

The language of meetings sent by Laura López, adapted version from the book *The language of meetings* by Malcolm Goodale

1. General language points

Effective communication in meetings is sometimes a matter of knowing certain special expressions.

1. Using would, could or might to make what you say more tentative
2. Presenting your view as a question not a statement
3. Using a grammatical negative to make a suggestion more open and therefore more negotiable
4. Using an introductory phrase to prepare the listener for your message.
5. Adding I'm afraid to make clear that you recognise the unhelpfulness of your response
6. Using words which qualify or restrict what you say to make your position more flexible (a bit difficult, a slight problem)
7. Using not with a positive word instead of the obvious negative word (not very convenient, I don't agree)
8. Using a comparative (better, more convenient) to soften your message.
9. Using a continuous form (I was wondering) instead of a simple form (I wondered) to make a suggestion more flexible.
10. Using stress as an important way of making the message more effective (It is important...)

2. Presenting an argument

<p><i>Beginning</i> I would like to begin by... I would like to make a few remarks concerning... I would like to comment on the problem of... I would like to mention briefly that... There are three points I'd like to make The most important points seem to me to be...</p>	<p><i>Ordering</i> First of all, we must "bear in mind"... At the outset... To begin with... Firstly..., Secondly..., Thirdly..., Finally...</p>
<p><i>Introducing a new point</i> I would now like to turn briefly to the problem of... The next issue I would like to focus on is... Turning to ...</p>	<p><i>Adding</i> In addition, ... I might add that... As well as..., there is also... Not only..., but also... Furthermore, ... Moreover, ...</p>

<i>Giving an example</i> Let me give an example... To illustrate this point, let us consider... A case in point is...	<i>Balancing</i> On the one hand..., but on the other hand... Although...we mustn't forget... Whereas...we have to remember... Despite the fact that ..., I ...
<i>Generalising</i> On the whole, ... In general, ... Generally speaking... By and large,... All in all, ... All things considered,...	<i>Stating preferences</i> I'd rather... than... I prefer...to... I tend to favour...as opposed to...has an advantage over...in that... The main advantage of...is that...
<i>Concluding</i> Let me conclude by saying... I'd like to conclude by stating that... Allow me to conclude by highlighting the fact that... In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that... I would now like to conclude my comments by reassuring you that we are fully aware of the fact that...	

3. Opinions

<i>Asking for an opinion</i> What's your opinion of...? What's your position on...? What do you think of...? I'd like to hear your views on...	<i>Asking for a reaction</i> Could I ask for your reaction to...? I was wondering where you stood on this question? Where exactly do you stand on this issue? I wonder if you'd like to comment, Mrs Lang?
<i>Giving strong opinions</i> I firmly believe that... I'm absolutely convinced that.... It's my belief that... There is no doubt in my mind that... It is quite clear that... I'm certain that.... It's my considered opinion that...	<i>Giving neutral opinions</i> I think that... In my opinion,... It's my opinion that... As I see it,... As far as I am concerned... From my point of view...
<i>Giving tentative opinions</i> It seems to me that... I would say that... As far as I'm able to judge... I think it would be fair to say that... I would like to ask my colleague Ms	<i>Bringing in to present a point</i> Ms Sheppard, would you like to come in here? Allow me to give the floor to Ms Redgrave I would like to invite Mr Wells to present

<p>David to give us her views on that. I think Mr Doll is more qualified than I am to deal with this question. I would like to bring in Ms Short who has studied this matter in more detail than I have. Perhaps Mr Bird would care to answer that.</p>	<p>his views on... I'd like to call on Mrs Kelly to present her views on... Mr Right, would you care to comment? I think Mr Douglas would like to make a point.</p>
<p>Summarizing Well, if I could just sum up the discussion... To summarize, I think we are in agreement on... To sum up, there seems to be... In short,... Briefly, the main points that have been made are... Well, at this stage I feel I should summarize the matter as it stands... If I may just go over the main points raised so far?</p>	

