

Speak Up with More Confidence

A practical guide to contributing in meetings without overthinking what to say

1. Decide how you want to contribute

Look at the agenda and choose one or two areas where your experience, knowledge or perspective could be useful. Ask yourself:

- What do I know that could help?
- What might others have overlooked?
- What question would help the group think more clearly?

2. Prepare your main point

You don't need to know everything. Write down your main point, why it matters, and what you recommend.

Use this structure:

"My view is... because... so I recommend..."

3. Question the thought holding you back

Ask yourself:

- What evidence do I have that this will happen?
- Am I expecting myself to know more than everyone else?
- Would I judge a colleague this harshly?
- What could the discussion lose if I stay silent?

Replace your prediction with: *"I don't need to be certain. My perspective could help the discussion."*

During the Meeting

Speak early

The longer you wait, the more pressure you place on yourself. Contribute within the first ten minutes.

- "There's one point I'd like to add."
- "I have a question about that."
- "Something I think we should consider is..."

Give yourself permission to pause

You don't have to respond immediately. A pause usually feels longer to you than to everyone else.

- "My initial view is..."
- "I haven't fully formed my thinking yet, but..."
- "I'd like a moment to think about that."

Disagree without overexplaining

State your position, give a brief reason, then stop.

- "I see it differently."
- "I understand the reasoning, although I'm concerned about..."
- "Can we test that assumption?"

Re-enter the conversation

If interrupted or the discussion moves on, bring yourself back in.

- "I'd like to finish the point I was making."
- "Before we move on, can I come back to...?"
- "I think my earlier point may help us decide."

After the Meeting

Reflect on what happened

Avoid judging your contribution by whether you sounded polished. Focus on facts rather than replaying how you think you came across.

Did I communicate the point I wanted to make?

What did I contribute that was useful?

What response or evidence did I notice?

What will I repeat or do differently next time?

Your next meeting commitment

Choose one small action for your next meeting. I will:

Share my view before I feel completely ready

Contribute within the first ten minutes

Ask one useful question

State a clear recommendation

Disagree when I see a risk or concern

Re-enter the conversation if I'm interrupted

- ❏ Confidence grows through contributing, seeing that you can handle the response, and doing it again. Your aim isn't to speak more for the sake of being visible - it's to make sure your knowledge and judgement are part of the conversation.

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