APEX ENGLISH
Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 7 · B1·7A

Closing the deal

Theme · Sales & customers

Unit 7 · B1·7A

Closing the deal

Theme: Sales & customers

B1 · Business English

Learning objectives

- Open, structure and close a short sales pitch without sounding pushy.
- Use the 1st conditional to make offers, promises and warnings ('If you sign today, I'll…').
- Handle two of the most common price objections in one calm sentence each.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Class Book

Warm-up · The last thing you bought

Think of the LAST non-food thing you bought that cost more than €100. Answer three questions in one sentence each.

What did you buy — and how did you first hear about it?

What was the ONE thing the seller said that pushed you to say yes?

Was there anything they said that ALMOST made you walk away?

Lead-in: predict the pitch

Six claims about how modern B2B sales actually work. For each one vote TRUE or FALSE. Compare your answers with a partner before the class discussion — no phones, gut feeling only.

kind: predictions

1. **claim:** Most B2B buyers have made 70% of the buying decision BEFORE they contact a salesperson. · **vote:** TRUE · **explain:** Multiple industry studies (Gartner, Forrester) put it around 60–70%. By the time a lead lands, they've already read your competitors' pricing pages.

2. **claim:** Offering a discount in the first meeting is the fastest way to close a deal. · **vote:** FALSE · **explain:** It usually SLOWS the deal — the buyer assumes there's more room. Discounts only work at the very end, tied to something ('if you sign this week…').

3. **claim:** In email outreach, a personalised first line raises reply rates by 3–5x versus a generic opener. · **vote:** TRUE · **explain:** Consistent across most B2B benchmarks. Even a 6-word specific first line ('Loved your Q3 launch — congrats') moves the needle.

4. **claim:** The best salespeople talk more than they listen. · **vote:** FALSE · **explain:** Recorded-call analysis (Gong, Chorus) shows top performers listen 55–60% of the call. The average performer talks 65% of the call and loses.

5. **claim:** 'What's your budget?' is the safest question to ask on a first call. · **vote:** FALSE · **explain:** It signals you're focused on their money, not their problem. Ask 'what would fixing this be worth to you?' — the answer is bigger and it earns trust.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

6. **claim:** Sending a written summary within 24 hours of a sales call increases the close rate by around 20%. · **vote:** TRUE · **explain:** Roughly 20% in most CRM studies. It's not persuasion — it's memory. Buyers forget 70% of a call within 48 hours; your written summary is what stays.

---

followUp: Which of your FALSE predictions surprises you most? Explain in one sentence.

Reading · The three moves of a modern sales call

Sales in 2026 doesn't look like sales in 2006. The customer arrives already informed — they've read the pricing page, they've watched a competitor's demo, and they've asked a colleague on LinkedIn what you're like to work with. That changes everything.

Move one: earn the meeting with a specific first line. 'Hi — I saw your Q3 launch, congratulations.' A specific, honest opener out-performs a generic 'quick chat?' by three or four to one. If the first line looks like a template, the reply looks like a delete.

Move two: listen twice as much as you talk. The top-performing sales reps talk about 40% of a call and listen 60%. The buyer is more likely to buy when they hear themselves describe the problem — and less likely when the seller keeps interrupting to describe the solution.

Move three: close with a next step, not a discount. 'If we agree today, I'll have the contract in your inbox by Wednesday and we'll start onboarding on the 15th.' A specific next step beats a vague promise — and beats a discount too. Discounts are a last-move tool, not a first-move one.

1. What has changed about the modern B2B buyer?
   (A) They arrive uninformed
   (B) They arrive already informed and have researched you
   (C) They only care about price
2. How much do top-performing sales reps talk on a call?
   (A) About 40%
   (B) About 60%
   (C) About 80%
3. According to the text, when should you use a discount?
   (A) First move
   (B) Middle move
   (C) Last move

Vocabulary in context

Match the phrase to the meaning.

earn the meeting — give the buyer a reason to accept your invite

a specific first line — an opener that shows real research, not a template

a next step — a clear, dated action that keeps the deal moving

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

a last-move tool — something you only bring out at the very end

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text, choose the correct option.

