



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 1 · B1·1A

Nice to meet you

Theme · Introductions & jobs



Unit 1 · B1·1A

Nice to meet you

Theme: Introductions & jobs

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Introduce yourself and your job in 2–3 clear sentences.
- Use present simple for routines/facts and present continuous for now/this week.
- Ask 5 friendly questions to keep a first conversation going.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · Two truths and a lie

Write 3 sentences about your job (2 true, 1 false). You'll read them out loud later — your partner has to guess which one is the lie.

1 sentence about what you do every day.

1 sentence about what you are working on this week.

1 sentence about a future plan for next month.

Lead-in · Match the job to what they do

Match each job title to what the person does at work.

1. sales rep

2. accountant

3. IT support

4. HR manager

5. receptionist

followUp: Which of these jobs is closest to yours? Which is furthest away?

Reading · The 30-second introduction

When you meet someone new at work, you usually have about thirty seconds to make a first impression. That is not much time. So keep it simple.

A good short introduction has three parts: your name, what you do, and one detail. The detail is the important part. It gives the other person something to ask about. "I'm Ana. I work in marketing. This week I'm running a new campaign for a bakery in São Paulo." That is much better than "I'm Ana. I'm a senior marketing specialist at a mid-size agency."

The second sentence uses long job titles. The first sentence uses easy words and one real project. People remember stories, not titles.

1. How long does a first impression usually take?

(A) About 5 minutes

(B) About 30 seconds

(C) About 2 minutes

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2. What three parts does a good short introduction have?

- (A) Name, salary, plans
- (B) Name, job, one detail
- (C) Name, city, phone

3. Why is 'the detail' important?

- (A) It shows you are important
- (B) It gives the other person something to ask about
- (C) It is polite

Vocabulary in context

Find these words in the text and match them to the meaning.

first impression — the opinion people form about you at the very start

campaign — a series of ads or actions to sell something

job title — the official name of your role at work

detail — one small, specific piece of information

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text, choose the correct option.

1. A first impression takes about 5 minutes.

- (A) True
- (B) False
- (C) Not Given

2. "I'm a senior marketing specialist at a mid-size agency" is the best short introduction.

- (A) True
- (B) False
- (C) Not Given

3. Long job titles are usually more memorable than short stories.

- (A) True
- (B) False
- (C) Not Given

4. Ana works with a bakery in São Paulo.

- (A) True
- (B) False
- (C) Not Given

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5. Ana has been in marketing for more than 10 years.

- (A) True
- (B) False
- (C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly. There is no single correct answer.

1. What is your usual 'first sentence' when you meet someone at work? Is it closer to Ana's version or to the long-title version?

2. Give an example of a 'detail' you could add to YOUR introduction this month.

Scan for meaning

Find and write down the word/phrase in the text that means the same as each definition.

1. the opinion people form about you very quickly

2. a series of actions to promote or sell something

3. the official name of your role at work

4. a small, specific piece of information

Vocabulary · Jobs and workplaces

colleague — a person you work with

boss / manager — the person in charge of your team

team — the group of people you work with

client / stakeholder — the person or party who pays for or has an interest in your work

supplier — a company that sells you what you need

intern — someone learning the job for a short time

office — the building/room where you work

shift — the hours you work (morning shift, night shift)

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briefing — a short session where colleagues sit together to align on work

target date — the cut-off point by which something must be finished

remote / hybrid / on-site — working from home / mixed / at the office

part-time / full-time — few hours a week / normal week (35–40h)

practice

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

1. My ____ Marta sits at the next desk.

2. The project ____ ____ is Friday at 5 pm.

3. We have a team ____ every Monday at 10.

4. She works ____ — only 20 hours a week.

5. Our biggest ____ pays us every month, on time.

6. I work ____ two days a week and go to the office on the other three.

Collocations • verbs + work nouns

Match each verb with the noun it usually goes with.

attend — a briefing

meet — a target date

answer — the phone

join — a team

report to — your manager

sign — a contract

Odd one out

Choose the word that does NOT belong with the others.

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1. colleague · teammate · client · co-worker
 - (A) colleague
 - (B) teammate
 - (C) client
 - (D) co-worker
2. office · briefing room · warehouse · target date
 - (A) office
 - (B) briefing room
 - (C) warehouse
 - (D) target date
3. remote · hybrid · on-site · full-time
 - (A) remote
 - (B) hybrid
 - (C) on-site
 - (D) full-time

Word building · noun ↔ person

Complete the pair (the activity/thing and the person who does it).

1. sales → a person who sells: ____

2. accounts → a person who checks the numbers: ____

3. management → the person in charge: ____

4. IT support → the person who fixes computers: ____ (2 words)

5. reception → the person at the front desk: ____

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Grammar · Present simple vs present continuous

1. Present simple — routines, facts, jobs — Use it for things that are true in general. • I work for a bakery. • She answers emails every morning. • We don't take orders on Sundays.

2. Present continuous — now / this week / this month — Use it for things happening around now. • I'm working from home this week. • We're launching a new product on Friday. • He isn't taking calls at the moment.

3. Watch out — stative verbs — Some verbs are usually in the SIMPLE, not continuous: know, need, want, like, understand, cost. ✗ I'm knowing him. → ✓ I know him.

Exercise A — Choose the correct form

Simple or continuous? Complete each sentence.

1. I ____ (work) in the finance team.

2. This week we ____ (train) two new interns.

3. She usually ____ (answer) the phone at reception.

4. Sorry, I can't talk — I ____ (finish) a report.

5. We ____ (not / open) on Sundays.

6. He ____ (know) our biggest client very well.

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**Exercise B — Find and fix the mistake**

Each sentence has ONE mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. I am working for a small company in Lisbon since 2019.

2. This month I write a lot of reports for my boss.

3. She is knowing the software very well.

4. We meet a new client tomorrow at 10 — it is confirmed.

Exercise C — Ask about the person

Write ONE question in the correct tense.

1. You want to know his job. →

2. You want to know her current project. →

3. You want to know his working hours. →

4. You want to know if she is busy right now. →

Exercise D — Rewrite for context

Rewrite each sentence so the tense fits the new time frame in brackets.

1. I work from home. (this week only)

2. We're launching a new product. (every summer)

3. She is answering emails right now. (as a routine)

4. They train the interns. (only today)

5. I'm needing five more minutes. (fix the mistake)

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Exercise E — Short answers

Answer these questions truthfully in ONE short sentence each.

1. What do you do?

2. What are you working on this week?

3. Do you usually take calls in the morning?

4. Are you learning anything new at work these days?

Exercise F — Complete the mini-dialogue

Complete each answer with the correct form of the verb in brackets. Choose simple or continuous.

1. — What ____ (you / do)? — I ____ (work) for a small design studio.

2. — Where's Marta? — She ____ (present) the numbers to the client right now.

3. — ____ (you / usually / start) at 9? — No, I ____ (start) at 8, but this week I ____ (come in) later because of the works on my street.

Listening · Two colleagues meeting on Monday morning

Two people meet in the office kitchen on a Monday morning. One is new, one has been there for two years.

pre

Where do you think they will meet?

What is the first question you would ask a new colleague?

gist

1. Who is new — Voice A or Voice B?

2. What team is the new person joining?

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3. Do they agree to have lunch together?

detail

1. How does Voice A describe her job in one line?

2. What is Voice B doing this week (not his normal work)?

3. What time does the team usually have lunch?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

1. Is the company big or small? How do you know?

2. Is Voice A friendly or distant? How do you know?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does in the conversation.

"You must be the new person." — opens the conversation with a soft guess

"Welcome, honestly." — sounds warm and real, not just polite

"I look after..." — plain-language way to describe your job

"How's it going so far?" — short, easy follow-up question

"Let me know if..." — leaves the door open for help later

Voice A: Morning! You must be the new person — Rafa, right?

Voice B: That's me. And you're...?

Voice A: Sofia. I look after the online shop — mostly the pages people see when they buy something.

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Voice B: Nice to meet you. Second day today — a bit lost, honestly.

Voice A: Ha, that's normal. Which team are you joining?

Voice B: Customer support. But this week I'm shadowing three different people to understand how the whole company works.

Voice A: Smart. How's it going so far?

Voice B: Good. Everyone's friendly. I just don't know where anything is yet — including the coffee machine.

Voice A: It's right behind you. Welcome, honestly. We usually have lunch around 12:30, in the small kitchen upstairs. Come and join us.

Voice B: I'd love to. Today?

Voice A: Actually I'm out on Tuesday and Wednesday. Thursday?

Voice B: Thursday works. Thanks.

Voice A: And let me know if you need anything — I sit two desks from you.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Listen again and complete the exact phrases Sofia and Rafa use.

1. You ____ ____ ____ new person — Rafa, right?

2. I ____ ____ the online shop — mostly the pages people see when they buy something.

3. This week I ____ ____ three different people to understand how the whole company works.

4. Let me ____ if you need anything.

Speaking · Your 30-second introduction

Prepare a 30-second self-introduction. Use ONE sentence in present simple (your normal job) and ONE in present continuous (something you're doing this week). Then swap with a partner and ask 3 follow-up questions each.

Scene: New colleague on your first day

A: You started this Monday.

B: You have been in the company for 3 years.

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Scene: At a small local business event

A: You run a small online shop.

B: You work in a bank branch.

Scene: On a video call with a new supplier

A: You buy packaging materials.

B: You sell packaging materials.

Discussion · introductions in real life

Choose 2 questions and speak for 30–45 seconds each. Then swap.

What is the best introduction you've ever heard? What made it work?

In your culture, do people share their job right away, or later in a conversation? What do you prefer?

Is it easier for you to introduce yourself in English, in your native language, or online? Why?

Should you always say your company name? When would you NOT say it?

Role-play · Coffee-machine intro

Read your role card, take 30 seconds to prepare, then run the conversation for 2 minutes. Aim for at least 3 turns each.

Scene: The coffee machine — first day

A: You: you started this Monday in the marketing team. This week you're just learning names and shadowing people. You don't know where anything is yet.

B: You: you've been in the sales team for 4 years. You're between meetings. Be friendly, ask 2 real questions, offer to have lunch this week.

Scene: Business event · after a talk

A: You: you run a small food-delivery startup. You're launching in a new city next month. Introduce yourself in ONE sentence with a real detail.

B: You: you work at a bank that lends money to small businesses. Listen, then ask ONE good follow-up question and give your card.

Mini-presentation · 60-second pitch

Prepare and deliver a 60-second pitch about yourself to a partner. Follow the 4-beat structure. Time yourself.

Beat 1 (10s) — Name + role in ONE sentence, no long title.

Beat 2 (15s) — One routine you're proud of (present simple).

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Beat 3 (20s) — One thing you're working on THIS month (present continuous).

Beat 4 (15s) — Invite ONE question: 'Ask me about ____.'

sample: I'm Ana. I help small bakeries sell more online. Every Monday I look at the numbers of the shops I work with and I send them a 3-line summary — that's the routine my clients like the most. This month I'm launching a new Instagram campaign for a bakery in São Paulo, and it's my first project with video. Ask me about the video part, because that's where I'm learning the most right now.

Writing · A short introduction email

Write a 60–80 word email to introduce yourself to a new team. Include: your name, your role, ONE routine (present simple), ONE current project (present continuous), and ONE friendly closing line.

bonus: Bonus task — LinkedIn 'About' line (max 25 words). Write a single sentence that mixes ONE routine and ONE current project, and ends with an invitation ('Ask me about...').

Wrap-up · What did we cover?

A short introduction has 3 parts: name, job, one detail.

Use present simple for routines/facts, present continuous for now/this week.

Stative verbs (know, need, want) usually stay in the simple form.

Ask specific follow-up questions — they invite a real answer.

Quiz

1. Choose the correct sentence.
(A) I am knowing the software.
(B) I know the software.
(C) I am know the software.
2. "This week I ____ a new report."
(A) write
(B) am writing
(C) wrote
3. Which is the BEST short introduction?
(A) I'm a senior specialist at a global agency.
(B) I'm Ana. I do marketing. This week I'm launching a bakery campaign.
(C) I have worked in marketing for many years in different places.
4. "She ____ (usually / start) at 9."
(A) is usually starting
(B) usually starts
(C) usually is starting

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5. The word 'colleague' means...

- (A) your boss
- (B) a person you work with
- (C) a customer

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Workbook — home practice



1. Vocabulary gap-fill

Complete each sentence with *ONE* word from the box.

Word bank: colleague · deadline · stakeholder · sync-up · remote · part-time

1. My ____ Pedro sits at the desk next to mine.

2. We have a team ____ every Monday at 10.

3. The project ____ is next Friday — please don't be late.

4. Our biggest ____ has been with us for 8 years.

5. I work ____ on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

6. She works ____ — only 20 hours a week.

2. Present simple or continuous?

Put the verb in brackets in the correct present form.

1. I ____ (work) in a small marketing team.

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2. This week we ____ (train) two new people.

3. She ____ (know) our biggest client very well.

4. Sorry — I can't chat. I ____ (finish) a report for tomorrow.

5. We ____ (not / open) the office on Fridays.

6. He usually ____ (arrive) at 8:30.

7. I ____ (need) five more minutes to answer this.

3. Routine, right now, or fixed plan?

Read each sentence and choose the correct label.

1. I answer emails every morning before 9.

(A) Routine

(B) Right now / this week

(C) Fixed future plan

2. I'm shadowing three colleagues this week.

(A) Routine

(B) Right now / this week

(C) Fixed future plan

3. We're launching a new product on Friday.

(A) Routine

(B) Right now / this week

(C) Fixed future plan

4. She always writes the meeting notes.

(A) Routine

(B) Right now / this week

(C) Fixed future plan

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5. I'm having lunch with a client on Thursday.

- (A) Routine
- (B) Right now / this week
- (C) Fixed future plan

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has *ONE* mistake. Rewrite it.

1. I am working for a bank in Porto — I started five years ago.

2. This month I write a lot of reports.

3. She is knowing the software very well.

4. We meet the client tomorrow at 3. It's confirmed.

5. Listening — three first-day introductions

Three new employees introduce themselves on day one. Notice how they mix routines and current tasks.

1. Which speaker gives the **CLEAREST** short introduction? Why?

2. Which speaker **MIXES** simple and continuous incorrectly?

3. Which speaker gives **ZERO** detail about themselves?

Voice A: Hi everyone. I'm the new person in sales. That's it, really. Nice to meet you.

Voice B: Hi. I'm Marta. I'm a designer — I usually work on our packaging, but this month I'm helping with the online shop redesign.

Voice C: Hello. My name is Igor. I am working here since 2019, in accounts. I like football.

6. Writing — a first-week note to your boss

Write 60–80 words. Include: (a) one sentence in present simple about your normal role, (b) one sentence in present continuous about what you're focused on this week, (c) **ONE** question at the end.

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7. Case study reflection

Look back at the *Padaria da Vila* case. Answer briefly, in your own words.

1. What is Sofia's BIGGEST problem in her first month?

2. Name ONE concrete first-week action you would take in her place, and explain why.

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Answer key — Class Book

Lead-in · Match the job to what they do

1. talks to customers and sells products
2. checks the numbers and pays the bills
3. fixes computers and helps with software
4. hires people and looks after the team
5. answers the phone and welcomes visitors

Reading · The 30-second introduction

1. (B) About 30 seconds
2. (B) Name, job, one detail
3. (B) It gives the other person something to ask about
1. (B) False
2. (B) False
3. (B) False
4. (A) True
5. (C) Not Given
1. Model: mine is closer to the long-title version — I usually give my full role at [company]. After this lesson I'll try starting with 'I help X do Y.'
2. Model: this month I'm running a small training for the new hires in customer support — that's my go-to detail right now.
1. first impression
2. campaign
3. job title
4. detail

Vocabulary · Jobs and workplaces

1. colleague
2. target date
3. briefing
4. part-time
5. client
6. remote
1. (C) client
2. (D) target date
3. (D) full-time
1. salesperson / sales rep
2. accountant
3. manager
4. IT technician
5. receptionist

Grammar · Present simple vs present continuous

1. work
2. are training
3. answers
4. am finishing
5. don't open
6. knows
1. I have worked / I've worked for a small company in Lisbon since 2019. (Or: I work for a small company in Lisbon — I started in 2019.)
2. This month I'm writing a lot of reports for my boss.
3. She knows the software very well.
4. We're meeting a new client tomorrow at 10 — it is confirmed.
1. What do you do?

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2. What are you working on this week/month?
3. What time do you usually start / finish?
4. Are you working on something urgent right now?
1. I'm working from home this week.
2. We launch a new product every summer.
3. She answers emails first thing every morning.
4. They're training the interns today.
5. I need five more minutes.
1. Model: I work for a small marketing team in São Paulo.
2. Model: I'm preparing a presentation for a new client on Thursday.
3. Model: No, I don't. I try to answer emails first and take calls after lunch.
4. Model: Yes, I'm learning how to use a new project-management tool.
1. What do you do? / I work for a small design studio.
2. She is presenting / She's presenting the numbers to the client right now.
3. Do you usually start at 9? / No, I start at 8, but this week I'm coming in later because of the works on my street.

Listening · Two colleagues meeting on Monday morning

1. Voice B is new (it's his second day).
2. The customer support team.
3. Yes — on Thursday, because on Tuesday and Wednesday Voice A is out of the office.
1. "I look after the online shop — mostly the pages people see when they buy something."
2. Shadowing three different people to understand how the company works.
3. Around 12:30, in the small kitchen on the second floor.
1. Fairly small — they have one kitchen on the second floor and people know each other by name.
2. Friendly — she offers lunch, uses his first name and says 'welcome, honestly'.
1. must be the
2. look after
3. am shadowing / 'm shadowing
4. know

Quiz

1. (B) I know the software.
2. (B) am writing
3. (B) I'm Ana. I do marketing. This week I'm launching a bakery campaign.
4. (B) usually starts
5. (B) a person you work with

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Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. colleague
2. sync-up
3. deadline
4. stakeholder
5. remote
6. part-time

2. Present simple or continuous?

1. work
2. are training
3. knows
4. am finishing
5. don't open
6. arrives
7. need

3. Routine, right now, or fixed plan?

1. (A) Routine
2. (B) Right now / this week
3. (C) Fixed future plan
4. (A) Routine
5. (C) Fixed future plan

4. Find and fix the mistake

1. I work for a bank in Porto — I started five years ago.
2. This month I'm writing a lot of reports.
3. She knows the software very well.
4. We're meeting the client tomorrow at 3. It's confirmed.

5. Listening — three first-day introductions

1. Speaker 2 — she gives name + role + one specific detail ("this month I'm helping with the online shop redesign").
2. Speaker 3 — 'I am working here since 2019' should be 'I have worked / I've worked here since 2019', OR 'I started here in 2019 — I work in accounts.'
3. Speaker 1 — just says 'I'm the new person in sales' and stops.

7. Case study reflection

1. Model: she is trying to change too many things at once — new menu, new opening hours and new Instagram — before the team is ready.
2. Model example: spend the first three mornings behind the counter, taking orders, so you understand who the real customers are before you change anything.

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APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 1 · B1·1B

What do you do all day?

Theme · Introductions & jobs



Unit 1 · B1·1B

What do you do all day?

Theme: Introductions & jobs

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Describe your working day using time expressions and sequence words.
- Use adverbs of frequency correctly (always, usually, often, sometimes, never).
- Compare a normal week and a busy week without mixing tenses.

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Class Book

Warm-up · Rank the day

Rank these 5 work activities from the one you spend **MOST** time on (1) to the one you spend **LEAST** time on (5). Be ready to explain #1 and #5.

answering emails

meetings (video or in person)

actually doing the main task of your job

talking to clients or customers

admin — filling forms, updating systems

Lead-in · Time expressions in the right place

Match each time expression with when we usually use it.

1. first thing in the morning

2. around lunchtime

3. later on

4. at the end of the day

5. once a week

followUp: Say ONE thing you do 'first thing in the morning' at work.

Reading · A day in the life of a small-shop owner

Lucía runs a small bookshop in Madrid. She usually opens the door at ten and closes at eight, but that's only half of her real day.

Before she opens, she checks the online orders from the night before and packs them into brown paper bags. She always makes a coffee first — she says the shop doesn't start until the coffee machine does.

During the day, she talks to customers, recommends books she has actually read, and answers messages from her Instagram account. Sometimes she doesn't sell a single book for two hours; then a school teacher walks in and buys thirty at once. That's the job.

After she closes, she still has one more task: writing tomorrow's social-media post. It takes her fifteen minutes if the day was calm, an hour if it wasn't.

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1. What does Lucía do BEFORE the shop opens?
 - (A) Cleans the floor
 - (B) Checks online orders and makes coffee
 - (C) Answers phone calls
2. What is unpredictable about her day?
 - (A) The opening time
 - (B) The number of books sold each hour
 - (C) Where she works
3. What decides how long the evening post takes?
 - (A) The weather
 - (B) Whether the day was calm or busy
 - (C) The number of employees

Vocabulary in context

Match the word/phrase to its meaning.

run (a shop) — be the owner or manager of a business

pack (an order) — put something in a box/bag to send

recommend — suggest something you think is good

at once — all at the same time

calm — quiet, not busy

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text, choose the correct option.

1. Lucía opens the shop at exactly 10 every day.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
2. She recommends books that she hasn't read yet.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
3. A school teacher once bought thirty books at once.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

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4. Lucía owns a second bookshop outside Madrid.
- (A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
5. Writing the evening post always takes exactly one hour.
- (A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given

React to the text

Choose *ONE* question and answer in 3–4 sentences.

1. What is your version of Lucía's 'the shop doesn't start until the coffee machine does'? Do you have a first ritual at work?

2. Which part of Lucía's day would be the hardest for you: the invisible morning prep, the quiet hours in the middle, or the evening post?

Scan for meaning

Find the word or phrase in the text with this meaning.

1. the moment when a shop or business officially opens for the day

2. a book that has just been published

3. a short message a business posts to its followers

4. a person who often visits and buys from the same shop

Vocabulary · A typical working day

check emails — read and reply to new messages

log in / log out — start / finish using a system or account

take a break — stop working for a short time

run a report — make the system produce a document with data

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follow up — contact someone again after a first message

handle a grievance — address a client who is dissatisfied

quiet day — day with little work / few customers

packed day — very busy day, back-to-back

back-to-back — one right after another (usually meetings)

off day — day when you are not working

on call — not officially working, but ready to help if needed

peak hours — the busiest time of the day

practice

Complete each sentence with ONE item from above.

1. I have meetings ___ all afternoon — no time even for coffee.

2. Tuesday is my ___ this week, so please write to me on Wednesday.

3. The shop's ___ are between 6 and 8 pm — that's when we do most of our sales.

4. Can you ___ with the stakeholder if they don't reply by Friday?

5. The IT team is ___ this weekend in case the site goes down.

6. I only need 10 minutes to ___ this month's sales.

Collocations · verbs that go with the day

Match each verb with the noun/phrase it usually goes with.

block — two hours in the morning

reply to — an email

join — a video call

hit — a deadline

handle — a grievance

take — a break

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**Odd one out**

Choose the item that does *NOT* belong with the others.

1. quiet day · calm day · packed day · easy day

- (A) quiet day
- (B) calm day
- (C) packed day
- (D) easy day

2. log in · log out · check in · sign in

- (A) log in
- (B) log out
- (C) check in
- (D) sign in

3. always · usually · often · yesterday

- (A) always
- (B) usually
- (C) often
- (D) yesterday

Word building · verb ↔ noun

Write the noun form of each verb (the activity or the thing).

1. to meet → a ____

2. to deliver → a ____

3. to plan → a ____

4. to review → a ____

5. to schedule → a ____

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Grammar · Adverbs of frequency

1. What they are — Words that answer 'how often?': always (100%) · usually · often · sometimes · rarely · never (0%)

2. Where they go — • BEFORE the main verb: I always check my emails first. • AFTER 'be': She is usually late on Mondays. • With modal verbs, AFTER the modal: We can sometimes work from home.

3. Longer expressions go at the START or END — • Every Monday we have a stand-up. / We have a stand-up every Monday. • Once a week I visit the warehouse.

Exercise A — Put the adverb in the correct place

Rewrite the sentence with the adverb in brackets.

1. I check my emails at 9. (always)

2. She is late on Mondays. (usually)

3. We can work from home. (sometimes)

4. He answers the phone quickly. (rarely)

5. They take a lunch break together. (often)

Exercise B — True for you?

Write TRUE sentences about your work day. Use ONE adverb of frequency in each.

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1. check emails first thing →

2. have back-to-back meetings →

3. take a real lunch break →

4. work at the weekend →

Exercise C — Fix the word order

Each sentence has ONE mistake in the position of the adverb or time expression. Rewrite it.

1. I check always my emails before 9.

2. She usually is in the office by 8:30.

3. We have every Monday a stand-up meeting.

4. He can sometimes not answer the phone.

Exercise D — Sentence transformation

Rewrite the sentence using the word in brackets, without changing the meaning.

1. I never miss the Monday stand-up. (always)

2. I do not usually take calls before 10. (rarely)

3. Every day she reviews the numbers. (checks / daily)

4. It is common for us to work from home. (often)

5. He is never in the office on Fridays. (works from home)

Exercise E — Interview your neighbour

Ask a partner these questions. Answer with a full sentence including ONE adverb of frequency.

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1. How often do you take a real lunch break?

2. How often does your team have unplanned meetings?

3. How often do you finish exactly on time?

4. How often do you say no to a meeting?

Exercise F — Choose the correct adverb

Choose the adverb that best fits the meaning of the sentence.

1. The team meeting is on Monday at 9. It is on the calendar every week.

2. About once a month there's a small problem with the system.

3. In 5 years, my boss has cancelled a meeting maybe twice.

4. Almost every Friday I finish 10 minutes early.

5. I refuse to answer emails after 8pm — no exceptions.

Listening · A quiet day and a packed day

Two people describe yesterday. One had a calm day, the other had a packed day.

pre

Guess: what makes a day feel 'packed' for you?

What are the first two things you do on a normal working day?

gist

1. Who had the calm day — Voice A or Voice B?

2. How many meetings did Voice B have?

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3. Did anyone skip lunch?

detail

1. What did Voice A do between 10 and 12?

2. Why did Voice B's day feel worse than usual?

3. What is Voice B's plan for tomorrow?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

1. Which of them is better at protecting their time?

2. Whose job sounds more predictable?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does in the conversation.

"To be honest, a quiet one." — answer softly, admits the truth

"Back-to-back from 9." — one-line way to describe a packed day

"That's not sustainable." — says the situation can't continue

"I'm going to block..." — future plan (going to)

"How was YOUR day?" — turns the question back to the other person

Voice A: How was your day?

Voice B: Packed. Back-to-back from 9. You?

Voice A: To be honest, a quiet one. I wrote the newsletter, had one short call, that was it.

Voice B: I'm jealous.

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Voice A: Well, tomorrow I have three interviews, so it balances out. Did you at least eat?

Voice B: A sandwich during the fourth call. My camera was off.

Voice A: That's not sustainable, though.

Voice B: I know. Tomorrow I'm going to block two hours in the morning. No meetings, no messages. Just the report.

Voice A: Good. And how was your day, honestly?

Voice B: Long. But at least the client is happy.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Listen again and complete each line with the exact words.

1. Packed. ____ - ____ - ____ from 9.

2. That's ____ ____, though.

3. Tomorrow I'm ____ ____ ____ two hours in the morning.

4. A sandwich during the fourth call. My camera ____ ____.

Speaking · Your normal day vs your busiest day

Prepare 1 minute about your NORMAL working day using at least THREE adverbs of frequency. Then prepare 1 minute about your BUSIEST day this month. Swap with a partner and ask 3 follow-up questions each.

Scene: Small bakery

A: You are the owner.

B: You are the delivery driver.

Scene: Bank branch

A: You are the receptionist.

B: You are the manager.

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Scene: Online shop

A: You take care of orders.

B: You take care of Instagram.

Discussion · your relationship with the working day

Choose 2 questions and speak for 30–45 seconds each.

What's the FIRST thing you do when you sit down at your desk? Why?

Do you prefer packed days or quiet days? What does each one cost you?

If you could delete ONE recurring task from your week, what would it be?

'The most productive people say no to almost everything.' — Warren Buffett paraphrase. True for you?

Role-play · Renegotiating the week

Read your card, prepare 30 seconds, then run the conversation for 2 minutes.

Scene: 1:1 with your manager on Friday afternoon

A: You: your week was packed. You worked 3 evenings. You want to block Monday morning (no meetings). Ask for it.

B: You: the manager. Monday morning is when the team usually syncs. Push back once, then negotiate a compromise.

Scene: Handover with a colleague going on holiday

A: You: you're going on holiday for a week. Explain your normal day in 60 seconds so a colleague can cover you.

B: You: the colleague covering. Ask 3 practical questions — timing, priorities, what NOT to touch.

Mini-presentation · A day in my life

Deliver a 60-second guided tour of your working day. Time yourself.

Beat 1 (10s) — The first 30 minutes: what always happens?

Beat 2 (15s) — The morning block: what usually / often happens?

Beat 3 (20s) — The afternoon: how does it change from the morning?

Beat 4 (15s) — The last 30 minutes: your closing ritual.

sample: The first 30 minutes are always the same — coffee, a quick look at the calendar, and I star the 3 things that must be done. In the morning I usually have one long block of deep work: writing, numbers, or the report of the week. Afternoons are the opposite — often back-to-back calls with clients or the team, and my energy drops around 4. My closing ritual is a 5-line message to myself for tomorrow — top 3 priorities, one thing to protect, one thing I can skip.

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Writing · Describe your working day

Write 70–90 words describing your typical working day. Use at least: 3 adverbs of frequency, 2 time expressions, and 2 phrases from the vocabulary list.

bonus: Bonus task — Slack status generator. Write 3 different Slack statuses for yourself (max 12 words each) using an adverb of frequency: one for a normal day, one for a packed day, one for a day off.

Wrap-up · Quick check

Adverbs of frequency: BEFORE the main verb, AFTER 'be', AFTER modals.

Longer time expressions (every Monday, once a week) usually go at the start or end.

Use present simple for routines — this is the natural tense for 'a normal day'.

'Back-to-back', 'peak hours', 'quiet day', 'packed day' — useful chunks.

Quiz

1. Where does 'usually' go? "She ____ arrives ____ before 9."
(A) usually / (nothing)
(B) (nothing) / usually
(C) usually / usually
2. Choose the correct sentence.
(A) I check always my emails.
(B) I always check my emails.
(C) Always I check my emails.
3. 'Peak hours' means...
(A) the quietest time
(B) the busiest time
(C) lunch time
4. 'Back-to-back' meetings are...
(A) one after another
(B) very short
(C) cancelled
5. Best position for 'every Monday'?
(A) I every Monday have a call.
(B) We have every Monday a call.
(C) Every Monday we have a call.

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Workbook — home practice



1. Vocabulary gap-fill

Complete each sentence with **ONE** phrase from the box.

Word bank: back-to-back · off day · peak hours · follow up · on call · handle a grievance

1. I have five meetings ____ tomorrow. No time for lunch.

2. Please ____ with the supplier if they don't answer by Wednesday.

3. Our shop's ____ are between 6 and 8 pm.

4. The IT team is ____ this weekend in case the site goes down.

5. Friday is my ____ — please write to me on Monday.

6. Part of my job is to ____ when a client is unhappy.

2. Adverbs of frequency — correct position

Rewrite each sentence with the adverb in the **CORRECT** place.

1. I check my emails at 9. (always)

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2. She is late on Mondays. (usually)

3. We can work from home. (sometimes)

4. He answers the phone quickly. (rarely)

5. They take a lunch break together. (often)

6. I check my personal messages during work. (never)

3. How often? — write true sentences

Answer with a TRUE sentence for you. Use one adverb of frequency in each.

1. How often do you check your emails first thing?

2. How often do you take a real lunch break?

3. How often do you work at the weekend?

4. How often do you have back-to-back meetings?

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake with adverb position or time expression.

1. I check always my emails before 9.

2. She usually is in the office by 8:30.

3. We have every Monday a stand-up meeting.

4. He sometimes can not answer the phone.

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5. Listening — three people describe their busiest day

Three colleagues describe the busiest day they had this month. Notice how they use adverbs and time expressions.

1. Which speaker had the day that felt LONGEST? Why?

2. Which speaker skipped lunch?

3. Which speaker used the future 'going to' at the end?

Voice A: Six meetings, no break between them. I ate a sandwich standing up in the kitchen at 3 pm.

Voice B: My colleague was sick, so I opened the shop alone. Forty customers before eleven. I usually have that many by three.

Voice C: The report took twice as long as I thought. Tomorrow I'm going to block the morning for the report. No meetings, no messages.

6. Writing — describe a busy day at work

Write 70–90 words about a busy day. Use at least: 2 adverbs of frequency (to compare with your normal day), 2 time expressions, and 2 phrases from the vocabulary list.

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Answer key — Class Book

Lead-in · Time expressions in the right place

1. at the very start of the day
2. roughly 12:00–13:30
3. at some point after now, same day
4. just before you finish work
5. one time every week

Reading · A day in the life of a small-shop owner

1. (B) Checks online orders and makes coffee
2. (B) The number of books sold each hour
3. (B) Whether the day was calm or busy
1. (A) True
2. (B) False
3. (A) True
4. (C) Not Given
5. (B) False
1. Model: yes — my day doesn't really start until I read three specific newsletters. If I skip them, I feel off all morning.
2. Model: the quiet hours in the middle. I get nervous when nothing is happening — I prefer being busy and reacting.
1. opens (the doors) at... / the shop opens at...
2. new release
3. the evening post
4. regular (customer)

Vocabulary · A typical working day

1. back-to-back
2. off day
3. peak hours
4. follow up
5. on call
6. run a report
1. (C) packed day
2. (B) log out
3. (D) yesterday
1. meeting
2. delivery
3. plan / planning session
4. review
5. schedule

Grammar · Adverbs of frequency

1. I always check my emails at 9.
2. She is usually late on Mondays.
3. We can sometimes work from home.
4. He rarely answers the phone quickly.
5. They often take a lunch break together.
1. Model: I usually check my emails first thing, but I try not to answer them until 10.
2. Model: I sometimes have back-to-back meetings, especially on Tuesdays.
3. Model: I rarely take a real lunch break — most days I eat at my desk.
4. Model: I never work at the weekend. That's my rule.
1. I always check my emails before 9.
2. She is usually in the office by 8:30.
3. We have a stand-up meeting every Monday. (or: Every Monday we have a stand-up meeting.)

