

Starting a meeting with Check-ins

Ever have that feeling at the start of a meeting where your mind just isn't focused? Maybe you were thinking about an email that just came in, running from a prior meeting and still making sense of that conversation, or worrying about the huge pile of to-dos on your plate.

You're not alone. It's not unusual to have other things on your mind which keep you from being fully present in a meeting. But as a result, it's hard to contribute your best thinking. And when everyone is slightly distracted, meeting conversations can get stuck or old ideas rehashed, and conclusions might never be reached.

One practice that can help set the stage for productive conversation is the check-in. This three-to-five-minute process can make a huge impact on your overall meeting effectiveness.

Check-ins help put distractions aside

Checking-in allows participants to share whatever is on their minds—whether related to the meeting or not. It might sound counter-intuitive to ask people to share information that is irrelevant or off topic. The truth is, if you don't acknowledge these thoughts or feelings, they will distract you throughout the meeting.

Instead, acknowledge that we all have other things going on by creating the space for everyone to unload what's on their mind at the moment and then put those thoughts or feelings aside.

According to Kristin Cobble in her article [How to Start a Meeting](#),

“Check-ins encourage everyone in the room to focus on the meeting and each other.”

Check-ins get everyone's voice in the room (& empower introverts)

Whether it's a face-to-face conversation or a virtual meeting, it is valuable to get everyone's voice in the room up front. This helps people feel more comfortable speaking up later in the meeting. If you are an [introvert](#) like me, who speaks less often than your extroverted peers, you can definitely feel the difference—hearing your own voice in the room empowers the second attempt.

While your colleagues share their thoughts, actively listen to them, make eye contact and acknowledges their presence. These simple non-verbal responses are a powerful (and less time consuming) way to build mutual trust and positive relationships.

Check-ins help take the 'temperature' of the room

If you've ever facilitated a meeting, you likely have experienced the perils of jumping into a conversation without understanding where everyone is at. Check-ins give you a quick assessment of the emotions and thoughts in the room. This helps you adjust the way you facilitate the meeting so you can engage people in the conversation right from the start and make the most of your time together.