

HOW TO MEET YOUR MP

So you want to organise a meeting with your local MP. What's the best way to go about doing this?

1. Do some research

- Find out who they are, which party your MP belongs to, whether they hold any other position in their party, how long they have been in parliament and whether they are a member of any parliamentary committees.
- Make sure you know how to pronounce their name and how you should address them. See the useful links section for some tips on using correct titles.
- Try to get an idea of where your MP stands on issues that Oxfam campaigns on.

2. Request a meeting

Put your request in writing

Always request a meeting in writing. If you call first, most MP's offices will ask that you put your request in an email, fax or letter. Taking the time to put your request in writing also shows your MP that you're serious. Your letter should be concise and to the point:

- Outline who you are and the organisation or issue you represent.
- State why you want to meet with them, who will attend the meeting and give them an outline of what you would like to discuss in one or two sentences or dot points.
- You can suggest a meeting at their office or, if you are holding a community meeting or event, invite them along.

Be reasonable about when you are asking them to meet. Check out **parliamentary sitting weeks** to make sure your MP is in their electorate and not in Canberra. See 'Useful Links' at the end of this guide for the details of sitting dates in your area.

For further tips on writing your letter, see the Writing to your MP guide.

Be persistent!

Follow up your written request with a telephone call – confirm that the office has received your request and indicate that you are looking forward to hearing back from them.

If you haven't received a response within ten days, call the office again and ask to speak with the MP's personal assistant or diary manager. If your request for a meeting is denied, don't give up! Many people succeed through sheer persistence. Remember to remain friendly, polite and respectful, and you will stand a greater chance of eventually securing a meeting time.

3. Prepare for the meeting

Once you've secured a meeting, it's important to know your issue ... and your MP! Start by letting your Community Campaigner know that you have secured a meeting and they can assist you with the meeting preparation by linking you up with reports and key campaign demands that Oxfam is making of the government.

It's important to research the issue – remember, no-one expects you to be an expert, just make sure you have a good understanding of the issue, are up-to-date with any media or community campaigns and, most importantly, are confident in what you're saying! If you're unsure of anything, you can always reach out to your Community Campaigner for advice or more information.

Then, make sure you have done your background research on your MP:

- Make sure you know how to pronounce their name and how you should address them. See the useful links section for some tips on using correct titles.
- Try to find out what your MP's personal views are on your issue as well as their party's policy.

Know what you want

Before your meeting, it is important to work out **what action you will ask your MP to take**. This will depend on which party the MP belongs to, whether they hold any other positions, and what their views are on the issue. It will also depend on the nature of your issue. For example, if you are meeting with your MP about a bill you disagree with, you might simply ask them to vote against the bill in parliament.

Your Community Campaigner will be able to assist with the key asks that Oxfam is making to MPs. So be sure to contact them for this information or look it up on the resource portal.

Organise your team for the meeting

Organise a small team of two to three people to attend the meeting. This will give you some moral support and help to show your MP that the issue is important to the wider community too.

You will need to delegate roles so that the meeting runs smoothly and meets its objectives. Your MP will expect you to take charge! So plan who will say what and choose someone to lead the conversation. That person will introduce your group members, begin the discussion, and conclude the meeting. Another person should take notes, especially of any commitments that are made.

Remember that if you are bringing people other than yourself, you need to let the MP's office know before the meeting.

Be organised

A brief document (ideally one page), outlining your key points and pertinent facts and figures, can be an effective way to communicate your message. Your MP may have an adviser or two with them, so **take additional copies** of any documents you plan to refer to.

It may help to write a few notes for yourself, outlining your key arguments and other facts and figures you want to use. Alternatively, you can simply use the document you have prepared for the MP. This will also help keep you focused on the important points of your discussion.

Tips for making a good first impression

- Get off on the right foot by dressing appropriately and arriving on time.
- Start by introducing yourself and thanking your MP for taking the time to meet with you.
- Remember to speak clearly and audibly, and maintain good eye contact. It's great to be passionate, but balance this with politeness.

Tell them exactly what you want

Give the MP compelling reasons to take the action you are requesting and point out the benefits to them. Demonstrating that there is electoral support for your cause is an important first step. Let them know how many Oxfam supporters there are in their electorate. The more support you can show, the more likely they'll think of the issue as a vote-changer.

Secure a commitment

Once you've spelt out what you are asking for, seek a commitment from your MP. Ask them what action they plan to take and when.

Leave a lasting impact

Regardless of how successful the meeting has been, take the time to once again thank your MP for meeting with you. Ask for the business cards of any advisers present at the meeting. Indicate that you appreciate their time and would be happy to meet with them again at any stage in the future.

Snap a picture

Ask your MP for a picture and let them know you will share it with the group and via social media.

4. Next steps

Debrief

Talk over how the meeting went with your team. Discuss what worked, what didn't, and how you could do it better next time. Make a note of any points to keep in mind for your next visit. Your experience and your better understanding of the politician will make your next meeting easier.

Go over your notes of the meeting, paying attention to any commitments that were made by the MP or any action points for you to provide further information. Work out who will be responsible for any follow up actions.

Follow up

Send a follow up letter or email to the MP. Thank them for meeting with you, outline your understanding of any actions they committed to take and indicate that you look forward to hearing from them. Include any information you promised to send to the politician.

Make sure your MP honours their commitments to you. If you don't hear anything within a month, give their office a call or write to ask them whether they have taken the action they committed to take. Once again, persistence is key!

Useful links:

[How to address Senators and Members](#)
[List of Senators and Members](#)

See relevant link below for parliament sitting dates for your state:

[Parliament of Victoria](#)
[Parliament of Queensland](#)
[Parliament of New South Wales](#)
[Parliament of Northern Territory](#)
[Parliament of South Australia](#)
[Parliament of Western Australia](#)
[Parliament of Tasmania](#)

Search for your MP online

Many MPs have their own websites, blogs and are on Facebook and Twitter.

See our handy guide, [Get passionate about politics](#), to learn the basics.

The top ten tips to meeting your MP

1. MP's secretaries and researchers are usually the first point of contact; they also manage MP diaries and sort their mail. Be extra nice and they'll make it all that much easier.
2. MPs have packed diaries so be sure to make any appointments well in advance. Don't stand them up or be late.
3. Do your homework. Be aware of Oxfam's concerns and, if in doubt, ask for advice. Research your MP's likely position on the issue and decide how to best approach the meeting.
4. Know what you want to say and be realistic about what your MP can do.
5. You don't need to be an expert, just passionate about the issue. Remember, as a constituent, your MP is accountable to you.
6. Keep your points clear and succinct.
7. Don't be party-political, focus on the issue.
8. Be clear about what you want your MP to do following the meeting.
9. Build a relationship based on a range of activities. Don't always ask them to write to ministers.
10. After the meeting, write to thank them for their involvement and follow up on any agreed actions.