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. He sometimes can't answer the phone.
1. I always attend the Monday stand-up.
2. I rarely take calls before 10.
3. She checks the numbers daily.
4. We often work from home.
5. He always works from home on Fridays.
1. Model: I rarely take a real lunch break — I eat while I answer emails.
2. Model: We sometimes have unplanned meetings, usually when something breaks in production.
3. Model: I usually finish 15–30 minutes late. Almost never on time.
4. Model: I rarely say no — but I'm trying to change that this month.
1. always (it happens every week)
2. sometimes / occasionally
3. rarely / hardly ever
4. usually
5. never

Listening · A quiet day and a packed day

1. Voice A.
2. Five, back-to-back.
3. Yes — Voice B ate a sandwich during the fourth call.
1. Wrote next month's newsletter and had one 20-minute call.
2. One meeting ran over, so the rest of the day was 15 minutes late.
3. Block two hours in the morning for deep work and refuse any meeting during that time.
1. Voice A — she gave herself a clear 2-hour block for writing. Voice B has to fix it tomorrow.
2. Voice A's — she describes a normal, planned day. Voice B is reacting to whatever comes in.
1. back-to-back
2. not sustainable
3. going to block
4. was off

Quiz

1. (A) usually / (nothing)
2. (B) I always check my emails.
3. (B) the busiest time
4. (A) one after another
5. (C) Every Monday we have a call.

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Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. back-to-back
2. follow up
3. peak hours
4. on call
5. off day
6. handle a grievance

2. Adverbs of frequency — correct position

1. I always check my emails at 9.
2. She is usually late on Mondays.
3. We can sometimes work from home.
4. He rarely answers the phone quickly.
5. They often take a lunch break together.
6. I never check my personal messages during work.

3. How often? — write true sentences

1. Model: I usually check my emails first thing — it's a bad habit.
2. Model: I rarely take a real lunch break. I eat at my desk most days.
3. Model: I never work at the weekend. That's my rule.
4. Model: I sometimes have back-to-back meetings on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

4. Find and fix the mistake

1. I always check my emails before 9.
2. She is usually in the office by 8:30.
3. We have a stand-up meeting every Monday.
4. He sometimes can't answer the phone.

5. Listening — three people describe their busiest day

1. Speaker 2 — she opened the shop alone (a colleague was sick) and had 40 customers before 11 am.
2. Speaker 1 — 'I ate a sandwich standing up in the kitchen at 3 pm.'
3. Speaker 3 — 'Tomorrow I'm going to block the morning for the report.'

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APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 2 · B1·2A

Tell me about your company

Theme · Companies & products



Unit 2 · B1·2A

Tell me about your company

Theme: Companies & products

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Describe a company in 3 sentences: what it does, since when, and one number.
- Use past simple to talk about the company's story (founded, launched, opened, grew).
- Use adverbs of frequency to describe how the company normally works.

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Class Book

Warm-up · Company name game

Think of 3 companies you know well (one you buy from, one you work for/with, one you admire). Write a 5-word description of each. You'll read them out loud — a partner has to guess which is which.

Company 1 (you buy from): 5 words

Company 2 (you work for/with): 5 words

Company 3 (you admire): 5 words

Lead-in · Match the company to what it sells

Match each company type to the main thing it sells.

1. a retailer

2. a wholesaler

3. a manufacturer

4. a service provider

5. a startup

followUp: Which type is closest to YOUR company (or your ideal one)?

Reading · The 3-sentence company story

Most people can't describe their own company in under a minute. They start with 'well, it's complicated...' and lose the listener in the first ten seconds. That's a problem, because in business you rarely get more than one minute.

A good short company story has three sentences. Sentence one: what the company does, in plain words. Sentence two: since when, and one number that shows size (people, clients, countries). Sentence three: one thing that is different this year.

Example: 'We make packaging for small food brands. We started in 2015 in Porto and today we serve 180 clients across Portugal and Spain. This year we're launching a compostable line — it's already 20% of our sales.' Twelve seconds. Concrete. Memorable.

1. What is the problem with most company descriptions?
 - (A) They are too short
 - (B) They start with 'it's complicated' and lose the listener
 - (C) They use too many numbers

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2. What should sentence 2 include?
 - (A) The founder's name
 - (B) Since when + one number
 - (C) The company's address
3. In the example, what is the company doing THIS year?
 - (A) Opening a factory in Spain
 - (B) Launching a compostable line
 - (C) Hiring 20 new people

Vocabulary in context

Find these words in the text and match them to the meaning.

in plain words — using simple, easy language

serve — sell to / work for (customers)

launch — start selling a new product

compostable — can break down naturally, like organic waste

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text, choose the correct option.

1. Most people can describe their company in under a minute.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
2. A good short company story has exactly 3 sentences.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
3. The example company was founded in 2015 in Porto.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
4. The example company has 200 employees.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



5. The compostable line already generates 50% of sales.

- (A) True
- (B) False
- (C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly. There is no single correct answer.

1. How long is YOUR current company description? Do you 'lose the listener' in the first 10 seconds?

2. Which of the 3 sentences is HARDEST for you to write in English? Why?

Scan for meaning

Find the word or phrase in the text that matches each definition.

1. using simple, easy language

2. to start selling a new product

3. the number of customers, employees or countries a company has

4. material that breaks down naturally

Vocabulary · Talking about a company

found / set up — to start a company (past: founded, set up)

oversee — to be in charge of and responsible for (a company, a division, a team)

expand — grow into new places, products or markets

supply — sell/provide something to another business

specialise in — focus on one specific thing

employ — have someone on the payroll as staff

headquarters (HQ) — the main office of a company

branch — a smaller office in another city

range — the collection of products a company sells

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



flagship product — the most important / most famous product

turnover — total sales in one year (before costs)

market share — the % of the market your company has

practice

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

1. Our ____ is in Lisbon, and we have small ____ in Porto and Madrid.

2. The company was ____ in 2010 by two engineers.

3. We ____ in packaging for the food industry — nothing else.

4. Our ____ product is a wooden cutting board that we've sold for 12 years.

5. Last year the company's ____ was €4.2 million.

6. We ____ about 60 people across three offices.

Collocations · verbs + company nouns

Match each verb with the noun it usually goes with.

launch — a new product

open — a branch / a store

hire — new staff

sign — a big contract

enter — a new market

increase — our market share

Odd one out

Choose the word that does NOT belong with the others.

1. found · set up · launch · run

(A) found

(B) set up

(C) launch

(D) run

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. retailer · wholesaler · manufacturer · turnover

- (A) retailer
- (B) wholesaler
- (C) manufacturer
- (D) turnover

3. flagship · range · branch · client

- (A) flagship
- (B) range
- (C) branch
- (D) client

Word building · verb ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

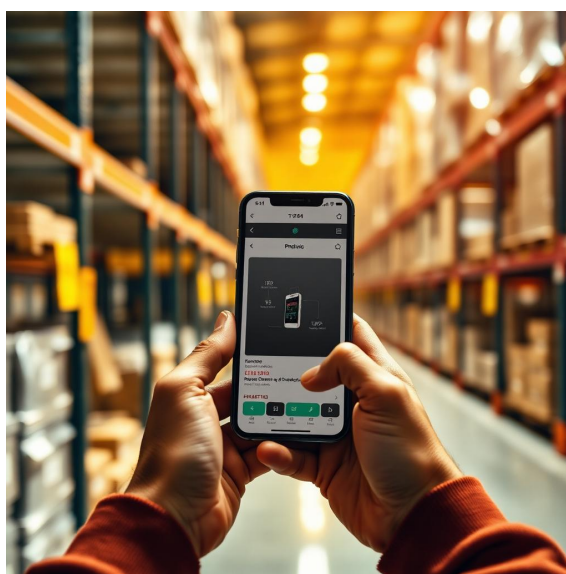
1. to grow → the ____

2. to produce → the ____

3. to compete → a ____ / the ____

4. to employ → an ____ / the ____

5. to invest → an ____ / an ____



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Grammar · Past simple for company stories

1. Past simple — finished actions with a clear time — Use for events with a clear finish (yesterday, in 2015, last year). • We founded the company in 2015. • Last year we opened a branch in Madrid. • They didn't launch the app in 2022 — it was in 2023.

2. Regular and irregular verbs — Regular: -ed (open → opened, launch → launched, employ → employed). Irregular (learn them): be → was/were, have → had, make → made, sell → sold, run → ran, grow → grew, buy → bought, take → took.

3. Questions and negatives — use did / didn't — • When did you start the company? • Where did you open your first branch? • We didn't sell online until 2020. (Not: 'When you started...?' or 'We didn't sold...')

Exercise A — Past simple form

Put the verb in brackets in the past simple.

1. The company ____ (start) in a small garage in 2011.

2. We ____ (sell) our first product in December that year.

3. They ____ (grow) very fast between 2018 and 2021.

4. We ____ (not / open) any physical shop until 2019.

5. The founder ____ (be) 24 years old at the time.

6. ____ they ____ (hire) more people in 2023?

Exercise B — Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake with past simple.

1. We founded the company on 2015.

2. When you opened your first branch?

3. They didn't sold anything in the first six months.

4. The turnover grow 30% last year.

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**Exercise C — Ask the founder**

Write *ONE* past-simple question to get the information in brackets.

1. (the year the company started) →

2. (the first product they sold) →

3. (how many employees at the beginning) →

4. (the reason they chose Porto) →

Exercise D — Timeline into full sentences

Turn each note into a complete past-simple sentence.

1. 2015 — Ana and Bruno / found / the studio (Porto)

2. 2017 — we / sign / our first big contract (a hotel chain)

3. 2019 — we / open / a second branch (Lisbon)

4. 2022 — turnover / grow / 40%

5. 2024 — we / launch / our compostable range

Exercise E — Adverbs of frequency in company routines

Put the adverb in the correct place.

1. We meet the whole team on Mondays. (always)

2. Our best client visits us once a year. (usually)

3. We can offer a discount above 500 units. (sometimes)

4. The factory is closed on Sundays. (always)

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Exercise F — Complete the mini-dialogue

Complete the answers in past simple.

1. — When ____ (you / start) the company? — We ____ (start) in 2016, in a small kitchen in Braga.

2. — How many people ____ (you / employ) at the beginning? — Only three — me, my sister and one part-timer.

3. — ____ (you / have) any investors? — No, we ____ — we ____ (grow) with our own money for the first four years.

Listening · A founder introduces her company at a fair

At a small trade fair, a founder gives her 60-second company pitch to a possible new client.

pre

What is the first question you would ask a stranger at a trade fair?

What info makes a company pitch feel REAL and not marketing?

gist

1. What does the company do?

2. When did they start, and where?

3. What is the ONE new thing this year?

detail

1. How many clients do they serve today, and in which countries?

2. How many employees do they have?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



3. What did she NOT talk about in her pitch?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

1. Is the founder used to giving this pitch? How do you know?

2. Does she want to close the sale AT the fair? How do you know?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase with what it does.

"We started in 2015, in Porto." — since when + where, in one line

"Today we serve about 180 clients..." — one number to show size

"This year we're launching..." — the one different thing this year

"If you send me the specs, I'll get you a quote by Friday." — closing move — next step, not the sale

Voice A: Hi! Do you want the 60-second version or the 5-minute one?

Voice B: Sixty seconds is perfect.

Voice A: OK. We design and produce sustainable packaging for small food brands — boxes, wraps, labels. We started in 2015, in Porto. Today we serve about 180 clients across Portugal and Spain, with 22 people, most of them here in Porto.

Voice B: Impressive.

Voice A: The one new thing this year: we launched a fully compostable line. It's already 20% of our sales. That's the thing everyone's asking about.

Voice B: Prices?

Voice A: Depends on volume and material. If you send me the specs, I'll get you a quote by Friday. Deal?

Voice B: Deal.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases from the pitch.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. We ____ ____ ____ 2015, in Porto.

2. Today we ____ about 180 clients across Portugal and Spain.

3. This year we ____ a fully compostable line.

4. If you send me the specs, I'll ____ ____ a quote by Friday.

Speaking · Your 60-second company pitch

Prepare a 60-second pitch about YOUR company (or a company you know well). Use the 3-sentence structure from the reading. Time yourself.

Scene: At a trade fair booth

A: You: run a small food-packaging company.

B: You: buy packaging for a snack brand.

Scene: In a plane, next to a stranger

A: You: work at a small software studio.

B: You: work in HR at a big bank.

Scene: At a family dinner (someone asks 'so what do you do again?')

A: You: run a small B2B consulting firm.

B: You: your uncle, who has always thought you 'do something with computers'.

Discussion · your company story

Choose 2 questions and speak for 30–45 seconds each.

What is the ONE number about your company you always mention? Why that one?

Would your CEO tell the same story about the company as you do? Where would you differ?

Is 'when we started' really interesting to a new client? When is it not?

What's the one story about your company you would NEVER tell a client, but you love to tell colleagues?

Role-play · At the trade fair booth

Read your role, prep 30s, then run a 2-minute conversation. Aim for 3 turns each.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

**Scene:** Trade fair · packaging company booth

A: You: founder of the packaging company from the audio. Someone stops at your booth. Give the 60-second pitch and close with a next step.

B: You: buyer for a small chocolate brand. You have 5 minutes. Ask ONE hard question about price, ONE about delivery time, and ONE about the compostable line.

Scene: Networking event · after a talk

A: You: run a 3-year-old consulting firm for family businesses. You have a coffee in your hand and 90 seconds before your next chat.

B: You: run a 40-year-old family bakery. You are curious but sceptical of 'consultants'. Ask ONE polite challenge.

Mini-presentation · 60-second company story

Deliver a 60-second company pitch to a partner using the 4-beat structure. Time yourself.

Beat 1 (10s) — What the company does, in plain words.

Beat 2 (15s) — Since when + one number that shows size.

Beat 3 (20s) — The ONE new thing this year (present continuous).

Beat 4 (15s) — The close: your next step, not the sale.

sample: We design and produce sustainable packaging for small food brands. We started in 2015 in Porto, and today we serve 180 clients across Portugal and Spain with 22 people. This year we're launching a fully compostable line — it's already 20% of our sales and it's the thing everyone's asking about. If you send me your product specs today, I'll get you a first quote by Friday. Deal?

Writing · A 3-sentence 'About us' for your company

Write a 3-sentence company description (60–80 words) for a website 'About us' block. Sentence 1: what you do. Sentence 2: since when + one number. Sentence 3: one thing that is different this year.

bonus: Bonus task — LinkedIn tagline (max 15 words). Compress your 3-sentence story into ONE line that ends with a concrete number.

Wrap-up · What did we cover?

A good short company story = 3 sentences: what, since when + one number, one thing new this year.

Past simple for finished actions with a clear time (founded, opened, launched).

Questions in past use did + base form; negatives use didn't + base form.

Adverbs of frequency describe how the company normally works.

Quiz

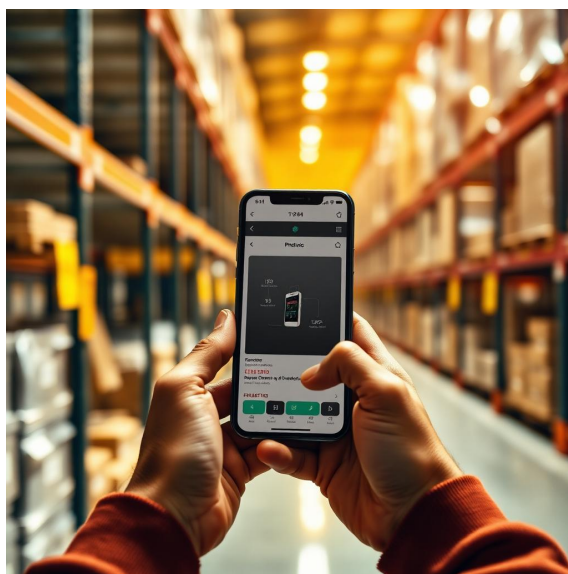
Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. Choose the correct sentence.
 - (A) We founded the company on 2015.
 - (B) We founded the company in 2015.
 - (C) We are founded the company in 2015.
2. "When ____ you start the company?"
 - (A) did
 - (B) do
 - (C) does
3. Which is the BEST short company description?
 - (A) We are a leading global provider of solutions.
 - (B) We make packaging for small food brands. We started in 2015. This year we're launching a compostable line.
 - (C) It's complicated — we do many things.
4. "Our ____ is in Lisbon and we have branches in Porto and Madrid."
 - (A) turnover
 - (B) headquarters
 - (C) range
5. Past simple of 'grow' is...
 - (A) grewed
 - (B) grown
 - (C) grew



Workbook — home practice



1. Vocabulary gap-fill

Complete each sentence with **ONE** word from the box.

Word bank: headquarters · branch · turnover · flagship · range · employ

1. Our ____ is in Berlin — that's where the boss works.

2. We opened a small ____ in Milan last year.

3. The company's ____ was €4 million last year.

4. Our ____ product has been selling since 2011 — everyone knows it.

5. The whole ____ has 12 different colours.

6. We ____ around 40 people at the moment.

2. Past simple — regular and irregular

Put the verb in brackets in the past simple.

1. The company ____ (open) its first shop in 2012.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. We ____ (grow) very fast between 2019 and 2022.

3. They ____ (sell) their first product online in 2015.

4. I ____ (not / know) the founder personally.

5. ____ you ____ (hire) new people last year?

6. We ____ (be) only three people at the beginning.

7. The turnover ____ (increase) 25% in 2023.

3. Company type

Choose the correct label for each company description.

1. 'We make furniture in a factory in Braga.'

- (A) Retailer
- (B) Manufacturer
- (C) Service provider

2. 'We help companies do their accounting.'

- (A) Retailer
- (B) Manufacturer
- (C) Service provider

3. 'We sell our own brand in 4 physical shops.'

- (A) Retailer
- (B) Manufacturer
- (C) Service provider

4. 'We buy from factories and sell in big quantities to shops.'

- (A) Retailer
- (B) Wholesaler
- (C) Service provider

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



5. 'We are a 3-year-old company, growing 100% per year.'

- (A) Startup
- (B) Retailer
- (C) Wholesaler

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake with past simple.

1. We founded the company on 2015.

2. When you opened your first branch?

3. They didn't sold anything in the first six months.

4. The turnover grow 30% last year.

5. Listening — three company pitches at a fair

Three founders give a short pitch. Notice how much they share and how they use numbers.

1. Which speaker gives the **CLEAREST** 3-sentence structure?

2. Which speaker uses **NO** real number?

3. Which speaker gives **TOO MANY** numbers, so you remember none?

Voice A: We are a leading provider of business solutions for the modern professional.

Voice B: We roast single-origin coffee for small independent cafés in central Portugal. We started in 2018 in a garage in Coimbra and today we supply 60 cafés. This year we're launching a home subscription box — 200 subscribers in six weeks.

Voice C: We were founded in 2011, we have 47 employees, turnover 3.2 million, 18 countries, 240 clients, and last year we grew 27%.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



6. Writing — the 3-sentence company story

Write 60–80 words in EXACTLY 3 sentences. (1) what your company does in plain words, (2) since when + one number that shows size, (3) one thing that is different this year.

7. Case study reflection

Look back at the Beira Roasters case. Answer briefly, in your own words.

1. In Rita's 3-sentence pitch to the supermarket, which sentence is MOST important? Why?

2. Would you accept the plastic-lined packaging for the supermarket, or refuse and lose the deal? Why?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Class Book

Lead-in · Match the company to what it sells

1. sells finished products to the public
2. sells large quantities to other businesses
3. makes physical products in a factory
4. sells time and expertise, not objects
5. a new company, usually growing fast

Reading · The 3-sentence company story

1. (B) They start with 'it's complicated' and lose the listener
2. (B) Since when + one number
3. (B) Launching a compostable line
1. (B) False
2. (A) True
3. (A) True
4. (C) Not Given
5. (B) False
1. Model: honestly, yes — I start with the parent group's name and my job title, which no one cares about. I should start with what we sell.
2. Model: sentence 3 — I never know what 'the one different thing this year' is. I'm going to ask my manager next week.
1. in plain words
2. launch
3. size
4. compostable

Vocabulary · Talking about a company

1. headquarters
2. founded
3. specialise
4. flagship
5. turnover
6. employ
1. (D) run
2. (D) turnover
3. (D) client
1. growth
2. product / production
3. competitor / competition
4. employee / employer / employment
5. investor / investment

Grammar · Past simple for company stories

1. started
2. sold
3. grew
4. didn't open
5. was
6. Did they hire
1. We founded the company in 2015.
2. When did you open your first branch?
3. They didn't sell anything in the first six months.
4. The turnover grew 30% last year.
1. When did you start the company?
2. What was your first product? / What did you sell first?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



3. How many employees did you have at the beginning?
4. Why did you choose Porto?
 1. In 2015 Ana and Bruno founded the studio in Porto.
 2. In 2017 we signed our first big contract with a hotel chain.
 3. In 2019 we opened a second branch in Lisbon.
 4. In 2022 our turnover grew 40%.
 5. In 2024 we launched our compostable range.
1. We always meet the whole team on Mondays.
2. Our best client usually visits us once a year.
3. We can sometimes offer a discount above 500 units.
4. The factory is always closed on Sundays.
1. When did you start the company? / We started in 2016, in a small kitchen in Braga.
2. How many people did you employ at the beginning?
3. Did you have any investors? / No, we didn't — we grew with our own money for the first four years.

Listening · A founder introduces her company at a fair

1. It designs and produces sustainable packaging for small food brands.
2. In 2015, in Porto.
3. A fully compostable line, already 20% of sales.
1. About 180 clients across Portugal and Spain.
2. 22 people, most of them in Porto.
3. Prices — she said she'd send a quote by email if he sends the product specs.
1. Yes — it's clean, timed, no 'ums', she doesn't hesitate about numbers.
2. No — she asks for specs and offers to send a quote by email. She's building the relationship, not selling on the spot.
1. started in
2. serve
3. launched
4. get you

Quiz

1. (B) We founded the company in 2015.
2. (A) did
3. (B) We make packaging for small food brands. We started in 2015. This year we're launching a compostable line.
4. (B) headquarters
5. (C) grew

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. headquarters
2. branch
3. turnover
4. flagship
5. range
6. employ

2. Past simple — regular and irregular

1. opened
2. grew
3. sold
4. didn't know
5. Did you hire
6. were
7. increased

3. Company type

1. (B) Manufacturer
2. (C) Service provider
3. (A) Retailer
4. (B) Wholesaler
5. (A) Startup

4. Find and fix the mistake

1. We founded the company in 2015.
2. When did you open your first branch?
3. They didn't sell anything in the first six months.
4. The turnover grew 30% last year.

5. Listening — three company pitches at a fair

1. Speaker 2 — plain words, since when, one number (60 cafés), one new thing (home subscription box).
2. Speaker 1 — 'we're a leading provider of solutions'. Nothing concrete.
3. Speaker 3 — five numbers in 15 seconds. Overwhelming.

7. Case study reflection

1. Model: sentence 3 — 'this year we launched a home subscription box, already 200 subscribers'. It shows Beira is growing on its own, not desperate for the supermarket deal.
2. Model: I would refuse. Compostable packaging IS the brand story. If you drop it for the supermarket, café clients will feel betrayed and the 'green' pitch stops working everywhere.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 2 · B1·2B

What do you sell?

Theme · Companies & products



Unit 2 · B1·2B

What do you sell?

Theme: Companies & products

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Describe a product in 3 lines: what it is, who it's for, and why it's different.
- Use adjective + noun word order and common product adjectives correctly.
- Compare two products using simple comparative structures (more / -er / better).

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · One product, three words

Think of the **LAST** thing you bought (physical or digital). Describe it in exactly 3 adjectives. Then explain why you chose those 3 and not others.

The product:

3 adjectives:

Why those 3?

Lead-in · Match the adjective to the category

Match each adjective to the type of product it usually describes.

1. durable

2. user-friendly

3. eco-friendly

4. affordable

5. premium

followUp: Which of these adjectives do you use MOST when you buy something?

Reading · Three ways to describe a product

There are three common ways to describe a product, and only one of them actually sells. The first is the feature list: 'stainless steel, 2-year warranty, waterproof, 500 ml'. This is what the box says. It is correct, but it is boring.

The second is the marketing line: 'the ultimate solution for the modern professional'. This is what the website says. It sounds important, but it means nothing.

The third is the specific story: 'I put my coffee in it at 7 am, and at 3 pm it's still warm. That's why I bought a second one for my husband.' This is what a real customer says. It sells, because you can see yourself using it.

The best product description mixes all three: one line of features, one line of benefit, and one small, real story. If you can't tell the small story, you probably don't know your product well enough yet.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. Which of the three descriptions actually sells?
 - (A) The feature list
 - (B) The marketing line
 - (C) The specific story
2. Why is the marketing line a problem?
 - (A) It's too short
 - (B) It sounds important but means nothing
 - (C) It's difficult to understand
3. According to the text, what does the BEST description do?
 - (A) Uses only stories
 - (B) Mixes features, benefit, and a small real story
 - (C) Copies what competitors say

Vocabulary in context

Find these words in the text and match them to the meaning.

warranty — a promise to repair/replace if broken

waterproof — water doesn't get through it

benefit — what the customer actually gets

feature — a technical detail of the product

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text, choose the correct option.

1. The text says there are three common ways to describe a product.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
2. The marketing line is the most effective way to sell.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
3. 'I bought a second one for my husband' is an example of a specific story.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. The product in the story costs €45.
- (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
5. You probably don't know your product well if you can't tell a small story about it.
- (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly. There is no single correct answer.

1. Think of your company's main product. What is ONE small, real customer story you could tell?

2. When you SHOP, which of the three descriptions convinces you? Are you honest with yourself?

Scan for meaning

Find the word/phrase in the text that matches each definition.

1. a promise to repair or replace something

2. water cannot pass through it

3. what the customer actually gets from a product

4. a small, believable customer example

Vocabulary · Describing products

reliable — you can trust it — it works

durable — lasts a long time without breaking

lightweight — very light and easy to carry

portable — easy to move from one place to another

user-friendly — easy to use, even the first time

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



high-quality — made with good materials and care

feature — a technical characteristic (size, colour, battery)

benefit — what the customer gains from the feature

target client — the type of stakeholder a product is designed to serve

price range — from the cheapest to the most expensive

packaging — the box/wrapping around the product

lead time — the time between order and delivery

practice

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

1. It's very ____ — you can put it in your bag and take it anywhere.

2. Our ____ is small business owners between 30 and 50.

3. The ____ is 5 working days from order to delivery.

4. This model is very ____ — you can learn to use it in 10 minutes.

5. The ____ is between €80 and €150, depending on the finish.

6. We use recycled ____ — that's important for our clients.

Collocations · product + verbs

Match each verb with the noun it usually goes with.

launch — a product

discontinue — a product line

test — a prototype

return — a faulty item

recommend — a product to a friend

compare — two options

Odd one out

Choose the word that does NOT belong.

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1. reliable · durable · high-quality · expensive

(A) reliable

(B) durable

(C) high-quality

(D) expensive

2. portable · lightweight · user-friendly · heavy

(A) portable

(B) lightweight

(C) user-friendly

(D) heavy

3. feature · benefit · packaging · turnover

(A) feature

(B) benefit

(C) packaging

(D) turnover

Word building · adjective ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

1. reliable → ____

2. durable → ____

3. safe → ____

4. flexible → ____

5. warm → ____

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Grammar · Adjectives and simple comparatives

- 1. Adjective order — most common (opinion → size → age → colour → material → noun) —** • a beautiful small black leather bag • a reliable modern German car Don't stack more than 3 adjectives — it sounds unnatural.
- 2. Comparatives — one short syllable: -er + than —** • cheap → cheaper than • fast → faster than • light → lighter than Spelling: big → bigger, easy → easier, hot → hotter.
- 3. Comparatives — two+ syllables: more/less + than —** • more expensive than • less reliable than • more user-friendly than
- 4. Irregular —** • good → better than • bad → worse than • far → further than

Exercise A — Adjective order

Put the adjectives in the natural order.

1. a bag / leather / small / black

2. a car / German / new / red

3. a table / round / wooden / big

4. a phone / cheap / Chinese / small

Exercise B — Make comparatives

Complete each sentence with the correct comparative form.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. Model X is ____ (cheap) than model Y.

2. Our new range is ____ (durable) than the old one.

3. The premium version is ____ (good) but ____ (expensive).

4. Shipping by air is ____ (fast) but ____ (expensive) than shipping by sea.

5. This model is ____ (light) than the previous one.

6. Our packaging is ____ (bad) than we thought — customers complain.

Exercise C — Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake.

1. Model B is more cheaper than model A.

2. Our product is more good than theirs.

3. It's a bag leather black small.

4. This version is expensiver.

Exercise D — Compare two products

Write ONE full sentence comparing the two products.

1. Model A: €89 · 2-year warranty. Model B: €149 · 5-year warranty. (price)

2. Model A: 350g. Model B: 220g. (weight)

3. Model A: 4.1 stars. Model B: 4.6 stars. (customer rating)

4. Model A: made in Portugal. Model B: made in China. (lead time)

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

**Exercise E — Rewrite in a natural way**

Rewrite each sentence to sound more natural.

1. The car has a body which is very light.

2. This machine is easy to use for the customer.

3. It's a product with high quality.

4. The bag lasts long and doesn't break easily.

Exercise F — Complete the sales dialogue

Complete the answers with the correct comparative or adjective form.

1. — Which model is ____ (light)? — The 220g one.

2. — And which one is ____ (good) for outdoor use? — Definitely the black one — it's ____ (durable) and completely waterproof.

3. — Is it ____ (expensive) than the previous version? — A little bit — about €30 ____ (much).

Listening · Two colleagues comparing two suppliers

Two colleagues are choosing between two suppliers of packaging. Both are good — but different.

pre

What are the 3 things you always compare when you choose a supplier?

Is 'the cheapest' always the best choice? Why or why not?

gist

1. How many suppliers are they comparing?

2. Who is cheaper — A or B?

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3. Which one do they finally choose, and why?

detail

1. How much shorter is A's lead time?

2. What does Voice B say about the customer rating?

3. What does 'the boss cares about the story' mean here?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

1. Is price the most important factor for them? How do you know?

2. Do they still have doubts after the decision? How do you know?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase with what it does.

"B is cheaper, but..." — acknowledges the tempting option first

"The lead time is much shorter." — comparative + intensifier (much)

"The reviews are better." — irregular comparative for a decision point

"Let's try A for the first order." — small commit, not a full switch

"...and keep B as backup." — leaves the door open, reduces risk

Voice A: OK, packaging. Supplier A or Supplier B?

Voice B: B is cheaper — about 20% less.

Voice A: Yeah, but the lead time is much shorter with A. Five days vs six weeks. That's a huge difference.

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Voice B: True. And the reviews are better — 4.6 vs 4.1. Returns are lower too.

Voice A: And you know the boss cares about the story — 'made in Portugal' looks better on the website.

Voice B: So it's A?

Voice A: Let's try A for the first order, and keep B as backup. If A slips, we know we have someone.

Voice B: Deal. I'll send the PO tomorrow morning.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases.

1. B is ____ — about 20% less.

2. The lead time is ____ with A.

3. And the reviews are ____ — 4.6 vs 4.1.

4. Let's try A ____, and keep B ____.

Speaking · The 3-line product pitch

Prepare a 30-second product pitch. Line 1: what it is. Line 2: who it's for. Line 3: why it's different (use ONE comparative).

Scene: New client at your stand

A: You: sell reusable coffee cups.

B: You: café owner.

Scene: Internal team, a new feature

A: You: product manager introducing a new app feature.

B: You: the sales team, sceptical.

Scene: A shop, a physical demo

A: You: sell a portable Bluetooth speaker.

B: You: a customer with a €50 budget.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Discussion · features vs benefits

Choose 2 questions and speak for 30–45 seconds each.

What is a common product you use every day that has a great BENEFIT but boring features?

Have you ever bought something because of a real story (not the features)? What was it?

Which is easier for you: describing your product's features or its benefits? Why?

Should the salesperson talk more, or ask more questions? Why?

Role-play · The 5-minute product demo

Read your role, prep 30s, run the conversation for 3–4 minutes.

Scene: Trade fair · comparing 2 models

A: You: salesperson. You have Model A (€89, 2-year warranty, 350g) and Model B (€149, 5-year warranty, 220g, better reviews). Recommend one — use at least 3 comparatives.

B: You: buyer for a small shop. Ask about weight, warranty and lead time. Push back once on price.

Scene: Café · pitching reusable cups

A: You: sell reusable coffee cups (€6 each, dishwasher-safe, 10 colours). Your unit price beats the standard supplier by 15%.

B: You: café owner. You already have a supplier. Ask: why change? Ask about MOQ (minimum order) and delivery.

Mini-presentation · Compare two products

Compare TWO real products (your company's or from your daily life) in 60 seconds using the 4-beat structure.

Beat 1 (10s) — Introduce both products in ONE sentence each.

Beat 2 (20s) — 2 comparatives: price and one other point.

Beat 3 (20s) — 1 real story: when did YOU choose one over the other?

Beat 4 (10s) — Which one would you recommend, and to whom?

sample: There are two obvious options for a small portable speaker under €100: the JBL Go and the Anker Soundcore Mini. The JBL is smaller and lighter, but the Anker is louder and has a battery that lasts almost twice as long. Last summer I took the Anker to the beach for a whole day, and I never had to charge it — the JBL would have died by lunch. I'd recommend the Anker for anyone who uses it outside, and the JBL for a bathroom or a small kitchen.

Writing · A 3-line product description

Write a 3-line product description (50–70 words) for your website. Line 1: what it is (features). Line 2: who it's for (target customer). Line 3: why it's different (one comparative or a small real story).

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



bonus: Bonus task — Amazon-style bullet points. Write EXACTLY 3 bullet points for the same product: one feature, one benefit, one specific story. Each bullet: max 15 words.

Wrap-up · What did we cover?

3 ways to describe a product: features, marketing line, specific story. Mix all three.

Adjective order: opinion → size → age → colour → material → noun.

Comparatives: -er / more depending on syllables; irregular better/worse.

Cheapest isn't always best — compare lead time, quality and the story.

Quiz

1. Which order is natural?
(A) a leather small bag
(B) a small leather bag
(C) a bag small leather
2. Model A costs €89. Model B costs €149. Model B is...
(A) cheaper than
(B) more cheap than
(C) more expensive than
3. Comparative of 'good' is...
(A) gooder
(B) better
(C) more good
4. Which description SELLS best?
(A) Stainless steel, 500 ml, waterproof.
(B) The ultimate solution for the modern professional.
(C) I put my coffee in it at 7 am and at 3 pm it's still warm.
5. 'Lead time' means...
(A) the price
(B) the time between order and delivery
(C) the warranty period

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Workbook — home practice



1. Vocabulary gap-fill

Complete each sentence with **ONE** phrase from the box.

Word bank: target customer · lead time · user-friendly · packaging · price range · warranty

1. The ____ is 5 working days from order to delivery.

2. Our ____ is small business owners between 30 and 50.

3. The ____ is between €80 and €150.

4. This model is very ____ — my grandmother learned to use it in one day.

5. The ____ is fully recyclable — it's part of our story.

6. We offer a 2-year ____ on every unit.

2. Adjective order

Put the adjectives in the natural order.

