce themselves.
- **Introduce the participants:** This is a great time for some interaction. Please see 7 ways in which you can engage your audience - if supported by the technology of your choice:

7 ways in which you can engage your audience:

- Use the **chat function** to introduce yourself with your name, job title, country, something quirky (e.g. what is your climate super power)

Climate relevance

For a good cooperation it is essential that the team harmonizes. This exercise is there to pick up the participants from minute one and to create an open and successful atmosphere.





- **Change your name** to reflect: name, country, organisation, or anything of interest
- **Polls / Mentimeter** to ask some questions related to the meeting objective. Examples include: where are you currently based, which sector do you work in, what is your level of expertise of topic x.
- Put up a relevant **cartoon**, invite reflections in the chat box as a 'warm up'. Please check potential copyright restrictions.
- **Laser ball** is an applied improvisation tool, which can lighten the mood and create a visual and physical connection between participants in a creative way. Very appropriate if you have a small group and are not too rushed.
- **What I like** is a way to draw the real world into the virtual world. Participants can draw their contributions, or simply show an object.
- **Life pulse** is a simple and visual introduction method, which allows us to establish connection between participants very quickly and to facilitate a brief introduction.

