Neuroinclusive Meeting Etiquette Guide

Creating meetings that work for every brain

A neuro-inclusive, neuro-affirming approach makes meetings calmer, clearer, and more productive for everyone. These guidelines help you run meetings that reduce anxiety, remove ambiguity, and support meaningful participation.

Core Principles
- Give people time to prepare.
- Be explicit about purpose, expectations, and structure.
- Reduce sensory and social pressure wherever possible.
- Offer multiple ways to contribute.
- Close meetings with clarity and certainty.

General Meeting Practice

Preparation
- Avoid last-minute meetings. If unavoidable, explain the purpose clearly.
  - For positive topics: "I'd love to share some good client feedback with you."
  - For difficult topics: outline the issue in advance, give reassurance, and offer processing time.
- Share start/finish times and any planned breaks.
- Circulate the agenda early. State:
  - Chair
  - Minute taker
  - Order of items
  - Who leads each item
  - Expected timescales
- Stick to the agenda and honour break times.
- Ask whether people are comfortable doing introductions. Always offer alternatives (e.g., posting a brief intro in the chat).
- Set turn-taking expectations from the start - raised-hand options online or in-room signals for in-person meetings.
- End with a concise summary and clear action list.

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In-Person Meetings

Before the Meeting
- Send precise directions (full address, postcode, building entrance, room number).
- Include accessibility details:
  - Parking location, cost, payment method (note if an app is required).
  - Nearest public transport stops.
- State whether people need to bring their own food/drinks or if refreshments will be provided. Mention nearby options.
- Let people know they can arrive early and wait somewhere safe.

Environment
- Use a layout with adequate space. Check if anyone needs:
  - No one seated behind them
  - A seat with the window behind
  - A quieter corner
- Allow movement—standing, stretching, or stepping out.
- Provide a quiet breakout area if possible.
- Offer fidget items openly to normalise self-regulation.

Online Meetings

Set-Up
- Title the meeting clearly: "Progress Review for Project X" rather than "Catch-Up."
- Add a helpful message in the invite explaining purpose and expectations.
- Avoid last-minute scheduling and back-to-back meetings. Build in buffer time.

During the Meeting
- Encourage—but do not require—cameras on.
- Offer alternatives for contribution: chat, shared document, or written input beforehand.
- Mute when not speaking to reduce background noise.

Hybrid Meetings

Structure
- Start with introductions for all attendees—online and in-room.
- Display the agenda clearly and keep it visible.
- Agree ground rules for contributions. Assign someone to monitor the online chat.

Technology & Inclusion
- Check that everyone can see and hear all speakers.
- Ensure one voice at a time.
- Reduce background noise—microphones amplify even subtle sounds like paper-shuffling or pen-clicking.

Top Tips for Neuroinclusive Meetings

1. Give Notice
Avoid last-minute meetings where possible. If it must be short notice, explain the purpose clearly and share any sensitive information beforehand.

2. Share Clear Details
Always state start/finish times, break times, and what people need to prepare or bring.

3. Circulate an Agenda Early
Include roles (Chair, Minute taker), discussion order, who leads each item, and timings.

4. Stick to the Plan
Follow the agenda and honour break times. Predictability supports focus.

5. Make Introductions Optional
Check people are comfortable introducing themselves and offer alternatives.

6. Use Fair Turn-Taking
Agree a simple method (hands up in person/online). Make space for quieter voices.

7. End with a Summary
Clearly recap decisions, actions, owners, and deadlines.