1. a car / German / new / red

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. a bag / leather / small / brown

3. a phone / cheap / Chinese / small

4. a table / wooden / big / round

3. Comparatives

Complete each sentence with the correct comparative form.

1. Model X is ____ (cheap) than model Y.

2. Our new range is ____ (durable) than the old one.

3. The premium version is ____ (good) but ____ (expensive).

4. This model is ____ (light) than the previous one.

5. Our packaging is ____ (bad) than we thought — customers complain.

6. This laptop is ____ (fast) than my old one.

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake.

1. Model B is more cheaper than model A.

2. Our product is more good than theirs.

3. It's a bag leather black small.

4. This version is expensiver.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



5. Listening — three product descriptions

Three salespeople describe the same category of product (portable speakers). Notice who sells best.

1. Which speaker uses ONLY features?

2. Which speaker uses ONLY a marketing line?

3. Which speaker mixes feature + benefit + story?

Voice A: Bluetooth 5.3, 20 hours battery life, IPX7 waterproof, USB-C charging.

Voice B: It's the ultimate audio experience for the modern professional.

Voice C: It weighs 220 grams and it's waterproof, so it fits in a jacket pocket and you can take it in the shower. Last summer I took it to the beach for a whole day and it didn't die once. My cousin bought two after she saw mine.

6. Writing — 3-line product description

Write a 3-line product description (50–70 words) for a real product you know. Line 1: features. Line 2: who it's for. Line 3: one comparative or one small real story.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Class Book

Lead-in · Match the adjective to the category

1. tools, shoes, furniture — things that must last
2. software, apps, machines
3. packaging, cleaning products, cosmetics
4. everyday products (price is the argument)
5. expensive products that promise quality

Reading · Three ways to describe a product

1. (C) The specific story
2. (B) It sounds important but means nothing
3. (B) Mixes features, benefit, and a small real story
1. (A) True
2. (B) False
3. (A) True
4. (C) Not Given
5. (A) True
1. Model: a client of ours prints our labels on their bread bags. One customer asked her where she bought the bags — and that customer became a client of OURS the next week. That's my go-to story.
2. Model: I always say I read the features, but honestly a good review with a specific story convinces me faster than any spec sheet.
1. warranty
2. waterproof
3. benefit
4. specific story

Vocabulary · Describing products

1. portable
2. target client
3. lead time
4. user-friendly
5. price range
6. packaging
1. (D) expensive
2. (D) heavy
3. (D) turnover
1. reliability
2. durability
3. safety
4. flexibility
5. warmth

Grammar · Adjectives and simple comparatives

1. a small black leather bag
2. a new red German car
3. a big round wooden table
4. a small cheap Chinese phone (or: a cheap small Chinese phone)
1. cheaper
2. more durable
3. better / more expensive
4. faster / more expensive
5. lighter
6. worse
1. Model B is cheaper than model A. (never 'more cheaper')
2. Our product is better than theirs.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



3. It's a small black leather bag.
4. This version is more expensive.
1. Model A is cheaper than Model B (by €60).
2. Model B is lighter than Model A (by 130g).
3. Model B is better rated / has better reviews than Model A.
4. Model A has a shorter lead time than Model B (because it's made locally).
1. The car has a very lightweight body. / has a light body.
2. This machine is very user-friendly. / is easy for the customer to use.
3. It's a high-quality product.
4. The bag is durable. / It's a very durable bag.
1. Which model is lighter? / the lighter one
2. Which one is better for outdoor use? / it's more durable and completely waterproof
3. Is it more expensive than the previous version? / about €30 more

Listening · Two colleagues comparing two suppliers

1. Two — Supplier A (Portuguese) and Supplier B (Chinese).
2. Supplier B is cheaper (about 20% less).
3. Supplier A — because the lead time is much shorter and the story is 'made locally', which their customers like.
1. 5 days vs 6 weeks — huge difference.
2. A has 4.6 stars vs B's 4.1 — 'the reviews are better and the returns are lower'.
3. Their manager values a 'made in Portugal' narrative for the brand.
1. No — B is cheaper but they pick A. The tie-breakers are lead time and the local story.
2. Yes — Voice A says 'let's try A for the first order and keep B as backup'. That's a soft commitment, not a full switch.
1. cheaper
2. much shorter
3. better
4. for the first order / as backup

Quiz

1. (B) a small leather bag
2. (C) more expensive than
3. (B) better
4. (C) I put my coffee in it at 7 am and at 3 pm it's still warm.
5. (B) the time between order and delivery

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. lead time
2. target customer
3. price range
4. user-friendly
5. packaging
6. warranty

2. Adjective order

1. a new red German car
2. a small brown leather bag
3. a small cheap Chinese phone (or: a cheap small Chinese phone)
4. a big round wooden table

3. Comparatives

1. cheaper
2. more durable
3. better / more expensive
4. lighter
5. worse
6. faster

4. Find and fix the mistake

1. Model B is cheaper than model A. (never 'more cheaper')
2. Our product is better than theirs.
3. It's a small black leather bag.
4. This version is more expensive.

5. Listening — three product descriptions

1. Speaker 1 — 'Bluetooth 5.3, 20 hours battery, IPX7 waterproof'. No benefit, no story.
2. Speaker 2 — 'the ultimate audio experience for the modern professional'. Sounds important, means nothing.
3. Speaker 3 — 220g and waterproof (feature), fits in a jacket pocket (benefit), 'I took it to the beach all day and it didn't die' (story).

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 3 · B1-3A

Emails that actually get answered

Theme · Emails & communication



Unit 3 · B1·3A

Emails that actually get answered

Theme: Emails & communication

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Write a clear business email in 5 lines: subject, greeting, one clear ask, one deadline, close.
- Use 'will' for decisions made at the moment of speaking and 'going to' for plans decided before.
- Choose the right register (formal vs friendly) for internal, external and first-contact emails.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · Your worst email

Think of the **WORST** work email you received this month (unclear, too long, no ask). Describe it in 3 sentences. What was the problem?

Who sent it?

How long was it (roughly)?

What did they actually want you to do?

Lead-in · Match the subject line to the goal

Match each subject line to what the sender really wants.

1. "Quick question — 30 seconds"

2. "Action required by Friday 5 pm"

3. "Just checking in"

4. "For your approval — new pricing"

5. "FYI — no action needed"

followUp: Which of these subject lines would YOU open first? Which one would you leave for tomorrow?

Reading · The 5-line email

Most work emails fail for one reason: the reader has to read too much to find out what you actually want. A 5-line email fixes that. Line 1: greeting. Line 2: context — one sentence. Line 3: the ask — what do you want? Line 4: the deadline — by when? Line 5: close.

Example. Subject: 'Q3 report — draft for your review'. Hi Marina. Attached is the draft of the Q3 report we spoke about on Monday. Could you review sections 2 and 3? I need your comments by Thursday 5 pm to hit the client deadline. Thanks, João.

Notice three things. First, the subject already says what and why. Second, the ask is one sentence — not 'let me know your thoughts', which is vague. Third, the deadline is a specific day and time, not 'as soon as possible' (which means nothing).

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1. Why do most work emails fail?
 - (A) They are too short
 - (B) The reader has to read too much to find the ask
 - (C) They use bad grammar
2. What should line 4 contain?
 - (A) The deadline
 - (B) A greeting
 - (C) The company logo
3. What is wrong with 'as soon as possible'?
 - (A) It's rude
 - (B) It means nothing specific
 - (C) It's too formal

Vocabulary in context

Find these words in the text and match them to the meaning.

the ask — the one thing you want the reader to do

the deadline — the last moment to do something

hit the deadline — finish something before the deadline

vague — not clear or specific

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text, choose the correct option.

1. The 5-line email starts with the ask.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
2. 'Let me know your thoughts' is a good, clear ask.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
3. The example email has a specific day AND time for the deadline.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. 5-line emails are only for informal messages.
- (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
5. 'ASAP' means nothing specific, according to the text.
- (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly. There is no single correct answer.

1. Do YOUR emails follow the 5-line structure? Where do they usually get too long?

2. What's the WORST deadline phrase you receive at work?

Scan for meaning

Find the phrase in the text that matches each definition.

1. the one clear thing you want the reader to do

2. the last moment to do something

3. to finish something before the deadline

4. not clear or specific

Vocabulary · Emails and phone communication

attach — add a file to an email

forward — send an email you received to someone else

cc / bcc — put someone else on the email in copy / hidden copy

reply — answer an email

follow up — write again about the same topic

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get back to (someone) — answer someone when you have the info

subject line — the short title of the email

greeting — the opening (Hi / Dear / Hello)

sign-off — the closing (Best regards / Thanks / Cheers)

the ask — the one thing you want the reader to do

cut-off — the last point at which something can be done

read receipt — a notification that the reader opened your email

practice

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

1. I've ____ the report to this email — please have a look.

2. Please ____ this to Marta, she needs to see it too.

3. I'll ____ ____ you by Thursday with the numbers.

4. The ____ ____ is 'Q3 report — draft for your review'.

5. The ____ is Friday 5 pm — please don't be late.

6. I'll ____ ____ next week if I haven't heard from you.

Collocations · email verbs

Match each verb with the noun it usually goes with.

send — an email / a message

attach — a document / a file

hit — the cut-off

cc — a colleague

confirm — a meeting / a booking

flag — an email as urgent

Odd one out

Choose the word that does NOT belong.

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1. subject line · greeting · sign-off · headquarters

- (A) subject line
- (B) greeting
- (C) sign-off
- (D) headquarters

2. forward · reply · attach · deliver

- (A) forward
- (B) reply
- (C) attach
- (D) deliver

3. urgent · ASAP · low priority · flagship

- (A) urgent
- (B) ASAP
- (C) low priority
- (D) flagship

Word building · verb ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

1. to reply → a ____

2. to attach → an ____

3. to confirm → a ____

4. to remind → a ____

5. to schedule → a ____

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Grammar · Future forms — will vs going to

- 'will' — decisions made AT the moment of speaking** — • [phone rings] — I'll get it. • OK, I'll send you the file tonight. • Don't worry — I'll take care of it. Often with: I think / I promise / probably / I'll.
- 'going to' — plans and intentions decided BEFORE now** — • I'm going to send the report tomorrow. (I already decided.) • We're going to open a new branch in March. • They're going to hire two more people this quarter.
- Predictions — both are common** — • I think it will rain tomorrow. (opinion, no evidence) • Look at those clouds — it's going to rain. (evidence right in front of you)
- Present continuous — fixed arrangements (with a time)** — • I'm meeting the client on Thursday at 3. (calendar-fixed, near future)

Exercise A — Choose will or going to

Complete each sentence with *WILL* or *GOING TO*.

1. [phone rings] — Don't worry, I ____ answer it.

2. We ____ launch the new website in October — the date is confirmed.

3. OK, I ____ send you the file after lunch.

4. Look at that queue! It ____ take ages.

5. I'm sure she ____ love the new design.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



6. They ____ move office next spring — the contract is signed.

Exercise B — Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake with future forms.

1. I will to send the report tomorrow.

2. We going to open a new branch next year.

3. The meeting will at 3 pm.

4. [phone rings] I'm going to get it.

Exercise C — Ask about the future

Write ONE question in the correct future form.

1. You want to know their marketing plan for next year. →

2. The email just arrived — you offer to answer it. →

3. You want to confirm the meeting time (already scheduled Thursday 3 pm). →

4. You want a rain prediction based on the dark sky. →

Exercise D — Rewrite for the right form

Rewrite each sentence with the correct future form.

1. OK, I send you the file tonight.

2. We open a new branch next year — it's decided.

3. Don't worry, I do it later.

4. I meet the client on Thursday at 3. (calendar-fixed)

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5. That box is heavy — you drop it!

Exercise E — Short answers

Answer each question truthfully in ONE short sentence, using a future form.

1. What are you going to do this weekend?

2. What time will you finish work today?

3. Are you going to answer that email now?

4. What's your next big project?

Exercise F — Complete the email exchange

Complete each answer with the correct future form.

1. — Can you send me the deck? — Sure, I ____ (send) it right after this call.

2. — What's on your calendar for Thursday? — I ____ (meet) the new client at 10.

3. — What are the marketing plans for Q4? — We ____ (launch) two campaigns and we ____ (hire) one more designer.

Listening · A quick call between manager and team member

Two colleagues have a 90-second call about a report. Notice how they switch between decisions right now (will) and plans (going to).

pre

Do you prefer to fix things over email or over a quick call? Why?

What's the ideal length for a work call in your opinion?

gist

1. What is the report about?

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2. Who is going to write it?

3. What does Voice A promise to do right now?

detail

1. By when does Voice A need the draft?

2. What does Voice B ask for extra?

3. What will happen if the CRM data is messy?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

1. Is this a normal exchange, or unusually tense?

2. Who is the more senior of the two?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does in the call.

"I'll send it right after this call." — 'will' — decision right now

"I'm going to write it this week." — 'going to' — plan made before

"I need it by Friday 5 pm." — specific deadline (day + time)

"Can you also send me...?" — polite extra request

"I'll call IT if it's messy." — 'will' — contingent decision

Voice A: Marta, quick one — the Q3 North sales report. Are you good to draft it?

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Voice B: Yes, I'm going to write it this week. When do you need the draft?

Voice A: By Friday 5 pm. Client meeting Monday morning.

Voice B: OK. Can you send me the raw CRM data? And also the comments from the last quarterly review?

Voice A: I'll send the CRM export right after this call. The comments — I'll dig them up and forward them by tonight.

Voice B: Perfect. If the CRM data is messy again, I'll flag it back to you.

Voice A: Fair. And if it's messy, I'll call IT and get it cleaned before end of day.

Voice B: Deal. Talk Friday.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases.

1. I'm ____ write it this week.

2. I ____ send the CRM export right after this call.

3. I need it ____ Friday 5 pm.

4. I ____ IT and get it cleaned before end of day.

Speaking · The 90-second call

Prepare a 90-second call to a colleague. Structure: 1) name the topic, 2) the ask, 3) the deadline, 4) confirm next step. Use ONE 'will' and ONE 'going to' at least.

Scene: You need a colleague's slide for tomorrow's deck

A: You: presenting tomorrow at 10 am.

B: You: the colleague who has the slide half-finished.

Scene: You want to move a meeting

A: You: need to move Thursday's meeting to Friday.

B: You: the client, quite busy.

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Scene: You need a decision from your boss on 2 options

A: You: have to choose between vendor A and vendor B by end of week.

B: You: the boss, on the way to the airport.

Discussion · email vs call

Choose 2 questions and speak for 30–45 seconds each.

In your job, do people call too much, email too much, or Slack too much?

When is it BETTER to call than to email? Give a real example.

What is your golden rule for the SUBJECT LINE?

How many emails do you get per day? How many actually need an answer?

Role-play · The urgent email that needs a call

Read your role, prep 30s, run the conversation for 2–3 minutes.

Scene: The client just sent an angry email at 5 pm on Friday

A: You: their account manager. You want to call, not reply by email. Prepare an opening line and ONE thing you will fix by Monday.

B: You: the client. You are frustrated because a delivery was late by 3 days. You want a real answer, not a copy-paste apology.

Scene: You need to reschedule tomorrow's team meeting

A: You: the meeting organiser. Your boss just booked you into another meeting at the same time.

B: You: a team member who blocked 90 minutes tomorrow for this. You are annoyed but professional.

Mini-presentation · 60-second Q4 plan

Deliver a 60-second update to your team about YOUR Q4 plans. Use the 4-beat structure. Time yourself.

Beat 1 (10s) — The ONE big goal for the quarter (going to).

Beat 2 (15s) — 2 concrete actions already planned (going to).

Beat 3 (20s) — 1 decision I'm making right now, live (will).

Beat 4 (15s) — Invite ONE question you can answer.

sample: My big Q4 goal is to reduce our email response time to under 4 hours. Two things are already planned: we're going to move our shared inbox to a new tool in October, and we're going to run a 90-minute training with everyone before we go live. Live decision — I'll set up the training slot this afternoon, so you should see a calendar invite by end of day. Ask me about the tool choice, because that's where I'm still learning.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Writing · A 5-line business email

Write a business email in **EXACTLY 5 lines** (subject + 5 lines). Include: a clear subject, greeting, one line of context, **ONE** ask, **ONE** specific deadline (day + time), a warm close. Max 80 words after the subject.

bonus: Bonus task — the same email, half the words. Take your 5-line email and cut it in half. Then send both versions to a partner and ask which one they'd answer faster.

Wrap-up · What did we cover?

5-line email: subject → greeting → context (1 line) → the ask → deadline → close.

'will' for decisions made at the moment of speaking; 'going to' for plans decided before.

Deadlines with a specific day AND time. Never 'ASAP'.

Match the register to the reader: internal short, external polished, first contact warm.

Quiz

- [phone rings] The best response is:
(A) I'm going to answer it.
(B) I'll answer it.
(C) I answer it.
- 'We ____ open a new branch in March — the contract is signed.'
(A) will
(B) are going to
(C) open
- The BEST deadline is:
(A) ASAP
(B) by Friday
(C) by Friday 5 pm
- 'The ask' means...
(A) the greeting
(B) the one thing you want the reader to do
(C) the sign-off
- Which subject line is **CLEAREST**?
(A) Question
(B) Update
(C) Action required by Friday 5 pm — Q3 report

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: attach · forward · deadline · subject line · follow up · get back to

1. I've ____ the invoice — please pay by end of month.

2. Could you ____ this email to Marta as well?

3. The ____ for the report is Friday 5 pm.

4. A clear ____ helps your email get opened first.

5. I'll ____ next week if I haven't heard from you.

6. I don't have the answer now — I'll ____ you tomorrow.

2. Will or going to?

Complete each sentence with *WILL* or *GOING TO*.

1. [phone rings] — Don't worry, I ____ answer it.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. We ____ launch the new website in October — the date is fixed.

3. OK, I ____ send you the file after lunch.

4. Look at those clouds! It ____ rain.

5. I'm sure she ____ love the new design.

6. They ____ move office next spring — the contract is signed.

3. Subject line diagnosis

Read each subject line and choose the best label.

1. 'Update'

(A) Clear

(B) Vague

(C) Urgent

2. 'Action required by Friday 5 pm — Q3 report'

(A) Clear

(B) Vague

(C) Urgent

3. 'ASAP'

(A) Clear

(B) Vague

(C) Rude and unclear

4. 'FYI — no action needed'

(A) Clear

(B) Vague

(C) Urgent

5. 'Question'

(A) Clear

(B) Vague

(C) Urgent

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has *ONE* mistake with future forms or email vocabulary.

1. I will to send the report tomorrow.

2. We going to open a new branch next year.

3. I attached please find the file.

4. Please answer to my email.

5. Listening — three voicemails

Three people leave voicemails. Notice who is clearest, and who wastes time.

1. Which voicemail has the **CLEAREST** ask?

2. Which voicemail has **NO** clear ask?

3. Which voicemail is **TOO LONG**?

Voice A: Hey, it's me. Give me a call back when you can. Thanks. Bye.

Voice B: Hi, this is Ana from Beira Roasters, calling about tomorrow's delivery. Please call me back before 5 pm on 91X XXX XXX. Thanks.

Voice C: Hi, so, remember last month when we discussed the pricing, and then you sent me the deck, and then we had that call with Marta, and... anyway, I need to talk to you about the new proposal, when you have a moment, thanks.

6. Writing — a 5-line email

Write a 5-line business email (max 80 words after the subject line). Include: clear subject, greeting, 1 line of context, *ONE* ask, *ONE* specific deadline (day + time), warm close.

7. Case study reflection

Look back at the Lumen Language School case. Answer briefly, in your own words.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. In Diana's 5-line reply to Bank X, what is the ONE thing she must NOT do?

2. Which of Diana's 5 indirect questions on the call is MOST important? Why?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Class Book

Lead-in · Match the subject line to the goal

1. asks for a small favour without pressure
2. gives a clear deadline in the subject
3. a soft nudge — no new information
4. needs a yes/no decision from the reader
5. shares information, nothing to do

Reading · The 5-line email

1. (B) The reader has to read too much to find the ask
2. (A) The deadline
3. (B) It means nothing specific
1. (B) False
2. (B) False
3. (A) True
4. (C) Not Given
5. (A) True
1. Model: mine get long in line 2 (context) — I overexplain the background because I'm afraid the reader forgot. This week I'll try to keep line 2 to ONE sentence.
2. Model: 'as soon as possible' and 'end of day' with no time zone — I never know what to do.
1. the ask
2. the deadline
3. hit the deadline
4. vague

Vocabulary · Emails and phone communication

1. attached
2. forward
3. get back to
4. subject line
5. cut-off
6. follow up
1. (D) headquarters
2. (D) deliver
3. (D) flagship
1. reply
2. attachment
3. confirmation
4. reminder
5. schedule

Grammar · Future forms — will vs going to

1. will / 'll
2. are going to
3. will / 'll
4. is going to / 's going to
5. will
6. are going to
1. I will send the report tomorrow. / I'm going to send the report tomorrow.
2. We're going to open a new branch next year.
3. The meeting is at 3 pm. / The meeting will be at 3 pm.
4. I'll get it. (decision at this moment, not a plan)
1. What are you going to do for marketing next year?
2. I'll reply to it. / Shall I reply to it?
3. So we're meeting on Thursday at 3, right?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. It's going to rain, isn't it?
1. OK, I'll send you the file tonight.
2. We're going to open a new branch next year.
3. Don't worry, I'll do it later.
4. I'm meeting the client on Thursday at 3.
5. That box is heavy — you're going to drop it!
1. Model: I'm going to visit my parents in Coimbra on Saturday.
2. Model: I'll finish around 6 pm — I still have one call at 5.
3. Model: No — I'll answer it tomorrow morning with a clear head.
4. Model: I'm going to redesign our website in Q4.
1. I'll send it right after this call.
2. I'm meeting the new client at 10.
3. We're going to launch two campaigns and we're going to hire one more designer.

Listening · A quick call between manager and team member

1. The Q3 sales numbers for the North region.
2. Voice B (Marta) — she already agreed to write it this week.
3. Send Marta the raw data from the CRM immediately after the call.
1. By Friday 5 pm — because the client meeting is Monday morning.
2. The comments from the last quarterly review, to add context.
3. Voice A will call IT and get it cleaned up before end of day.
1. Normal — friendly, short, both use first names, no defensive language.
2. Voice A — sets the deadline, has access to CRM admin, promises to call IT.
1. going to
2. will / 'll
3. by
4. will call / 'll call

Quiz

1. (B) I'll answer it.
2. (B) are going to
3. (C) by Friday 5 pm
4. (B) the one thing you want the reader to do
5. (C) Action required by Friday 5 pm — Q3 report

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. attached
2. forward
3. deadline
4. subject line
5. follow up
6. get back to

2. Will or going to?

1. will / 'll
2. are going to
3. will / 'll
4. is going to / 's going to
5. will
6. are going to

3. Subject line diagnosis

1. (B) Vague
2. (A) Clear
3. (C) Rude and unclear
4. (A) Clear
5. (B) Vague

4. Find and fix the mistake

1. I will send the report tomorrow.
2. We're going to open a new branch next year.
3. Please find the attached file. / I've attached the file.
4. Please answer / reply to my email.

5. Listening — three voicemails

1. Voice 2 — 'this is Ana from Beira Roasters, calling about tomorrow's delivery — please call me back before 5 pm on 91X XXX XXX'.
2. Voice 1 — 'hey, it's me... call me back when you can' — no reason, no deadline.
3. Voice 3 — 90 seconds of background before mentioning the request.

7. Case study reflection

1. Model: promise a price and a start date in the reply itself. She needs the discovery call first — the reply should only buy time and set the next step.
2. Model: 'Could you tell me who makes the final decision on this?' — if it's not Ricardo, the whole 20-minute call risks being with the wrong person.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 3 · B1·3B

On the phone and on video

Theme · Emails & communication



Unit 3 · B1·3B

On the phone and on video

Theme: *Emails & communication*

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Open, hold and close a business phone or video call with confidence.
- Handle a bad connection, an interruption or a request to repeat.
- Use polite indirect questions and confirmation language to sound professional.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · Your call habits

Rank these 5 call situations from the one you handle *BEST* (1) to the one you handle *WORST* (5) in English. Be ready to explain #1 and #5.

answering an unexpected call from a client

leading a video meeting with 6+ people

leaving a voicemail

asking someone to repeat because you didn't understand

closing a call politely when the other person keeps talking

Lead-in · Match the phrase to its function

Match each call phrase to what it's really doing.

1. "Sorry, could you repeat that?"

2. "You're breaking up a little."

3. "Just to confirm..."

4. "Could I stop you for one second?"

5. "I need to jump — I have another call."

followUp: Which of these do you use *MOST* at work? Which one do you *AVOID*?

Reading · Why English phone calls feel harder

Many B1 learners can write perfect emails but freeze on a phone call. It's not their level of English — it's the missing signals. On a call there are no facial expressions, no body language, and sometimes no video. Your only tool is your voice and the words you choose.

Three small habits fix most of the problem. First, name yourself and the reason in the first ten seconds: 'Hi, this is João from Beira Roasters — quick question about tomorrow's delivery.' Second, use short 'active listening' words to prove you're there: 'sure', 'OK', 'got it', 'right'. Silence on a call sounds like you disappeared.

Third, always *CLOSE* with a summary. Even one line — 'so, you'll send the numbers by Friday and I'll call you Monday at 10, right?' — saves a whole email chain later. Professionals don't sound impressive because their grammar is perfect. They sound impressive because they name themselves, they listen out loud, and they close clearly.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. According to the text, why are phone calls harder than emails?
 - (A) The English is more advanced
 - (B) There are no facial expressions or body language
 - (C) Grammar rules are different
2. What should you do in the first 10 seconds?
 - (A) Ask about the weather
 - (B) Name yourself and the reason for the call
 - (C) Apologise for calling
3. What is the purpose of the final summary?
 - (A) To sound polite
 - (B) To avoid a long email chain later
 - (C) To end the call quickly

Vocabulary in context

Find these words in the text and match them to the meaning.

freeze — become suddenly unable to speak

signals — small hints that people use to communicate

active listening — showing you're paying attention while listening

close (a call) — end it clearly, with a summary

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text, choose the correct option.

1. The text says the main problem is grammar level.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
2. Silence on a call sounds like you disappeared.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
3. You should always send a follow-up email after every call.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. 'Sure', 'OK' and 'got it' are examples of active listening.

- (A) True
- (B) False
- (C) Not Given

5. Video calls are always easier than phone calls.

- (A) True
- (B) False
- (C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly. There is no single correct answer.

1. Which of the 3 habits (name + reason / active listening / close with summary) is HARDEST for you? Why?

2. Do you agree that phone calls in English are harder than emails? What is your personal experience?

Scan for meaning

Find the phrase in the text that matches each definition.

1. become suddenly unable to speak or think

2. short words that prove you're paying attention

3. end a call clearly with a summary

4. small hints people use to communicate

Vocabulary · Phone and video call phrases

hold on / hang on — wait a moment (informal)

put someone on hold — stop the conversation while they wait

transfer a call — pass the call to another person

get cut off — the call ended by accident

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- mute / unmute** — turn your microphone off / on
- drop off (a call)** — leave the call before it ends
- you're breaking up** — your voice is choppy — bad connection
- you're on mute** — we can't hear you, please unmute
- can you hear me?** — check if your sound is working
- let me share my screen** — start screen-sharing
- shall I turn my camera on?** — offer video
- let me revert to you** — I need to check and reply later

practice

Complete each sentence with ONE phrase from the lists.

1. Sorry, I ____ you off — please repeat the last sentence.

2. Sorry, you're ____ ____ — I only catch every third word.

3. Marta, you're ____ ____ ____ — please unmute.

4. I'll ____ ____ my screen so we can look at the numbers together.

5. I don't have the answer right now — let me ____ ____ ____ ____ by tomorrow.

6. Sorry, I got ____ ____ — I'm calling you back now.

Collocations · call verbs

Match each verb with the noun it usually goes with.

- make** — a call
- return** — a missed call
- join** — a meeting / a call
- leave** — a voicemail
- schedule** — a follow-up call
- reconnect** — after a bad connection

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

**Odd one out**

Choose the word that does *NOT* belong.

1. mute · unmute · hang up · attach
 - (A) mute
 - (B) unmute
 - (C) hang up
 - (D) attach
2. hold on · hang on · one moment · goodbye
 - (A) hold on
 - (B) hang on
 - (C) one moment
 - (D) goodbye
3. voicemail · missed call · sign-off · ring back
 - (A) voicemail
 - (B) missed call
 - (C) sign-off
 - (D) ring back

Word building · verb ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

1. to call → a ____

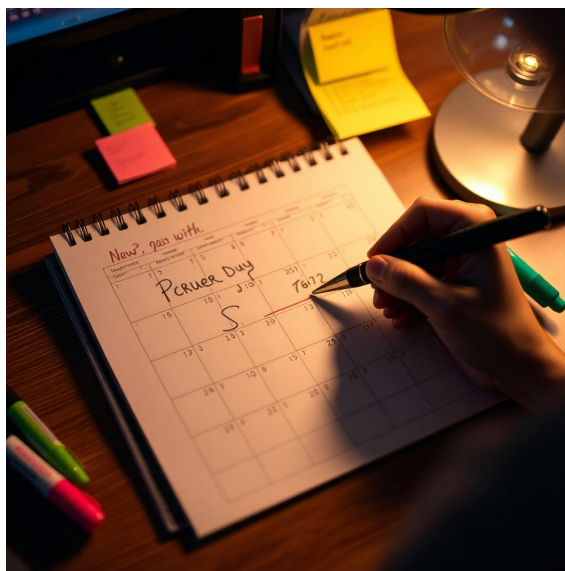
2. to connect → a ____

3. to interrupt → an ____

4. to invite → an ____

5. to introduce → an ____

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Grammar · Polite indirect questions

1. Why indirect? — Direct questions can sound blunt on a call. • Direct: What is your name? • Indirect: Could you tell me your name, please? Indirect = softer, more professional.

2. Structure — Start with: Could you tell me... / Do you know... / May I ask... Then use STATEMENT word order (no auxiliary do/does/did). ✗ Could you tell me what is your name? ✓ Could you tell me what your name is?

3. Yes/no questions → use 'if' or 'whether' — • Direct: Are you available Friday? • Indirect: Could you tell me if you are available Friday? • Do you know whether the meeting is confirmed?

4. Confirming — 'just to confirm...' — • Just to confirm, you'll send the numbers by Friday, right? • Sorry, did you say Tuesday or Thursday? These are gold for phone/video.

Exercise A — Make it indirect

Rewrite each direct question as an indirect one.

1. What is your email address?

2. When does the meeting start?

3. Where is the report?

4. Is the boss in the office today?

5. How much does it cost?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



6. Has the client replied yet?

Exercise B — Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake with indirect question form.

1. Could you tell me what is the deadline?

2. Do you know when does the meeting start?

3. Could you tell me where I can to find the report?

4. Do you know is the boss available?

Exercise C — Confirm on a call

Write ONE 'just to confirm' sentence for each situation.

1. You agreed to send the invoice by Friday 5 pm. →

2. The client will meet you at their office on Tuesday at 10. →

3. You will call back Monday morning with the answer. →

4. The price you agreed is €4,500 excluding VAT. →

Exercise D — Ask for a repeat / a clarification

Write ONE polite phrase for each situation.

1. You didn't catch the price. →

2. You didn't understand a technical word. →

3. You want to check you heard 'Tuesday' correctly. →

4. The line is bad — you want them to say it again. →

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Exercise E — Rewrite for the phone

Rewrite each direct email sentence as a polite phone sentence.

1. Send me the file.

2. I need the answer today.

3. Repeat, please.

4. Wait a second.

Exercise F — Complete the phone dialogue

Complete each answer.

1. — Hi, I'd like to speak with Marta, please. — Sure. May I ____ ____ ____ (ask / who / calling)?

2. — Could you tell me ____ ____ ____ ____ (when / meeting / start)? — The meeting starts at 10 sharp.

3. — Just ____ ____ ____ ____ (confirm), you'll send the numbers by Friday, right? — Correct — by Friday 5 pm.

Listening · A video call gets interrupted

Two colleagues on a video call. There is a bad connection, a mute mistake, and a summary at the end.

pre

What is your usual first sentence when you join a video call late?

What do you do when you can't hear the other person?

gist

1. What problem happens FIRST in the call?

2. What problem happens SECOND?

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3. How do they close the call?

detail

1. What deadline do they finally agree on?

2. Which topic did they NOT get to?

3. How does Voice B react to the interruption?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

1. How well do these two people know each other?

2. Would you say Voice B is a good communicator on video? Why?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does.

"Marta, you're on mute." — helpful correction, no drama

"Sorry, you're breaking up." — signals bad connection politely

"Got it." / "Right." — active listening, low-cost

"Just to confirm..." — closing summary opener

"I'll send you a written summary too." — backup — protects both sides

Voice A: Hi Marta — can you hear me?

Voice B: ...

Voice A: Marta, you're on mute.

Voice B: Sorry! Can you hear me now?

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Voice A: Loud and clear. OK — Q3 report. Where are we?

Voice B: Draft is 70% done. I need the numbers from the North region.

Voice A: Right, I'll send... sorry — [pause] can you still hear me?

Voice B: Sorry, you're breaking up. Say that again?

Voice A: Better? I said — I'll send you the CRM export tonight. Deadline for the draft?

Voice B: Thursday. Then we do a quick call Friday at 10 to review?

Voice A: Perfect. Just to confirm — you'll send the report by Thursday and I'll call you Friday at 10. What about the Q4 marketing plan?

Voice B: Let's save that for Friday. I'll send you a written summary of this call too, just in case.

Voice A: Appreciate it. Talk Friday.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases from the call.

1. Marta, you're ____ ____.

2. Sorry, you're ____ ____.

3. Just to ____, you'll send the report by Thursday...

4. I'll send you a written ____ of this call too.

Speaking · The 3-minute mock call

In pairs, run a 3-minute mock call. Cover: (a) intro line 'this is X, calling about Y', (b) 1 indirect question, (c) 1 'sorry, could you repeat', (d) close with a 'just to confirm' summary.

Scene: You call a supplier to confirm tomorrow's delivery

A: You: expecting a delivery of 200 boxes at 9 am.

B: You: the supplier — the truck will arrive between 8:30 and 10.

Scene: You call a client to move a meeting

A: You: need to move a meeting from Wed 3 pm to Thu 11 am.

B: You: the client — you can do Thu, but only after 2 pm.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Scene: You return a missed call from a stranger

A: You: you missed 2 calls from an unknown number.

B: You: a recruiter with a job you might like — 90 seconds to pitch.

Discussion · your worst call

Choose 2 questions and speak for 30–45 seconds each.

What was the WORST work call you ever had in English? What made it bad?

Do you prefer voice-only or video? Why? Does it depend on who you're calling?

Is it OK to keep your camera OFF? When yes, when no?

