

**great{with}meetings**



# **Setting Yourself Up for a **Great** Meeting**

A practical preparation guide

**Use in 10 minutes**

*Know the cost. Make it count.*

---

A great meeting usually isn't "run" into greatness. It's **set up** into greatness — before anyone joins.

*This guide helps you prepare in a way that makes the meeting clearer, calmer, and more useful for everyone.*

## 01 Start with One Simple Question

### What must be true by the end of this meeting?

Pick one primary outcome:

- **A decision** has been made
- **A plan** exists (with owners and dates)
- **A problem** is understood and options are agreed
- **Alignment** exists (everyone shares the same understanding)
- **Ideas** have been generated and prioritised
- **A risk** has been surfaced and actions agreed

*If you can't name the outcome clearly, the meeting is not ready yet.*

*"By the end of this meeting, we will have..."*

---

---

## 02 Check if the Meeting Should Exist at All

Before you send an invite, ask: Could this be done without a meeting?

If it's...	Then...
Information sharing	Send an update (allow questions async)
Status reporting	Use a shared doc or dashboard
One person needing input	Gather input async, meet only if needed
A decision	Meeting may be right – but it must be structured

*If the outcome isn't improved by people being live together, don't meet.*

## 03 Invite the Right People (and Only the Right People)

Most meetings struggle because of one of two things: too many people, or missing the people who can decide or unblock.

### Use these roles:

- **Decision owner** – who will decide (or confirm the decision process)
- **Essential contributors** – people whose input is needed to reach the outcome
- **Implementers** – people who must act afterwards (keep this group small)
- **Optional attendees** – can join if useful, but the meeting can succeed without them

*Simple test: If someone can't contribute to the outcome, they don't need to be there live. Invite optional attendees as "optional" and share notes afterwards.*

## 04 Make the Agenda Outcome-Based

A strong agenda is a set of questions to answer – not a list of themes.

Replace this...	With this...
“Project update”	“What has changed since last week that affects delivery?”
“Budget”	“What decision do we need to make about budget today?”
“Next steps”	“What are the next three actions, and who owns them?”

### Agenda structure that works:

- 1. Context (2–5 mins):** What’s the situation and why now?
- 2. Discussion (main block):** The questions we must answer
- 3. Decisions (timeboxed):** What are we deciding today?
- 4. Actions (final 5 mins):** Who does what by when?

## 05 Timebox Everything (and Protect Attention)

If your meeting is 60 minutes, don’t plan 60 minutes of content. Plan 45–50 minutes, leaving time to land decisions and actions calmly.

### Practical timeboxing:

- 5 mins – opening and purpose
- 10–15 mins – context and key facts
- 25–30 mins – discussion/decision work
- 5–10 mins – decisions + actions + close

*If it’s a difficult topic, build in breathing room. Not every minute needs to be filled.*

## 06 Send Pre-Work That People Will Actually Do

Pre-reading fails when it's long, vague, or sent too late.

### Keep it to one of these:

- **A short brief** (max 1 page)
- **A few bullet points** and a link
- **A single question** people must answer before the meeting

*The golden rule: If pre-work takes longer than 10 minutes, many people won't do it.*

### Pre-work message template:

*"To make this meeting useful, please read/answer this before we meet: \_\_\_\_\_ (5–10 mins). If you can't, no problem – but please skim the headline points so we can use our time well."*

## 07 Decide How You'll Capture Decisions and Actions

Most meetings fail *after* they end.

Before the meeting starts, decide:

- Where will decisions be recorded? (doc, tracker, Slack, email)
- Who will take notes? (don't assume it's "everyone")
- What format will you use?

### Simple format (copy/paste):

Decisions			
Decision	Owner	Date	Notes
Actions			
Action	Owner	Due date	Checkpoint
Open Questions			
Question	Who will answer	By when	

## 08 Set the Tone in the Invite

People join meetings in “survival mode” if the invite is vague. Include this in the calendar invite description:

### Great Meeting Invite Template

**Purpose:** Why we're meeting

**Outcome:** What we will leave with

**Agenda:** 3–5 questions we must answer

**Pre-work:** What to read/bring

**Decision process:** Who decides / how we'll decide

**Notes/actions:** Where they'll be captured

### Example (short):

**Purpose:** *Align on launch readiness*

**Outcome:** *Decide go/no-go and agree final actions*

**Agenda:** *What's changed? What risks remain? What must be true to ship?*

**Pre-work:** *Read the 1-page status summary (link)*

**Decision:** *[Name] decides after input*

**Notes:** *Actions captured in [link]*

## 09 Final Quality Check (30 Seconds)

Before you hit send, check:

- Can I explain the outcome in one sentence?
- Do we have the decision owner / key people present?
- Is the agenda a set of questions, not topics?
- Is there enough time for decisions + actions?
- Will attendees know what to do before they join?

*If yes – you're set.*

---

## A Quick Reminder

A good meeting is a gift. It respects people's time and attention.

**Preparation isn't admin – it's how you make the meeting worth having.**

great{with}meetings