



Meeting reports

Lesson code: S8BX-158B-3QXN

UPPER INTERMEDIATE

1 Warm-up

Taking down meeting minutes is not the most glamorous job, but it is an important one. How far would you agree with this statement?

2 Writing minutes

Read the following tips on writing meeting minutes:

1. Write in a clear and understandable way for future, outside readers as well as for the participants of the meeting.
2. Include the names of the people who were present at the beginning of the document.
3. Clearly state the agenda at the beginning of the document.
4. Use bullet points to make the minutes easier to read.
5. Include only the key points that were made. Do not write down unnecessary details.
6. Make a note of issues that were suggested for future meetings.
7. Use a variety of speaking verbs, e.g. *noted*, *said*, *mentioned*, etc.
8. Proof-read the report for typos and omissions.

The managers of Global Training Solutions held a meeting to discuss marketing strategy for their language school business. Listen to an extract from the meeting and read the minutes extract on the next page. Tick the tips above that were clearly followed.



Now add the following verbs and phrases in bold to the categories above:

Mr Ross **provided an update on** the company's present financial situation.

Jorge **was of the opinion** that we need to negotiate a better price from our current supplier.

Maria **emphasised** that the reasons behind our drop in profit were related to the recent political changes.

Sam **didn't believe** that location was the issue.

Jan **proposed** that we should wait a few months before making a decision on the matter.

Lidia **expressed concern about** the new proposed conference centre.

Lei Pin **reminded** us that we urgently need a customer care department.

Put the verbs and phrases in the correct category below. Three verbs may belong to both categories:

+ that + SUBJECT + VERB: _____

+ NOUN or VERB -ing: _____

4 Grammar review - Reporting

Direct speech is used to repeat the words that someone else said, e.g. *Helen asked, "Can you send me the minutes of the meeting, please?"* Reported speech is used to say or write what someone else said without repeating the exact words that were said, e.g. *Bob noted that competition in the language school market had become very intense.* It is often necessary to change the verb tense from direct speech.

Look at the recording script and minutes of the meeting in Exercise 2 as well as the sentences in Exercise 3 and complete the rules below with the correct tenses and example sentences:

1. **present simple** (e.g. _____) → past simple (e.g. Helen felt that it was important to create an advertising impact.)
2. **present perfect** (e.g. _____) → _____ (e.g. Bob noted that competition in the language school market had become very intense.)
3. **'will' + infinitive** (e.g. _____) → _____ (e.g. Bob mentioned that this would be discussed at the next meeting)
4. If we report a fact or situation that is still true, it is not necessary to change the tense of the verb (e.g. _____)
5. After **suggest that, propose that** (also **recommend that, demand that, insist that**) we often use **should + verb** (e.g. _____) to report a suggestion, recommendation etc.

What other verb tense changes happen with reported speech?

How are questions reported?



5 Grammar practice

Report the following statements using appropriate speaking verbs or phrases:

1. George: I think that we need to review our budget for next year.
2. Michael: We should wait for Filippo to come back from his holiday before discussing this issue.
3. Patrice: If we keep our current supplier, we will need to re-negotiate their terms of payment.
4. Alice: In my opinion, Mark's attitude to work is the main problem.
5. Chen Li: I'm a bit concerned about the new proposal. We tried something similar last year and it didn't work.
6. Diego: I like the Crown Hotel much more. It's the perfect location for the conference.
7. Abdul: Tourist numbers are down this year. Remember that!
8. Toshi: We will be able to increase our profit by at least 20% with these new cost-cutting measures.
9. Pascal: We haven't yet decided on an appropriate remuneration package for our new managers. I think we should discuss this at the next meeting.
10. Carla: I don't think that we should change the location of the office party this year. It was a great success last year and the year before.