4. Agreeing and Disagreeing

<p>Strong agreement I completely agree I agree entirely with your point of view. I'm of exactly the same opinion. I'm in total agreement.</p>	<p>Neutral agreement I agree I think we are in agreement on that. I think you're right. I think we can accept your position on that.</p>
<p>Partial agreement I would tend to agree with you on that. I agree with you on the whole, but it could be said that... I agree in principle, but... By and large I would accept your views, but... Although I agree with most of what you've said, I find it difficult to agree with your point about...</p>	<p>Softening strong disagreement Frankly, ... To be quite frank,... To put it bluntly,... With respect...</p>
<p>Strong disagreement I totally disagree with you I don't agree at all. You're completely mistaken. I disagree entirely. Under no circumstances could I agree to that. What you are saying is just not feasible</p>	<p>Softening neutral disagreement I'm afraid... I'm sorry,... With respect... I respect your opinion, of course, however...</p>
<p>Neutral disagreement I don't completely agree with you on that.</p>	<p>Tactful disagreement I agree up to a point, but...</p>

<p>I really can't agree with you on that. I can't say that I share your view. We'll have to agree to differ. I'm not totally convinced by your argument. I can't accept your point of view. I can't help feeling that... I feel I must disagree. I really must take issue with you here.</p>	<p>To a certain extent I agree with you, but... You have a point there, but... I take your point, Mr Hoffman, but have you considered...? I can see your point of view, but surely... I have some sympathy with your position, but...</p>
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5. Interrupting

<p><i>Interrupting</i> May I interrupt you for a moment? Sorry to interrupt, but... If I may just interrupt you for a moment, I'd like to... I don't want to interrupt, but...</p>	<p><i>Taking the floor</i> Could I come in at this point? Could I say something about...? If I could just come in here...? If no one objects, I'd would like to say a few words about... If I could say a word about... I have a point to make here.</p>
<p><i>Commenting</i> I wonder if I could comment on that last point? Excuse me, but I'd just like to point out that... I'd like to add something here, if I may? May I just draw your attention to the fact that... Excuse me, but I think it's relevant to add that... Before we go any further, may I point out...</p>	<p><i>Coming back to a point</i> As I was saying... Coming back to what I was just saying... Perhaps I could resume... If I may just go back to the point I was making... If I could continue... Your question leads us back to... To return to...</p>
<p><i>Preventing an interruption</i> Perhaps I could return to that point later on... If I might just finish... With your permission, I'd rather finish what I was saying... With respect, I should like to finish the point I was making... If you would allow me to continue... If you would be so kind as to let me finish</p>	<p><i>Pre-empting an Interruption</i> There are two points I would like to make First, I would like to reply to Mr Hawk and then I would like to comment on... Very briefly.... I'd just like to.....</p>

6. Clarifying

<p><i>Asking for confirmation</i> Would I be correct in saying that...? If I've understood you correctly, you're saying that...? Correct me if I'm wrong, but... Am I correct in assuming that...? When you say..., do you mean that...? Are you saying that...? Basically, what you're saying is...</p>	<p><i>Asking for a repetition</i> I'm afraid I'm not quite clear what you mean by that. I'm sorry, I didn't quite follow what you said about... I'm afraid I don't understand what you mean. I'm afraid I didn't quite get your last point. Could you go over it again please?</p>
<p><i>Correcting misunderstandings</i> I'm afraid there seems to have been a slight misunderstanding. We seem to be talking at cross purposes. I think you've misunderstood me. That isn't quite what I meant. With respect, that is not what I said.</p>	<p><i>Re-phrasing</i> Perhaps I haven't made myself clear. Basically, what I'm trying to say is... Sorry, I'm probably not making myself clear. Let me put it in another way... Perhaps I should make that clearer by saying.... Allow me to rephrase that. To be more specific... Put simply, ...</p>

7. Questioning

<p><i>Asking general questions</i> Would you mind...? I was wondering if you...? May I ask... Would you mind if I asked...?</p>	<p><i>Asking for further information</i> Could you be a "little more precise"? I'm sorry, but could you explain in a little more detail? Could you give us some details about...? Would you care to elaborate on that? Could you expand on that?</p>
<p><i>Playing for time</i> That's a very interesting question. That's a difficult question to answer. I'm glad you asked that question. You have raised an important point there. I'm sure you will appreciate how complicated this matter is.</p>	<p><i>Saying nothing</i> Well, it's rather difficult to say at present. I'm afraid I don't have enough information at my disposal to answer that. I'm afraid I'm not in a position to comment on that just yet. I think we can leave the problem of...aside for a moment, the real issue is... I don't think we have enough time at our disposal to consider all the implications of this particular aspect of the problem.</p>

Questioning

It depends what you mean by...