What do you do when you don't understand someone's accent on a call?

Role-play · Bad-connection call

Read your role, prep 30s, run the 3-minute call. Simulate ONE bad-connection moment.

Scene: Client call from a coworking space (noisy background)

A: You: client. You are in a coffee shop and the wifi is poor. You want to reschedule a meeting AND confirm two prices.

B: You: the account manager. Handle the bad line calmly, ask ONE indirect question, close with a 'just to confirm' summary.

Scene: Voicemail follow-up

A: You: you left a voicemail yesterday. Now you're calling back. Say why in the first 10 seconds.

B: You: the person who got the voicemail — you were busy but you remember. Answer politely and give ONE concrete next step.

Mini-presentation · 60-second 'how I handle calls'

Deliver a 60-second talk to a partner. Follow the 4-beat structure.

Beat 1 (10s) — Your first sentence when you PICK UP a business call in English.

Beat 2 (15s) — Your favourite polite indirect question and when you use it.

Beat 3 (20s) — What you do when you didn't understand something.

Beat 4 (15s) — How you close a call cleanly.

sample: When I pick up a business call, my first sentence is always the same: 'Hi, this is Ana speaking — how can I help?' It gives me one second to switch to English mode. My favourite polite indirect question is 'Could you tell me what the best time to call back is?' — much softer than 'When can I call you again?' When I don't understand something, I don't fake it — I say 'Sorry, could you say that in a different way?' To close, I always use 'just to confirm' and repeat the next step in one sentence. That

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saves me from a follow-up email 90% of the time.

Writing · Follow-up email after a call

Write the 5-line follow-up email you would send after the video call in today's listening. Subject → greeting → 1-line context → 2-line summary of what was decided → clear next step with deadline → close. Max 80 words.

bonus: Bonus task — 'Would you rather' polls. Write TWO indirect questions your team could vote on this week (e.g., 'Could you tell me whether you prefer Monday or Thursday for the weekly?'). Max 15 words each.

Wrap-up · What did we cover?

3 habits: name yourself + reason / active listening ('got it', 'right') / close with a summary.

Indirect questions = softer + more professional. Statement word order after the opener.

Fix problems with fixed phrases: 'you're on mute', 'you're breaking up', 'could you repeat'.

'Just to confirm...' saves a whole email chain later.

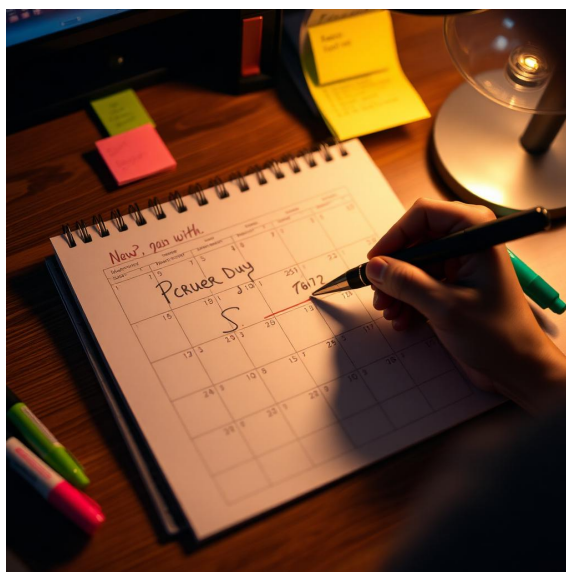
Quiz

1. The most polite version is:
 - (A) What is your name?
 - (B) Could you tell me what your name is?
 - (C) Could you tell me what is your name?
2. Colleague can't be heard. You say:
 - (A) Your microphone is broken.
 - (B) You're on mute.
 - (C) You should speak louder.
3. To close a call cleanly, you say:
 - (A) OK bye.
 - (B) Just to confirm, you'll send the report by Thursday, right?
 - (C) Talk soon.
4. The correct indirect form is:
 - (A) Do you know when starts the meeting?
 - (B) Do you know when the meeting starts?
 - (C) Do you know when does the meeting start?
5. 'You're breaking up' means...
 - (A) You're speaking too fast.
 - (B) The connection is bad / your voice is choppy.
 - (C) The call is over.

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Workbook — home practice



1. Vocabulary gap-fill

Complete each sentence with **ONE** phrase from the box.

Word bank: on mute · breaking up · hang on · hold on · get back to · cut off

1. Marta, you're ____ — please unmute.

2. Sorry, you're ____ — I only catch every other word.

3. ____ one second, I need to check the file.

4. ____, someone at the door.

5. I don't have the number now — I'll ____ you tomorrow.

6. Sorry, we got ____ — I'm calling you back now.

2. Make it indirect

Rewrite each direct question as an indirect one, starting with 'Could you tell me...' or 'Do you know...'

1. What is your email address?

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2. When does the meeting start?

3. Where is the report?

4. Is the boss in the office today?

5. How much does it cost?

6. Has the client replied yet?

3. 'Just to confirm...'

Write *ONE* 'just to confirm' sentence for each situation.

1. You agreed to send the invoice by Friday 5 pm.

2. The client will meet you at their office on Tuesday at 10.

3. You will call back Monday morning with the answer.

4. The price is €4,500 excluding VAT.

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has *ONE* mistake with indirect question form or call vocabulary.

1. Could you tell me what is the deadline?

2. Do you know when does the meeting start?

3. You are in mute.

4. The line is broken up.

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5. Listening — three call openings

Three people answer a business call. Notice who sounds most professional in the first 10 seconds.

1. Who sounds MOST professional?

2. Who sounds UNPROFESSIONAL?

3. Who names the company but not themselves?

Voice A: Yeah, hello?

Voice B: Beira Roasters, this is Ana speaking — how can I help?

Voice C: Beira Roasters, good morning.

6. Writing — a call summary email

Write the 5-line follow-up email you would send after a phone/video call. Subject → greeting → 1-line context → 2-line summary of what was decided → clear next step with deadline → close. Max 80 words.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Class Book

Lead-in · Match the phrase to its function

1. polite ask for a repeat
2. signals a bad connection
3. closing move — verify next steps
4. polite interruption
5. closing signal with a real reason

Reading · Why English phone calls feel harder

1. (B) There are no facial expressions or body language
2. (B) Name yourself and the reason for the call
3. (B) To avoid a long email chain later
1. (B) False
2. (A) True
3. (C) Not Given
4. (A) True
5. (C) Not Given
1. Model: closing with a summary — I'm always in a rush and I say 'OK bye' and hang up. Then I re-open the topic by email 20 minutes later. I'm going to change that.
2. Model: for me, video is easier than voice-only. On the phone I can't see the other person's face, and I second-guess whether they understood me.
1. freeze
2. active listening
3. close (a call)
4. signals

Vocabulary · Phone and video call phrases

1. on hold
2. breaking up
3. on mute
4. let me share
5. get back to you
6. cut off
1. (D) attach
2. (D) goodbye
3. (C) sign-off
1. call
2. connection
3. interruption
4. invitation / invite
5. introduction

Grammar · Polite indirect questions

1. Could you tell me what your email address is?
2. Do you know when the meeting starts?
3. Could you tell me where the report is?
4. Do you know if the boss is in the office today?
5. Could you tell me how much it costs?
6. Do you know if the client has replied yet?
1. Could you tell me what the deadline is?
2. Do you know when the meeting starts?
3. Could you tell me where I can find the report?
4. Do you know if the boss is available?
1. Just to confirm, I'll send you the invoice by Friday at 5 pm, right?
2. Just to confirm, we're meeting at your office on Tuesday at 10, correct?

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3. Just to confirm, I'll call you back Monday morning with the answer.
4. Just to confirm, the price we agreed is €4,500 excluding VAT — is that right?
1. Sorry, could you repeat the price? / Sorry, was that four thousand or fourteen thousand?
2. Sorry, could you explain what you mean by [word]?
3. Sorry, did you say Tuesday or Thursday?
4. Sorry, you're breaking up — could you say that again, please?
1. Could you send me the file, please?
2. Would it be possible to get an answer today?
3. Sorry, could you repeat that, please?
4. Could you hold on for one second, please?
1. May I ask who is calling? (or: May I ask who's calling?)
2. Could you tell me when the meeting starts?
3. Just to confirm, you'll send the numbers by Friday, right?

Listening · A video call gets interrupted

1. Voice B is on mute — Voice A can't hear her.
2. Voice A's connection is bad ('you're breaking up').
3. Voice A summarises: 'you'll send the report by Thursday and I'll call you Friday at 10.'
1. Thursday for the report, Friday at 10 for the follow-up call.
2. The Q4 marketing plan — they'll discuss it Friday.
3. Calmly — apologises for the mute, offers to send a written summary as a backup.
1. Fairly well — first names, casual tone, no need for long introductions.
2. Yes — recovers quickly from the mute, uses active listening ('got it', 'right'), and offers a backup written summary.
1. on mute
2. breaking up
3. confirm
4. summary

Quiz

1. (B) Could you tell me what your name is?
2. (B) You're on mute.
3. (B) Just to confirm, you'll send the report by Thursday, right?
4. (B) Do you know when the meeting starts?
5. (B) The connection is bad / your voice is choppy.

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Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. on mute
2. breaking up
3. Hold on
4. Hang on
5. get back to
6. cut off

2. Make it indirect

1. Could you tell me what your email address is?
2. Do you know when the meeting starts?
3. Could you tell me where the report is?
4. Do you know if the boss is in the office today?
5. Could you tell me how much it costs?
6. Do you know if the client has replied yet?

3. 'Just to confirm...'

1. Just to confirm, I'll send you the invoice by Friday at 5 pm, right?
2. Just to confirm, we're meeting at your office on Tuesday at 10, correct?
3. Just to confirm, I'll call you Monday morning with the answer.
4. Just to confirm, the price we agreed is €4,500 excluding VAT, correct?

4. Find and fix the mistake

1. Could you tell me what the deadline is?
2. Do you know when the meeting starts?
3. You're on mute.
4. You're breaking up. / The line is breaking up.

5. Listening — three call openings

1. Voice 2 — 'Beira Roasters, this is Ana speaking, how can I help?'
2. Voice 1 — 'yeah, hello?' — no name, no company.
3. Voice 3 — 'Beira Roasters, good morning' — polite but not personal.

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APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 4 · B1·4A

Talking numbers and prices

Theme · Numbers, prices & deals

Unit 4 · B1·4A

Talking numbers and prices

Theme: Numbers, prices & deals

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Say numbers, prices, percentages and dates fluently and correctly in English.
- Compare products, suppliers and offers using comparatives and superlatives.
- Present a short price/quality comparison in 60 seconds.

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Class Book

Warm-up · Say the number

Read each number out loud, twice. Once quickly, once carefully. Time yourself: under 45 seconds for all six.

€14,750.30

1,250,000 users

a 12.5% increase

0.75 seconds

€1.4bn revenue

the 3rd quarter of 2026

Lead-in · Match the number to the situation

Match each number to where you'd hear it at work.

1. €4,500

2. +18%

3. 1 / 3

4. 24/7

5. Q4 2026

followUp: Which of these numbers would make you MOST nervous if it landed in your inbox?

Reading · The price is only half the story

When people compare offers, they usually look at the price first. That is the easy number. But the real cost of a product is almost never the price on the invoice. It's the total cost of ownership — TCO.

Imagine two printers. Printer A costs €200. Printer B costs €350. Printer A looks cheaper. But Printer A uses ink cartridges that cost €80 every two months. Printer B uses cartridges that cost €40 every four months. After one year, Printer A costs €680 in total; Printer B costs €470. The cheaper printer is actually the more expensive one.

A good buyer always asks three questions: 'What is the price?', 'What are the running costs?' and 'How long will this last?'. The best offer is rarely the lowest — it's the one with the lowest TCO over the life of the product.

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1. What does TCO stand for?
 - (A) Total cost of ownership
 - (B) The company's official price
 - (C) Total customer offer
2. After one year, which printer is more expensive in total?
 - (A) Printer A
 - (B) Printer B
 - (C) They cost the same
3. What is the best offer, according to the text?
 - (A) The one with the lowest price
 - (B) The one with the lowest TCO
 - (C) The one with the biggest brand

Vocabulary in context

Find these words in the text and match them to the meaning.

invoice — the bill you receive from a supplier

running costs — money you keep paying to use something

cartridge — the ink container in a printer

buyer — the person who chooses and pays a supplier

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text, choose the correct option.

1. The price on the invoice is usually the real cost.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
2. Printer B's cartridges are cheaper AND last longer than Printer A's.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
3. Most buyers already look at TCO.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. 'What are the running costs?' is one of the three key buyer questions.
- (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
5. Printer A comes with a longer warranty than Printer B.
- (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly. There is no single correct answer.

1. In YOUR job, when have you (or your company) chosen the cheapest option and regretted it? What did it really cost in the end?

2. For which type of purchase is price the MOST important factor? For which is it the LEAST important?

Scan for meaning

Find the phrase in the text that matches each definition.

1. the bill from a supplier

2. the money you keep paying to use something

3. the total money you spend over the product's life

4. the person who chooses and pays a supplier

Vocabulary · Numbers, prices and money

quote / quotation — a written price proposal from a vendor

discount — money off the normal price

markup — how much you add on top of your cost

margin — the profit as a % of the price

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invoice — the itemised bill you issue or receive

deposit — money paid up front to reserve something

VAT (Value Added Tax) — sales tax added to the price

net / gross — before tax / including tax

in bulk — in large quantities, usually cheaper

unit price — the price of ONE item

lead time — how long from order to delivery

flat fee — one fixed price, no matter the quantity

practice

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

1. The ____ per box is €12; if you order 100+, it drops to €10.

2. Their price is €4,500 ____, or €5,535 including 23% VAT.

3. We can give you a 10% ____ if you pay within 7 days.

4. The supplier's ____ is 3 weeks — too slow for us.

5. Buying ____ saves us about 18% per unit.

6. We ask for a 30% ____ before we start production.

Collocations · price and money verbs

Match each verb with the noun it usually goes with.

request — a quote

issue — an invoice

offer — a discount

meet — a budget

beat — a competitor's price

pay — a deposit

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**Odd one out**

Choose the word that does *NOT* belong.

1. discount · rebate · price cut · deadline

(A) discount

(B) rebate

(C) price cut

(D) deadline

2. invoice · receipt · bill · headline

(A) invoice

(B) receipt

(C) bill

(D) headline

3. net · gross · VAT · asap

(A) net

(B) gross

(C) VAT

(D) asap

Word building · verb ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

1. to price → a ____

2. to discount → a ____

3. to quote → a ____

4. to negotiate → a ____

5. to invest → an ____

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Grammar · Comparatives and superlatives

- 1. Short adjectives (1 syllable) → -er / -est** — • cheap → cheaper → the cheapest • fast → faster → the fastest • big → bigger → the biggest (double consonant)
- 2. Long adjectives (3+ syllables) → more / the most** — • expensive → more expensive → the most expensive • reliable → more reliable → the most reliable
- 3. Two-syllable adjectives — most take more/most; adjectives ending in -y take -ier/-iest** — • easy → easier → the easiest • happy → happier → the happiest • modern → more modern → the most modern
- 4. Irregular** — • good → better → the best • bad → worse → the worst • far → farther/further → the farthest/furthest
- 5. Useful patterns** — • ...er / more ... than: 'Printer B is cheaper than Printer A.' • the ...est / the most ...: 'This is the cheapest option we found.' • as ... as: 'Printer B is not as cheap as Printer A.' • much / a bit / slightly + comparative: 'much cheaper', 'a bit slower'.

Exercise A — Comparative or superlative?

Complete with the correct form of the adjective.

1. Printer B is ____ (cheap) than Printer A over one year.

2. This is ____ (good) offer we have received this quarter.

3. Their lead time is ____ (long) than ours.

4. It's ____ (expensive) laptop in the whole catalogue.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



5. Our new website is ____ (fast) than the old one.

6. Q3 was ____ (bad) quarter of the year.

Exercise B — Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake with comparatives or superlatives.

1. This supplier is more cheaper than the other one.

2. It's the most best deal we've seen this year.

3. Their office is more bigger than ours.

4. Printer B is not as expensive than Printer A.

Exercise C — 'much / a bit / slightly' + comparative

Add ONE of: much / a bit / slightly (any of them can fit; use the one that sounds most natural for you).

1. Their price is ____ higher than ours — about 3%.

2. The new laptop is ____ faster — twice as fast, in fact.

3. This model is ____ heavier — only 200g more.

4. Their warranty is ____ better — 5 years vs our 1 year.

Exercise D — Write the sentence

Write ONE sentence comparing the two, using the form in brackets.

1. Supplier A: €12/unit · Supplier B: €10/unit (comparative — cheap)

2. Laptop X: 2.1 kg · Laptop Y: 1.4 kg (comparative — light)

3. 3 vendors: 4.2 / 4.5 / 4.9 stars (superlative — highly rated)

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4. Old website: 3.2s load · New website: 1.1s (comparative — fast)

Exercise E — About YOUR company / market

Answer each question with *ONE* full sentence using a comparative or superlative.

1. Who is your biggest competitor?

2. What is the most expensive tool you use at work?

3. Which of your products is the most profitable?

Exercise F — Complete the comparison mini-dialogue

Complete each answer with a comparative or superlative.

1. — How does the new plan compare to the old one? — It's ____ (good) — same features, 20% ____ (cheap).

2. — And of all the suppliers, which is your favourite? — Honestly, Nova is ____ (reliable) — their lead time is ____ (short).

Listening · Comparing two supplier quotes

Two colleagues in procurement talk through two quotes for the same office chairs. Notice how they use comparatives and superlatives to weigh the offers.

pre

When you compare two supplier quotes, what are the **FIRST** three things you look at?

Have you ever paid **MORE** on purpose because a supplier was more reliable?

gist

1. What product are they buying?

2. Which supplier has the lower unit price?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



3. Which supplier do they finally prefer?

detail

1. What is Alpha's lead time?

2. What is Beta's lead time and warranty?

3. What is the price difference in TOTAL?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

1. Are they under time pressure? How do you know?

2. Who is more risk-averse — Voice A or Voice B?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does in the call.

"Alpha is cheaper — by €25 a chair." — compares two options with a specific number

"Beta has the shortest lead time." — superlative — the extreme option

"Their warranty is much better." — 'much' + comparative — strong contrast

"It's not as reliable as Beta." — 'as ... as' — negative comparison

"That's the best combo overall." — superlative to close a comparison

Voice A: OK, chairs — 80 units. I got two quotes. Alpha is €140 a chair; Beta is €165.

Voice B: So Alpha is cheaper — by €25 a chair. What about lead time?

Voice A: That's the problem. Alpha is 6 weeks. Beta is 2.

Voice B: The new floor opens in 3 weeks. Alpha is already out then.

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Voice A: Right. And Beta has the shortest lead time in the market — nobody else is under 4.

Voice B: What about warranty? Alpha's chairs are much cheaper, but are they as good?

Voice A: Alpha's warranty is 1 year. Beta's is 5. So it's not as reliable as Beta on paper, either.

Voice B: €2,000 more in total. For 4 more years of warranty and 4 weeks less waiting — that's the best combo overall.

Voice A: Agreed. I'll issue the PO to Beta this afternoon.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases from the call.

1. Alpha is ____ — by €25 a chair.

2. Beta has ____ ____ lead time in the market.

3. Alpha's warranty is 1 year. Beta's is 5. So it's not ____ ____ Beta on paper.

4. That's ____ ____ combo overall.

Speaking · The 60-second comparison

Choose ONE of the situations below. Prepare a 60-second oral comparison. Use AT LEAST two comparatives and one superlative. End with a clear recommendation.

Scene: Two CRM tools your team could adopt

A: You: presenting the two options to your boss. Cover price, ease of use, integrations.

B: You: the boss — you have 60 seconds and one question at the end.

Scene: Two suppliers for the same raw material

A: You: procurement. One is cheaper but slower; the other is faster but pricier.

B: You: the operations manager — you care most about NOT running out of stock.

Scene: Two candidates for the same open role

A: You: hiring manager. One candidate is more experienced; the other is a better cultural fit.

B: You: HR — you push back on 'gut feeling' and want objective criteria.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Discussion · how YOUR company decides

Choose 2 questions and speak for 30–45 seconds each.

When your company compares suppliers, who has the FINAL word?

What is the SLOWEST supplier decision you've ever seen? Why did it take so long?

What matters more to you in a supplier: the lowest price, or the best relationship?

Give an example of a time paying MORE turned out to be the cheaper decision.

Role-play · Defend the more expensive option

Read your role, prep 30s, run the conversation for 2–3 minutes.

Scene: Your CFO is pushing for the cheapest quote

A: You: the buyer. You believe the pricier supplier is safer. Prepare 3 concrete arguments and use at least 2 comparatives.

B: You: the CFO. You care about EBITDA this quarter. Push back on every soft argument ('better relationship', 'nicer people').

Scene: A client asks for a 15% discount on your quote

A: You: the account manager. You have 3% of margin to give — no more. Prepare a polite counter-offer and a comparison with a competitor.

B: You: the client. You have received 2 cheaper quotes from competitors and you want to hear a real reason to pay more.

Mini-presentation · 60-second 'the best purchase we made'

Deliver a 60-second talk about the SMARTEST purchase your team made in the last year. Follow the 4-beat structure. Time yourself.

Beat 1 (10s) — WHAT we bought and its headline price.

Beat 2 (15s) — What we COMPARED it to (at least 2 comparatives).

Beat 3 (20s) — Why it turned out to be the BEST choice (1 superlative + a number).

Beat 4 (15s) — What we would (or wouldn't) do differently next time.

sample: Last year we bought a mid-range project-management tool for €18 per user per month. We compared it to a free tool and to a premium one at €45 per user. The free tool was cheaper but much slower to set up, and the premium one had features we would never use. Our mid-range choice turned out to be the best decision of the year — we cut our project delays by 40% in three months. Next time I'd move faster: we lost two months debating between the three options.

Writing · A 5-line comparison summary for your boss

Write a 5-line email to your boss comparing TWO real (or realistic) options at your company. Include: subject with the decision, 1 line of context, ONE comparative sentence, ONE superlative sentence, ONE clear recommendation + deadline for the decision. Max 80 words after the subject.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



bonus: Bonus task — the same email, half the words. Then send both versions to a partner and ask which one they'd act on faster.

Wrap-up · What did we cover?

Say numbers, prices, %, and dates clearly — practise them out loud.

Comparatives (-er / more) and superlatives (-est / the most) — plus 'as ... as' for negatives.

TCO > price: always ask about running costs and lead time.

Boost comparatives with 'much', 'a bit', 'slightly' to sound natural.

Quiz

1. €14,750.30 is best read as:
(A) fourteen thousand seven hundred fifty and thirty
(B) fourteen thousand, seven hundred and fifty euros thirty
(C) one four seven five zero point thirty
2. 'This model is ____ than the old one — twice as fast.'
(A) much faster
(B) more faster
(C) the most fast
3. 'It's the ____ deal we've seen this year.'
(A) best
(B) better
(C) most best
4. 'Printer B is not ____ Printer A.'
(A) as cheap as
(B) cheaper than
(C) the cheapest
5. TCO stands for:
(A) Total Cost of Ownership
(B) Top Client Offer
(C) The Company's Offer

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Workbook — home practice



1. Vocabulary gap-fill

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

Word bank: quote · discount · lead time · unit price · invoice · in bulk

1. Could you send me a written ____ for 200 units by Friday?

2. Buying ____ saves us about 15% per unit.

3. Their ____ is 4 weeks — too long for our timeline.

4. The ____ is €12; if you order 500+, it drops to €10.

5. We can offer you a 10% ____ if you pay within 7 days.

6. I'll send you the ____ this afternoon — please pay in 30 days.

2. Comparative or superlative?

Complete each sentence with the correct form of the adjective in brackets.

1. Printer B is ____ (cheap) than Printer A over one year.

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2. This is ____ (good) offer we've received this quarter.

3. Their lead time is ____ (long) than ours.

4. It's ____ (expensive) laptop in the whole catalogue.

5. Q3 was ____ (bad) quarter of the year.

6. Their warranty is ____ (short) than ours — only 6 months.

3. Say the number — which is correct?

Choose the correct way to say each number.

1. €1,450.30

- (A) one thousand four hundred fifty and thirty
- (B) one thousand, four hundred and fifty euros thirty
- (C) one four five zero point thirty

2. +18%

- (A) a rise of eighteen percent
- (B) a rise plus eighteen
- (C) a rise of eighteen per hundred

3. Q4 2026

- (A) question four of two thousand twenty-six
- (B) the fourth quarter of two thousand and twenty-six
- (C) quarter four twenty-six

4. €1.4bn

- (A) one point four billion euros
- (B) one point four euros
- (C) one comma four million

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake with comparatives, superlatives or price vocabulary.

1. This supplier is more cheaper than the other one.

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2. It's the most best deal we've seen this year.

3. Printer B is not as expensive than Printer A.

4. Their lead-time is much shorter of ours.

5. Listening — three price openings

Three sales reps quote a price for the same product. Notice who is professional and who loses control of the deal.

1. Who sounds most PROFESSIONAL?

2. Who sounds WEAK / desperate?

3. Who sounds ARROGANT?

Voice A: So, um, the price is €980 a laptop. I know it's a bit high — I could probably do 5% off if you want.

Voice B: The list price is €980 per laptop. If you can sign this week, I can go to €900 — that's 8% off.

Voice C: €980. That's the price. It's non-negotiable.

6. Writing — a 5-line comparison summary

Write a 5-line email to your boss comparing TWO real (or realistic) options at your company. Include ONE comparative sentence, ONE superlative sentence, and ONE clear recommendation with a deadline. Max 80 words.

7. Case study reflection

Look back at the *Herdade dos Sabores* case. Answer briefly, in your own words.

1. Which supplier would YOU choose for the BioMarkt trial? Explain in 2 sentences.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. What is the biggest risk of choosing the cheapest supplier (BohemiaGlass)?

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Answer key — Class Book

Lead-in · Match the number to the situation

1. a monthly subscription fee for a big software
2. quarterly sales growth vs last year
3. share of customers who churn each year
4. how a support line describes its hours
5. when a product will launch

Reading · The price is only half the story

1. (A) Total cost of ownership
2. (A) Printer A
3. (B) The one with the lowest TCO
1. (B) False
2. (A) True
3. (C) Not Given
4. (A) True
5. (C) Not Given
1. Model: we bought the cheapest CRM two years ago. Setup was fine but every new report costs us a paid consultant. TCO after 2 years is 3× what a mid-range CRM would have cost.
2. Model: for one-off consumables (office paper) price wins. For anything you'll use daily for 5+ years (laptop, car, ERP), price is almost the least important — quality and support decide.
1. invoice
2. running costs
3. total cost of ownership (TCO)
4. buyer

Vocabulary · Numbers, prices and money

1. unit price
2. net
3. discount
4. lead time
5. in bulk
6. deposit
1. (D) deadline
2. (D) headline
3. (D) asap
1. price
2. discount
3. quote / quotation
4. negotiation
5. investment

Grammar · Comparatives and superlatives

1. cheaper
2. the best
3. longer
4. the most expensive
5. faster
6. the worst
1. This supplier is cheaper than the other one.
2. It's the best deal we've seen this year.
3. Their office is bigger than ours.
4. Printer B is not as expensive as Printer A.
1. a bit / slightly
2. much

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3. slightly / a bit
4. much
1. Supplier B is cheaper than Supplier A.
2. Laptop Y is lighter than Laptop X.
3. The 4.9-star vendor is the most highly rated of the three.
4. The new website is much faster than the old one.
1. Model: Our biggest competitor is Bravo Consulting — they have twice our headcount.
2. Model: The most expensive tool we use is Salesforce — about €150 per user per month.
3. Model: Our online training course is the most profitable — the margin is over 70%.
1. It's better — same features, 20% cheaper.
2. Nova is the most reliable — their lead time is the shortest.

Listening · Comparing two supplier quotes

1. Office chairs — 80 units for the new floor.
2. Voice A's option — Alpha — at €140 per chair vs €165.
3. The more expensive one (Beta) — the warranty and lead time are much better.
1. 6 weeks.
2. 2 weeks and a 5-year warranty vs Alpha's 1-year warranty.
3. $80 \times €25 = €2,000$ more with Beta.
1. Yes — the new floor opens in 3 weeks, so Alpha's 6-week lead time is already impossible.
2. Voice B — she keeps returning to the warranty and the lead time; price is her secondary concern.
1. cheaper
2. the shortest
3. as reliable as
4. the best

Quiz

1. (B) fourteen thousand, seven hundred and fifty euros thirty
2. (A) much faster
3. (A) best
4. (A) as cheap as
5. (A) Total Cost of Ownership

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Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. quote
2. in bulk
3. lead time
4. unit price
5. discount
6. invoice

2. Comparative or superlative?

1. cheaper
2. the best
3. longer
4. the most expensive
5. the worst
6. shorter

3. Say the number — which is correct?

1. (B) one thousand, four hundred and fifty euros thirty
2. (A) a rise of eighteen percent
3. (B) the fourth quarter of two thousand and twenty-six
4. (A) one point four billion euros

4. Find and fix the mistake

1. This supplier is cheaper than the other one.
2. It's the best deal we've seen this year.
3. Printer B is not as expensive as Printer A.
4. Their lead time is much shorter than ours.

5. Listening — three price openings

1. Voice B — states the list price, then offers a specific discount tied to a specific action.
2. Voice A — apologises for the price BEFORE the buyer even reacts, and volunteers a discount unprompted.
3. Voice C — says the price is fixed 'take it or leave it', no room to negotiate.

7. Case study reflection

1. Model: CristalNorte. The unit price is close to target AND the 3-week lead time gives Mariana a real safety buffer — a broken glass batch would still leave 7 weeks to fix it.
2. Model: the 7-week lead time leaves only 3 weeks for delivery, quality checks and shipping to Germany. ONE mistake and the whole trial dies — and with it the 80,000-jar annual contract.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 4 · B1·4B

Negotiating and closing a deal

Theme · Numbers, prices & deals

Unit 4 · B1·4B

Negotiating and closing a deal

Theme: Numbers, prices & deals

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Open, hold and close a simple business negotiation politely.
- Ask for and give a discount, extra service, or better payment terms.
- Use conditional language ('if you ... , we can ...') to trade concessions.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · Deal or no deal

Rank these 5 concessions from the one you'd most like to receive (1) to the one you'd care least about (5).
Be ready to justify #1 and #5.

10% discount on the price

30 extra days to pay

free installation

an extra year of warranty

priority support (answer in 2h)

Lead-in · Match the phrase to its function

Match each negotiation phrase to what it's really doing.

1. "Is there any flexibility on the price?"

2. "If we sign today, could you...?"

3. "That's outside our budget, unfortunately."

4. "Let me check with my manager and get back to you."

5. "So, just to summarise the final terms..."

followUp: Which of these do you use MOST in your job? Which one do you AVOID?

Reading · Never negotiate on price alone

Junior buyers push on price. Senior buyers push on terms. There's a big difference. If you only negotiate on price, both sides end up unhappy: the seller loses margin, the buyer wonders if they could have got even more off. Nobody wins.

A better move is to trade concessions. Instead of asking 'can you do it cheaper?', ask 'if we sign a 2-year contract, can we lock in this year's price?' or 'if we pay 50% up front, can you throw in the training?'. Now both sides gain something specific.

Three golden phrases open the door to almost any negotiation. First: 'is there any flexibility on...?' — softer than 'give me a discount'. Second: 'if you can do X, we can do Y' — the pattern of a professional trade. Third: 'let me sleep on it and come back to you tomorrow' — because a fast yes is often a bad yes.

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1. What is the difference between junior and senior buyers?
 - (A) Juniors push on price; seniors push on terms
 - (B) Seniors never negotiate
 - (C) Juniors always get better deals
2. Why is negotiating on price alone bad?
 - (A) It's illegal
 - (B) Both sides end up unhappy
 - (C) It takes too long
3. What does 'let me sleep on it' really mean?
 - (A) I need to sleep now
 - (B) I'll come back to you tomorrow with an answer
 - (C) I'm not interested

Vocabulary in context

Find these words in the text and match them to the meaning.

margin — the seller's profit on a deal

concession — something you give up to move the deal forward

flexibility — room to move on a term or a price

throw in — add something for free as part of the deal

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text, choose the correct option.

1. Senior buyers only negotiate on price.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
2. 'If you can do X, we can do Y' is called a professional trade.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
3. A fast yes is always a good yes.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. The article says WHERE these tactics originally come from.
- (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
5. 'Is there any flexibility on...?' is softer than 'give me a discount'.
- (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly. There is no single correct answer.

1. In your culture, is it normal to negotiate on price for B2B services? Or is the first price usually the final price?

2. What's the WORST negotiation habit you've seen in someone else? (Or been guilty of?)

Scan for meaning

Find the phrase in the text that matches each definition.

1. the seller's profit on a deal

2. something you give up to move the deal forward

3. the pattern of a professional trade

4. add something for free as part of the deal

Vocabulary · Negotiation and closing

table an offer — put forward a price or a deal for consideration

counter-offer — reply with a different offer

meet halfway — split the difference between two positions

walk away — leave the deal because it's not good enough

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trade off — give up one thing to get another

clinch the deal — finalise the negotiation with a binding agreement

payment terms — how and when the buyer pays

net 30 / net 60 — the buyer pays 30 / 60 days after invoice

upfront payment — money paid before the work starts

throw in — add something extra for free

sleep on it — take a day to decide

final terms — the agreed conditions at the end

practice

Complete each sentence with ONE phrase from the lists.

1. Our standard ____ are net 30 — payment 30 days after the invoice.

2. If you can commit to a 2-year contract, I can ____ the setup fee.

3. It's a big decision — let me ____ and come back to you tomorrow.

4. We're €500 apart. Shall we ____?

5. Their price was 40% above ours. We had to ____.

6. Let me summarise the ____ before we sign.

Collocations · deal verbs

Match each verb with the noun it usually goes with.

reach — an agreement

close — a deal

sign — a contract

extend — a deadline

waive — a fee

lock in — a price

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**Odd one out**

Choose the word that does *NOT* belong.

1. offer · counter-offer · deal · sunset

(A) offer

(B) counter-offer

(C) deal

(D) sunset

2. net 30 · upfront · deposit · overtime

(A) net 30

(B) upfront

(C) deposit

(D) overtime

3. walk away · meet halfway · close the deal · take the stairs

(A) walk away

(B) meet halfway

(C) close the deal

(D) take the stairs

Word building · verb ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

1. to negotiate → a ____

2. to agree → an ____

3. to offer → an ____

4. to propose → a ____

5. to concede → a ____

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Grammar · 1st conditional for trading concessions

1. **Form** — IF + present simple , will / can + base verb • If you sign today, we can waive the setup fee. • If we pay 50% upfront, will you throw in the training?
2. **Why 'if' + present, NOT 'if' + will** — ✗ If you will sign today, we can waive the fee. ✓ If you sign today, we can waive the fee.
3. **Order doesn't matter — meaning is the same** — • If you commit to 2 years, we can lock in this price. • We can lock in this price if you commit to 2 years.
4. **Softeners: 'would' + 'if' + past — even more polite** — • If you signed today, we could waive the fee. (softer, more hypothetical) • Would you agree if we included the training?
5. **Common negotiation openers** — • What if we...? / Would you consider...? • Is there any flexibility on...? • Let me sleep on it. I'll come back to you tomorrow.