1. Sales in 2026 looks the same as sales in 2006.
   (A) True
   (B) False
   (C) Not Given
2. A generic opener works as well as a specific one.
   (A) True
   (B) False
   (C) Not Given
3. The best reps listen more than they talk.
   (A) True
   (B) False
   (C) Not Given
4. A discount always speeds up the deal.
   (A) True
   (B) False
   (C) Not Given
5. Sales reps who use video calls close more deals than those who don't.
   (A) True
   (B) False
   (C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly.

1. Which of the three moves does your company (or a company you've bought from) do WORST?

2. Is 'talk 40%, listen 60%' realistic in your language and culture?

Scan for meaning

Find the phrase in the text that matches each definition.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. a reason to accept a meeting invite

2. an opener that shows real research

3. a clear, dated action

4. something to use only at the very end

Vocabulary · The sales cycle

a lead — a possible customer, not qualified yet

a prospect — a lead that has confirmed real interest

a pipeline — the list of deals you're working on, by stage

a discovery call — the first call — you listen, they describe the pain point

a proposal / a quote — the written offer with price and terms

an objection — the buyer's reason for saying no (or not yet)

to qualify (a lead) — to check if it's a real opportunity

to follow up — to contact again after a call or email

to close (a deal) — to reach a final yes

to lose (a deal) — to fail to close — often to a competitor

to nurture (a lead) — to stay in contact patiently, over time

to upsell — to sell a bigger / better version to an existing customer

practice

Complete each sentence with ONE word or phrase from the lists.

1. We got 300 sign-ups at the trade fair — but only 40 are real ___.

2. I need to ___ ___ with the client I met on Monday — no reply yet.

3. The Berlin deal is the biggest one in my ___ this quarter.

4. Their main ___ is the price — we're 12% above the incumbent.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

5. We ___ the deal to a smaller competitor — mainly on delivery time.

6. The account has been open for two years — time to try to ___.

Collocations · sales verbs

Match the verb with the noun.

generate — leads

book — a discovery call

send — a proposal

handle — an objection

close — the deal

hit — the quota

Odd one out

Choose the word that does NOT belong.

1. lead · prospect · stakeholder · invoice
   (A) lead
   (B) prospect
   (C) stakeholder
   (D) invoice
2. discount · quote · proposal · objection
   (A) discount
   (B) quote
   (C) proposal
   (D) objection
3. close · qualify · nurture · postpone
   (A) close
   (B) qualify
   (C) nurture
   (D) postpone

Word building · verb ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

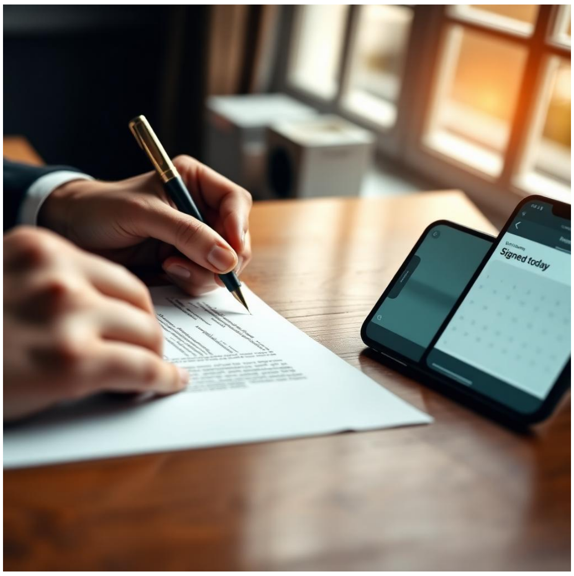
1. to negotiate → a ___

2. to propose → a ___

3. to object → an ___

4. to compete → a ___

5. to sell → a ___



Grammar · 1st conditional — offers, promises and warnings

1. Form: If + present simple, will / won't + infinitive — • If you sign today, we'll waive the setup fee. • If you don't reply by Friday, we won't hold the price.

