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How to Follow Up
After a **Meeting**

Turn discussion into decisions and actions people
can actually track

Read time: 9 minutes

Know the cost. Make it count.

A meeting is just discussion unless something comes out the other end: a clear decision, defined actions, or new understanding.

But most meetings end and... nothing. People disperse. Everyone remembers something different. Actions die.

The meeting only earns its time after it ends. That's when follow-up happens. That's when discussion becomes decisions people can actually track.

> *This guide shows you exactly what to follow up on, how to format it, and how to close the loop so actions actually happen.*

01   The 24-Hour Rule

Send a recap within 24 hours of the meeting. By then, people have partly forgotten what happened. After 48 hours, memory gets fuzzy.

This is non-negotiable. It's the difference between decisions sticking and decisions disappearing.

02   Capture the Right Things (Not Everything)

Don't transcribe the whole meeting. That's noise. Capture only what matters.

Four things actually matter:

- **Decisions made:** What did we agree on? State it in one sentence per decision.
- **Actions assigned:** Who's doing what? With what deadline? (See the next section—this needs detail.)
- **Open questions:** What do we still need to figure out? Who's finding the answer?
- **Next meeting:** When do we come back together? What will we decide then?

> *Rule of thumb: If it wasn't a decision, an action, a question, or a next meeting, don't include it. Shorter is better.*

03   Use a Follow-Up Format People Can Scan in 20 Seconds

People won't read a long email. Use a template they can glance at and instantly understand:

Meeting Recap Template

Meeting: Project X Planning (23 Jan, 10am)
Attendees: You, Sarah, James, Maria

Decision 1: We're launching the beta on March 1
Decision 2: We're testing with 100 beta users, not 50
Decision 3: We'll use Slack for daily async updates

Actions: See table below

Open questions : Legal sign-off on T&Cs. Sarah will confirm timeline by Friday.

Next meeting: Kick-off planning for beta comms. Tuesday 30 Jan, 2pm.

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04   Make Actions 'Real'

An action without these three things is a suggestion, not a commitment.

- **Owner:** One person. Not 'we' or 'the team.' One human.
- **Deadline:** Not 'soon.' A date. A specific date.
- **Definition of done:** What does 'done' actually look like? How will we know it's done?

> *Golden rule: If someone could argue 'that's done' and someone else could argue 'that's not done,' it's not specific enough.*

Example:

> *Fuzzy: 'Maria will scope technical requirements'*

> *Real: 'Maria will write a 1-page technical spec covering API dependencies, server requirements, and timeline. Due Friday 27 Jan. Done means James and Tom have reviewed and signed off.'*

05   Keep a Decision Log

Don't bury decisions in email recaps. Keep one decision log. Every decision goes in. You can reference it forever.

Decision Log Template

Decision # What did we decide?
Date decided Context / Why
Owner When do we revisit?

Dec 1: Use Slack for project comms
Why: Email threads were too hard to follow
Owner: James (to set up workspace)
Revisit: Never unless we change tools

Dec 2: Publish beta on March 1, not Feb 15
Why: Need more testing. Feb timeline was too tight.
Owner: Maria (to coordinate with marketing)
Revisit: If we hit blockers before Feb 15

06 Close the Loop Gently

People don't finish actions because they either forget or don't know if they're still expected to do it.

Helpful wording before someone misses a deadline:

- "Hey, just checking: are we still on track for X by [deadline]? Anything you need from me?"
- "I wanted to flag that [action] is due tomorrow. Want to sync on where you are with it?"
- "[Deadline] just passed on X. Did that happen or do we need to reschedule?"

Simple accountability. Not blame. Just: "Did it happen?"

> *"Follow-up isn't nagging. It's clarity. It says: This matters. You committed. I'm holding space for it."*

07 Pick the Right Channel

Different meeting types need different follow-up channels:

Meeting Type	Channel / Format
Decision-making / planning	Email recap + decision log
Team standup / status	Slack thread with action updates
All-hands / large group	Public doc (Google Doc, Notion, Confluence)
Difficult conversation / feedback	Personal note + calendar reminder to follow up
Project kickoff / complex planning	Shared doc + email summary
Quick sync / pairing session	Nothing (unless actions emerged—then one-liner in Slack)
Board / executive review	Written report with decisions and timeline
Customer meeting	Recap email to customer + internal action list

📧 08 For Difficult Meetings: Add One Extra Layer of Care

If the meeting was hard (conflict, difficult feedback, misalignment), the follow-up needs extra attention:

- Send it within 12 hours, not 24
- Be specific about what was agreed. Don't vague-it
- Reference what each person said and committed to (so no one can rewrite it later)
- Include next steps for repair or resolution if needed
- Offer a follow-up conversation: 'Let's sync again on [date] to see how this is landing'

✓ 09 Follow-Up Message Templates

A) Email Recap Template

Use this for important decisions and planning meetings:

Subject: *[Project] Meeting Recap — 23 Jan*
Hi all,

Quick recap from yesterday's planning session:

DECISIONS *We're launching beta March 1 (not Feb 15). We're testing with 100 beta users. All comms go through Slack.*

ACTIONS *[See table below]*

NEXT STEPS *Kick-off planning for beta marketing communications. Tuesday 30 Jan, 2pm.*

Let me know if anything's missing or wrong.
Thanks,
[Your name]

B) Slack Template (for quick syncs or standups)

> 🔔 *Project X standup recap:*
> ☑ **Done:** *James finished API spec. Sarah reviewed. Approved.*
> 🚀 **Next:** *Maria will build the connection layer (due Fri).*
> ❓ **Blocker:** *Need design review before engineering. Can you fit us in this week, Tom?*
> 🗓 **Next meeting:** *Fri 29 Jan, same time.*

◎ 10   The Follow-Up Checklist

Use this right after every meeting:

☐ I've written down all decisions (one sentence each)

☐ I've defined all actions with owner + deadline + done-ness

☐ I've said 'next meeting' and when

☐ I've captured open questions and who's answering them

☐ I've chosen the right channel (email, Slack, doc, etc.)

☐ I'm sending within 24 hours (preferably 12 hours for important meetings)

☐ I've used a scannable format—someone can understand it in 20 seconds

☐ I've been specific enough that people know what 'done' means

☐ I've added a follow-up date to my calendar (when do we see progress or close the loop?)

☐ I'll gently check in if deadlines slip

A Quick Reminder

A meeting only earns its time after it ends.

Follow-up is where clarity becomes momentum.

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