Exercise A — Build the 1st conditional

Match the two halves into a full sentence.

1. If we pay 50% upfront, ____

2. If you sign today, ____

3. If they don't drop the price, ____

4. If we order 500 units, ____

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5. If you extend the deadline, ____

Exercise B — Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake with 1st conditional or negotiation language.

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

2. We are going to walk away if they don't will drop the price.

3. Is there any flexibility about the price?

4. Let me sleeping on it.

Exercise C — Trade a concession

Write ONE 'if you ..., we can ...' sentence for each situation.

1. The client wants a 10% discount. You can give it — if they sign a 2-year contract. →

2. The supplier wants payment in 15 days. You need 60. →

3. The client wants free installation. You'll do it — if they pay 50% upfront. →

4. The vendor wants €200 more per unit. You'll consider it — if the warranty doubles. →

Exercise D — Rewrite in softer, hypothetical form

Rewrite each sentence using 'if + past → would/could' (more polite/hypothetical).

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

2. If we pay 50% upfront, will you throw in the training?

3. If they don't drop the price, we'll walk away.

Exercise E — 5 polite negotiation moves

For each situation, write ONE polite sentence you could actually say.

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1. Ask for flexibility on the price. →

2. Soft-reject the offer without saying 'no'. →

3. Buy 24 hours to think. →

4. Ask for training to be included. →

5. Summarise before signing. →

Exercise F — Complete the negotiation dialogue

Complete each answer.

1. — Your price is a bit above our budget. Is there any ____ (flexibility) ____ (on) the price? — If you ____ (order) 200 units instead of 100, we ____ (can) drop it by 8%.

2. — OK, let's talk terms. If we ____ (pay) 30% upfront, ____ (will/you) waive the delivery fee? — Sure. Then just to ____ (summarise), we're at €95/unit, 200 units, 30% upfront, free delivery. Deal?

Listening · A short pricing call between buyer and vendor

A buyer and a vendor talk about a first order. Notice how the vendor says 'no' politely, and how they trade concessions instead of dropping the price.

pre

When a supplier says 'that price is fixed', do you believe them? Why or why not?

What's your favourite polite way to ask for a discount?

gist

1. What is being sold?

2. What discount does the buyer ask for at first?

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3. What does the vendor offer instead?

detail

1. What is the vendor's list price per laptop?

2. What was the final agreed price?

3. What extra concessions did the buyer secure?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

1. Who feels more in control at the end — buyer or vendor?

2. Would you say the vendor is experienced? Why?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does in the call.

"Is there any flexibility on the price?" — polite opener from the buyer

"15% is a bit tough for us on this quantity." — soft 'no' from the vendor

"If you can sign this week, we can go to 8%." — trades a concession — 'if you X, we Y'

"We'd also throw in the 3-year warranty." — adds a sweetener without cutting price further

"Let me send you the paperwork today." — closes the deal — action step

Voice A: So — 50 laptops at €980 each. Before we go further, is there any flexibility on the price?

Voice B: Honestly, at 50 units, 15% is a bit tough for us. But if you can sign this week, we can go to 8%.

Voice A: 8%. That's better. But 8% off a €980 list — I was hoping for closer to 12%.

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Voice B: I hear you. What I CAN do — we'd also throw in the 3-year warranty instead of 1, and we'd add priority support for the whole team.

Voice A: Priority support is nice — 2-hour response?

Voice B: 2 hours, business days. And if you order more than 80 units, we'd revisit the discount.

Voice A: 50 is what we need. OK — 8%, 3-year warranty, priority support. That works.

Voice B: Deal. Let me send you the paperwork today so we lock it in.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases from the call.

1. Is there any ____ on the price?

2. ____ you can sign this week, we ____ go to 8%.

3. We'd also ____ the 3-year warranty.

4. Let me send you the ____ today.

Speaking · The 3-minute mock negotiation

In pairs, run a 3-minute mock negotiation. Cover: (1) polite opener, (2) at least ONE 'if you ..., we can ...' trade, (3) ONE soft 'no', (4) a 'just to summarise' close.

Scene: Software renewal — vendor wants +18% this year

A: You: the customer. Same features as last year — you don't accept a big increase without a fight.

B: You: the vendor. Your cloud costs went up 22%; you MUST recover at least 10% or the deal is a loss.

Scene: Office cleaning contract — 12 months

A: You: the office manager. You want longer cleaning hours for the same price.

B: You: the supplier. You can give more hours only if the contract goes from 12 to 24 months.

Scene: Freelance rate for a 3-month project

A: You: the freelancer. Your normal day rate is €400. The client is offering €280.

B: You: the client. Your budget is fixed at €280/day but you could extend the project or pay upfront.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Discussion · your negotiation style

Choose 2 questions and speak for 30–45 seconds each.

In a negotiation, do you prefer to make the FIRST offer, or let the other side start? Why?

What's the LAST time you walked away from a deal? Was it the right call?

Which is harder for you in English: making an offer, or saying 'no' politely?

Do you prefer to negotiate in person, on video, on the phone, or by email? Why?

Role-play · The deal that almost died

Read your role, prep 30s, run the 3-minute call. End with a clear yes, no, or 'let me sleep on it'.

Scene: Long-term client asks for 25% off, out of nowhere

A: You: account manager. You've served this client for 4 years. 25% off would wipe out your margin. Prepare 2 counter-offers.

B: You: the client. Your CFO has told you: 25% off or you switch supplier next quarter. You'd rather stay — but not at any price.

Scene: New supplier — first order, big potential

A: You: buyer. You want to test them with a small order (20 units) at a good price. Prepare 1 concession you can offer to make it attractive.

B: You: the supplier. You need this reference client. But 20 units at a big discount hurts. Ask for something in return (case study, referral, longer contract).

Mini-presentation · 60-second 'my best negotiation ever'

Deliver a 60-second talk to a partner about YOUR best negotiation. Follow the 4-beat structure.

Beat 1 (10s) — What was on the table (product / service / value).

Beat 2 (15s) — The other side's opening position.

Beat 3 (20s) — The trade or move that unlocked the deal (use 1 conditional).

Beat 4 (15s) — The final terms and what YOU learned.

sample: Last year I was negotiating a €40,000 training contract with a corporate client. Their opening was 'we love the programme, but 40k is out of reach — we can go to 28'. Instead of arguing on the price, I said: 'if you commit to a second cohort in Q2, I can drop the per-cohort price by 15%'. That got us to a €68,000 two-cohort deal at €34k each — actually more revenue for me and a lower per-unit price for them. What I learned: always look for a way to grow the pie before you split it.

Writing · A short counter-offer email

The client asked for 15% off your quote. You can only give 6% AND you want a longer contract. Write a 5-line counter-offer email. Include: subject, greeting, 1 line of context, ONE clear counter-offer using 'if ..., we can ...', ONE deadline for their decision, warm close. Max 80 words.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



bonus: Bonus task — write the SAME counter-offer in a much friendlier tone (imagine a client you've known for years) AND in a much more formal tone (a first-contact enterprise client). Compare the two.

Wrap-up · What did we cover?

Never negotiate on price alone. Trade concessions.

'If you ..., we can ...' is the professional negotiator's pattern.

Polite openers: 'is there any flexibility on...?', 'what if we...?'

Never say a fast yes. 'Let me sleep on it' is a valid, professional move.

Always close with 'just to summarise the final terms...' — no ambiguity.

Quiz

1. Which is the correct 1st conditional?
 - (A) If you will sign today, we can waive the fee.
 - (B) If you sign today, we can waive the fee.
 - (C) If you signing today, we can waive the fee.
2. The politest opener for a discount is:
 - (A) Give me a discount.
 - (B) Is there any flexibility on the price?
 - (C) Your price is too high.
3. 'Let me sleep on it' means:
 - (A) I need to rest first.
 - (B) I'll come back to you tomorrow with an answer.
 - (C) I'm rejecting the offer.
4. 'Throw in' means:
 - (A) reject completely
 - (B) add something for free
 - (C) pay upfront
5. The BEST way to close a negotiation is:
 - (A) OK, sounds good, bye.
 - (B) Send me an email whenever.
 - (C) Just to summarise the final terms — [X, Y, Z]. Are we agreed?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Workbook — home practice



1. Vocabulary gap-fill

Complete each sentence with **ONE** phrase from the box.

Word bank: throw in · sleep on it · meet halfway · walk away · payment terms · final terms

1. If you sign a 2-year deal, I can ____ the installation for free.

2. It's a big decision — let me ____ and come back tomorrow.

3. We're €500 apart. Shall we ____?

4. Their price was 40% above ours. We had to ____.

5. Our standard ____ are net 30 — payment 30 days after invoice.

6. Let me summarise the ____ before we sign.

2. 1st conditional trades

Rewrite each request as a professional 'if you ..., we can ...' sentence.

1. The client wants 10% off. You'll give 5%.

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2. The supplier wants payment in 15 days. You need 60.

3. The buyer wants free installation. You want a 2-year contract.

4. The vendor wants €200 more per unit. You'll accept — if warranty doubles.

3. Make it politer

Rewrite each blunt sentence into a polite negotiation phrase.

1. Give me a discount.

2. That price is too high.

3. I need to think.

4. OK sold, bye.

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake with 1st conditional or negotiation language.

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

2. We are going to walk away if they don't will drop the price.

3. Is there any flexibility about the price?

4. Let me sleeping on it.

5. Listening — three closing moments

Three deals reach the closing moment. Notice who closes cleanly and who leaves it ambiguous.

1. Which close is **CLEAREST**?

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2. Which close is AMBIGUOUS?

3. Which close is TOO PUSHY?

Voice A: OK, sounds good then. Talk soon.

Voice B: Just to summarise the final terms — €95 per unit, 200 units, net 30, delivery by the 15th.
Are we agreed?

Voice C: Great, I'll send you the contract to sign in the next 5 minutes.

6. Writing — a short counter-offer email

The client asked for 15% off. You can only give 6% AND you want a longer contract. Write a 5-line counter-offer using 'if ..., we can ...', a deadline for their decision, and a warm close. Max 80 words.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Class Book

Lead-in · Match the phrase to its function

1. polite opener — asks for a discount
2. trades speed for a concession
3. soft rejection — keeps the door open
4. buys time, doesn't say no
5. closes the deal by naming what's agreed

Reading · Never negotiate on price alone

1. (A) Juniors push on price; seniors push on terms
2. (B) Both sides end up unhappy
3. (B) I'll come back to you tomorrow with an answer
1. (B) False
2. (A) True
3. (B) False
4. (C) Not Given
5. (A) True
1. Model: in Portugal, in B2B it's expected. First quote is a starting point — I would lose respect if I didn't push back at least once, politely.
2. Model: talking too much. I've watched people 'sell past the close' — the client already said yes, and then the seller talked so much they created a new objection.
1. margin
2. concession
3. if you can do X, we can do Y
4. throw in

Vocabulary · Negotiation and closing

1. payment terms
2. throw in
3. sleep on it
4. meet halfway
5. walk away
6. final terms
1. (D) sunset
2. (D) overtime
3. (D) take the stairs
1. negotiation
2. agreement
3. offer
4. proposal
5. concession

Grammar · 1st conditional for trading concessions

1. will you throw in the training? / can you throw in the training?
2. we can waive the setup fee.
3. we'll walk away from the deal.
4. will you give us a bigger discount?
5. we can send you a much better draft.
1. If you sign today, we can waive the setup fee.
2. We're going to walk away if they don't drop the price.
3. Is there any flexibility on the price?
4. Let me sleep on it.
1. If you sign a 2-year contract, we can offer you a 10% discount.
2. If you can give us net 60, we can commit to a full year of orders.
3. If you can pay 50% upfront, we can include the installation for free.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. If you double the warranty from 2 to 4 years, we can accept the €200 extra per unit.
1. If you signed today, we could waive the fee.
2. If we paid 50% upfront, would you throw in the training?
3. If they didn't drop the price, we'd walk away.
1. Is there any flexibility on the price?
2. That's slightly outside our budget, unfortunately. Could we look at option B?
3. Let me sleep on it and come back to you tomorrow morning.
4. If we sign for two years, could you include the training?
5. Just to summarise the final terms — €120 per unit, net 30, delivery by the 15th. Are we agreed?
1. Is there any flexibility on the price? — If you order 200 units instead of 100, we can drop it by 8%.
2. If we pay 30% upfront, will you waive the delivery fee? — Sure. Then just to summarise, we're at €95/unit, 200 units, 30% upfront, free delivery. Deal?

Listening · A short pricing call between buyer and vendor

1. 50 laptops for the client's new office.
2. 15%.
3. 8% off, plus free 3-year warranty and priority support if they sign this week.
1. €980.
2. €901.60 per laptop (8% off €980).
3. 3-year warranty (up from 1) and priority support (2h response).
1. Both feel like winners — the buyer got more than the list price and extras; the vendor kept the margin and locked the deal this week.
2. Yes — never says 'no', trades concessions instead of dropping the price, and closes with 'let me send you the paperwork today'.
1. flexibility
2. If ... can
3. throw in
4. paperwork

Quiz

1. (B) If you sign today, we can waive the fee.
2. (B) Is there any flexibility on the price?
3. (B) I'll come back to you tomorrow with an answer.
4. (B) add something for free
5. (C) Just to summarise the final terms — [X, Y, Z]. Are we agreed?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. throw in
2. sleep on it
3. meet halfway
4. walk away
5. payment terms
6. final terms

2. 1st conditional trades

1. If you can double the order, we can offer you 10% off.
2. If you give us net 60, we can commit to a full year of orders.
3. If you sign a 2-year contract, we can include the installation at no extra cost.
4. If you double the warranty, we can accept the €200 extra per unit.

3. Make it politer

1. Is there any flexibility on the price?
2. That's slightly outside our budget, unfortunately.
3. Let me sleep on it and come back to you tomorrow morning.
4. Just to summarise the final terms — [X, Y, Z]. Are we agreed?

4. Find and fix the mistake

1. If you sign today, we can waive the setup fee.
2. We're going to walk away if they don't drop the price.
3. Is there any flexibility on the price?
4. Let me sleep on it.

5. Listening — three closing moments

1. Voice 2 — restates every agreed term and asks for an explicit 'yes'.
2. Voice 1 — 'sounds good' with no summary; both sides may remember different terms tomorrow.
3. Voice 3 — assumes agreement and asks for the signature without confirming the buyer is in fact ready.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 5 · B1·5A

Business travel that actually works

Theme · Travel & logistics



Unit 5 · B1·5A

Business travel that actually works

Theme: *Travel & logistics*

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Talk about past trips and travel experiences using present perfect and past simple.
- Book, change and confirm flights, hotels and transfers politely.
- Handle small-talk on the road: airport, taxi, hotel and dinner.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · Traveller's checklist

Answer YES or NO to each item. Be ready to explain your last YES and last NO.

I've flown for work in the last 12 months.

I've had a flight cancelled or heavily delayed.

I've used a company travel policy or expense tool.

I've stayed in a hotel more than 3 nights in a row this year.

I've eaten at the airport in the last month.

Lead-in · Match the trip moment to the phrase

Match each phrase to the moment on the trip.

1. "I'd like to check in, please. My reservation is under García."

2. "Is this seat taken?"

3. "Could I have the receipt, please?"

4. "What time is check-out?"

5. "Sorry, I've been travelling since 5 a.m. — I'll keep this short."

followUp: Which of these do you say MOST often on a work trip?

Reading · The 3 rules of stress-free business travel

Experienced business travellers all agree on three unofficial rules. First: never check a bag on a same-day trip. If your flight is delayed and your bag is lost, the meeting is lost too. Carry-on only.

Second: build a 90-minute buffer at every airport. Traffic, security lines and boarding chaos always take longer than you think. If you have never missed a flight, congratulations — you have also probably wasted a lot of time. A missed connection costs a full day; an early arrival costs one coffee.

Third: keep every receipt. Modern travel-expense tools can scan them from your phone, but if you have lost the paper, you have lost the money. Finance departments are polite but strict: no receipt, no reimbursement.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. Why do experienced travellers avoid checked bags on same-day trips?
 - (A) It costs money
 - (B) If the bag is lost, the meeting is lost too
 - (C) It's slower to pack
2. What's the recommended airport buffer?
 - (A) 30 minutes
 - (B) 60 minutes
 - (C) 90 minutes
3. What happens if you lose a receipt?
 - (A) Finance sends a warning
 - (B) You cannot be reimbursed
 - (C) You must fill in a form

Vocabulary in context

Find these words in the text and match them to the meaning.

carry-on — a small bag you take on board the plane

buffer — extra time or space just in case

connection — the second flight of a journey

reimbursement — getting your money back from your company

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text, choose the correct option.

1. Checking a bag is always a bad idea.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
2. A missed connection can cost a full day.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
3. The article recommends a specific expense tool by name.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. Finance departments accept expenses without a receipt.
- (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
5. Experienced travellers agree on three rules.
- (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly. There is no single correct answer.

1. Which of the three rules do YOU already follow? Which one do you break?

2. Is there a fourth 'unofficial rule' you'd add for your industry?

Scan for meaning

Find the phrase in the text that matches each definition.

1. a small bag you take onto the plane

2. extra time just in case

3. the money the company gives you back

4. the second flight of a journey

Vocabulary · Travel and expenses

book a flight / hotel — reserve a seat or a room

check in / check out — arrive at / leave a hotel or a flight

boarding pass — the ticket you show to board the plane

layover / stopover — time between two flights

one-way / return — a single ticket / going and coming back

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aisle / window seat — the seat by the walkway / by the window

per diem — a fixed daily amount for meals and small costs

expense claim — the document you submit for reimbursement

receipt — the paper or PDF proof of payment

shuttle — a small bus between the airport and a hotel

loyalty programme — airline / hotel points system

off-peak / peak season — cheaper time of year / busier and pricier

practice

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

1. I always ask for an ____ seat — I like to stretch my legs.

2. My ____ ____ in Frankfurt is 4 hours — long enough for a shower.

3. Our ____ ____ in Berlin is €65 per day for meals.

4. Don't forget to submit the ____ ____ by Friday.

5. There's a free ____ every 20 minutes to the terminal.

6. Please keep every ____ — even for coffee.

Collocations · travel verbs

Match each verb with the noun it usually goes with.

catch — a flight

miss — a connection

check into — a hotel

board — a plane

clear — security / customs

file — an expense claim

Odd one out

Choose the word that does NOT belong.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. aisle · window · middle · budget
 - (A) aisle
 - (B) window
 - (C) middle
 - (D) budget
2. shuttle · taxi · metro · invoice
 - (A) shuttle
 - (B) taxi
 - (C) metro
 - (D) invoice
3. receipt · expense · per diem · deadline
 - (A) receipt
 - (B) expense
 - (C) per diem
 - (D) deadline

Word building · verb ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

1. to travel → a ____

2. to arrive → an ____

3. to depart → a ____

4. to reserve → a ____

5. to cancel → a ____

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Grammar · Present perfect vs past simple

1. Past simple → a **FINISHED** time (yesterday, last week, in 2023) — • I flew to Madrid last Monday.
• We stayed at the Marriott in March. • She missed her connection in Frankfurt yesterday.

2. Present perfect → **life experience, no specific time** — • I've flown to Madrid many times. • Have you ever missed a connection? • We've stayed at the Marriott before — it's fine.

3. 'ever / never / before' go with present perfect — • Have you ever been to Tokyo? • I've never lost a bag. • I've been there before.

4. Once you say WHEN, switch to past simple — • I've been to Tokyo. (experience) → I went to Tokyo in 2019. (time given) • Have you had breakfast? (still today) → Did you have breakfast? (finished morning)

5. Common past-simple time markers — yesterday · last night / week / year · in 2024 · two days ago · this morning (if it's now afternoon)

Exercise A — Present perfect or past simple?

Complete with the correct form of the verb.

1. ____ you ever ____ (fly) business class?

2. I ____ (fly) to London last Tuesday.

3. We ____ (be) to that hotel three times this year.

4. She ____ (miss) her connection yesterday and slept at the airport.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



5. I ____ (never / lose) a bag — touch wood.

6. ____ you ____ (submit) the expense report yet?

Exercise B — Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake with present perfect or past simple.

1. I have flown to Madrid last Monday.

2. Did you ever been to Tokyo?

3. She has missed her connection yesterday.

4. I never have stayed at the Marriott before.

Exercise C — 'ever / never / before'

Complete with ever, never or before.

1. Have you ____ used the airport lounge in Munich?

2. I've ____ flown with that airline — I don't trust the reviews.

3. Yes, I've stayed here ____ . Room 402 is the quiet one.

4. Has your bag ____ been lost on an international flight?

Exercise D — Write the sentence

Write ONE sentence for each situation, using present perfect OR past simple.

1. Trip: Milan · when: last April · verb: visit → (past simple)

2. Experience: any Marriott in Europe · verb: stay · question form

3. Life experience: NO lost bag · verb: lose

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4. This week (not finished): submit the expense report · negative

Exercise E — About YOUR travel

Answer each question with *ONE* full sentence. Choose your tense carefully.

1. Have you ever missed a flight? What happened?

2. What was the last work trip you took?

3. How many times have you flown this year?

Exercise F — Complete the travel dialogue

Complete each answer.

1. — ____ you ever ____ (be) to Berlin? — Yes, I ____ (go) there in 2023 for a trade fair.

2. — How was your trip? — Awful. My flight ____ (be) 4 hours late and I ____ (arrive) at 2 a.m.

Listening · A late hotel check-in

A tired business traveller arrives at a hotel at 11:30 p.m. after a delayed flight. Listen for how she handles the check-in and asks about breakfast and the shuttle.

pre

When you arrive at a hotel very late, what are your FIRST 3 requests?

Have you ever been given the wrong room by a hotel? What did you do?

gist

1. What time does she arrive at the hotel?

2. What is the main problem at check-in?

3. How does she solve it?

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**detail**

1. What time is breakfast?

2. What time is the airport shuttle in the morning?

3. What does the receptionist offer as compensation?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

1. Is she an experienced business traveller? Why?

2. Is the receptionist trying to help or trying to close the conversation?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does.

"I'd like to check in, please. My reservation is under Costa." — polite check-in opener

"Have you got any high-floor rooms available?" — polite request for a change

"What time is breakfast?" — practical next-morning question

"Is there a shuttle to the airport?" — planning the departure

"Could I have a wake-up call at 5:30, please?" — polite service request

Voice A: Good evening. I'd like to check in, please. My reservation is under Costa.

Voice B: Good evening, Ms Costa. Welcome. Let me see... yes, one night, checking out tomorrow. I'm afraid the high-floor room you booked isn't available — I can offer you 214, close to the elevator.

Voice A: Hmm, honestly, I've been travelling since 5 a.m. I really need a quiet room. Have you got any high-floor rooms available?

Voice B: Let me check... yes, 812 just became free. Same category, and it's a corner room — much quieter.

Voice A: Perfect, thank you. And what time is breakfast?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Voice B: Breakfast is 6:30 to 10, on the 2nd floor. And there's a shuttle to the airport every 30 minutes from 5 a.m.

Voice A: Great. Could I have a wake-up call at 5:30, please?

Voice B: Of course. And since we changed your room — a free bottle of water and late check-out until 1 p.m. Enjoy your stay.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases from the call.

1. I'd like to ____, please. My reservation is under Costa.

2. Have you got any ____ rooms available?

3. What time is ____?

4. Could I have a ____ at 5:30, please?

Speaking · The 60-second trip debrief

Choose ONE past trip (real or realistic). Prepare a 60-second oral debrief. Use AT LEAST two past-simple verbs and one present-perfect experience sentence.

Scene: A trip that went well

A: You: talk to a colleague on Monday morning. Cover: where, why, one highlight.

B: You: the colleague. Ask ONE follow-up question at the end.

Scene: A trip that went badly

A: You: report to your boss. Cover: what happened, what you did, one lesson.

B: You: the boss. Ask 'what will you do differently next time?'

Scene: A frequent-flyer memory

A: You: 'the worst airport I've ever been to' — 60 seconds, no notes.

B: You: listener. Say your own after.

Discussion · how YOU travel for work

Choose 2 questions and speak for 30–45 seconds each.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Which airport have you passed through the most times? Why?

What's the WORST hotel you've ever stayed in for work?

Do you prefer to travel alone or with a colleague? Why?

What's ONE thing you always pack for a work trip?

Role-play · Rebook a cancelled flight

Read your role, prep 30s, run the conversation for 2–3 minutes.

Scene: Your flight tomorrow morning is cancelled

A: You: the traveller. You **MUST** be in Milan by 11 a.m. for a signing. Ask the airline for options and defend your priority.

B: You: the airline agent. The next flight is 4 p.m. You can offer a competitor's 8 a.m. flight but only if the passenger accepts a different airport.

Scene: Late-night arrival, wrong hotel room

A: You: the guest. It's 11:30 p.m., you booked a quiet room, and you got a noisy one. Stay polite but firm.

B: You: the receptionist. The hotel is 90% full. You can move the guest OR offer late check-out and free breakfast. Try the cheaper option first.

Mini-presentation · 60-second 'the most useful trip of my career'

Deliver a 60-second talk about ONE trip that made a real difference. Use the 4-beat structure.

Beat 1 (10s) — Where and when.

Beat 2 (15s) — Who you met and why it mattered.

Beat 3 (20s) — What CHANGED because of that trip (a number if possible).

Beat 4 (15s) — What you'd do the same or differently.

sample: In 2023 I flew to Milan for a two-day supplier visit. I met the plant manager and the head of quality — face-to-face, for the first time in three years of emails. In two days we solved a defect problem that had been open for six months, and orders went up 30% the following quarter. Next time I'd stay a third day: the informal dinner opened more doors than the meetings.

Writing · A 5-line trip summary email

Write a 5-line email to your team summarising a recent (or realistic) work trip. Include: subject with destination and dates, ONE past-simple sentence about a meeting, ONE present-perfect experience sentence, ONE clear next step. Max 80 words after the subject.

bonus: Bonus task — write the SAME summary as a bullet-point Slack message. Which version would your team read?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Wrap-up · What did we cover?

Present perfect = experience / no specific time. Past simple = finished time.

'Have you ever...?' + 'Yes, I have — I went there in [year].' is the classic pattern.

Airport / hotel survival phrases: check in, boarding pass, shuttle, wake-up call.

Always ask for the receipt. No receipt, no reimbursement.

Quiz

1. Choose the CORRECT sentence.
(A) I've flown to Madrid last Monday.
(B) I flew to Madrid last Monday.
(C) I flying to Madrid last Monday.
2. '___ you ever ___ Tokyo?'
(A) Did / visit
(B) Have / visited
(C) Are / visiting
3. A carry-on bag is:
(A) a bag you check in the hold
(B) a small bag you take on board
(C) a bag the airline gives you
4. Per diem means:
(A) a fixed daily amount for meals
(B) the total trip budget
(C) a receipt scan
5. Which sentence uses PRESENT PERFECT correctly?
(A) I've never lost a bag.
(B) I never have lost a bag.
(C) I have never lost a bag yesterday.

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: carry-on · layover · per diem · expense report · shuttle · receipt

1. I only travel with a ____ — I never check a bag on a same-day trip.

2. My ____ in Frankfurt is 3 hours — enough for a proper meal.

3. Our ____ ____ in Berlin is €65 a day for meals.

4. Please submit the ____ ____ by Friday.

5. There's a free ____ every 20 minutes from the hotel to the terminal.

6. Don't lose the ____ — Finance won't reimburse you without it.

2. Present perfect or past simple?

Complete each sentence with the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. ____ you ever ____ (fly) business class?

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2. I ____ (fly) to London last Tuesday.
-
3. We ____ (be) to that hotel three times this year.
-
4. She ____ (miss) her connection yesterday and slept at the airport.
-
5. ____ you ____ (submit) the expense report yet?
-
6. I ____ (never / lose) a bag on an international flight.
-

3. Choose the correct polite phrase

Choose the option that sounds most professional at the hotel or airport.

1. Late arrival at the hotel:
- (A) Give me a room.
 - (B) I'd like to check in, please. My reservation is under Silva.
 - (C) You have a room for me?
2. Asking for a quieter room:
- (A) This room is bad.
 - (B) Have you got any high-floor rooms available?
 - (C) I don't want this room.
3. Asking for a receipt:
- (A) Give me the paper.
 - (B) Could I have the receipt, please?
 - (C) I need paper.
4. Asking for the airport shuttle:
- (A) When bus?
 - (B) Is there a shuttle to the airport?
 - (C) How I go airport?

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake with present perfect / past simple or travel vocabulary.

1. I have flown to Madrid last Monday.
-

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2. Did you ever been to Tokyo?

3. I never have stayed at the Marriott before.

4. The bus of shuttle goes every 20 minutes.

5. Listening — three airport announcements

Three short airport announcements. Notice who gives useful information and who leaves passengers confused.

1. Which announcement is **CLEAREST**?

2. Which is **USELESS**?

3. Which is **POLITE** and complete?

Voice A: Passengers on flight to Madrid, your flight is delayed. Please wait.

Voice B: Flight IB3145 to Madrid has been moved from Gate B12 to Gate B27, new departure time 15:40, due to a late incoming aircraft.

Voice C: Ladies and gentlemen, we're sorry to announce that flight LH441 will now depart at 16:20 instead of 15:30 because of weather in Munich. Thank you for your patience.

6. Writing — a 5-line trip summary email

Write a 5-line email to your team summarising a recent (or realistic) work trip. Include **ONE** past-simple sentence about a meeting, **ONE** present-perfect experience sentence, and **ONE** clear next step. Max 80 words.

7. Case study reflection

Look back at the *Cerâmica Vista Ria* case. Answer briefly, in your own words.

1. Which shipping option would **YOU** choose for the first Nordic order? Why?

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2. What is the biggest risk of choosing the CHEAPEST shipping option?

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Answer key — Class Book

Lead-in · Match the trip moment to the phrase

1. arriving at the hotel reception
2. boarding a plane / train
3. paying a taxi or a meal for expenses
4. the morning of departure at the hotel
5. starting a meeting after a long flight

Reading · The 3 rules of stress-free business travel

1. (B) If the bag is lost, the meeting is lost too
2. (C) 90 minutes
3. (B) You cannot be reimbursed
1. (B) False
2. (A) True
3. (C) Not Given
4. (B) False
5. (A) True
1. Model: I always carry on. But I've lost receipts twice this year — I still don't have a good system.
2. Model: for events, always book the hotel next to the venue — 10 minutes of walking with a suit and a laptop is worth €50 more per night.
1. carry-on
2. buffer
3. reimbursement
4. connection

Vocabulary · Travel and expenses

1. aisle
2. layover
3. per diem
4. expense claim
5. shuttle
6. receipt
1. (D) budget
2. (D) invoice
3. (D) deadline
1. traveller / trip
2. arrival
3. departure
4. reservation
5. cancellation

Grammar · Present perfect vs past simple

1. Have you ever flown
2. flew
3. have been
4. missed
5. have never lost
6. Have you submitted
1. I flew to Madrid last Monday.
2. Have you ever been to Tokyo?
3. She missed her connection yesterday.
4. I have never stayed at the Marriott before.
1. ever
2. never
3. before

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4. ever

1. I visited Milan last April.
2. Have you (ever) stayed at any Marriott in Europe?
3. I've never lost a bag.
4. I haven't submitted the expense report yet.

1. Model: Yes, I missed a flight to Barcelona in 2022 because of traffic. I slept at the airport and flew out the next morning.

2. Model: My last work trip was to Amsterdam in October — a two-day conference.

3. Model: I've flown seven times this year, mostly within Europe.

1. Have you ever been to Berlin? — Yes, I went there in 2023 for a trade fair.

2. My flight was 4 hours late and I arrived at 2 a.m.

Listening · A late hotel check-in

1. 11:30 p.m., after a 3-hour flight delay.

2. The room she booked (quiet side, high floor) is not available — she is offered a lower floor near the elevator.

3. She politely asks if any high-floor room is free — the receptionist finds one on the 8th floor.

1. 6:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

2. Every 30 minutes, from 5 a.m.

3. A free bottle of water and a late check-out until 1 p.m.

1. Yes — she knows exactly what to ask (breakfast time, shuttle, quiet room) and stays polite even after a delay.

2. Really trying to help — offers a free bottle of water and late check-out without being asked.

1. check in

2. high-floor

3. breakfast

4. wake-up call

Quiz

1. (B) I flew to Madrid last Monday.
2. (B) Have / visited
3. (B) a small bag you take on board
4. (A) a fixed daily amount for meals
5. (A) I've never lost a bag.

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Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. carry-on
2. layover
3. per diem
4. expense report
5. shuttle
6. receipt

2. Present perfect or past simple?

1. Have you ever flown
2. flew
3. have been
4. missed
5. Have you submitted
6. have never lost

3. Choose the correct polite phrase

1. (B) I'd like to check in, please. My reservation is under Silva.
2. (B) Have you got any high-floor rooms available?
3. (B) Could I have the receipt, please?
4. (B) Is there a shuttle to the airport?

4. Find and fix the mistake

1. I flew to Madrid last Monday.
2. Have you ever been to Tokyo?
3. I have never stayed at the Marriott before.
4. The shuttle (bus) goes every 20 minutes.

5. Listening — three airport announcements

1. Voice B — states the flight number, the new gate, the new time and the reason.
2. Voice A — says the flight is 'delayed' without a new time or a new gate.
3. Voice C — apologises, gives the reason, the new time, and thanks passengers for their patience.