6 Role play and writing

Group classes: Work in groups of three or more. Hold a short meeting on a topic of your choice or one suggested by your teacher. Appoint a chairperson and a minute taker to take notes during the meeting. If there is time, change roles and discuss a different issue. The minute takers should write up their reports for the next lesson to be checked by your teacher and approved/disapproved by the meeting 'participants'.

One-to-one: Four managers of a growing IT distribution company are participating in an important teleconference to discuss a proposal to become a publicly listed company on the stock exchange. Listen to the meeting and take notes. Write up the minutes report using the template on the next page for homework. To listen to the meeting again, use your mobile device to scan the code on the right or go to <https://www.linguahouse.com/r/6b>



Xcel Systems management teleconference, 11th March 2010

Present: Daniel Goldman (managing director), Anthony Smart (chief accountant), Alex Pressello (sales director), Susan Clarke (HR director)

Agenda: to discuss the proposal to go public



2 Writing minutes

- Bob:** Thanks for coming everybody . As you all know, the purpose of this meeting is to decide on an effective marketing strategy for the next semester. OK, let's get started then, shall we? The first item on the agenda is advertising. You are all aware that the competition is getting pretty intense, and we really need to stand out more than ever. Helen has some interesting ideas. Helen, would you like to get us off the mark?
- Helen:** Thank you Bobby. My idea is to focus on a street billboard campaign with each poster featuring one of our teachers. After all, it is the teacher, not the school, that the students are ultimately buying, so I think we should have a campaign that strongly reflects this.
- Bob:** I think this is quite an interesting approach. Would anyone like to comment? Lorenzo?
- Lorenzo:** Yes, I'm not too sure about this idea, actually. You know what the market is like. Teachers come and go, and it's risky to invest in an expensive campaign without being able to guarantee potential students that what they see is what they get.
- Helen:** That's true, Lorenzo, but the way I see it, it doesn't really matter. The point of advertising is to create an impact. We need a brand image that people are going to instantly recognise.
- Bob:** Let's get some other ideas. Mark?
- Mark:** I'd like to see us being more directly in touch with potential students. We should be more active in educational trade fairs in different cities and on the Internet. As far as trade fairs are concerned, we need to ...
- Bob:** Let's try not to digress too much. We will come back to that at the next meeting, but what I want to focus on at this meeting is your ideas for advertising.
- Mark:** In that case, I tend to agree with Lorenzo, and I think we should consider the idea that I suggested last semester --- using that image of a man reaching the summit of a mountain to represent achievement and success. I think that would make a strong impact and it would go well with our slogan.
- Bob:** Any thoughts on that?
- Anne:** Well, I agree that it's a pretty eye-catching image. I just don't think it's particularly original. Look at our main competitor, they've launched a similar billboard campaign this semester so I don't think it would help us stand out in the market. Personally, I like Helen's idea.
- Bob:** Ok, we're a bit short on time so let's wrap this up. We'll take a vote on the two propositions. All those in favour of Helen's idea? All those in favour of Mark's? Right, Helen's it is then. Right, now on to the next item on the agenda. We need to discuss ...

6 Role play and writing

- Daniel Goldman:** Good morning all. This is Daniel Goldman. As you all know, we are here to discuss the proposal put forward at the last meeting. So, where do you all stand on this?
- Anthony Smart:** Anthony Smart here. Well, I'm definitely all for it. In the long run, we'll be able to raise the capital that we desperately need to expand the business into new markets.
- Daniel Goldman:** Alex, would you like to share your views?
- Alex Presello:** Yes. I have my reservations. My main concern is that by going public and expanding our business, we will lose our competitiveness.
- Anthony Smart:** What do you mean by that?
- Alex Presello:** Well, we have a reputation for providing great customer service and treating our clients as individuals. Our customers keep coming back because of the human touch.
- Daniel Goldman:** He may have a point there. If we end up going for big profits, we'd have to sacrifice customer service and then we'll be competing directly with the multinationals on their terms.
- Alex Presello:** Not only that, we'd probably lose some of our existing customers. And since the market leaders are better established than we are, it will be tough to compete. We're likely to go out of business.



