Frequently Asked Questions:

Scheduling Meetings

What if I need to cancel or reschedule my meeting?
Email the staffer and explain to them your situation. If you need to cancel your meeting, apologize and then briefly outline to the staffer your message and ask. If you need to reschedule, provide alternative dates and/or times that you’re available to meet.

What if I want to schedule a meeting last minute?
Keeping in mind that offices are very busy, email the office and see if someone is available to meet with you. While you may be able to schedule a meeting within the same week, it’s unlikely you’ll be able to schedule a meeting without 72 hours’ notice. If you are unable to schedule a meeting, you can still drop by the office with your materials and ask that they be given to the appropriate staff member.

What if the office cancels the meeting?
Everyone in your group you should e-mail the staffer you were scheduled to meet with and briefly outline your message and ask.

What if Congress is closed due to inclement weather?
Office closures in Washington, D.C. are decided by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). However, Congressional offices do not always OPM guidance. Call and/or email the staffer you are scheduled to meet with to confirm whether the Congressional office is open or closed.

What if I’m running late to my meeting?
Call the office to let them know you’re running late.

What if one of the attendees is a no-show?
Let the staffer know at the beginning of the meeting, that the attendee will not be joining.

During the Meeting

What if I meet with another staffer in the office and not who I scheduled my meeting with?
In your follow-up email to the staffer that you met with, be sure to CC the staffer you were originally scheduled to meet with.
What if my meeting doesn’t take place in a Congressional office?
Office space is at a premium on Capitol Hill, especially in the House of Representatives, so be flexible and don’t feel slighted if your meeting takes place in the hallway, cafeteria, or as the legislator walks to vote. Be flexible.

What if the member of Congress stops by during the middle of my meeting?
Stop and acknowledge the legislator, tell them you’re a constituent, share why you’re meeting with the office, and what you’d like them to do. Remember to stay on track.

What if the office disagrees with me, is rude, or goes off on a tangent?
Rarely will members of Congress or their staff be rude or combative, but if you find yourself in that situation remember to remain neutral and continue to try to engage the legislator or staff in a productive conversation. If the legislator or staffer goes off on a tangent, do not engage them; try to bring the focus back to your message and ask.

What if I forget to bring my materials?
Don’t worry. Simply, include your materials in your follow-up thank you email to the office.

What if I don’t know the answer to a question a staffer asks me?
You are not expected to know everything. Simply state that you’re unsure and will follow-up with the office with the answer.

Miscellaneous
Is there a place to store my luggage?
If you bring your luggage to Capitol Hill with you, plan to travel with it throughout the day.

How can I request a Capitol tour or White House tour?
You can arrange a Capitol tour or White House tour through your members of Congress.