2. 'Unless' = if not — • Unless we hear from you by Friday, we'll re-open the slot. • = If we don't hear from you by Friday, …

3. When (not if) → you know it will happen — • If the client signs, I'll celebrate. (I'm not sure) • When the client signs, I'll celebrate. (I'm confident)

4. Softeners for sales — • If it helps, we'll extend the trial by two weeks. • If you're comfortable with that, I'll send the contract now. • Would you be open to a call, if I keep it to 20 minutes?

5. Warnings without sounding rude — • If we don't lock this in by Friday, the price goes up in Q4. (fact, not a threat) • Compare: If you don't decide, you'll pay more. (blunt)

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — put the verb in the right form

1st conditional. Choose 'If' or 'when' where it appears.

1. If you (sign) today, we (waive) the setup fee.
2. Unless we (hear) from you by Friday, we (re-open) the slot.
3. When the contract (arrive), I (start) onboarding immediately.
4. If it (help), we (extend) the trial by two weeks.
5. If you (not / decide) by Q4, the price (go) up.
6. If the demo (go) well, I (send) the proposal Thursday.

Exercise B — find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake.

1. If you will sign today, we waive the fee.
2. Unless you don't reply by Friday, we re-open the slot.
3. When you signing, I'll start.
4. If it helps, we extending the trial.

Exercise C — 'if' vs 'when'

Choose 'if' or 'when' for the meaning shown in brackets.

1. (uncertain) ___ the client accepts, we'll invoice on Monday.
2. (certain — meeting is scheduled) ___ we meet on Thursday, I'll bring the samples.
3. (uncertain) ___ they raise the timeline objection, I'll show them the plan.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

4. (certain — deal is signed) ___ the money hits our account, we'll kick off.

Exercise D — write the sales offer

Write ONE polite sales sentence using 'if' + will for each situation.

1. You want the client to sign this week — offer to skip the setup fee.
2. The client is worried about the length of the contract.
3. The client wants a small discount you can't fully give.
4. You want the client to introduce you to another team in the same company.

Exercise E — soften a warning

Rewrite each blunt warning as a polite 1st-conditional sentence a customer won't hate you for.

1. 'Decide by Friday or the price goes up.'
2. 'Answer my email or I'll cancel your slot.'
3. 'We won't ship unless you pay first.'

Exercise F — handling two objections

For each objection, write one 1st-conditional response.

1. 'Your price is 12% higher than the competitor.'
2. 'We need to think about it.'

Listening · Three sales reps, one client, one objection

The same client says the same thing to three different sales reps: 'Your price is 15% higher than the competitor.' Listen to how each rep handles the objection. Decide who wins the deal, who loses it, and who is somewhere in between.

pre

What's the worst response you've ever heard to 'you're too expensive'?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

In your own buying life, has a discount ever changed your mind about a supplier?

gist

1. Which voice offers a discount immediately?

2. Which voice asks a question before answering?

3. Which voice is polite but loses the room?

detail

1. What did Voice A do wrong, tactically?

2. What was Voice B's specific counter-move?

3. Why does Voice C's approach fail even though nothing she says is wrong?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

1. Which rep does the buyer trust the most by the end?

2. Would Voice B's approach work in every culture?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does.

"Let me see what I can do on price." — opens a discount too early

"Can I ask what's included in the competitor's quote?" — reframes before responding

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

"If we compare total cost over 12 months, we're €4,000 cheaper." — shifts from headline price to total value

"If it helps, I'll send you a written comparison by Wednesday." — creates a clear next step

"I hear you — that's a real number, and I appreciate you telling me." — acknowledges without giving in

Voice A: Ah, okay. 15% higher. Look — let me see what I can do on price. Honestly, I can probably get you 10% off if I speak to my director. Would 10% work for you?

Voice B: That's useful — thank you for being direct. Before I respond on price, can I ask what's included in the competitor's quote? Because when we've done these comparisons, our headline price is higher, but if we compare the total cost over 12 months, we're usually €4,000 cheaper — mainly because their onboarding is charged separately and their support tier is basic. If it helps, I'll send you a written comparison by Wednesday and we can talk again Thursday.