7. Case study reflection

1. Model: the mid-price air-freight option. Sea is too slow for a first order that **MUST** be perfect on arrival, and the ultra-fast courier eats the whole margin.
2. Model: a 6-week sea shipment through Rotterdam risks arriving after the buyer's launch date. Late delivery on order #1 = no order #2.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 5 · B1·5B

Logistics, delivery and delays

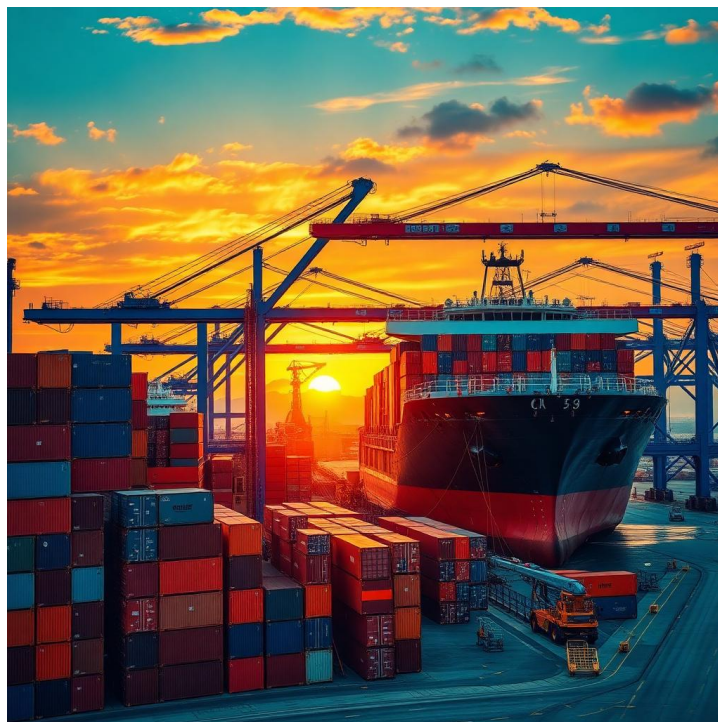
Theme · Travel & logistics

Unit 5 · B1·5B

Logistics, delivery and delays

Theme: Travel & logistics

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Talk about deliveries, delays and shipping status using present perfect with 'just / already / yet' and 'for / since'.
- Update a customer politely when a shipment is late.
- Compare shipping options: sea, air, road, courier.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · Order status flash cards

Read each status out loud in a natural sentence starting with 'Your order...'. Time yourself: under 45 seconds for all six.

shipped 2 days ago

cleared customs this morning

out for delivery

delayed at the port for 4 days

lost in transit

delivered and signed for

Lead-in · Match the delivery scenario to the phrase

Match each phrase to the situation.

1. "Your order has just been shipped."

2. "The container has been stuck at customs for 3 days."

3. "We haven't received the goods yet."

4. "The package has already been delivered."

5. "There's been an issue at the port — we'll update you today."

followUp: Which of these do you HATE getting most as a customer? Why?

Reading · Why 'the last mile' costs more than the first 10,000 km

A container of headphones can travel 10,000 km from Shenzhen to Rotterdam for less than 2 euros per unit. Ocean freight is astonishingly cheap. The problem is what happens next.

The 'last mile' — the final delivery from the local warehouse to the customer's door — is where the money disappears. A small van, a driver, traffic, one missed doorbell, one redelivery: it can cost more than the entire trip across the ocean.

That's why supply-chain teams spend so much energy on this final step. If the last mile has been optimised — right delivery windows, right address data, an unlocked delivery box — the whole chain works. If it hasn't, all the earlier savings are lost.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. What is the 'last mile' in logistics?
 - (A) The last km of the ocean journey
 - (B) The final delivery from local warehouse to the customer
 - (C) The mile before the port
2. Why is the last mile so expensive?
 - (A) Ocean freight is cheap; small vans, traffic and redeliveries are not
 - (B) Because of import taxes
 - (C) Because ships are slow
3. What is the article's main point?
 - (A) Ocean freight is a scam
 - (B) The final step decides whether the whole chain is profitable
 - (C) Customers should collect their own parcels

Vocabulary in context

Find these words in the text and match them to the meaning.

freight — goods being transported in bulk

warehouse — a large building where goods are stored

supply chain — the full path a product travels from factory to buyer

redelivery — a second attempt to deliver a parcel

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text, choose the correct option.

1. Ocean freight is more expensive than local delivery per unit.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
2. The last mile is often the most expensive step.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
3. Delivery boxes solve the last-mile problem completely.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. Traffic and missed doorbells cost money.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
5. The article gives the exact cost of a redelivery.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly. There is no single correct answer.

1. As a CUSTOMER, what's the most annoying last-mile experience you've had this year?

2. For YOUR business, is the last mile a real cost, or is it invisible? Should it be?

Scan for meaning

Find the phrase in the text that matches each definition.

1. goods being transported in bulk

2. the full path a product travels from factory to buyer

3. a second attempt to deliver a parcel

4. a large building where goods are stored

Vocabulary · Logistics and delivery

shipment — the goods being sent in one delivery

consignment — a batch of goods sent to one customer

carrier — the company that transports the goods

tracking number — the code that shows where a shipment is

invoice — the bill for the goods

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



customs — the official check at the border

ETA (estimated time of arrival) — when the shipment is expected

in transit — on the way, not yet delivered

out for delivery — with the local driver today

delayed — late compared to the promised date

lead time — days from order to delivery

backlog — a build-up of unfulfilled orders owing to processing bottlenecks

practice

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

1. The ___ has been ___ ___ since Tuesday, but nothing has moved.

2. Please send me the ___ ___ so I can check where the box is.

3. The container has been stuck at ___ for 4 days.

4. Our new ___ is much faster than the old one — 3-day delivery to Germany.

5. The ___ has grown to 200 orders because our packing team is short-staffed.

6. The ___ is Friday afternoon — I'll confirm as soon as it lands.

Collocations · logistics verbs

Match each verb with the noun it usually goes with.

ship — an order

track — a shipment

clear — customs

confirm — delivery

reduce — lead time

file — a claim

Odd one out

Choose the word that does NOT belong.

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1. shipment · consignment · parcel · payment

(A) shipment

(B) consignment

(C) parcel

(D) payment

2. carrier · courier · van · budget

(A) carrier

(B) courier

(C) van

(D) budget

3. customs · warehouse · port · discount

(A) customs

(B) warehouse

(C) port

(D) discount

Word building · verb ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

1. to deliver → a ____

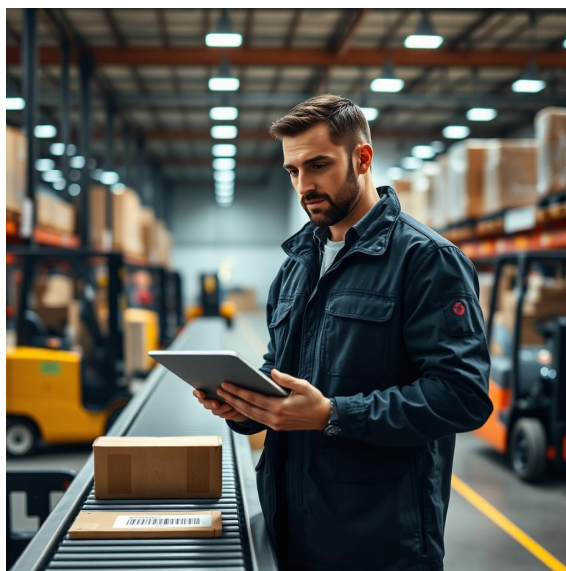
2. to ship → a ____

3. to import → an ____

4. to export → an ____

5. to store → ____

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Grammar · Present perfect with 'just / already / yet · for / since'

1. **'just'** → **something happened a very short time ago** — • Your order has just been shipped. • The driver has just left the warehouse.
2. **'already'** → **sooner than expected (positive)** — • The parcel has already been delivered — check reception. • We've already cleared customs — surprisingly fast.
3. **'yet'** → **not up to now (in questions and negatives)** — • Has your order arrived yet? • We haven't received the goods yet.
4. **'for' + a duration · 'since' + a starting point** — • The container has been stuck for 3 days. • The container has been stuck since Monday.
5. **Word order to remember** — • just / already → between HAVE and the past participle. • yet → at the END of the sentence. • for / since → after the main verb: 'we've waited for a week / since Monday'.

Exercise A — 'just / already / yet'

Complete with *just*, *already* or *yet*.

1. Great news — the parcel has ____ been delivered.

2. Have you shipped the container ____?

3. We haven't received the invoice ____.

4. The driver has ____ left — 30 seconds ago.

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5. You don't need to send it — I've ____ received a copy.

Exercise B — 'for' or 'since'?

Complete with *for* or *since*.

1. The container has been at customs ____ 4 days.

2. We've been waiting for a tracking update ____ Tuesday morning.

3. I've worked with this carrier ____ 8 years.

4. They've had a shipping backlog ____ the port strike started.

Exercise C — Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has *ONE* mistake with *just* / *already* / *yet* / *for* / *since*.

1. The parcel has yet arrived.

2. We are waiting since Monday.

3. I've worked here since 8 years.

4. Have you already sent the invoice yet?

Exercise D — Write the sentence

Write *ONE* sentence for each situation.

1. Container: still at customs · 5 days · use 'for'

2. Driver: left the depot 2 minutes ago · use 'just'

3. Invoice: still not sent · use 'yet'

4. Order: delivered earlier than promised · use 'already'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Exercise E — Update the customer

Write *ONE* polite customer-facing sentence for each real logistics moment.

1. The shipment has just cleared customs.

2. The driver hasn't reached the depot yet.

3. The parcel has already been delivered — it's at reception.

Exercise F — Complete the logistics dialogue

Complete each answer.

1. — Any news on order 4477? — Yes — it's ____ (just) been shipped. ETA is Thursday.

2. — Have you cleared customs ____ (yet)? — Not ____ (yet), but the paperwork has been with them ____ (since) Monday.

Listening · A delivery-status call with an unhappy customer

A logistics coordinator explains a delay to a customer whose order is late. Listen for how she uses present perfect + just / already / yet / for / since.

pre

What's the WORST way a supplier has ever told you 'your order is late'?

When a shipment is late, what are the FIRST 3 things you want to hear from the supplier?

gist

1. What is the customer's main complaint?

2. What is the real cause of the delay?

3. What compensation does the coordinator offer?

detail

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1. When did the container arrive at the port?

2. How long has it been at customs?

3. What is the new ETA?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

1. Is the customer likely to order again? Why?

2. Where does the blame actually sit?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does in the call.

"The container has been at customs for 4 days." — explains the delay with 'for' + duration

"Nothing has moved since Saturday." — uses 'since' + starting point

"Your goods haven't left the port yet." — honest update with 'yet'

"I've just spoken to our customs broker." — shows action was taken 'just' now

"We'll ship your next order by express at no extra cost." — offers a concrete compensation

Voice A: I'm calling about order 4477 — you promised Monday, and it's Wednesday. Nobody has told us anything.

Voice B: You're absolutely right, and I'm sorry. Let me give you the full picture. The container has been at customs for 4 days — nothing has moved since Saturday morning.

Voice A: For 4 days? Why?

Voice B: A paperwork error on our side. I've just spoken to our customs broker — everything has now been corrected, and the container is scheduled to clear this afternoon. Your goods haven't left the port yet, but the new ETA is Thursday afternoon.

Voice A: Thursday. That's already 3 days late. Our production line is idle.

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Voice B: Understood. Two things: we'll ship your next order by express at no extra cost, and we'll issue a €200 credit note on this invoice. I'll email the confirmation within the hour.

Voice A: OK. I appreciate the honesty. Please make sure Thursday is Thursday.

Voice B: You have my direct line. I'll call you the moment it leaves the port.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases from the call.

1. The container has been at customs ____ 4 days.

2. Nothing has moved ____ Saturday morning.

3. Your goods haven't left the port ____.

4. I've ____ spoken to our customs broker.

Speaking · Update your customer

Choose ONE of the situations. Prepare a 60-second oral update. Use AT LEAST 'just', 'already', 'yet', 'for' and 'since' at least once each.

Scene: A B2B customer whose 500-unit order is 3 days late

A: You: the logistics coordinator. Explain what happened, where the shipment is now, and offer ONE concrete compensation.

B: You: the customer. Push for a specific new ETA and hold them to it.

Scene: An online customer waiting for a €800 parcel

A: You: customer service. The parcel has been out for delivery TWICE — nobody at home. Offer 3 solutions.

B: You: the customer. You need it by Saturday for a gift; today is Thursday.

Scene: A raw-material supplier stuck at customs

A: You: the production manager. Your line stops in 48 hours. Talk to the supplier and set a hard deadline.

B: You: the supplier. You can offer an air-freight backup — but you need the customer to accept a €4/kg surcharge.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Discussion · your worst delivery experience

Choose 2 questions and speak for 30–45 seconds each.

What's the LONGEST you've ever waited for a business-critical delivery?

In your industry, is sea freight, air freight, road or courier the most common? Why?

Have you ever had to explain a big delay to an angry customer? How did you handle it?

Which carrier or courier do you trust most? Why?

Role-play · The 'production line will stop' call

Read your role, prep 30s, run the 3-minute call. Aim to end with a clear, agreed next step.

Scene: Container stuck at customs; buyer's line stops in 48 hours

A: You: the buyer. You need parts by Friday morning or 40 workers stop. Prepare ONE ultimatum AND ONE compromise you'd accept.

B: You: the supplier. Customs will clear tomorrow, air-freight would arrive Thursday night. It costs you €3,000 but keeps a €150,000 client.

Scene: First order to a new key account — carrier lost the parcel

A: You: account manager. Your first-ever order to a promising new client has been lost by the carrier. Prepare an apology + a real recovery plan.

B: You: the new client. You're already unimpressed. Decide during the call whether you'll place order #2 or walk away.

Mini-presentation · 60-second 'the delivery that changed a customer'

Deliver a 60-second talk about ONE delivery moment that made — or broke — a customer relationship. Use the 4-beat structure.

Beat 1 (10s) — WHAT was being delivered and to whom.

Beat 2 (15s) — What went wrong (or surprisingly right).

Beat 3 (20s) — How your team handled it (use 1 present-perfect sentence).

Beat 4 (15s) — What the customer did next.

sample: Last year we shipped 800 uniforms to a hotel chain opening a new resort. The container has been stuck at customs for 5 days because of a labelling error our side. We've just chartered a small plane at our own cost to fly 200 uniforms for the opening day. The rest arrived a week late. The client didn't leave — in fact, they doubled the annual order six months later, because we owned the mistake and paid for the fix.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Writing · A 5-line 'delay' update email

Write a 5-line email to a customer whose shipment is late. Include: subject with order number, ONE sentence with 'has been ... for/since', ONE clear new ETA, ONE concrete compensation, warm sign-off. Max 80 words after the subject.

bonus: Bonus task — write the SAME email in a much MORE formal tone (first-contact enterprise customer) and in a much MORE informal tone (a long-standing SME customer you know well). Compare the two.

Wrap-up · What did we cover?

'just' = a moment ago. 'already' = sooner than expected. 'yet' = not up to now (?/-).

'for' + duration (for 4 days). 'since' + starting point (since Monday).

The last mile is where the money is made or lost — treat it like the priority it is.

When it's late: own it, name a NEW ETA, and offer ONE concrete compensation.

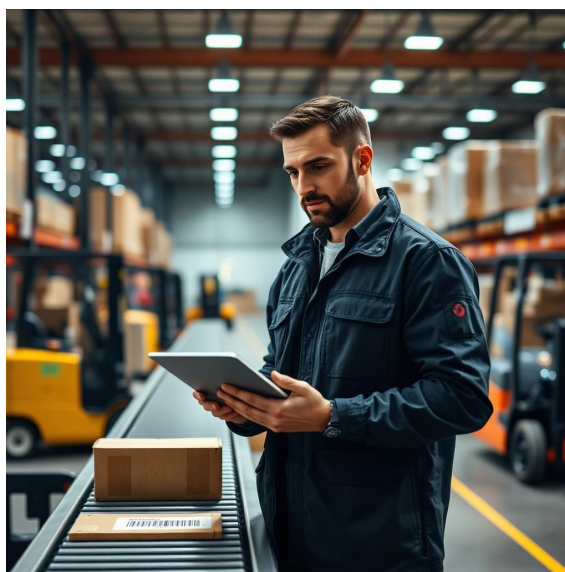
Quiz

1. Choose the CORRECT sentence.
(A) Has the parcel arrived already?
(B) Has the parcel arrived yet?
(C) Both are correct.
2. 'The container has been at customs ____ 4 days.'
(A) since
(B) for
(C) just
3. 'We've been waiting for a tracking update ____ Tuesday.'
(A) for
(B) since
(C) yet
4. 'The driver has ____ left the depot.'
(A) yet
(B) since
(C) just
5. The 'last mile' is:
(A) the last km of the ocean journey
(B) the final delivery from local warehouse to the customer
(C) the mile before customs

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Workbook — home practice



1. Vocabulary gap-fill

Complete each sentence with **ONE** phrase from the box.

Word bank: ETA · tracking number · customs · backlog · in transit · carrier

1. Please send me the ____ ____ so I can see where the box is.

2. The container has been stuck at ____ for 4 days.

3. Our new ____ delivers to Germany in 3 days — much faster than the old one.

4. The ____ has grown to 200 orders because our packing team is short-staffed.

5. The order has been ____ ____ since Tuesday morning.

6. The ____ is Friday afternoon — I'll confirm as soon as it lands.

2. just / already / yet · for / since

Complete each sentence with the correct time word.

1. The parcel has ____ been delivered — check reception (2 minutes ago).

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2. Have you cleared customs ____?

3. We haven't received the invoice ____.

4. The container has been at customs ____ 4 days.

5. Nothing has moved ____ Saturday morning.

6. You don't need to send it — I've ____ received a copy.

3. Make it politer

Rewrite each blunt sentence into a polite customer-facing update.

1. Your order is late. Deal with it.

2. Customs is slow, not our problem.

3. We don't know where it is.

4. Just wait.

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake with present perfect or logistics vocabulary.

1. The parcel has yet arrived.

2. We are waiting since Monday.

3. I've worked here since 8 years.

4. The container has been in the customs since 4 days.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



5. Listening — three ways to break bad news

Three logistics reps call a customer to say the same shipment is late. Notice who owns the problem and who hides behind excuses.

1. Who sounds MOST professional?

2. Who is HIDING?

3. Who is OVER-PROMISING?

Voice A: Yeah, so, customs is slow and the carrier isn't answering. It should arrive soon.

Voice B: I'm sorry — your container has been at customs for 4 days due to a paperwork error on our side. Everything has just been corrected; new ETA is Thursday afternoon. We'll ship your next order by express at no extra cost.

Voice C: Don't worry, it'll be there tomorrow, guaranteed.

6. Writing — a 5-line 'delay' update email

Write a 5-line email to a customer whose shipment is late. Include ONE 'has been ... for/since' sentence, ONE new ETA, and ONE concrete compensation. Max 80 words.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Class Book

Lead-in · Match the delivery scenario to the phrase

1. the warehouse just handed the box to the courier
2. an official inspection is delaying release
3. the buyer is still waiting after the promised date
4. someone has signed for it — check reception
5. the supplier is proactively warning the client

Reading · Why 'the last mile' costs more than the first 10,000 km

1. (B) The final delivery from local warehouse to the customer
2. (A) Ocean freight is cheap; small vans, traffic and redeliveries are not
3. (B) The final step decides whether the whole chain is profitable
1. (B) False
2. (A) True
3. (C) Not Given
4. (A) True
5. (C) Not Given
1. Model: the driver rang, I answered in 5 seconds, and he'd already left. Two redeliveries and a trip to the depot to collect it.
2. Model: it's invisible — we outsource all delivery. But every complaint we get is about that last step, so it's clearly not free.
1. freight
2. supply chain
3. redelivery
4. warehouse

Vocabulary · Logistics and delivery

1. in transit
2. tracking number
3. customs
4. carrier
5. backlog
6. ETA
1. (D) payment
2. (D) budget
3. (D) discount
1. delivery
2. shipment
3. import
4. export
5. storage

Grammar · Present perfect with 'just / already / yet · for / since'

1. just / already
2. yet
3. yet
4. just
5. already
1. for
2. since
3. for
4. since
1. The parcel has already arrived. / Has the parcel arrived yet?
2. We've been waiting since Monday.
3. I've worked here for 8 years.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. Have you sent the invoice yet? / Have you already sent the invoice?

1. The container has been at customs for 5 days.

2. The driver has just left the depot.

3. We haven't sent the invoice yet.

4. The order has already been delivered.

1. Good news — your shipment has just cleared customs and is now on its way to your warehouse.

2. The driver hasn't reached the depot yet, but we'll send you the tracking update within the hour.

3. The parcel has already been delivered — please check with your reception; it was signed for at 10:15 today.

1. It's just been shipped. ETA is Thursday.

2. Not yet, but the paperwork has been with them since Monday.

Listening · A delivery-status call with an unhappy customer

1. The order was promised for Monday and it's now Wednesday — nothing has been delivered.

2. The container has been stuck at customs for 4 days because of a paperwork issue on the supplier side.

3. Free express delivery on the next order and a €200 credit note.

1. Friday morning.

2. 4 days — since Saturday.

3. Thursday afternoon (48 hours from the call).

1. Probably yes — the coordinator was honest, took responsibility, and offered a real compensation, not just words.

2. On the supplier's side — a paperwork error, not the carrier or customs. The coordinator does NOT blame external parties.

1. for

2. since

3. yet

4. just

Quiz

1. (C) Both are correct.

2. (B) for

3. (B) since

4. (C) just

5. (B) the final delivery from local warehouse to the customer

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. tracking number
2. customs
3. carrier
4. backlog
5. in transit
6. ETA

2. just / already / yet · for / since

1. just
2. yet
3. yet
4. for
5. since
6. already

3. Make it politer

1. I'm sorry — your order has been delayed. The new ETA is [date], and we'll cover express delivery at no extra cost.
2. The container has been at customs for 4 days. We're actively pushing our broker for a same-day release and will update you within the hour.
3. The shipment is currently in transit; we've asked our carrier for an updated location and will forward it as soon as we have it.
4. Thank you for your patience — I'll call you the moment the shipment leaves the port.

4. Find and fix the mistake

1. The parcel has already arrived. / Has the parcel arrived yet?
2. We've been waiting since Monday.
3. I've worked here for 8 years.
4. The container has been at customs for 4 days.

5. Listening — three ways to break bad news

1. Voice B — states the cause, the new ETA, and one concrete compensation.
2. Voice A — blames 'customs' and 'the carrier' without a new ETA or a fix.
3. Voice C — 'tomorrow, guaranteed' with no explanation — very risky if it slips again.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 6 · B1·6A

Meetings that actually finish on time

Theme · Meetings basics

Unit 6 · B1·6A

Meetings that actually finish on time

Theme: Meetings basics

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Open, run and close a short meeting using clear signposting language.
- Talk about meeting rules and expectations with should, must and have to.
- Give and defend a meeting policy in one calm sentence.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · Meeting confessions

Read each confession. Say TRUE for you, FALSE for you, or SOMETIMES. Be ready to justify your last TRUE in one sentence.

I've sat through a meeting this month that could have been an email.

I've said 'let's take that offline' when I meant 'stop talking'.

I've joined a meeting without reading the agenda.

I've muted myself and done other work.

I've been late to a meeting and lied about the reason.

Lead-in: what would you actually do?

Four typical meeting situations. For each one, decide what you would ACTUALLY do — then compare with a partner. There are no wrong answers, only honest ones.

kind: scenarios

1. **emoji:** 🤨 · **title:** The 10-minute overrun · **situation:** The meeting was supposed to end 10 minutes ago. The organiser is still going. You have a hard stop.

2. **emoji:** 🤨 · **title:** No agenda · **situation:** You've been added to a 60-minute meeting with a vague title and no agenda. It starts in 20 minutes.

3. **emoji:** 🤨 · **title:** The dominator · **situation:** One colleague has been talking for 12 minutes straight. Two quieter people haven't said a word.

4. **emoji:** 🤨 · **title:** The mystery decision · **situation:** The meeting is ending. Someone said 'let's go with option B'. You're not sure who owns it or by when.

followUp: Which of these do you find HARDEST to say out loud in English? Rank them 1–4.

Reading · The 3 rules of a meeting that ends on time

Every good manager has a mental checklist for meetings — and it fits on a napkin. Rule one: no agenda, no meeting. If nobody wrote down what the meeting is for, the meeting is a conversation. Have a conversation instead — it's shorter.

Rule two: name the owner and the decision before you leave the room. A meeting that ends with 'we'll figure it out' figures out nothing. A meeting that ends with 'Marta owns it, decision by Friday' has moved the ball.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Rule three: end early when you can. If the room finishes in 22 minutes instead of 30, give the eight minutes back. Nobody has ever complained about getting time back. And people remember who does it — they trust that person's meetings.

1. What does 'no agenda, no meeting' mean in practice?
 - (A) Meetings are optional
 - (B) Without a written purpose, it's just a conversation
 - (C) Send the agenda in advance or after
2. According to the text, what makes a meeting 'move the ball'?
 - (A) Everyone speaking
 - (B) Naming an owner and a decision
 - (C) Taking notes
3. Why is ending early powerful?
 - (A) Nobody complains and people remember
 - (B) It saves money
 - (C) It shows the meeting was well-prepared

Vocabulary in context

Find these words in the text and match them to the meaning.

- agenda** — the written list of what a meeting will cover
- owner** — the person responsible for a task or decision
- move the ball** — make real progress towards a goal
- give ... back** — return unused time or resources

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text, choose the correct option.

1. The author says every meeting should last 30 minutes.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
2. A meeting without an agenda is really just a conversation.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



3. 'We'll figure it out' is a successful meeting close.
- (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
4. People trust managers who give time back.
- (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
5. The author blames senior leaders for bad meetings.
- (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly. There is no single correct answer.

1. Of the three rules, which one is most broken at YOUR company?

2. Is there a fourth rule you would add?

Scan for meaning

Find the phrase in the text that matches each definition.

1. the written plan of what a meeting will cover

2. the person who is responsible

3. make real, measurable progress

4. return time that wasn't used

Vocabulary · Running a meeting

an agenda — the written list of topics for a meeting

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



the chair (of the meeting) — the person who leads and controls it

minutes — the written record of what was decided

AOB — 'any other business' — final slot for unlisted topics

an action item — a task assigned to a specific owner

a hard stop — a fixed end-time you cannot move

to kick off — to start a meeting or project

to signpost — to say clearly what you're going to do next

to park (an issue) — to postpone a topic to keep on schedule

to loop in (someone) — to include them by email or invite

to take (something) offline — to discuss it later, outside the meeting

to wrap up — to conclude and summarise

practice

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

1. Let's ____ ____ — thanks everyone for being on time.

2. I've got a ____ ____ at 3 — can we start with item 4?

3. Good point, but let's ____ that and come back on Friday.

4. Can we ____ Priya ____? She'll have the data.

5. Let's ____ ____ — action items are Marc by Tuesday, Ana by Thursday.

6. Sorry, that's off-topic — can we ____ it ____?

Collocations · meeting verbs

Match each verb with the noun it usually goes with.

set — an agenda

take — the minutes

chair — a meeting

assign — an action item

reach — a decision

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



postpone — a discussion

Odd one out

Choose the word that does NOT belong.

1. agenda · minutes · action item · invoice

(A) agenda

(B) minutes

(C) action item

(D) invoice

2. chair · attend · park · deliver

(A) chair

(B) attend

(C) park

(D) deliver

3. kick off · wrap up · sign off · look up

(A) kick off

(B) wrap up

(C) sign off

(D) look up

Word building · verb ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

1. to decide → a ____

2. to discuss → a ____

3. to attend → an ____

4. to agree → an ____

5. to postpone → a ____

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Grammar · should / must / have to

1. **should** → **advice / a good idea** — • You should send the agenda the day before. • You shouldn't check email during a meeting.
2. **must** → **strong personal rule / speaker's authority** — • You must silence your phone before the meeting starts. • I must remember to send the minutes today.
3. **have to** → **external rule / requirement from outside** — • We have to attend the Monday stand-up — the company requires it. • She had to leave early because of another meeting.
4. **mustn't ≠ don't have to** — • You mustn't record the call. = it's forbidden. • You don't have to record the call. = it's optional.
5. **Meeting-friendly patterns** — • The chair should keep to time. • Attendees have to arrive on time. • You mustn't share confidential slides externally. • You don't have to speak — but you can if you want to.

Exercise A — should, must, or have to?

Choose the best option for each context (sometimes more than one is possible; pick the strongest fit).

1. Company policy: every meeting over 20 minutes ____ have an agenda.

2. Advice: you ____ read the pre-read before the call — it saves everyone time.

3. Confidentiality: you ____ share the slides outside the company.

4. Practical: I ____ leave at 3 — the metro closes at 3:10.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



5. Optional: you ____ join Friday's optional social — but it's fun.

6. Personal rule: I ____ remember to switch off notifications during 1-to-1s.

Exercise B — find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake.

1. You don't must record the call.

2. The manager has to attends the review every quarter.

3. You should to send the agenda the day before.

4. We must to leave by 4.

Exercise C — 'mustn't' vs 'don't have to'

Complete with mustn't or don't have to.

1. You ____ turn your camera on — it's an optional-camera call.

2. You ____ share the client's name outside this room.

3. Attendees ____ speak — silent listeners are welcome.

4. You ____ forward the deck to anyone outside legal.

Exercise D — write the meeting rule

For each situation, write ONE meeting rule for your team, using should / must / have to.

1. People keep joining without reading the pre-read.

2. Meetings drift beyond the scheduled end.

3. Nobody knows who owns the follow-up.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. Confidential client work is sometimes shown in shared rooms.
-

Exercise E — about YOUR meetings

Answer each question with *ONE* full sentence. Use *should*, *must* or *have to*.

1. What is ONE thing your colleagues have to do at every meeting?
-

2. What is ONE thing they mustn't do?
-

3. What is ONE thing they don't have to do (but many think they must)?
-

Exercise F — polite meeting phrases

Complete each phrase.

1. Signposting: 'Let's ____ with the first item on the agenda.'
-

2. Interrupting politely: 'Sorry to ____ — quick question on that.'
-

3. Parking a topic: 'Great point — can we ____ that and pick it up on Friday?'
-

4. Closing: 'To ____, action items are Marc by Tuesday, Ana by Thursday.'
-

Listening · The team lead who cut meetings in half

A team lead is asked how she reduced her team's meeting load from 22 hours a week to 11. Listen for the three rules she introduced — and how she defended them when the pushback came.

pre

If you had to cut your meetings by 50% next week, what would you cut FIRST?

Have you ever pushed back on a meeting invite? What did you say?

gist

1. By how much did she cut the team's meetings?
-
-
-

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. What are her three rules, in one line each?

3. What was the biggest source of pushback?

detail

1. What did she do with the extra 5–10 minutes she gave back?

2. How did she handle a senior colleague who kept sending invites without agendas?

3. What did her team's engagement scores do after 3 months?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

1. Is she anti-meeting, or pro-good-meeting?

2. Would she call this an easy change? Why or why not?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does.

"No agenda, no meeting — I'll catch it async." — polite decline of an unclear invite

"Could you drop 2 bullets on the outcome?" — asking for a light agenda without sounding demanding

"25 or 50 minutes — never 30 or 60." — structural rule that creates breathing room

"Camera optional — no explanation needed." — removing a small daily social tax

"I held the line for two weeks." — personal commitment to a new rule

Voice A: So — 22 hours of meetings a week, down to 11. What did you actually change?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Voice B: Three rules. First: no agenda, no meeting. If the invite doesn't say what we're deciding, I don't accept — I catch up async.

Voice A: That must have upset people.

Voice B: Yes. For about two weeks. I got called 'too corporate' twice. I just held the line — I kept declining, politely. I'd reply: 'happy to join — could you drop two bullets on the outcome? Otherwise I'll catch up async.' After two weeks, the invites started coming with agendas.

Voice A: Rule two?

Voice B: 25 or 50 minutes — never 30 or 60. It sounds silly but it gives everyone five to ten minutes between calls. Nobody sprints across the office anymore.

Voice A: And the third?

Voice B: Camera optional. Named it out loud on day one. No explanation needed if you're off camera. That one was easy — people were grateful within a week.

Voice A: Did engagement scores drop?

Voice B: The opposite. Highest jump in the department. Turns out people don't hate their job — they hate their calendar.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases from the interview.

1. No ____, no meeting.

2. Could you ____ two bullets on the outcome?

3. 25 or 50 minutes — ____ 30 or 60.

4. Camera optional — no ____ needed.

5. I ____ the ____ for two weeks.

Speaking · The 60-second meeting policy

Choose ONE meeting problem at your (real or imagined) company. Prepare a 60-second oral policy. Use AT LEAST one sentence with must/mustn't, one with have to / don't have to, and one with should.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Scene: The meeting-that-should-be-an-email

A: You: the team lead. Announce the new rule to your team.

B: You: a skeptical colleague. Push back ONCE — the team lead has to defend the rule.

Scene: The dominator

A: You: the chair. Interrupt a colleague who's been talking for 8 minutes.

B: You: the dominator. React — apologise, negotiate, or push back.

Scene: The camera-optional call

A: You: announce that cameras are now optional in Monday stand-ups.

B: You: a manager who fears people will disengage. Ask ONE tough question.

Class discussion

Vote as a class: which meeting rule would have the biggest impact if your company adopted it tomorrow?

Ban meetings without an agenda.

Cap all meetings at 25 or 50 minutes.

Cameras optional by default.

No meetings on Wednesdays.

Role-play · declining an invite

Two people. Student A sends a meeting invite. Student B has to decline politely but firmly, using at least one modal (should / must / have to / don't have to).

Scene: Vague 'catch-up' at 5 p.m. Friday

A: Student A: convince Student B to attend — 'it's only 30 minutes'.

B: Student B: decline politely. Offer an async alternative.

Scene: A meeting you were added to by mistake

A: Student A: 'we need your input on Client-Y'.

B: Student B: check if you really have to be there. Offer a written note instead.

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: agenda · hard stop · park · loop in · wrap up · kick off

1. Let's ____ — thanks everyone for being here.

2. No ____, no meeting — that's our new team rule.

3. I've got a ____ at 3 — can we start with item 4?

4. Great point, but let's ____ it and come back on Friday.

5. Can you ____ Priya? She'll have the data.

6. Let's ____ — action items are Marc by Tuesday, Ana by Thursday.

2. should / must / have to

Complete each sentence with the best modal for the meaning in brackets.

1. (external rule) Every meeting over 20 minutes ____ have an agenda.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. (strong personal rule) I ____ silence my phone before the call starts.

3. (advice) You ____ send the pre-read the day before.

4. (forbidden) You ____ share confidential slides outside the company.

5. (optional) You ____ turn your camera on — it's optional.

6. (practical) I ____ leave at 3 — my next call is at 3:05.

3. Choose the best polite phrase

Choose the option that sounds most professional in a meeting.

1. Opening a meeting:

(A) Ok, we start.

(B) Let's kick off — thanks for being on time.

(C) Attention everyone.

2. Interrupting a colleague:

(A) Stop talking, please.

(B) Sorry to jump in — quick question on that.

(C) Let me speak now.

3. Parking a topic:

(A) That's off-topic.

(B) Great point — can we park it and pick it up Friday?

(C) Not today.

4. Closing a meeting:

(A) We finish.

(B) To wrap up: Marc by Tuesday, Ana by Thursday.

(C) Bye.

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake.

1. You don't must record the call.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. The manager has to attend the review.

3. You should send the agenda in advance.

4. We must leave by 4.

5. Listening — three meeting openings

Three team leads open the same weekly meeting. Decide who sets it up for a productive 30 minutes and who wastes the first five.