- Anthony Smart:** Oh, come off it! There is more to us than just customer service. Don't forget we have negotiated exclusive distribution rights for several of our best-selling products.
- Alex Presello:** That may well be true Anthony, but the majority of our products are not unique.
- Daniel Goldman:** He's absolutely right there. Susan, I know this isn't your area, but what's your take on this?
- Susan Clarke:** Well, I haven't given it too much thought, but I do have one question. Since analysts are likely to have the same concerns as we do, how do we intend to attract potential shareholders?



1 Warm-up

Encourage a short discussion. Minute taking is generally considered a tedious, unexciting task. However it is also considered essential for various reasons such as legal (meeting minutes can be considered legal documents by government agencies), keeping records of ideas and suggestions, accountability (knowing which tasks have been assigned to which participants), etc.

2 Writing minutes

Play the audio file or use your mobile device to scan the QR code (make sure you have installed a QR code reader app and can access the Internet on your device).

All the tips have been followed.

3 Speaking verbs and phrases

Talk about something in detail and share opinions: discuss

Make something clear by giving information about it: explain

Make something known to everybody: present, provide an update on

Give attention or importance to something: note, draw attention to, point out, emphasise, express concern about

Speak about an idea for consideration: suggest, propose

Give an opinion: feel, be of the opinion, believe

Support or approve something: favour

+ that + SUBJECT + VERB: note, mention, explain, point out, feel, believe, be of the opinion, emphasise, suggest, propose, remind

+ NOUN or VERB -ing: discuss, favour, draw attention to, provide an update on, express concern about, mention, suggest, propose

4 Grammar review - Reporting

1. The point of advertising is to create an impact.
2. ... the competition has become pretty intense; past perfect
3. We will come back to that at the next meeting; would + infinitive
4. Helen pointed out that it is the teachers that the students are buying. / Jorge was of the opinion that we need to negotiate a better price from our current supplier. / Lei Pin reminded us that we urgently need a customer care department.
5. Jan proposed that we should wait

For a more advanced or ambitious class, you can teach the use of the English subjunctive after 'suggest that', 'propose that', etc. The subjunctive is formed by omitting 'should', leaving the infinitive without 'to', e.g. 'Jan proposed that we wait...'. The subjunctive can be used in the negative with 'not' ('Jan proposed that we not wait...')

Present continuous → past continuous; past simple → past perfect

Questions are reported with 'if' or 'whether'. Tense changes for reported speech apply. E.g. John asked: "Do we need more time?" / John asked if/whether we needed more time.

5 Grammar practice

The context of each sentence does not necessitate a change in tense. The students are free to imagine if each situation is still true or not, but it is a good idea to encourage practice in making tense changes. Possible answers:

1. George felt that we need/needed to review our budget next year.
2. Michael suggested waiting/that we should wait for Filippo to come back from his holiday before discussing the issue.
3. Patrice explained that if we keep/kept our current supplier, we will/would need to re-negotiate their terms of payment.
4. Alice was of the opinion that Mark's attitude to work is/was the main problem.
5. Chen Li expressed concern about the new proposal. He pointed out that we had tried something similar last year and it hadn't worked.
6. Diego favoured the Crown Hotel. He felt that it was the perfect location for the conference.
7. Abdul reminded us that tourist numbers are/were down this/that year.
8. Toshi indicated that we will/would be able to increase our profit by at least 20% with the new cost-cutting measures.
9. Pascal pointed out that we hadn't/haven't yet decided on a remuneration package for our new managers. He suggested that we should discuss it at the next meeting.
10. Carla didn't believe that we should change the location of the office party this year. She pointed out that it was/had been a success last year.

6 Role play and writing

Play the audio file or use your mobile device to scan the QR code.

One-to-one: Read through the recording script and pre-teach any vocabulary that you think may cause difficulties.

