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- I do get irritated by people who regularly turn up late to meetings, I just think it's really rude. They are effectively saying that their time is more valuable than the time of everyone else at the meeting put together, and however important you are, you can never say that. Of course, they aren't consciously thinking that they're just disorganized or forgetful, or they booked another meeting into their diary just before yours without a safety gap. Or maybe they got way late on their way to the meeting and were too unassertive or perhaps too polite to say no, I've got a meeting now, I'll come back to you later. But still, the result is that they're late to the meeting, which inconveniences everyone else. So, it's bad enough that some people aren't there for the first part of the meeting, but even worse is having to delay the start of the meeting because some people aren't there. Sometimes it's even the leader of the meeting who's the one who's late.

So, I've got some strategies for you to make sure that people turn up on time to your meetings, but before we get to those, it's worth noting that in my research I've discovered that there are big differences between the private and public sectors, and also, that Americans tend to be more polite than the British, or at least, the apparently polite British can get away with saying and doing things that would be quite rude sounding to Americans. For example, in the UK, it would be perfectly acceptable to call someone out for being regularly late to a meeting or to take away the biscuits at the start of a meeting and deliberately leave just crumbs for the late-comers to see. We would see it as a bit of fun, but with a point. And in the guise of joking around, we can be pretty barbed. While, I think with Americans and probably many other cultures, criticism is done and taken more directly, so it has to be gentler. So, anyway, see what you think of the following methods and pick one or more that you feel comfortable would work in the culture of your organization and your country.

I've got nine quick ideas for you and here they are.

1. My first suggestion is to have an unusual start time, something like 11:15 or 11:20, which will make them focus on when the meeting starts. To some people nine o'clock means nine-ish, give or take five or 10 minutes, but 11:20 sounds really precise.
2. Have cakes or doughnuts to eat just before you start and take them away when the meeting starts as an extra incentive.

3. Take away any spare chairs so that when people arrive late, there aren't any chairs and they have to go and fetch one from another room, and maybe spread yourselves equally around the table so there isn't an obvious place for them to push in with the chair that they've fetched.
4. Have the door closed, or maybe even locked if it's in England so that they can tell that the meeting has started and then they feel as if they're intruding.
5. Say something assertive when they arrive, something like, "Julia, the meeting has already started," or asking them why they're late, which will make them feel less keen on being late next time, but also sends a signal to everyone else that it's a bad idea to be late.
6. Remind everyone with a note on the agenda that you really do want to start on time.
7. Remind them personally if they're a regular offender. "Julia, you're sometimes late, "I know how busy you are, "but it would be really good if you could definitely "be there for the 11:15 start." If Julia I know is watching this, by the way, don't worry, I know that you're never late.
8. Refuse to back over their items once they arrive. Sorry, you missed it, we don't have time to go back, it's all sorted now and it'll be in the minutes.
9. See them after the meeting and offer to help. "Julia, you were late again for my meeting today, "and I'm just wondering, is there anything I can do? "Would it help to have the meeting "at a different time of day, for example?" Maybe there is something simple that could help, but mainly, you're politely saying something's got to change.

So, who are the late-comers for your meetings? And which method are you going to use on them from now on? Use the notetaking tool to answer these questions.