1. Which opening is **CLEAREST**?

2. Which is **WORST**?

3. Which one gives permission **NOT** to attend next time?

Voice A: OK, so, morning everyone. Let's... see where we are today. Who wants to start? Maybe Ana? Or Marc?

Voice B: Morning. Two decisions today, 25 minutes, hard stop at :55. Decision one: do we launch the pilot on the 12th or the 19th? Decision two: who owns the client email. If we finish early, we give the time back.

Voice C: Morning. Quick check first — is this meeting still earning its slot? If today becomes another status readout, we should kill this meeting and move to a Monday note. Agreed? Great. Then let's move.

6. Writing — a 4-sentence meeting policy

Write a 4-sentence meeting policy for your team. Sentence 1: use 'must' or 'have to' (a rule). Sentence 2: use 'should' (advice). Sentence 3: use 'mustn't' (forbidden). Sentence 4: use 'don't have to' (optional). Max 80 words.

7. Case study preview

Before you start Case Study 6, answer briefly.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. How many hours a week do you spend in meetings? How many of those hours are 'good' meetings?

2. If your manager told you tomorrow 'cut your meetings by 50%', which one would you cut first — and how would you justify it?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Class Book

Reading · The 3 rules of a meeting that ends on time

1. (B) Without a written purpose, it's just a conversation
2. (B) Naming an owner and a decision
3. (A) Nobody complains and people remember
1. (C) Not Given
2. (A) True
3. (B) False
4. (A) True
5. (C) Not Given
1. Model: rule two. We name owners in the meeting, but nobody writes them down — so by Monday, nobody remembers who owns what.
2. Model: no laptops for the first 10 minutes. Otherwise nobody is really in the room.
1. agenda
2. owner
3. move the ball
4. give ... back

Vocabulary · Running a meeting

1. kick off
2. hard stop
3. park
4. loop ... in
5. wrap up
6. take ... offline
1. (D) invoice
2. (D) deliver
3. (D) look up
1. decision
2. discussion
3. attendee / attendance
4. agreement
5. postponement

Grammar · should / must / have to

1. has to (external rule)
2. should
3. mustn't (forbidden)
4. have to
5. don't have to
6. must
1. You mustn't record the call. (OR: You don't have to record the call. — meaning changes)
2. The manager has to attend the review every quarter.
3. You should send the agenda the day before.
4. We must leave by 4. (OR: We have to leave by 4.)
1. don't have to
2. mustn't
3. don't have to
4. mustn't
1. Model: attendees have to read the 1-page pre-read before joining.
2. Model: the chair must end the meeting at :55 past the hour, whatever happens.
3. Model: we should name an owner and a due date for every action item, out loud, before we close.
4. Model: you mustn't discuss Client-X projects in open-plan or shared meeting rooms.
1. Model: they have to switch cameras on during our weekly 1-to-1.
2. Model: they mustn't discuss client names in a public café — it's a firm rule.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



3. Model: they don't have to attend meetings marked 'FYI, optional' — it's genuinely optional.

1. kick off
2. jump in
3. park
4. wrap up

Listening · The team lead who cut meetings in half

1. From 22 hours a week to 11 — a 50% reduction.
2. (1) No agenda, no meeting. (2) 25 or 50 minutes — never 30 or 60. (3) 'Camera optional' — she named it out loud on day 1.
3. The 'no agenda' rule — people said it was 'too corporate'. She held the line by declining agenda-less invites for two weeks.
1. Nothing forced — she said the whole point was that people GOT the time, not that she filled it.
2. She replied privately: 'happy to join — could you drop 2 bullets on the outcome? Otherwise I'll catch up async.'
3. Went up — the highest jump in her department.
1. Pro-good-meeting. She defends meetings that decide things — she cuts the ones that don't.
2. No — she mentions two weeks of pushback and says she had to hold the line personally. It only works if the manager doesn't blink.
1. agenda
2. drop
3. never
4. explanation
5. held / line

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. kick off
2. agenda
3. hard stop
4. park
5. loop in
6. wrap up

2. should / must / have to

1. has to
2. must
3. should
4. mustn't
5. don't have to
6. have to

3. Choose the best polite phrase

1. (B) Let's kick off — thanks for being on time.
2. (B) Sorry to jump in — quick question on that.
3. (B) Great point — can we park it and pick it up Friday?
4. (B) To wrap up: Marc by Tuesday, Ana by Thursday.

4. Find and fix the mistake

1. You mustn't record the call. (OR: You don't have to record the call. — meaning changes)
2. The manager has to attend the review.
3. You should send the agenda in advance.
4. We must leave by 4. (OR: We have to leave by 4.)

5. Listening — three meeting openings

1. Voice B — states the goal, the time budget, and the two decisions to make.
2. Voice A — vague ('so... let's see where we are today') with no agenda and no time budget.
3. Voice C — 'if this becomes a status readout again, we should kill this meeting'.

7. Case study preview

1. Model: about 18 hours a week. Maybe 6 are genuinely useful — the rest are status updates I could read in 3 minutes.
2. Model: the weekly all-team update. Nobody speaks, nobody remembers what was said. I'd propose a written Monday note instead — same information, 10 minutes to read, no calendar block.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 6 · B1-6B

Speaking up when it matters

Theme · Meetings basics

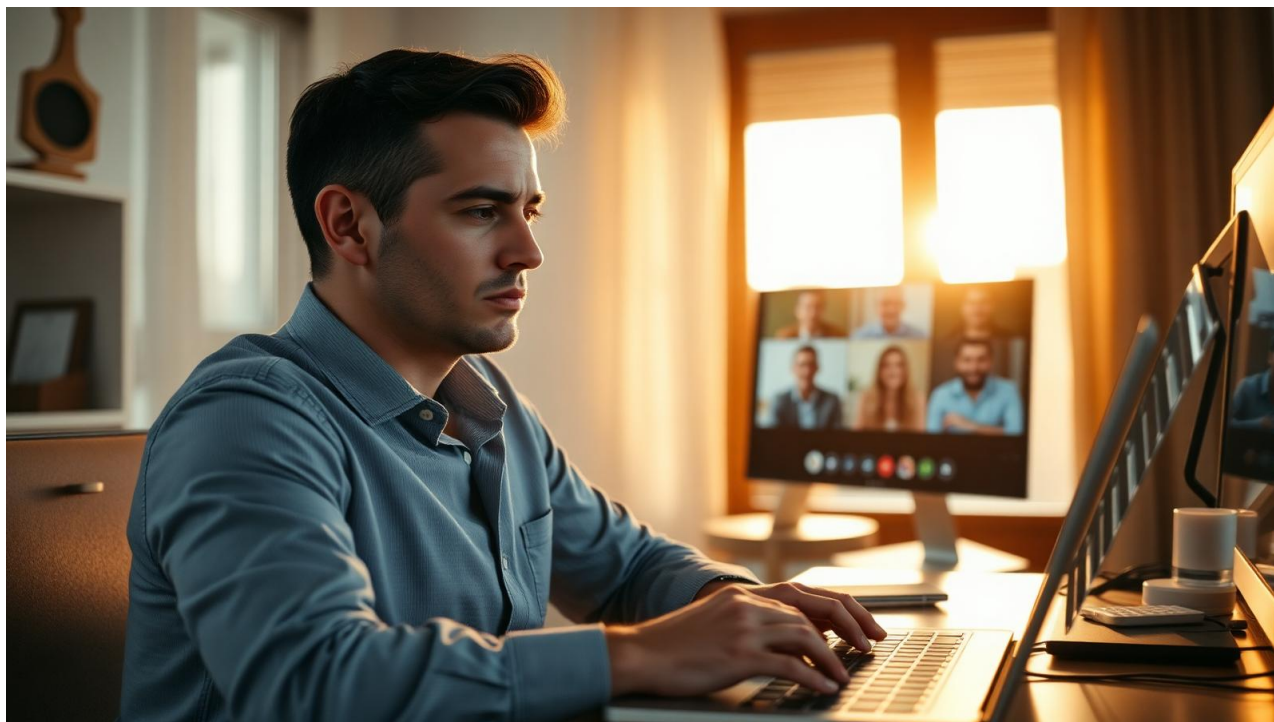


Unit 6 · B1·6B

Speaking up when it matters

Theme: Meetings basics

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Interrupt, disagree and clarify politely in a meeting.
- Give advice using should, ought to, had better and don't have to.
- Write a short piece of workplace advice (2–3 sentences) using modals.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · Speak-up temperature check

Rate each situation 1 (super easy) to 5 (I freeze). Share your highest score and your lowest — one sentence each.

Disagreeing with your manager in front of the team.

Interrupting a colleague who's been speaking for 5 minutes.

Asking 'sorry, could you say that again?' on a video call.

Correcting a factual mistake in someone's slide.

Saying 'I don't know' out loud in a senior meeting.

Lead-in: agony aunt mailbox

Four short letters have arrived in the class advice column. Read them all, then choose ONE to answer. Write 2–3 sentences of advice using modals (should, ought to, must, had better, don't have to...). We'll read the best answers aloud.

kind: mailbox

1. **label:** LETTER 1 · **text:** My team keeps adding me to evening calls because of the time zone. I'm exhausted and resentful, but I'm scared to say no. What should I do? · **signature:** — Tired in Tokyo

2. **label:** LETTER 2 · **text:** My manager gives me feedback in front of the whole team. Some of it is fair — but doing it publicly makes me shut down. I've never told him it bothers me. Is that on me? · **signature:** — Silent in São Paulo

3. **label:** LETTER 3 · **text:** In every meeting there's one person who talks over me. I've tried waiting for a gap. There isn't one. I'm starting to just email my ideas afterwards, but nobody remembers who suggested what. · **signature:** — Talked-over in Toronto

4. **label:** LETTER 4 · **text:** I've realised I actually disagree with a decision my team made last week. The meeting is closed and everyone has moved on. Do I say something now, or let it go? · **signature:** — Late in Lisbon

1. **for:** LETTER 1 · **model:** You shouldn't accept every evening call — that's not sustainable. You ought to ask for a written summary instead, or rotate the late slot with a colleague. You don't have to justify sleeping.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. **for:** LETTER 2 · **model:** Public feedback is his mistake, not yours — but he can't fix what you don't name. You should ask for a 10-minute 1-to-1 and say, calmly, that private feedback works better for you. You mustn't stay silent — silence looks like agreement.

3. **for:** LETTER 3 · **model:** You had better raise it in the meeting itself — one clear line: 'Sorry, I hadn't finished — can I finish that thought?' If it keeps happening, you should flag it to the chair privately, not by email.

4. **for:** LETTER 4 · **model:** You should say something — but frame it as a question, not a reversal. 'Quick check on the option-B decision — I've been thinking, and I have one concern. Can I share it?' You don't have to reopen the whole debate to raise one risk.

followUp: Whose problem is closest to something you have at work? Explain in one sentence.

Reading · Three ways to disagree without being 'that person'

Disagreeing in a meeting is harder than it looks. Say it too softly and nobody hears you; say it too hard and you become 'that person'. There are three moves that work.

Move one: agree with the goal, disagree with the plan. 'I want the same outcome — I'm just worried the timeline is too tight.' You've made it about the work, not about the person.

Move two: ask before you argue. 'Can I check one thing before we lock this in?' A question buys you 30 seconds. In 30 seconds you can raise a risk without triggering a defence.

Move three: put your disagreement on the record — in writing, calmly, within 24 hours. 'Just to capture my one concern from today's meeting...' If it turns out you were right, everyone remembers. If not, nobody minds — you flagged it professionally.

1. According to the text, what's the problem with disagreeing too softly?

- (A) Nobody hears you
- (B) You look weak
- (C) You look confused

2. What is 'agree with the goal, disagree with the plan'?

- (A) A trick
- (B) A way to make it about the work, not the person
- (C) A management theory

3. Why put your disagreement in writing within 24 hours?

- (A) To create conflict
- (B) So there's a professional record if you turn out to be right
- (C) To involve HR

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Vocabulary in context

Match the phrase to the meaning.

raise a risk — point out something that could go wrong

lock (something) in — confirm a decision so it can't change

put on the record — note officially, usually in writing

trigger a defence — make the other person react protectively

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text, choose the correct option.

1. Being 'that person' is a compliment.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
2. A short question can buy you time to raise a concern.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
3. You should always write your disagreement within the meeting itself.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
4. The author gives four moves in total.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
5. Flagging a risk in writing is called 'professional'.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly.

1. Which of the three moves do you already do — and which one is new to you?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. Is there a fourth move you'd add?

Scan for meaning

Find the phrase in the text.

1. point out something that could go wrong

2. confirm a decision

3. make someone react protectively

4. note officially in writing

Vocabulary · Speaking up politely

to interrupt (politely) — to speak while another is speaking, but respectfully

to jump in — informal way to interrupt briefly

to push back — to disagree with a plan or a request

to clarify — to ask for something to be made clearer

to paraphrase — to repeat something in your own words

to signal (a concern) — to flag something discreetly before it becomes a friction point

"Sorry to jump in, but..." — polite interruption opener

"Just to check my understanding..." — soft way to ask for clarification

"Can I add one thing?" — asking for a small speaking turn

"I see it slightly differently." — polite disagreement

"Can I raise one concern before we close?" — flagging a risk before a decision is locked in

"Just to be clear on next steps..." — closing summary opener

practice

Complete each sentence with ONE phrase from the lists.

1. 'Sorry to ____, but we haven't confirmed the deadline yet.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. 'Just to ____ my understanding — Marc owns the deliverable by Friday, right?'

3. 'Can I ____ one concern before we close?'

4. 'I ____ it slightly differently — can I share why?'

5. 'Just to be ____ on next steps — Ana sends the summary tonight.'

6. 'Can you ____ what you mean by "soon"?''

Collocations · softening verbs

Match the verb with the noun/phrase.

raise — a concern / a risk

push — back (on a decision)

seek — clarification

flag — an issue

table — a suggestion

voice — an opinion

Odd one out

Which word does NOT belong?

1. clarify · paraphrase · summarise · postpone

(A) clarify

(B) paraphrase

(C) summarise

(D) postpone

2. concern · risk · issue · agenda

(A) concern

(B) risk

(C) issue

(D) agenda

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



3. polite · calm · respectful · abrupt

(A) polite

(B) calm

(C) respectful

(D) abrupt

Word building · adjective ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

1. polite → ____

2. clear → ____

3. respectful → ____

4. confident → ____

5. honest → ____



Grammar · should / ought to / had better · don't have to

1. **should** → **general advice (soft)** — • You should send a short summary after the meeting.

2. **ought to** → **slightly more formal 'should'** — • You ought to raise this with your manager, not with HR first.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



3. had better → **strong warning about a specific situation** — • You'd better mention that risk today — it may be too late tomorrow. • ■■■ Not for general advice. Only for 'if you don't, there's a real consequence'.

4. don't have to → **it's optional (NOT forbidden)** — • You don't have to speak in every meeting. • Compare: You mustn't share the slides externally. (forbidden)

5. Softeners that pair well with modals — • I think you should ... • Maybe you ought to ... • Honestly, you'd better ... • You really don't have to ...

Exercise A — pick the right modal

Choose *should*, *ought to*, *had better* or *don't have to*.

1. General advice: you ____ read the minutes even when you attended.

2. Optional: you ____ join the Friday drinks — it's genuinely optional.

3. Real risk if you don't: you ____ tell your boss BEFORE she sees the client email.

4. Formal advice to a peer: you ____ copy Legal on that reply.

5. Reassurance: you ____ apologise — it wasn't your mistake.

6. Warning: we ____ leave now or we'll miss the whole first session.

Exercise B — find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has *ONE* mistake.

1. You had better to tell her before Monday.

2. You don't have not to speak.

3. You ought send the summary today.

4. Maybe you should to raise it in the meeting.

Exercise C — advice with softeners

Rewrite each blunt sentence into polite advice using a softener + modal.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. 'Send it.'

2. 'Tell your boss now.'

3. 'Don't reply while angry.'

4. 'Copy HR.'

Exercise D — answer the mailbox

Write a 2–3 sentence reply to *ONE* letter from the lead-in, using *AT LEAST* two of: *should, ought to, had better, don't have to, mustn't*.

1. Reply to Tired in Tokyo:

2. Reply to Silent in São Paulo:

Exercise E — your workplace advice column

Write *ONE* piece of real advice you'd give a colleague this month. Use two modals. Max 3 sentences.

1. Your advice:

Exercise F — softeners in action

Complete each phrase.

1. Softener + strong warning: 'Honestly, you'd ____ tell them before Monday.'

2. Softener + advice: 'I ____ you should copy Legal on this.'

3. Softener + optional: 'You really ____ ____ come in tomorrow.'

4. Softener + formal advice: '____, maybe you ____ ____ raise it with your director first.'

Listening · Three colleagues, one difficult meeting

Three colleagues describe how they handled the *SAME* difficult meeting: a proposal was pushed through without proper discussion. Listen for who spoke up, who stayed quiet, and who put their disagreement 'on the record' later.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

**pre**

Have you ever regretted staying quiet in a meeting? What happened?

Have you ever regretted speaking up? What happened?

gist

1. What was the meeting about?

2. Which voice raised a concern in the meeting itself?

3. Which voice stayed silent but sent an email within 24 hours?

detail

1. What was Voice A's regret?

2. What phrase did Voice B use to raise the concern without derailing the meeting?

3. What did Voice C's email include?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

1. Who handled it best — Voice B in the meeting, or Voice C in writing?

2. Why does Voice A regret it so much?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



"Can I raise one concern before we close?" — polite risk-flag inside the meeting

"Just to put my one concern on the record..." — professional written follow-up

"Happy to be wrong — just wanted this on the record." — leaving room to disagree without escalating

"What happens to the two clients who asked for monthly?" — one specific, unemotional question

"Now it just looks like I agreed." — regret about silence in a meeting

Voice A: Honestly? I sat there. Three minutes for questions, everyone looked at their laptop, and I stayed quiet too. It's been bothering me all week — I actually disagreed. And now, because I said nothing and I wrote nothing, it just looks like I agreed. That's on me.

Voice B: I asked one question. Just one. 'Can I raise one concern before we close? What happens to the two clients who explicitly asked for monthly reviews?' That's it. It didn't derail the meeting. It just meant that when I left the room, everyone knew there was one open question — with my name next to it.

Voice C: I didn't speak in the meeting — I don't process fast enough live. But I sent an email within 24 hours. One paragraph. One specific risk, one proposed mitigation, and I ended with 'happy to be wrong — just wanted this on the record.' Three weeks later, one of the two clients did leave. My email was already there. That mattered.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases from the audio.

1. Now it just looks like I ____.

2. Can I ____ one ____ before we close?

3. Just to put my one concern on the ____.

4. Happy to be ____ — just wanted this on the record.

Speaking · The 60-second speak-up

Choose **ONE** real (or realistic) meeting moment where you should have spoken up but didn't. Prepare a 60-second oral 'what I should have said' — the polite, clear version. Use **AT LEAST** one softener + modal ('I think you should...', 'Maybe you ought to...', 'Honestly, you'd better...').

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Scene: A decision made without you

A: You: raise the concern AFTER the meeting, in a 1-to-1. Use 'ought to' + a softener.

B: You: the decision-maker. React — defend, listen, or reopen.

Scene: A public feedback moment

A: You: ask calmly for private feedback next time. Use 'I think you should...'.
B: You: the manager. React — apologise, negotiate, or push back.

Scene: A dominator in a stand-up

A: You: interrupt politely. Use 'Sorry to jump in...'.
B: You: the dominator. React — say sorry, negotiate time, or ignore.

Class discussion

Discuss briefly.

In your culture, is disagreeing in public normal, or a big deal?

Is silence in a meeting the same as agreement? Should it be?

Which is harder: raising a concern LIVE or writing it up within 24 hours?

Role-play · the 24-hour email

Student A had a meeting yesterday where a decision was rushed through. Student B is the manager. Student A writes and delivers (out loud) a 5-line 'just to put on the record' message. Student B has to respond in one calm sentence.

Scene: A rushed hiring decision

A: Student A: raise ONE concern about the candidate — with a suggested mitigation.

B: Student B: the hiring manager. React — reopen, negotiate, or defend.

Scene: A budget cut you weren't consulted on

A: Student A: flag ONE cut that affects a real project.

B: Student B: the finance lead. React — negotiate, explain, or reverse.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Workbook — home practice



1. Vocabulary gap-fill

Complete each sentence with **ONE** word from the box.

Word bank: interrupt · clarify · concern · record · paraphrase · push back

1. Can you ____ what you mean by 'soon'?

2. Sorry to ____ — quick question on that number.

3. Can I raise one ____ before we close?

4. Just to put my one concern on the ____...

5. Let me ____ that to check I understood: you want the deck by Wednesday, not Thursday.

6. I want to ____ ____ on the timeline — it's tighter than it looks.

2. should / ought to / had better / don't have to

Choose the best modal for the meaning.

1. (general advice) You ____ read the minutes even when you attended.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. (optional) You ____ join the Friday drinks — it's genuinely optional.

3. (real consequence if you don't) You ____ tell your boss BEFORE she sees the client email.

4. (formal advice to a peer) You ____ copy Legal on that reply.

5. (reassurance) You ____ apologise — it wasn't your mistake.

6. (warning) We ____ leave now or we'll miss the whole first session.

3. Polite or blunt?

For each pair, choose the version that will land better in a professional meeting.

1. Disagreeing:

(A) You're wrong.

(B) I see it slightly differently — can I share why?

2. Clarifying:

(A) What?

(B) Just to check my understanding — you mean by Friday?

3. Interrupting:

(A) Stop.

(B) Sorry to jump in, but quick question.

4. Raising a concern:

(A) This is a bad idea.

(B) Can I raise one concern before we close?

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake.

1. You had better to tell her before Monday.

2. You don't have not to speak.

3. You ought send the summary today.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. Maybe you should to raise it in the meeting.

5. Listening — three colleagues after a rushed decision

Three colleagues talk about the same meeting where a proposal was pushed through without proper discussion. Decide who handled it well — and who didn't.

1. Which colleague RAISED the concern in the meeting?

2. Which one PUT IT ON THE RECORD in writing within 24 hours?

3. Which one REGRETS staying silent?

Voice A: Honestly, I sat there. I disagreed, but I said nothing and I wrote nothing. Now it just looks like I agreed. That's on me.

Voice B: I asked one question. 'Can I raise one concern before we close? What happens to the two clients who asked for monthly?' It didn't derail anything — but my name was on the concern.

Voice C: I don't process fast enough live. I sent one paragraph within 24 hours: one risk, one mitigation, 'happy to be wrong — just wanted this on the record'. Three weeks later, one of the two clients left. That email mattered.

6. Writing — your own mailbox reply

Choose *ONE* letter from the class mailbox (lead-in) that you did *NOT* answer in class. Write a 3-sentence reply. Use *AT LEAST* two modals from this lesson (should, ought to, had better, don't have to, mustn't). Max 60 words.

7. Case study reflection

Look ahead to Case Study 6. Answer briefly.

1. In your team, who is most likely to stay silent when they disagree — and why?

2. What *ONE* rule would you introduce next Monday to make speaking up easier?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Class Book

Reading · Three ways to disagree without being 'that person'

1. (A) Nobody hears you
2. (B) A way to make it about the work, not the person
3. (B) So there's a professional record if you turn out to be right
1. (B) False
2. (A) True
3. (B) False
4. (B) False
5. (A) True
1. Model: I do 'ask before you argue' naturally. The 24-hour written-note move is new — I usually just let it go.
2. Model: name the risk with a number. 'I'm 70% worried about the timeline.' A number lands harder than 'I'm worried'.
1. raise a risk
2. lock (something) in
3. trigger a defence
4. put on the record

Vocabulary · Speaking up politely

1. jump in
2. check
3. raise
4. see
5. clear
6. clarify
1. (D) postpone
2. (D) agenda
3. (D) abrupt
1. politeness
2. clarity
3. respect
4. confidence
5. honesty

Grammar · should / ought to / had better · don't have to

1. should / ought to
2. don't have to
3. had better
4. ought to
5. don't have to
6. 'd better
1. You had better tell her before Monday.
2. You don't have to speak.
3. You ought to send the summary today.
4. Maybe you should raise it in the meeting.
1. Model: 'I think you should send it — the sooner the better.'
2. Model: 'Honestly, you'd better tell your boss now — before someone else does.'
3. Model: 'Maybe you shouldn't reply right now — sleep on it.'
4. Model: 'You ought to copy HR on this — just to have it on the record.'
1. Model: 'You shouldn't accept evening calls as the default. You ought to ask for a written summary or rotate the slot with a colleague. You don't have to justify sleeping.'
2. Model: 'You had better raise it in a private 1-to-1 — soon. You shouldn't tolerate public feedback if it makes you shut down. You mustn't assume he knows how it lands.'
1. Model: 'You should stop replying to emails after 8 p.m. — you're training people to expect it. You don't have to be always-on to be senior.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. better
2. think
3. don't have to
4. Actually / ought to

Listening · Three colleagues, one difficult meeting

1. A proposal to move all client reviews from monthly to quarterly — presented as 'basically decided' with 3 minutes for questions.
2. Voice B — asked one clear question ('what happens to the two clients who explicitly asked for monthly?').
3. Voice C — sent a calm one-paragraph email 'just to put my one concern on the record'.
 1. Not speaking up and not writing anything down — 'now it just looks like I agreed'.
 2. 'Can I raise one concern before we close?'
3. One specific risk, ONE proposed mitigation, and 'happy to be wrong — just wanted this on the record'.
 1. Both worked. Voice B raised the concern live; Voice C created a paper trail. The worst outcome was Voice A's silence with no follow-up.
 2. Because silence in a meeting looks like agreement — and there's no record to say otherwise.
 1. agreed
 2. raise / concern
 3. record
 4. wrong

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. clarify
2. interrupt
3. concern
4. record
5. paraphrase
6. push back

2. should / ought to / had better / don't have to

1. should / ought to
2. don't have to
3. had better
4. ought to
5. don't have to
6. 'd better

3. Polite or blunt?

1. (B) I see it slightly differently — can I share why?
2. (B) Just to check my understanding — you mean by Friday?
3. (B) Sorry to jump in, but quick question.
4. (B) Can I raise one concern before we close?

4. Find and fix the mistake

1. You had better tell her before Monday.
2. You don't have to speak.
3. You ought to send the summary today.
4. Maybe you should raise it in the meeting.

5. Listening — three colleagues after a rushed decision

1. Voice B — asked one clear, specific question before the room closed the topic.
2. Voice C — sent a calm one-paragraph email with one risk and one mitigation.
3. Voice A — 'now it just looks like I agreed'.

7. Case study reflection

1. Model: the newest hires. They still think 'raising a concern' will make them look negative. They're wrong, but nobody has told them yet.
2. Model: at every meeting close, the chair has to ask: 'anyone got one concern before we close?' — five seconds of silence, then move on.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



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



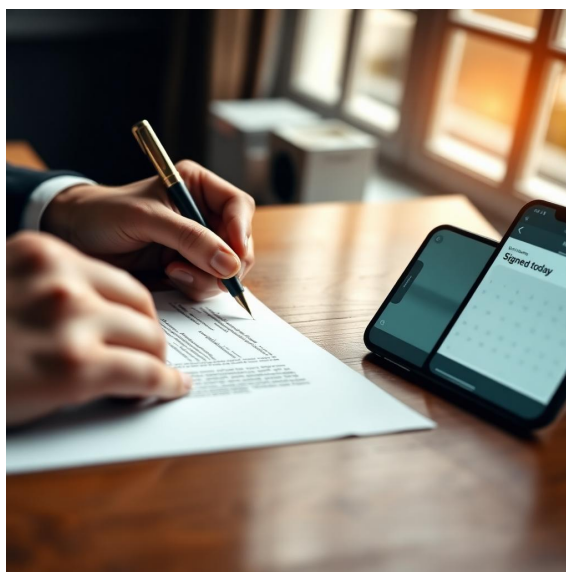
1. to negotiate → a ____

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.'

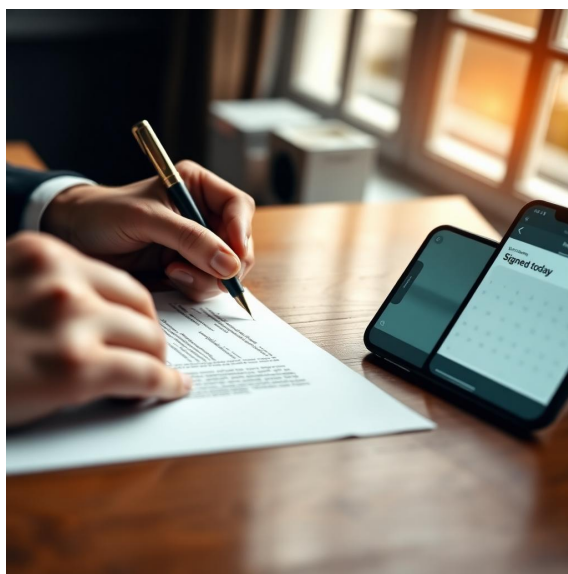
A: Student A: offer a clear next step in 5–7 days with a small commitment.

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



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 7 · B1·7B

When customers complain

Theme · Sales & customers



Unit 7 · B1·7B

When customers complain

Theme: Sales & customers

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Handle a customer complaint in three calm steps — acknowledge, verify, resolve.
- Use quantifiers (some / any / much / many / few / little / most / no) accurately in customer-service writing.
- Turn a 1-star review into a public reply that a future customer will trust.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · Your last complaint

Think of the last time YOU complained about something as a customer. Answer three questions in one sentence each.

What was the complaint about, in 5 words?

Was it handled well or badly? What was the ONE thing that made the difference?

Did you ever buy from that company again — why or why not?

Lead-in: guess what the customer really wants

Six customers arrive angry. For each one, don't guess the problem — guess what they actually want the company to DO. Vote (A) an apology, (B) a refund, (C) a replacement, (D) an explanation, or (E) to be heard. Peek at the reveal only after you've committed.

kind: guess-complaint

1. **emoji:** ■ · **title:** The wrong-size shoes · **situation:** Marta ordered size 39 boots for a wedding on Saturday. She opened the box on Thursday — size 41. She's writing to customer service on Thursday evening. · **answer:** C — a replacement, fast. What she actually wants is size 39 boots at her door by Saturday morning. A refund solves nothing — the wedding is Saturday.

2. **emoji:** ■■ · **title:** The 45-minute wait · **situation:** A couple sat at a restaurant for 45 minutes before their food arrived. The food was fine. They paid in full, left, and the next day posted a 2-star Google review. · **answer:** E — to be heard. They paid in full and left — they don't want money. They want the manager to see the review and reply publicly. Silence will lose the next twenty customers who read it.

3. **emoji:** ■ · **title:** The double charge · **situation:** João was charged twice for the same €89 subscription — once on the 3rd and again on the 5th. He noticed on the 10th and emails support, calmly. · **answer:** B — a refund, but also D — an explanation. He wants the €89 back today, and one clear sentence telling him it won't happen again. If he only gets the refund, he still doesn't trust the system.

4. **emoji:** ■ · **title:** The birthday parcel that never came · **situation:** Isabel ordered her daughter's birthday present two weeks in advance. On the birthday itself, the tracking still says 'in transit — depot'. She calls customer service in tears. · **answer:** A + E — a real apology, and someone to actually LISTEN. A refund won't fix the birthday. The best rep will name the problem out loud ('this shouldn't have happened, I'm so sorry'), then offer a same-day digital gift the child can open, then the refund.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



5. **emoji:** 🤔 · **title:** The confusing bill · **situation:** A small-business owner opens his mobile bill and it's €280 higher than last month. He can't see WHY — the line items are opaque. He calls the network, polite but firm. · **answer:** D — an explanation FIRST, then possibly a partial refund. He isn't accusing the company of a scam. He wants someone to walk him through the €280 line by line. If the explanation is clear, he'll often accept it. If it's evasive, he cancels.

6. **emoji:** 😡 · **title:** The dirty hotel room · **situation:** Amara checks into a business hotel at 11pm after a long flight. The room clearly hasn't been cleaned. Hair on the pillow. She's exhausted and has meetings at 8am. · **answer:** C — a replacement (a different, clean room, tonight, no forms) — plus A, an apology at reception. She does not want to discuss compensation at 11pm. Compensation can be offered by email tomorrow, unprompted.

followUp: Which of the six is the HARDEST case to handle? Rank the top two.

Reading · The three-step complaint recovery

Most complaints don't fail because the customer is unreasonable. They fail because the company answers step three before doing steps one and two. There are three steps, in order, and skipping the order is what makes an angry customer leave forever.

Step one: acknowledge. Not 'sorry you feel that way' — that isn't an apology, it's a defence. A real acknowledgement names the specific thing that went wrong. 'Your parcel didn't arrive on your daughter's birthday. That shouldn't have happened.' Some customers only need this step. They already know it's not personal — they need to know you know.

Step two: verify. This is the step most companies skip. Ask a few short questions to make sure you're solving the right problem. 'Can I check the order number?' 'Was it charged to the same card?' Most support scripts jump straight to a refund, and half the time the refund is for the wrong issue entirely.

Step three: resolve. Offer ONE specific thing, not three vague ones. 'I've refunded the €89 to your card — you'll see it in three working days, and I've flagged your account so this can't repeat.' Notice the sentence: what happened, when it will be fixed, and how you've protected them from a repeat. Few customer-service replies contain all three — most contain none.

1. According to the text, why do most complaints fail?
 - (A) Customers are unreasonable
 - (B) Companies answer step three before doing steps one and two
 - (C) There aren't enough support staff
2. What's wrong with 'sorry you feel that way'?
 - (A) Nothing
 - (B) It's a defence, not an apology
 - (C) It's too formal

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



3. Which step do most companies skip?

- (A) Acknowledge
- (B) Verify
- (C) Resolve

Vocabulary in context

Match the phrase to the meaning.

acknowledge (a problem) — name it clearly without defending

verify — ask short questions to confirm the real issue

resolve — offer one specific fix

flag an account — mark it so a problem can't repeat

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text, choose the correct option.

1. The three steps can be done in any order.

- (A) True
- (B) False
- (C) Not Given

2. 'Sorry you feel that way' is a real apology.

- (A) True
- (B) False
- (C) Not Given

3. Some customers only need the acknowledgement step.

- (A) True
- (B) False
- (C) Not Given

4. Verification usually takes at least ten questions.

- (A) True
- (B) False
- (C) Not Given

5. A good resolution sentence names the fix, the timing and how repeats are prevented.

- (A) True
- (B) False
- (C) Not Given

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



React to the text

Discuss briefly.

1. Which step does YOUR company (or a company you know) skip most often?

2. Is there a fourth step you'd add?

Scan for meaning

Find the phrase in the text that matches each definition.