Voice C: I hear you, and I understand — pricing is always sensitive. But you have to remember, our product includes 24/7 support, and the security certification, and the API access, and the dedicated account manager, and the quarterly business reviews, and — you know — really the whole platform is designed for enterprise, so if you look at everything you're getting, it's actually excellent value, and I really don't think the competitor can match that…

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases from the audio.

1. Let me see what I can do on ___.

2. Before I respond on price, can I ___ what's included in the competitor's quote?

3. If we compare total cost over 12 months, we're €4,000 ___.

4. If it ___, I'll send you a written comparison by Wednesday.

5. That's a real ___, and I appreciate you telling me.

Speaking · The 60-second sales close

Choose ONE product or service you know well (real or imagined). Prepare a 60-second oral close. Use AT LEAST one 1st-conditional offer ('If you sign this week, we'll…'), one softener ('If it helps…'), and ONE clear next step with a date.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Scene: The startup pitch

A: You: the founder of a €40/month scheduling tool. Close a small-agency owner who's said 'I'll think about it'.

B: You: the small-agency owner. Push back once on price, then decide.

Scene: The 6-figure enterprise deal

A: You: the enterprise sales rep. The client's CFO wants a 15% discount before signing.

B: You: the CFO. React — accept the counter-offer, push again, or walk away.

Scene: The renewal upsell

A: You: the account manager. Client's contract ends in 30 days — offer the annual plan with 2 free months.

B: You: the customer. React — accept, negotiate, or downgrade.

Class discussion

Discuss briefly.

In your industry, is 'discount early' or 'discount only at the end' the norm?

What is the ONE 1st-conditional offer you could genuinely make to a customer next week?

Is 'if it helps…' a real softener in your language, or does it sound weak?

Role-play · handling one objection

Student A: a sales rep. Student B: a buyer who raises ONE of the objections below. Rep has to answer with at least one 1st-conditional sentence and one clear next step.

Scene: 'Your price is too high.'

A: Student A: reframe from price to total cost. Offer a comparison document by a specific day.

B: Student B: the buyer. React — accept the counter, push again, or walk away.

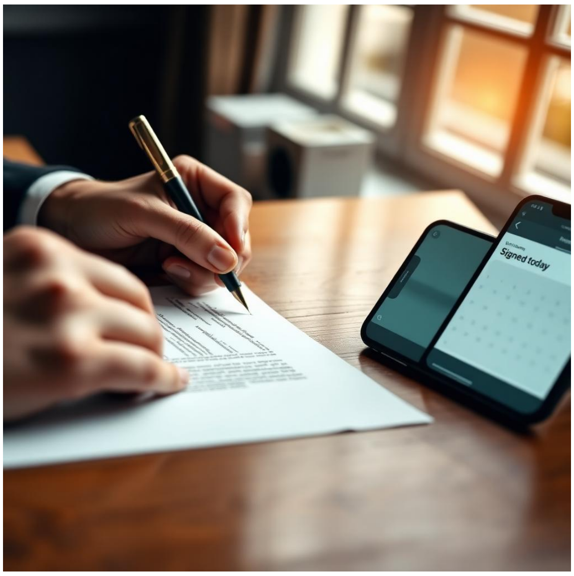
Scene: 'We need more time to decide.'

A: Student A: offer a clear next step in 5–7 days with a small commitment.

B: Student B: the buyer. React — agree, negotiate the date, or push it further.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Workbook — home practice



1. Vocabulary gap-fill

Complete each sentence with ONE word or phrase from the box.

Word bank: lead · pipeline · objection · follow up · quote · upsell

1. We got 300 sign-ups at the trade fair — but only 40 are real ___.

2. Their main ___ is the price — we're 12% above the incumbent.

3. I need to ___ ___ with the client I met on Monday — no reply yet.

4. The Berlin deal is the biggest one in my ___ this quarter.

5. I sent them a full written ___ yesterday — waiting on their sign-off.

6. The account has been open for two years — time to try to ___.

2. 1st conditional — put the verb in the right form

Use 'if' or 'when' + present simple, then will / won't + infinitive.

