

The VC Meeting Cheat Sheet

Read the room in real time — and pull a drifting meeting back before it ends.

Watch for the tilt. Early on, an investor is deciding whether the *problem* is real. The moment they stop doing that and start exploring whether *you're* the one to solve it — that's when you've won the room. Everything good flows from it. Your job is to get there faster, and to notice when you're drifting away from it.

Signs it's going well

- ✓ **Questions shift from “what” to “how.”** “How do you onboard? How does this scale?” They're picturing you in the market.
- ✓ **They map you to pain they know.** “Our portfolio companies complain about exactly this.” You're connecting to lived experience, not abstraction.
- ✓ **They bring themselves into the story.** Offering intros, naming people you should meet, “I wish we'd had this at my last company.”
- ✓ **They test edge cases — and listen.** Hard questions, but they're weighing your answers, not using them to close the door.
- ✓ **They ask about you.** Your motivation, your team's background. Founder-market fit only matters once they're interested.
- ✓ **They shift to funding mechanics.** How much, who else is in, use of funds. That's deal-evaluation mode.
- ✓ **They run over time.** A 30-minute slot becomes 50. Nobody lingers on a pass.
- ✓ **They start selling you.** On the firm, the partners, the platform team. The dynamic has flipped — they want in.

Signs it's going badly — and your ripcord

- ✗ **They stay at the surface.** “So... what does it do again?” after you've explained.
Reset: “Let me simplify — the problem, the wedge, the expansion. Want me to show the flow in one slide?”
- ✗ **An early category-killer objection.** “Isn't this just [incumbent] with AI?” before your wedge has landed.
Flip it: “Exactly — that frustration is why our opening exists. Here's where we win.”
- ✗ **They go quiet or multitask.** Camera off, typing, no follow-ups. Mentally checked out.
Make them talk: “Quick gut-check — does this pain show up across your portfolio?”
- ✗ **They keep saying “interesting.”** Said flat, it's usually code for unconvinced.
Name it: “I've heard ‘interesting’ a couple of times — curious kind, or skeptical kind?”
- ✗ **Time shrinks / no next steps.** Hard stop early; ends with “keep us posted” instead of a next call.
Go direct: “Before we wrap — what's the one thing that doesn't land? I'd rather take it head-on.”
- ✗ **Generic compliments.** “Great pitch, you're clearly sharp.” Politeness, not interest.
Surface it: “I appreciate that — but honestly it sounds like a soft pass. Any blocker I can address now?”

Course-correct **early**. The moment you spot the drift, flip control back with a question — don't wait for the goodbye email.