I'm not quite sure what you mean by that.

I'm afraid I don't quite follow...

I don't think it's quite as simple as that...

8. Proposals

<p><i>Proposals, recommendations and suggestions-strong</i> I strongly recommend that... I suggest most strongly that... I advise you most strongly to... In our view, it is high time that... In my view, the only viable solution is...</p>	<p><i>Proposals, recommendations and suggestions-tentative</i> I would propose that... If I may make a suggestion, we could... I would like to put forward a proposal that... I wonder if I might suggest... Wouldn't it be a good idea to...? Wouldn't it be better to...?</p>
<p><i>Expressing total support</i> I am fully in favour of... This proposal has my fully support. I can thoroughly recommend that... I should like to express my total support for this... I totally agree with... I entirely approve of...</p>	<p><i>Expressing support</i> I am in favour of... I would certainly give my backing to... I would certainly endorse such a proposal. I see no objection to that. I would not be opposed to that.</p>
<p><i>Expressing partial support</i> My initial reaction is favourable, but... With certain reservations, I would support your proposal. I shouldn't like you to think that I'm necessarily against this in any way, but I can't help wondering...</p>	<p><i>Expressing total opposition</i> I am totally opposed to the proposal. I see no valid reason for supporting the proposal. Frankly, I thin that's out of the question. I'm afraid this proposal leaves a great deal to be desired.</p>
<p><i>Expressing opposition</i> I am opposed to the proposal I'm afraid I can't support the proposal. As it stands, I would not be able to give it my backing. Without substantial changes, I cannot give the proposal my support</p>	<p><i>Expressing tentative opposition</i> On the face of it, this seems quite a good suggestion, but... I can see many problems in adopting this. I'm not sure the proposal is feasible. This proposal is likely to present difficulties. I'm not convinced that this proposal is really worthwhile.</p>

9. Persuading

<p>Asking questions</p> <p>Have you taken into account...? Has it occurred to you that...? Do you realise that...? I was wondering if you'd thought of...? Would you agree that...? Wouldn't it be a good idea to...?</p>	<p>Adding information</p> <p>There are, if I may say so, certain points you should bear in mind... There are other considerations. For example, If we look at it in another light... Seen from another angle, one could say... I wonder if you've considered...</p>
<p>Challenging</p> <p>I wonder if that view is justified in the light of... I don't think you fully appreciate the fact that... It would be in your own interest to... I would be inclined to..., if I were you.</p>	<p>Expressing reservation.</p> <p>I have certain reservations about... I think we should give ourselves time to reflect on... I'm rather worried about... Under no circumstances should we come to a hasty decision on this. I am afraid such a decision might lead to... I feel that in view of... it would be prudent to... I can't help feeling that...</p>
<p>Reassuring</p> <p>There's no cause for concern as far as...is concerned. Let me assure you straightaway on that point. I can assure you that... We understand your concern about...and we assure you that we will do everything in our power to... We share your concern about this, and you may rest assured that... You need have no fears about...</p>	

10. Degrees of importance

<p>Emphatic views</p> <p>I particularly want to emphasize the fact that... It is essential to realise that... This issue is highly significant. I feel this is a vital issue I consider this point of the utmost importance</p>	<p>Neutral views</p> <p>I attach considerable importance to... Allow me to emphasize at this juncture that... We mustn't underestimate the importance of... It is well worth noting that... We cannot stress too much the importance of... Let me say again how much importance I attach to...</p>
<p>Tentative views</p>	<p>Playing down a point</p>

<p>I would like to remind you that...</p> <p>I wish to draw your attention to...</p> <p>We cannot overlook the fact that...</p> <p>I believe this warrants further discussion.</p>	<p>These are minor issues when one considers...</p> <p>But this is only of secondary importance.</p> <p>But this is, after all, a relatively small point.</p> <p>I'm afraid I regard that as of relatively minor significance.</p> <p>I'm afraid I'm not totally convinced of the importance of...</p>
<p><i>Degrees of certainty</i></p> <p>Certain</p> <p>I'm certain that...</p> <p>It's certain that...</p> <p>There's no doubt that...</p> <p>Without doubt, ...</p> <p>Undoubtedly...</p>	<p><i>Probable</i></p> <p>I'm almost certain that...</p> <p>It's highly probable that...</p> <p>It's quite likely that...</p>
<p><i>Possible</i></p> <p>This could well...</p> <p>It's possible that...</p> <p>It's not out of the question that...</p> <p>It's not impossible that...</p> <p>I think there is every possibility that...</p>	<p><i>Unlikely</i></p> <p>It is highly improbable that...</p> <p>It is highly unlikely that...</p> <p>There's very little likelihood of...</p>
<p><i>Uncertain</i></p> <p>I'm not certain that...</p> <p>I have doubts about...</p> <p>I doubt if...</p> <p>There is some doubt as to whether this...</p> <p>I'm uncertain about...</p>	