1. If you (sign) today, we (waive) the setup fee.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. Unless we (hear) from you by Friday, we (re-open) the slot.

3. When the contract (arrive), I (start) onboarding immediately.

4. If it (help), we (extend) the trial by two weeks.

5. If you (not / decide) by Q4, the price (go) up — I don't set it.

6. If the demo (go) well, I (send) the proposal Thursday.

3. Which sales close would actually work?

Choose the version that is most likely to CLOSE the deal.

1. The client says 'I need to think about it.' You reply:
   (A) 'Sure, let me know.'
   (B) 'Of course — if it helps, I'll send a one-page summary today and we can lock a 15-minute follow-up on Thursday.'
   (C) 'The price goes up next week.'
2. The client asks for a 15% discount. You reply:
   (A) 'Okay, 15% off — sign today.'
   (B) 'Before I respond on price, can I ask what's included in the competitor's quote?'
   (C) 'That's impossible.'
3. Opening a discovery call, you say:
   (A) 'So — tell me about yourself.'
   (B) 'I saw your Q3 launch — congratulations. Before I pitch anything, can I ask what's on your plate this quarter?'
   (C) 'Let me tell you about our product.'
4. Ending a call with no clear next step, you say:
   (A) 'I'll email you.'
   (B) 'If it helps, I'll send the proposal by Wednesday and we'll speak again Thursday at 10 — does that work?'
   (C) 'Talk soon.'

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. If you will sign today, we waive the fee.

2. Unless you don't reply by Friday, we re-open the slot.

3. When you signing, I'll start.

4. If it helps, we extending the trial.

5. Listening — three sales reps handle 'you're too expensive'

Three sales reps hear the same objection: 'Your price is 15% higher than the competitor.' Decide who WINS the deal, who LOSES it, and who is somewhere in between.

1. Which rep discounts too early?

2. Which rep reframes to total value?

3. Which rep talks too much and never asks?

Voice A: Ah, 15% higher. Let me see what I can do on price — I can probably get you 10% off if I speak to my director. Would 10% work for you?

Voice B: Thank you for being direct. Before I respond on price, can I ask what's included in the competitor's quote? Because when we compare total cost over 12 months, we're usually €4,000 cheaper — their onboarding is charged separately and their support tier is basic. If it helps, I'll send you a written comparison by Wednesday.

Voice C: I hear you — pricing is always sensitive. But remember, our product includes 24/7 support, and the security certification, and the API access, and the account manager, and quarterly reviews, and if you look at everything you're getting, it's actually excellent value, and really I don't think the competitor can match that…

6. Writing — your 60-second close

Choose ONE product or service you know well. Write a 4-sentence sales close. Sentence 1: 1st-conditional offer ('If you sign this week, we'll…'). Sentence 2: a softener ('If it helps…'). Sentence 3: ONE clear next step with a date. Sentence 4: what happens if they don't decide by that date — factually, not as a threat. Max 90 words.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

7. Case study preview

Before Case Study 7, answer briefly.

1. You run a small bakery. A slick online competitor arrives at 20% cheaper. Do you cut your price? Why or why not?

2. What's the ONE customer-service line you'd want every staff member in a small shop to say the same way?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Answer key — Class Book

Reading · The three moves of a modern sales call

1. (B) They arrive already informed and have researched you
2. (A) About 40%
3. (C) Last move
1. (B) False
2. (B) False
3. (A) True
4. (B) False
5. (C) Not Given
1. Model: move one. Every outreach email opens with 'Hi, hope you're well' — nobody bothers to research anymore.
2. Model: harder in cultures where silence is uncomfortable. In practice, forcing yourself to count to three before answering solves 80% of it.
1. earn the meeting
2. a specific first line
3. a next step
4. a last-move tool

Vocabulary · The sales cycle

1. leads
2. follow up
3. pipeline
4. objection
5. lost
6. upsell
1. (D) invoice
2. (D) objection
3. (D) postpone
1. negotiation
2. proposal
3. objection
4. competitor / competition
5. sale / seller

