

Sound Professional When Making Arrangements and Discussing Timings

When we need to cancel a meeting, we can also **call off** a meeting.
If we want to move a meeting to a later time or date, we can **postpone** a meeting.
Often, we have to postpone a meeting because there is some emergency or task that **comes up** unexpectedly.

Sometimes we have to postpone a meeting because the previous meeting **overran**.
If we want to move a meeting to an earlier time or date, we can **bring forward** a meeting.
Sometimes, you might accidentally book 2 meetings for the same time, which means you **have a clash** in your schedule, or maybe someone has arranged an emergency meeting causing a clash, and therefore you have to postpone one of the meetings.

Sometimes we want to move a task to a later time or date, maybe this is because a more important task has come up, or maybe we are just feeling like we don't want to deal with that task at this particular time. In this case, we can **put off** a task until later.

When arranging meetings in today's fast-paced world, it is often difficult to find a time when everyone is free. Maybe you are especially **tied up** with a lot of other tasks or meetings, and you can't find space in your schedule. If you have a lot of free time, you can **work around** someone else. You could **move some things around** in your schedule in order to **free up** some space at a time which is convenient for your colleagues.



A) Match the phrases to the definitions

Based on the context of the article, can you match the words in the box to the definitions listed below? Then add the word into the example sentence. You may need to change the form of the word to fit the meaning of the sentence.

To call off	to come up	to overrun
To bring forward	to have a clash	to put off
To work around someone	to move some things around	to free up
		to be tied up

1. To continue beyond the expected time that something should take: _____

"Apologies for being late, my previous meeting _____."

2. To be so busy that you are unable to talk to someone or go somewhere: _____

"Apologies, I'm a little _____ on Monday with a lot of meetings. Do you have any time on Tuesday afternoon?."

3. To move an event to an earlier time or date: _____

"It appears that the matter is more urgent than we first expected. I'm going to _____ the meeting to tomorrow morning."

4. To cancel an event: _____

"Tomorrow's event has been _____ due to the bad weather."

5. To change some things in your schedule to adapt to someone else's: _____

"If you are quite busy over the next few days, we are happy to _____ you so that we can make sure that we fit in another meeting before the weekend."

6. To appear unexpectedly (referring to a situation, problem or emergency): _____

"I'm sorry, something quite important has just _____, and I need to deal with it immediately. Could we postpone our meeting until next week?"

7. To make a time available for an event or task: _____

"I will _____ some time this afternoon to finish the report."

8. To delay something to a later time or date: _____

"Let's _____ this discussion until tomorrow".

9. To rearrange some parts of your schedule: _____

"If you're only free tomorrow at 3, I can _____ to free up some space."

10. To have 2 events which are scheduled to happen at the same time: _____

"Apologies, I _____ in my schedule at the time of our meeting, so unfortunately I will be unable to attend."

B) Key Words in a New Context

Below you can find a paragraph. Can you fill in the gaps in the paragraph with the words from the box below? You may need to change the form of some of the verbs in order for them to fit into the sentence.

To call off	to come up	to overrun
To bring forward	to put off	to be tied up
To work around someone	to move some things around	to free up

Advertising Campaign Meeting

Alex, Sarah, and Mike are discussing the launch of a new advertising campaign.

Alex: So, moving on to the campaign launch. We only have a few weeks left until the big day, and we have a lot of work to do. It is going to be a real challenge to meet the deadline, but we absolutely cannot afford to miss it.

Sarah: Agreed. I think we need to _____ some of the tasks on the timeline to make sure we meet the deadline. Based on how slowly things have moved so far, I think it is a good idea to start designing the main concepts a little bit earlier in case some unexpected problems _____.

Mike: That's a good point. I can start work on the concept design and copywriting at the beginning of next week.

Sarah: Great, that _____ some time for me to work on the social media campaign.

Mike: Also, I'm going to _____ my trip to Berlin at the end of next week to make up for the lost time.

Sarah: Oh no, that's not good. Is there any way you can _____ some of your tasks until you're back?

Mike: I don't think so. I'm so _____ at the moment with the launch as well as another project, so I'm going to be working over the weekends until after the launch date.

Alex: Okay, I appreciate your commitment Mike. I'll continue with my work on setting up the campaign tracking. It is also important to arrange a quick meeting next week just to check up on progress. Do you both have time next Wednesday afternoon at around 3pm?

Sarah: I have some small meetings on Wednesday, but I can _____ to make it work. My other meetings aren't so important, and this is a much more pressing issue.

Mike: I have a meeting next Wednesday afternoon from 2-3pm, but it is likely to _____, so I wouldn't be able to guarantee that I would be there on time for 3pm.

Alex: In that case, I'm happy to _____ you Mike if you would prefer, say, 3.30?

Mike: Yes, that works. Would you be able to make that Sarah?

Sarah: Yes, that would be fine, I'll move some things around.

Alex: Ok great, I'll send you both an invite on Teams to confirm.

C) Comprehension Questions

1. What do you think Mike means when he uses the phrase “to make up for lost time”?

2. What do you think Sarah means when she describes the launch as a “pressing issue”?

3. What is Mike’s main problem with the suggested 3pm meeting on Wednesday afternoon? Does he have a clash in his schedule?

4. What phrase does Mike use to say that he agrees with the 3.30pm time for the meeting next Wednesday afternoon?

5. What phrase does Mike use to ask Sarah if she will be able to attend the meeting?

D) More Uses of Selected Key Words
To come up

When something unexpected appears, we often don’t have time to explain exactly what it is. Therefore it is perfectly normal and natural just to say that ‘something’ has come up:

“Apologies, I have to cancel our meeting later. Something really urgent has come up.”

If we say that something ‘has’ come up (present perfect tense), it means that something has come up, but we haven’t had the chance to solve it yet. If we have already solved something, we can say that ‘something came up’ (past simple tense).

“Sorry for being late. Something rather important came up, but we’ve solved it now.”

To call off / to put off / to bring forward

When we use these phrasal verbs, we can put a noun in the middle or at the end of

the phrasal verb. However, when we use the preposition 'it', this must come in the middle:

"We don't have time to finish the task now, let's just put it off until tomorrow."

"There were too many people out of the office. The meeting would have been unproductive so we called it off."

To be tied up

Usually, we say that we are "tied up with" something:

"I'm a bit tied up with these reports at the moment, so can we put off our meeting until tomorrow?"

E) Glossary of words for sounding professional when making arrangements and talking about timings

to call off

to come up

to overrun

to bring forward

to have a clash

to put off

to be tied up

to work around someone

to move some things around

to free up