11. Compromising

<p><i>Offering a compromise</i></p> <p>We are prepared to..., on condition that...</p> <p>I think we could..., provided that...</p> <p>We are ready to..., on the understanding that...</p> <p>We are willing to..., with the proviso that...</p> <p>We are more than ready to..., as long as...</p> <p>I believe we can..., if...</p>	<p><i>Asking if it's acceptable</i></p> <p>Is that acceptable?</p> <p>Would that be acceptable?</p> <p>Would that be satisfactory?</p> <p>Is that acceptable as a compromise solution?</p> <p>We hope that this will be acceptable.</p>
<i>Adding a condition positively</i>	<i>Adding a condition negatively</i>

<p>We see no objection whatsoever, provided that...</p> <p>If we agreed, it would be conditional on...</p> <p>Our agreement is conditional on...</p> <p>If we agreed, we hope you would reciprocate by...</p> <p>If you would be prepared to..., then we could...</p>	<p>We'd be rather reluctant to ..., unless...</p> <p>I don't think we could..., unless...</p> <p>We wouldn't be prepared to..., unless...</p> <p>We have certain reservations about..., and unless...</p> <p>Only if you..., would we be prepared to...</p>
<p><i>Accepting a compromise</i></p> <p>I think that would be perfectly acceptable.</p> <p>We see no objection to that.</p> <p>That seems to be a reasonable compromise.</p> <p>In a spirit of compromise, we would be willing to accept your offer.</p> <p>To meet you halfway on this, I think we could agree to your condition.</p>	<p><i>Rejecting a compromise</i></p> <p>We are not entirely convinced that this is a viable solution to the problem.</p> <p>Although we want to avoid a deadlock as much as you do, we find your offer unacceptable.</p> <p>You leave us with little alternative but to...</p> <p>In that case, we should very reluctantly have to...</p> <p>In which case, we would be virtually obliged to...</p> <p>You put us in a difficult position.</p>

12. Procedure for a formal meeting

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening <p>Ladies and Gentlemen, I declare the meeting open.</p> <p>Right, shall we get started?</p> <p>Let's get down to business, shall we?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The minutes <p>May I read the minutes?</p> <p>Would someone move that the minutes of the last meeting be accepted?</p> <p>Has everyone seen the minutes?</p> <p>Can we take the minutes as read?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Agenda <p>Has everyone received a copy of the agenda?</p> <p>The first item on the agenda today is...</p> <p>I would like to add an item to the agenda.</p> <p>Could we delete item 5 from the agenda?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The subject <p>The purpose of today's meeting is...</p> <p>The first problem we have to consider is...</p> <p>Perhaps we should first look at...</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving the floor <p>I'd like to give the floor to Miss Hinton.</p> <p>Mrs Williams, would you like to say something about this?</p> <p>Mr Brown, I think you know something about this problem.</p> <p>Have you got anything to say, John?</p> <p>What are your views on this, Anne?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking the floor <p>Excuse me Mr Chairman, may I say something please?</p> <p>With the Chair's permission, I'd like to take up the point about...</p> <p>Could I just make a point about...?</p> <p>Could I say something here, please...?</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finishing a Point <p>Has anyone anything further they wish to add before we move on to the next item on the agenda?</p> <p>Has anyone anything further to add?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directing <p>We seem to be losing sight of the main point. The question is...</p> <p>This isn't really relevant to our discussion. What we're trying to do is...</p> <p>Could you stick to the subject, please?</p> <p>Let's not get sidetracked. The issue under discussion is...</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping order <p>We can't all speak at once; Mr Newby, would you like to speak first?</p> <p>Mrs Wilson, would you mind addressing your remarks to the Chair please.</p> <p>I shall have to call you to order, Mr Simpson.</p>	