Grammar · 1st conditional — offers, promises and warnings

1. sign / will waive
2. hear / will re-open
3. arrives / will start
4. helps / will extend
5. don't decide / will go
6. goes / will send
1. If you sign today, we'll waive the fee.
2. Unless you reply by Friday, we'll re-open the slot. (OR: If you don't reply…)
3. When you sign, I'll start.
4. If it helps, we'll extend the trial.
1. If
2. When
3. If
4. When
1. Model: 'If you sign by Friday, we'll waive the €900 setup fee.'
2. Model: 'If you'd prefer, we'll start with a 3-month rolling contract instead of 12.'
3. Model: 'If you sign the annual, we'll extend the trial by two weeks — that's better than a discount for you.'
4. Model: 'If you introduce me to the ops team, I'll cover the first onboarding session for both teams at no extra cost.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. Model: 'If we lock this in by Friday, we'll hold today's price. After Friday, the Q4 rate applies — I don't set it, sorry.'
2. Model: 'Unless I hear from you by Wednesday, I'll re-open the slot for the next client on the list — happy to hold it if you send one line back.'
3. Model: 'Standard terms are 50% upfront. If we receive the deposit by Wednesday, we'll ship on Friday as agreed.'
1. Model: 'If we match on price only, we'll match on service too — and their service is where you're already losing time. If you compare the total year, we're €4,000 cheaper.'
2. Model: 'Absolutely — if it helps, I'll send you a one-page summary today and we can lock in a 15-minute follow-up on Thursday. That way you're not chasing this in your inbox.'

Listening · Three sales reps, one client, one objection

1. Voice A — 'let me see what I can do on price' — offers 10% off in the first minute.
2. Voice B — 'can I ask what's included in the competitor's quote?' — refuses to compete on headline price alone.
3. Voice C — apologises repeatedly, defends the price with feature list, never asks a question.
1. Discounted in the first minute, before understanding the buyer's real concern. Buyer walked away assuming there was more room and asked for another 10%.
2. Reframed to total cost of ownership over 12 months — showed the competitor's cheaper headline price was €4,000 more expensive across the full year with hidden fees.
3. She talks 90% of the call. She never asks what the buyer actually values. The buyer feels lectured, not listened to.
1. Voice B — because Voice B asked a question, listened, then reframed. Trust follows the person who slows down.
2. Not automatically — some buyers expect a discount early as a sign of respect. Voice B's move works best when the buyer values transparency over speed.
1. price
2. ask
3. cheaper
4. helps
5. number

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. leads
2. objection
3. follow up
4. pipeline
5. quote
6. upsell

2. 1st conditional — put the verb in the right form

1. sign / will waive
2. hear / will re-open
3. arrives / will start
4. helps / will extend
5. don't decide / will go
6. goes / will send

3. Which sales close would actually work?

1. (B) 'Of course — if it helps, I'll send a one-page summary today and we can lock a 15-minute follow-up on Thursday.'
2. (B) 'Before I respond on price, can I ask what's included in the competitor's quote?'
3. (B) 'I saw your Q3 launch — congratulations. Before I pitch anything, can I ask what's on your plate this quarter?'
4. (B) 'If it helps, I'll send the proposal by Wednesday and we'll speak again Thursday at 10 — does that work?'

4. Find and fix the mistake

1. If you sign today, we'll waive the fee.
2. Unless you reply by Friday, we'll re-open the slot. (OR: If you don't reply…)
3. When you sign, I'll start.
4. If it helps, we'll extend the trial.

5. Listening — three sales reps handle 'you're too expensive'

1. Rep A — offers 10% off in the first minute, before asking a single question.
2. Rep B — asks what's included in the competitor's quote, then shows the 12-month total is €4,000 lower with them.
3. Rep C — lists every feature politely, but never asks what the buyer actually values.

7. Case study preview

1. Model: no. If I cut, I lose the margin AND the story. I compete on the thing they can't copy — the driver who knows your name, the loaf that's still warm at 7:55am.
2. Model: 'That shouldn't have happened — I'm sorry. Let me sort it out for you now.' — acknowledge, don't defend, one specific action.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class