# 10 Tricks to Appear Smart During Meetings

Here are my ten favorite tricks for quickly appearing smart during meetings.

Like everyone, appearing smart during meetings is my top priority. Sometimes this can be difficult if you start daydreaming about your next vacation, your next nap, or bacon. When this happens, it's good to have some fallback tricks to fall back on. Here are my ten favorite tricks for quickly appearing smart during meetings.

1. Draw a Venn diagram
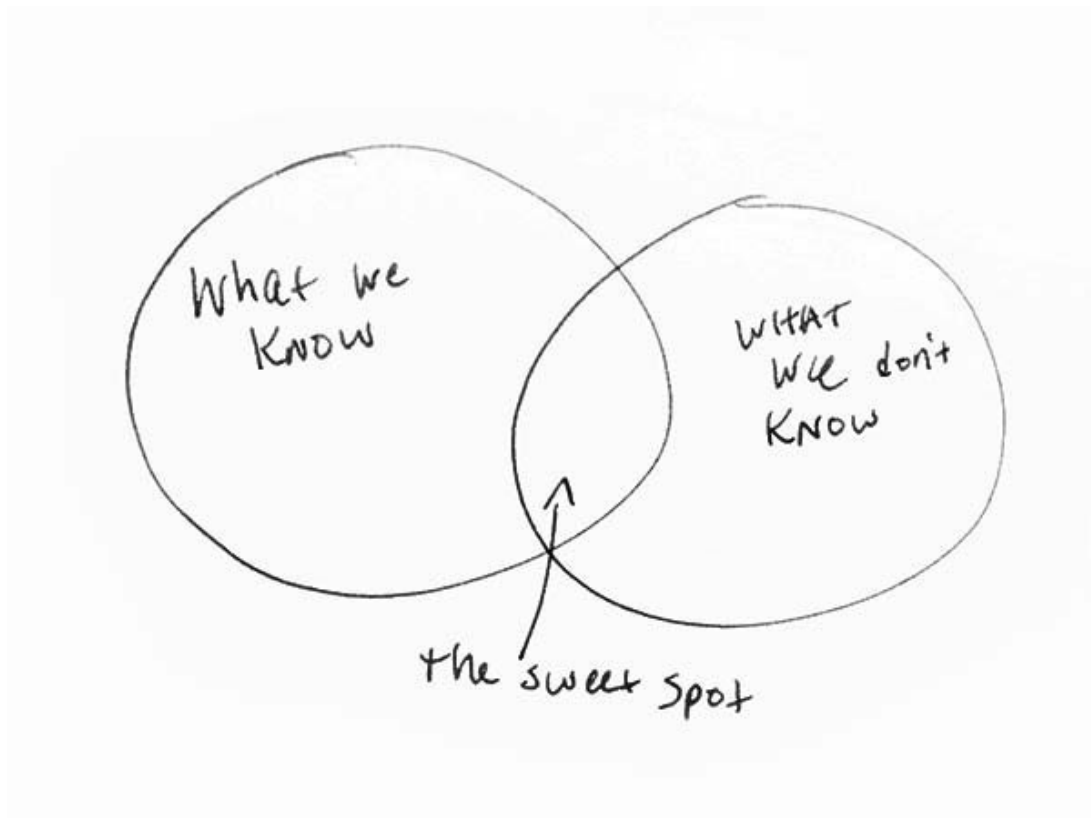
Getting up and drawing a Venn diagram is a great way to appear smart. It doesn't matter if your Venn diagram is wildly inaccurate, in fact, the more inaccurate the better. Even before you've put that marker down, your colleagues will begin fighting about what exactly the labels should be and how big the circles should be, etc. At this point, you can slink back to your chair and go back to playing Candy Crush on your phone.

2. Translate percentage metrics into fractions

If someone says "About 25% of all users click on this button," quickly chime in with, "So about 1 in 4," and make a note of it. Everyone will nod their head in agreement, secretly impressed and envious of your quick math skills.

3. Encourage everyone to "take a step back"

There comes a point in most meetings where everyone is chiming in, except you. Opinions and data and milestones are being thrown around and you don't know your CTA from your OTA. This is a great point to go, "Guys, guys, guys, can we take a step back here?" Everyone will turn their heads toward you, amazed at your ability to silence the fray. Follow it up with a quick, "What problem are we really trying to *solve*?" and, boom! You've bought yourself another hour of looking smart.

4. Nod continuously while pretending to take notes

Always bring a notepad with you. Your rejection of technology will be revered. Take notes by simply writing down one word from every sentence that you hear. Nod continuously while doing so. If someone asks you if you're taking notes, quickly say that these are your own personal notes and that someone else should really be keeping a record of the meeting. Bravo compadre. You've saved your ass, and you've gotten out of doing any extra work. Or any work at all, if you're truly succeeding.

5. Repeat the last thing the engineer said, but very very slowly

Make a mental note of the engineer in the room. Remember his name. He'll be quiet throughout most of the meeting, but when his moment comes everything out of his mouth will spring from a place of unknowable brilliance. After he utters these divine words, chime in with, "Let me just repeat that," and repeat exactly what he just said, but very, very slowly. Now, his brilliance has been transferred to you. People will look back on the meeting and mistakenly attribute the intelligent statement to you.

6. Ask "Will this scale?" no matter what it is

It's important to find out if things will scale no matter what it is you're discussing. No one even really knows what that means, but it's a good catch-all question that generally applies and drives engineers nuts.

7. Pace around the room

Whenever someone gets up from the table and walks around, don't you immediately respect them? I know I do. It takes a lot of guts but once you do it, you immediately appear smart. Fold your arms. Walk around. Go to the corner and lean against the wall. Take a deep, contemplative sigh. Trust me, everyone will be shitting their pants wondering what you're thinking. If only they knew (bacon).

8. Ask the presenter to go back a slide

"Sorry, could you go back a slide?" They're the seven words no presenter wants to hear. It doesn't matter where in the presentation you shout this out, it'll immediately make you look like you're paying closer attention than everyone else is, because clearly *they* missed the thing that you're about to brilliantly point out. Don't have anything to point out? Just say something like, "I'm not sure what these numbers mean," and sit back. You've bought yourself almost an entire meeting of appearing smart.

9. Step out for a phone call

You're probably afraid to step out of the room because you fear people will think you aren't making the meeting a priority. Interestingly, however, if you step out of a meeting for an "important" phone call, they'll all realize just how busy and important you are. They'll say, "Wow, this meeting is important, so if he has something even *more* important than this, well, we better not bother him."

10. Make fun of yourself

If someone asks what you think, and you honestly didn't hear a single word anyone said for the last hour, just say, "I honestly didn't hear a single word anyone said for the last hour." People love self-deprecating humor. Say things like, "Maybe we can just use the lawyers from my divorce," or "God I wish I was dead." They'll laugh, value your honesty, consider contacting H.R., but most importantly, think you're the smartest looking person in the room.

Sarah Cooper is a writer, speaker and bestselling author of *100 Tricks to Appear Smart in Meetings*, and *How to Be Successful Without Hurting Men's Feelings*.