

A polite way to exit meetings early

While you should do your best to avoid leaving a meeting early, sometimes you just can't help it, when higher-priority commitments overlap with the meeting time. If you have a compelling reason for cutting the meeting short, follow these steps:

Talk to the meeting leader. Before the meeting, explain to the meeting leader that you must duck out early and why. If you have a legitimate excuse, he or she should be understanding.

Don't arrive late. If you show up late and leave early, you send a message that the meeting is unimportant to you. But if you arrive early, you show the leader that you care about the meeting. Plus, you might have the opportunity to discuss the agenda items you will miss.

Ask a co-worker to take notes. Tell the meeting leader you have asked the person to do so because you don't want to miss anything. And make sure you repay the favor to your co-worker.

Make it easy to exit without distracting the group. Sit near the door, and don't spread your belongings everywhere so you can quickly slip out.

Leave during a break. The timing won't always work out, but when it does, leave when the meeting leader calls a quick recess or, at the very least, when the group switches to a new topic on the agenda.

Don't make a scene when you leave. Don't announce that you are heading out. Simply nod at the team leader and exit without any fanfare.

— Adapted from [“The Best Way to Leave a Meeting Early,”](#) Geoffrey James, *Inc.*, www.inc.com.