1. name a problem without defending yourself

2. confirm the real issue with short questions

3. offer one specific fix

4. mark an account so a problem can't repeat

Vocabulary · Complaint & recovery language

a complaint — a formal expression that something went wrong

a refund — the money reimbursed to the client

a replacement — a new item to replace the faulty one

a chargeback — the client disputes the charge with their bank (bad for you)

goodwill — an extra gesture not required — free shipping, credit, upgrade

a formal escalation — the complaint moved up to a manager or a regulator

to acknowledge — name the friction point clearly, without being defensive

to verify — confirm the details with short questions

to resolve — close the issue with one specific action

to escalate — pass the case up the chain

to compensate — offer something (money, credit, upgrade) to make up for it

to follow up — contact the client proactively after the fix

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



practice

Complete each sentence with *ONE* word or phrase.

1. I'd like to ____ the delay — that shouldn't have happened.

2. Before I ____, can I check the order number?

3. I've processed the ____ — €89 back to your card in three working days.

4. As a ____ gesture, I've added €20 credit to your account.

5. If you'd prefer, I can ____ this to my manager today.

6. I'll ____ on Friday to make sure everything's now sorted.

Collocations · complaint verbs

Match the verb with the noun/phrase.

- issue** — a refund
- resolve** — a complaint
- offer** — a replacement
- escalate** — to a manager
- flag** — an account
- restore** — trust

Odd one out

Choose the word that does *NOT* belong.

1. refund · replacement · discount · discovery call
 - (A) refund
 - (B) replacement
 - (C) discount
 - (D) discovery call

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. acknowledge · verify · resolve · postpone

(A) acknowledge

(B) verify

(C) resolve

(D) postpone

3. goodwill · credit · upgrade · invoice

(A) goodwill

(B) credit

(C) upgrade

(D) invoice

Word building · verb ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

1. to apologise → an ____

2. to compensate → ____

3. to resolve → a ____

4. to complain → a ____

5. to escalate → an ____



Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Grammar · Quantifiers — some / any / much / many / few / little / most / no

- 1. some / any** — • some → positive: 'We received some complaints this week.' • any → negative and questions: 'We didn't receive any complaints.' / 'Did you receive any complaints?' • BUT some in polite offers/requests: 'Would you like some help?'
- 2. much / many / a lot of** — • many + countable plural: 'many customers, many refunds' • much + uncountable: 'much time, much information' • a lot of → both, in positive sentences: 'a lot of complaints / a lot of feedback'
- 3. few / a few · little / a little** — • a few = some (positive): 'We had a few complaints — nothing serious.' • few = almost none (negative feel): 'We had few complaints — under 5.' • a little = some (positive, uncountable): 'a little patience' • little = almost none: 'little patience'
- 4. most / no** — • most of + specific group: 'Most of our customers renew.' / most + general: 'Most customers renew.' • no + noun (strong): 'We received no complaints this month.' • not any (softer): 'We didn't receive any complaints.'
- 5. Customer-service safe patterns** — • 'Some of our customers reported this — thank you for flagging it.' ■ • 'A few users experienced a delay.' ■ (small number, no drama) • 'Very few customers were affected.' ■ (reassures without lying) • ■ Avoid: 'many customers had this issue' when you mean 'a few' — it inflames.

Exercise A — some or any?

Complete with *some* or *any*.

1. We received ____ negative reviews this week — all handled.

2. We haven't had ____ chargebacks this quarter.

3. Did you receive ____ email from support today?

4. Would you like ____ help with the return?

5. There isn't ____ record of your call — could you send me the reference?

Exercise B — much, many, or a lot of?

Complete with the *right quantifier*.

1. How ____ complaints did we get this week?

2. There isn't ____ time before the client calls back.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



3. We got ____ feedback after the launch — mostly positive.

4. I don't have ____ information yet — I'll write back once I do.

5. How ____ patience do you think this case needs?

Exercise C — few vs a few · little vs a little

Choose the version that gives the right FEELING.

1. (reassuring) 'Very ____ customers experienced the outage — under 200 in total.'

2. (reassuring) 'We had ____ complaints — nothing serious.'

3. (negative — 'almost none') 'The team had ____ patience left after 6 hours of angry calls.'

4. (positive — 'some') 'Give the case manager ____ time — she'll come back with a proper answer.'

Exercise D — write the customer-service reply

Rewrite each blunt sentence into a customer-service sentence using a quantifier that reassures without lying.

1. 'Lots of people had this problem.' (bad — inflames)

2. 'We got no negative feedback.' (bad — sounds like a lie)

3. 'There's not much I can do.' (bad — gives up)

4. 'Any customer would be upset.' (bad — abstract)

Exercise E — a customer-service email

Write a 4-sentence customer-service email using AT LEAST four different quantifiers.

1. The customer's parcel is 5 days late.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Exercise F — find and fix

Each sentence has *ONE* quantifier mistake.

1. We didn't receive some complaints today.

2. I don't have many information about your case yet.

3. Very a few customers reported this issue.

4. Most of customers renew after year one.

Listening · The 1-star review that changed the restaurant

A restaurant owner talks about the *ONE* 1-star Google review that made her rewrite her whole complaint policy. Listen for what the customer complained about, what she did wrong the first time, and the three changes she made afterwards.

pre

Have you ever written a bad online review? Did the company reply — and did the reply change your mind?

What's the **WORST** way you've seen a business reply to a bad review?

gist

1. What was the customer's original complaint?

2. What did the owner do wrong in the first reply?

3. What are the three changes the owner made afterwards?

detail

1. Why did the customer edit the review from 2 stars to 1?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. What does the owner now write in the FIRST line of every reply?

3. How many customers, per year, has this policy converted from angry to loyal, according to the owner?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is *IMPLIED*.

1. Is the owner primarily solving for the ONE angry customer, or for the twenty future customers reading the reply?

2. Would her approach work for every complaint?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does.

"Thank you for writing this — I read every one personally." — opens with acknowledgement, in the first sentence

"We were unusually busy that night." — the defensive line that made things worse

"I'm sorry we let you down on Friday." — names the specific thing without defending

"Come back — dinner for two, on me." — the make-good, offered privately by DM

"The reply was worse than the wait." — the sentence that made her rewrite her policy

Voice A: So — the ONE 1-star review that changed everything. Tell me.

Voice B: 45-minute wait for food, Friday night, place was packed. The food, when it arrived, was fine. Service was distracted. She paid in full, said nothing, and 24 hours later there was a 2-star Google review. My first reply — I'm embarrassed now — was defensive. I wrote 'we were unusually busy that night, and all our staff were doing their best'. Within an hour, she edited the review down to 1 star and added: 'the reply was worse than the wait'. That sentence has been in my head for two years.

Voice A: What changed?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Voice B: Three things. One: I now reply personally to every review under 4 stars, within 24 hours. Two: I never defend in the public reply. I acknowledge, I name the specific thing, I don't make excuses. 'Thank you for writing this — I read every one of these personally, and I'm sorry we let you down on Friday.' Three: the make-good is offered privately, in a DM. 'Come back — dinner for two, on me.' Never in public. The public reply is for the twenty future customers reading it. The DM is for the one customer in front of you.

Voice A: Does it work?

Voice B: About 40 a year accept the make-good. 70% of those become regulars. It costs me maybe €2,000 in food. It saves me — I can't even calculate. A 4.9 rating instead of a 4.3, on the platform where 80% of my bookings come from.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases from the audio.

1. The reply was ____ than the ____.

2. I read every one of these ____.

3. I'm sorry we let you ____ on Friday.

4. Come back — dinner for two, on ____.

5. The public reply is for the twenty future customers ____ it.

Speaking · The 60-second complaint recovery

Choose ONE recent complaint (real or realistic). Prepare a 60-second oral recovery. Use AT LEAST one acknowledgement, one verification question, one specific resolution — and AT LEAST two different quantifiers (some / any / much / many / few / little / most / no).

Scene: The wrong-size boots (from lead-in)

A: You: customer service. It's Thursday evening, wedding is Saturday. Save this customer.

B: You: Marta. React — accept the fix, push for more, or walk away.

Scene: The double charge

A: You: customer service. Refund AND explain in one calm minute.

B: You: João. React — accept, push for goodwill, or escalate.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

**Scene:** The 2-star Google review

A: You: the owner. Reply in ONE minute out loud — public version.

B: You: a future customer reading the reply. Judge — would you book or scroll on?

Class discussion

Discuss briefly.

Which is worse for your business — the one angry customer, or the twenty future customers reading how you replied?

In your culture, is 'the customer is always right' true, or is it more nuanced?

What is the ONE customer-service rule you'd introduce tomorrow if you ran a small shop?

Role-play · replying to a public review

Student A: a business owner. Student B: an angry customer who has just posted a 2-star public review. A writes a 3-sentence public reply out loud (acknowledge → don't defend → invite to DM). B is the same customer, reading it. B decides: leave it at 2 stars, edit down to 1, or edit up to 3.

Scene: A late delivery on a birthday

A: Student A: owner. Reply publicly in 3 sentences, offer make-good in DM.

B: Student B: the customer. React — soften, harden, or update the review.

Scene: A rude waiter

A: Student A: restaurant owner. Reply publicly — no excuses about staffing.

B: Student B: the customer. React — accept a private make-good, or double down publicly.

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: acknowledge · verify · refund · goodwill · escalate · follow up

1. I'd like to ____ the delay — that shouldn't have happened.

2. Before I resolve this, can I ____ the order number?

3. I've processed the ____ — €89 back to your card in three working days.

4. As a ____ gesture, I've added €20 credit to your account.

5. If you'd prefer, I can ____ this to my manager today.

6. I'll ____ on Friday to make sure everything's now sorted.

2. Quantifiers — some / any / much / many / few / little / most / no

Complete each customer-service sentence with the best quantifier.

1. We received ____ complaints this week — all handled.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



-
2. We haven't had ____ chargebacks this quarter.
-
3. There isn't ____ time before the client calls back.
-
4. How ____ negative reviews did we get last month?
-
5. Very ____ customers experienced the outage — under 200 in total. (reassuring)
-
6. We had ____ ____ complaints — nothing serious. (small number, no drama)
-
7. Give the case manager ____ ____ time — she'll come back with a proper answer.
-
8. ____ customers renew after year one — retention is our strongest number.
-

3. Choose the version that will land better

In each pair, which reply will a real customer accept?

1. Opening a complaint reply:
- (A) 'Sorry you feel that way.'
 - (B) 'Your parcel didn't arrive on your daughter's birthday — that shouldn't have happened, and I'm sorry.'
2. After a double charge:
- (A) 'We've refunded you.'
 - (B) 'I've refunded the €89 to your card — you'll see it in three working days, and I've flagged your account so this can't repeat.'
3. Reply to a 2-star Google review:
- (A) 'We were unusually busy that night — all our staff were doing their best.'
 - (B) 'Thank you for writing this — I read every one personally, and I'm sorry we let you down on Friday.'
4. Reassuring during an outage:
- (A) 'Lots of people had this problem.'
 - (B) 'A few users experienced this — including you. We've fixed the cause and I've credited your account.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has *ONE* quantifier mistake.

1. We didn't receive some complaints today.

2. I don't have many information about your case yet.

3. Very a few customers reported this issue.

4. Most of customers renew after year one.

5. Listening — the 1-star review that changed the restaurant

A restaurant owner talks about the *ONE* 1-star review that made her rewrite her whole complaint policy. Decide what she got *WRONG* the first time and what she now does *INSTEAD*.

1. What did the owner write in her *FIRST* reply that made things worse?

2. What is her *NEW* opening line for every reply under 4 stars?

3. Where is the make-good ('dinner for two, on me') now offered — public reply or private DM?

Voice A: The *ONE* 1-star review that changed everything — tell me.

Voice B: 45-minute wait, Friday night. Food was fine when it arrived. She paid, left, and posted a 2-star review the next day. My first reply — I'm embarrassed now — was defensive: 'we were unusually busy that night, all our staff were doing their best'. Within an hour she edited the review down to 1 star and wrote: 'the reply was worse than the wait'. That sentence has been in my head for two years.

Voice A: So what did you change?

Voice B: Three things. One: I reply personally to every review under 4 stars within 24 hours. Two: I acknowledge, name the specific thing, no excuses. 'Thank you for writing this — I'm sorry we let you down on Friday.' Three: the make-good is offered privately, in a DM. 'Come back — dinner for two, on me.' Never in public. The public reply is for the twenty future customers reading it. The DM is for the one customer in front of you.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



6. Writing — turn a bad review into a public reply

You're the owner of a small business. A customer has posted this 2-star review: 'Ordered a birthday cake for Saturday. Arrived on Sunday. Ruined the party. Very disappointed.' Write a 3-sentence PUBLIC reply that acknowledges, does not defend, and invites them to DM for a make-good. Then write the 2-sentence DM. Use AT LEAST two different quantifiers.

7. Case study reflection

Look ahead to Case Study 7 (Florista Alma). Answer briefly.

1. The bakery has lost 52 subscribers in 6 months — silently. Nobody complained. What is your first question to Sofia?

2. Sofia refuses to compete on price. Name ONE non-price advantage you'd protect first.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Class Book

Reading · The three-step complaint recovery

1. (B) Companies answer step three before doing steps one and two
2. (B) It's a defence, not an apology
3. (B) Verify
1. (B) False
2. (B) False
3. (A) True
4. (C) Not Given
5. (A) True
1. Model: step two, verify. We jump to refund because it's fast, but we refund the wrong thing half the time and the customer still complains.
2. Model: step four — proactive follow-up. A 48-hour 'just checking everything's now sorted' email flips a mediocre recovery into a loyal customer.
1. acknowledge
2. verify
3. resolve
4. flag an account

Vocabulary · Complaint & recovery language

1. acknowledge
2. verify
3. refund
4. goodwill
5. escalate
6. follow up
1. (D) discovery call
2. (D) postpone
3. (D) invoice
1. apology
2. compensation
3. resolution
4. complaint / complainant
5. escalation

Grammar · Quantifiers — some / any / much / many / few / little / most / no

1. some
2. any
3. any
4. some
5. any
1. many
2. much
3. a lot of
4. much
5. much
1. few
2. a few
3. little
4. a little
1. Model: 'A few users experienced this — including you. We've fixed the underlying cause and I've credited your account.'
2. Model: 'We received very few negative reports — yours was one of them, and I appreciate you writing in.'
3. Model: 'There are a few things I can do straight away — a full refund, a 3-month credit, or a same-day replacement. Which works best for you?'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. Model: 'Any customer in your position would be frustrated, and honestly, I would be too — here's what we're doing about it today.'

1. Model: 'A few of our routes had delays this week — yours was one of them, and I'm sorry. There isn't much I can do about the shipping company itself, but I've upgraded your next order to next-day at no cost, and I've refunded most of the shipping fee from this order. Very few customers see this — you shouldn't have been one of them.'

1. We didn't receive any complaints today.

2. I don't have much information about your case yet.

3. Very few customers reported this issue.

4. Most customers renew after year one. (OR: Most of our customers renew after year one.)

Listening · The 1-star review that changed the restaurant

1. 45-minute wait for food on a Friday night. The food was fine, service was distracted. She paid in full, left, and posted a 2-star review the next day.

2. She defended — 'we were unusually busy, all our staff were doing their best' — and the customer edited the review down to 1 star out of frustration.

3. (1) she now replies personally to every review under 4 stars, within 24 hours. (2) she never defends in a public reply — only acknowledges. (3) she offers a specific make-good ('come back — dinner for two, on me') by DM, never in public.

1. Because the defensive reply made her feel unheard. She said: 'the reply was worse than the wait.'

2. 'Thank you for writing this — I read every one of these personally, and I'm sorry we let you down on [date].'

3. About 40 — she tracks the ones who accept the make-good and come back. Around 70% become regulars.

1. The twenty future customers. She says the review is 'a public conversation' — the specific customer might not come back, but the tone of the reply decides whether the next twenty book.

2. Not automatically. For a real safety issue (hair in food, allergy mistake), she'd go further — a call, a full refund, a formal write-up. The 3-step reply is for service-quality complaints, not safety.

1. worse / wait

2. personally

3. down

4. me

5. reading

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. acknowledge
2. verify
3. refund
4. goodwill
5. escalate
6. follow up

2. Quantifiers — some / any / much / many / few / little / most / no

1. some
2. any
3. much
4. many
5. few
6. a few
7. a little
8. Most

3. Choose the version that will land better

1. (B) 'Your parcel didn't arrive on your daughter's birthday — that shouldn't have happened, and I'm sorry.'
2. (B) 'I've refunded the €89 to your card — you'll see it in three working days, and I've flagged your account so this can't repeat.'
3. (B) 'Thank you for writing this — I read every one personally, and I'm sorry we let you down on Friday.'
4. (B) 'A few users experienced this — including you. We've fixed the cause and I've credited your account.'

4. Find and fix the mistake

1. We didn't receive any complaints today.
2. I don't have much information about your case yet.
3. Very few customers reported this issue.
4. Most customers renew after year one. (OR: Most of our customers renew after year one.)

5. Listening — the 1-star review that changed the restaurant

1. She defended — 'we were unusually busy, all our staff were doing their best' — and the customer edited the review down from 2 to 1 star and added 'the reply was worse than the wait'.
2. 'Thank you for writing this — I read every one of these personally, and I'm sorry we let you down on [date].'
— acknowledgement, in the first sentence, no defence.
3. Private DM only. The public reply is for the twenty future customers reading it. The DM is for the one customer in front of you.

7. Case study reflection

1. Model: 'When was the last time a driver actually TALKED to any of the 52 who cancelled? — because silent churn almost always means we stopped noticing them before they stopped paying.'
2. Model: the driver who knows every customer's name. That's the thing BreadFlow can't copy, ever. Fund whatever protects that — not a discount.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 8 · B1·8A

When things go wrong

Theme · Problems & solutions

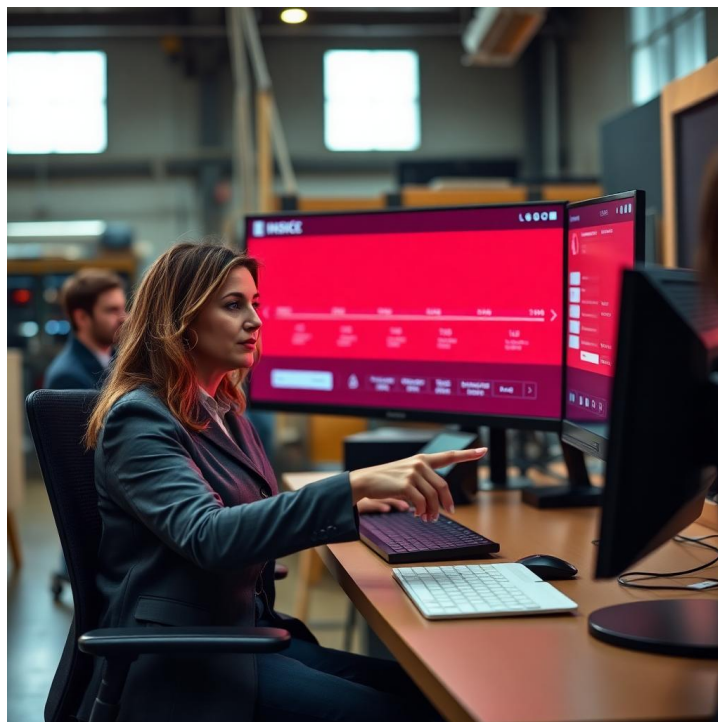


Unit 8 · B1·8A

When things go wrong

Theme: Problems & solutions

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Describe a workplace incident using past continuous + past simple ('I was writing the report when the system crashed').
- Report a problem calmly, in the right order: what happened, what you did, what you need.
- Use six high-frequency 'problem' verbs and nouns you can drop into any status update.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · The last small disaster at work

Think of the *LAST* small thing that went wrong at work — a missed deadline, a wrong file, a broken meeting link. Answer three questions in one sentence each.

What were you doing when it went wrong?

What did you do first?

Looking back, what would you do differently?

Lead-in: what happened next?

Four workplace situations. For each one, choose the option that describes the *MOST* professional next move. There is one clearly better answer per case.

kind: scenarios

1. **title:** The wrong attachment · **setup:** You sent an internal salary spreadsheet to the whole company instead of just HR. You realise 3 minutes after sending.

2. **title:** The client demo crashes · **setup:** You're 4 minutes into a live client demo. The software freezes on your laptop. The client can see the frozen screen.

3. **title:** The delivery goes to the wrong address · **setup:** A €4,000 shipment arrived at a customer's OLD address today. They just called, calm but firm.

4. **title:** Silent bug for two weeks · **setup:** You discover an invoicing bug that has slightly overcharged 40 customers for the past 14 days. No one has complained yet.

followUp: Which of your answers was the closest call? Explain in one sentence.

Reading · The three-sentence status update

The best status updates when something goes wrong are always three sentences long. Sentence one is what happened, in plain language, no jargon and no blame. Sentence two is what you have done in the last hour — a concrete action, not a plan. Sentence three is what you need from the reader — a decision, a resource, or nothing at all.

Most bad status updates fail at sentence one. They open with excuses — 'as you know, the vendor has been having issues since Tuesday' — or with drama — 'this is a disaster'. Both waste the reader's attention. A calm, factual first sentence ('The payment gateway went down at 09:14 this morning') tells the reader you're in control before you've said what you did.

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Sentence two is where trust is built or lost. 'We're looking into it' loses trust. 'I've routed all payments to the backup provider and 78% of orders are going through' builds it. Numbers, verbs in the past, specific actions — those three things separate a professional update from a panicked one.

Sentence three is the one most people forget. If you don't ask for anything, the reader has to guess whether they need to act. Even 'no action needed from you — I'll send the next update at 14:00' is better than silence. Silence in a crisis feels a lot like abandonment.

1. How long should the ideal status update be?
 - (A) One paragraph
 - (B) Three sentences
 - (C) As long as the situation needs
2. According to the text, why is 'we're looking into it' a bad phrase?
 - (A) It's too formal
 - (B) It gives no concrete action, so it loses trust
 - (C) It's grammatically wrong
3. What is the most-forgotten sentence?
 - (A) The apology
 - (B) What you need from the reader
 - (C) The greeting

Vocabulary in context

Match the phrase to the meaning.

in plain language — without jargon or drama

a concrete action — something you have actually done, not planned

to route (traffic / payments) to — to send them via a different path

no action needed — the reader does not have to do anything

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text.

1. A good status update should be about one paragraph long.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
2. Opening with an excuse wastes the reader's attention.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

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3. 'We're looking into it' is worse than a specific action with a number.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
4. Every status update should include an apology.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
5. Silence is the safest choice when you don't have a solution yet.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly.

1. In your company, do people update calmly or dramatically when something goes wrong?

2. Is 'no action needed from you' polite or lazy in your language?

Scan for meaning

Find the phrase in the text that matches each definition.

1. without jargon and without blame

2. something you actually did, not something you plan

3. an update that admits the reader doesn't have to do anything

Vocabulary · Six 'problem' verbs and nouns

an issue / a bug — a small technical or process friction point

an incident — the neutral word for something that went wrong (favoured in reports)

a workaround — a temporary fix that keeps things running

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root cause — the real underlying reason, not the symptom

a delay — when something is slower than expected

an outage — when a system is completely unavailable

to escalate — to hand a friction point to a more senior person

to roll back — to undo a recent change and return to the previous version

to trigger — to make something start (usually accidentally)

to spot — to notice early

to flag — to mark for attention

to resolve — to close a problem completely

practice

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

1. We've applied a temporary ____ so orders keep going through while we fix the real bug.

2. The 09:14 ____ affected roughly 12% of transactions for 40 minutes.

3. I've ____ the ticket to my team lead — she can approve the refund.

4. We ____ the deployment at 09:15 and traffic recovered within 5 minutes.

5. The ____ of the issue was a badly configured cache, not the payment provider.

6. Please ____ any similar errors in the ticket so we can track them.

Collocations · common problem phrases

Match the verb with the noun.

identify — the root cause

apply — a workaround

report — an incident

cause — an outage

resolve — an issue

escalate — a ticket

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**Odd one out**

Choose the word that does NOT belong.

1. issue · bug · outage · deadline

(A) issue

(B) bug

(C) outage

(D) deadline

2. roll back · escalate · workaround · celebrate

(A) roll back

(B) escalate

(C) workaround

(D) celebrate

3. spot · flag · resolve · postpone

(A) spot

(B) flag

(C) resolve

(D) postpone

Word building · verb ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

1. to resolve → a ____

2. to delay → a ____

3. to escalate → an ____

4. to fail → a ____

5. to recover → a ____

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Grammar · Past continuous + past simple (interrupted action)

1. Form: past continuous = was/were + verb-ing — • I was writing the report at 9am. • The team was testing the new release when ...

2. Interrupted action: past continuous (background) + past simple (interruption) — • I was writing the report when the system crashed. • We were rolling out the update when we spotted the bug.

3. Two parallel actions in the past: while + past continuous — • While I was calling the vendor, my colleague was writing to the client. • While we were rolling back, the phones started ringing.

4. State verbs (know, understand, own, need) — no continuous — • I knew there was a problem. (NOT: I was knowing.) • We needed help. (NOT: We were needing help.)

5. Time markers: at 09:14 / at that moment / when + past simple — • At 09:14 we were still processing payments normally. • When the alert came in, three of us were already on the call.

Exercise A — put the verbs in the correct tense

Past continuous OR past simple.

1. I (write) the report when the system (crash).

2. We (test) the new release when we (spot) the bug.

3. While I (call) the vendor, my colleague (write) to the client.

4. At 09:14 we (still / process) payments normally.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



5. When the alert (come) in, three of us (already / be) on the call.

6. The team (roll out) the update when the site (go) down.

Exercise B — find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake.

1. I was knowing there was a problem.

2. When the system crashed, I write the report.

3. While we rolled back the update, the phones were start ringing.

4. The team was need help immediately.

Exercise C — join the two events

Combine each pair using past continuous + past simple.

1. I / write the email — my manager / call me

2. We / test the demo — the wifi / drop

3. She / present to the client — the fire alarm / go off

4. The team / deploy the fix — a second bug / appear

Exercise D — write your own incident line

Write ONE sentence about a real (or plausible) work incident using past continuous + past simple.

1. A wifi drop during a client call.

2. A file lost right before a deadline.

3. A colleague resigned in a difficult week.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Exercise E — the three-sentence status update

Write a three-sentence status update for each incident, using past continuous + past simple in sentence one.

1. The payment gateway went down at 09:14 for 40 minutes.

2. You sent an internal spreadsheet to the whole company by mistake.

Listening · Three status updates, one outage

The same 40-minute payment-gateway outage. Three team leads brief the CEO on Slack voice-note. Decide which one you'd promote, which one you'd coach, and which one you'd worry about.

pre

In your team, who is the calmest voice when things go wrong?

What's the ONE phrase you're tired of hearing during incidents?

gist

1. Which voice sticks to the three-sentence rule?

2. Which voice opens with excuses?

3. Which voice sounds panicked?

detail

1. What specific action did Voice B take?

2. What is missing from Voice A's update, tactically?

3. Why does Voice C's tone make things worse?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is *IMPLIED*.

1. Which lead does the CEO trust most in a crisis?

2. What should Voice C do BEFORE the next update?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does.

"At 09:14, the gateway went down." — opens with a factual timestamp

"I've routed traffic to the backup — 82% of orders are going through." — reports a concrete action with a number

"No action needed from you — next update at 11:00." — closes with a clear ask or a clear release

"As you know, the vendor has been having issues since Tuesday..." — opens with an excuse

"This is a disaster — we don't know what happened." — signals lost control

Voice A: Hi team, so as you know, the vendor has been having issues since Tuesday, we flagged this to procurement last month, and I want to say we did warn everyone. Anyway, payments went down this morning at some point, we're on it, more info when I have it.

Voice B: Quick update. At 09:14 the payment gateway went down while we were processing the morning batch. I've routed traffic to the backup provider and 82% of orders are going through. No action needed from you — I'll send the next update at 11:00 with the root cause.

Voice C: Hi, hi, so this is a disaster, we don't know what happened yet, everyone is on the call, the vendor isn't answering the phone, I'll come back to you as soon as I know something, but honestly I have no idea when that will be.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases from the audio.

1. At 09:14 the payment gateway ____ down.

2. I've ____ traffic to the backup provider.

3. 82% of orders are going ____.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. No action needed from you — next update at ____.

5. This is a ____ — we don't know what happened.

Speaking · Your 60-second incident debrief

Choose *ONE* real or realistic incident from your work life. Prepare a 60-second oral status update in three sentences: what happened (past continuous + past simple), what you did (past simple + numbers), what you need (or 'no action needed').

Scene: Incident 1 — the missed client email

A: You: an account manager. A client emailed at 08:03 with an urgent question. You saw it at 15:00.

B: You: the head of client success. React — accept, ask for the root cause, or ask what changes tomorrow.

Scene: Incident 2 — the late delivery

A: You: an ops manager. A €4,000 shipment arrived at the customer's OLD address today.

B: You: the CEO. React — accept the plan, push for a bigger goodwill gesture, or ask for the process fix.

Scene: Incident 3 — the wrong invoice

A: You: a finance lead. 40 customers were slightly overcharged for 14 days. Nobody noticed yet.

B: You: the head of legal. React — approve the proactive email, ask for a lawyer review first, or push back on the wording.

Class discussion

Discuss briefly.

In your industry, is 'own the incident' or 'defend the team' the default reflex?

What is the ONE phrase you would ban from status updates in your company?

Is 'no action needed from you' polite or lazy in your language?

Role-play · deliver one bad-news update

Student A gives the three-sentence status update. Student B (the boss) reacts with ONE clarifying question. A answers in ONE calm sentence.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Scene: The launch is 48 hours late.

A: Student A: the project lead. Deliver the three-sentence update.

B: Student B: the CEO. Ask ONE calm question — cause, blame, or plan.

Scene: The server was down for 90 minutes on Black Friday.

A: Student A: the ops lead. Deliver the three-sentence update.

B: Student B: the CFO. Ask ONE calm question — revenue impact, cause, or communication to customers.

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: workaround · outage · escalated · rolled back · root cause · flag

1. We've applied a temporary ____ so orders keep going through.

2. The 09:14 ____ affected 12% of transactions for 40 minutes.

3. I've ____ the ticket to my team lead — she can approve the refund.

4. We ____ the deployment at 09:15 and traffic recovered.

5. The ____ was a badly configured cache, not the payment provider.

6. Please ____ any similar errors so we can track them.

2. Past continuous vs past simple

Put the verbs in the correct tense.

1. I (write) the report when the system (crash).

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. We (test) the release when we (spot) the bug.

3. While I (call) the vendor, my colleague (write) to the client.

4. At 09:14 we (still / process) payments normally.

5. When the alert (come) in, three of us (already / be) on the call.

6. The team (roll out) the update when the site (go) down.

3. Which status update is stronger?

Choose the version that builds MORE trust.

1. Opening line:
 - (A) 'As you know, the vendor has been having issues since Tuesday...'
 - (B) 'At 09:14 the payment gateway went down for 40 minutes.'
 - (C) 'This is a disaster — we don't know what happened.'
2. Sentence two:
 - (A) 'We're looking into it.'
 - (B) 'I've routed traffic to the backup — 82% of orders are going through.'
 - (C) 'The vendor isn't answering the phone.'
3. Sentence three:
 - (A) No sentence three — end there.
 - (B) 'No action needed from you — next update at 11:00.'
 - (C) 'I'll come back when I know something.'
4. Best language for the incident report:
 - (A) 'It's chaos.'
 - (B) 'Root cause: badly configured cache; workaround applied.'
 - (C) 'Everything broke.'

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake.

1. I was knowing there was a problem.
-

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. When the system crashed, I write the report.

3. While we rolled back, the phones were start ringing.

4. The team was need help immediately.

5. Listening — three status updates, one outage

Three team leads brief the CEO on Slack voice-note about the same 40-minute outage. Who would you promote, coach, or worry about?

1. Which voice sticks to the three-sentence rule?

2. Which voice opens with excuses?

3. Which voice sounds panicked?

Voice A: Hi team, so as you know, the vendor has been having issues since Tuesday, we flagged this to procurement last month... anyway, payments went down this morning at some point, we're on it, more info when I have it.

Voice B: Quick update. At 09:14 the payment gateway went down while we were processing the morning batch. I've routed traffic to the backup provider and 82% of orders are going through. No action needed from you — next update at 11:00.

Voice C: So this is a disaster, we don't know what happened yet, everyone is on the call, the vendor isn't answering, I'll come back to you as soon as I know something.

6. Writing — your three-sentence status update

Choose *ONE* real (or realistic) incident from your work life. Write the three-sentence update. Sentence 1: past continuous + past simple ('At 09:14, we were processing... when...'). Sentence 2: past simple with *ONE* concrete action and *ONE* number. Sentence 3: what you need or 'no action needed from you — next update at [time]'. Max 80 words.

7. Case study preview

Before Case Study 8, answer briefly.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. A food-delivery app gets 40 one-star reviews in 48 hours after a bug. Do you reply publicly to each one, or issue one public statement?

2. What is the ONE 'used to' sentence a founder should be able to say honestly by month 6?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Class Book

Reading · The three-sentence status update

1. (B) Three sentences
2. (B) It gives no concrete action, so it loses trust
3. (B) What you need from the reader
1. (B) False
2. (A) True
3. (A) True
4. (C) Not Given
5. (B) False
1. Model: mostly dramatically. Every issue becomes a red-alert email. The result is that real red alerts get ignored.
2. Model: polite — it saves the reader's brain. Only lazy if you use it when action actually IS needed.
1. in plain language, no jargon and no blame
2. a concrete action
3. no action needed from you

Vocabulary · Six 'problem' verbs and nouns

1. workaround
2. outage
3. escalated
4. rolled back
5. root cause
6. flag
1. (D) deadline
2. (D) celebrate
3. (D) postpone
1. resolution
2. delay
3. escalation
4. failure
5. recovery

Grammar · Past continuous + past simple (interrupted action)

1. was writing / crashed
2. were testing / spotted
3. was calling / was writing
4. were still processing
5. came / were already
6. was rolling out / went
1. I knew there was a problem.
2. When the system crashed, I was writing the report.
3. While we were rolling back the update, the phones started ringing.
4. The team needed help immediately.
1. I was writing the email when my manager called me.
2. We were testing the demo when the wifi dropped.
3. She was presenting to the client when the fire alarm went off.
4. The team was deploying the fix when a second bug appeared.
1. Model: 'I was presenting the quarterly numbers to the client when the wifi dropped for eight minutes.'
2. Model: 'I was finishing the presentation at 11pm when Word crashed and lost the last hour of work.'
3. Model: 'We were preparing the launch when my project lead handed in her notice.'
1. Model: 'At 09:14 the payment gateway went down while we were processing the morning batch. I've routed traffic to the backup provider and 82% of orders are going through. No action needed from you — I'll update again at 11:00.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. Model: 'I was replying to HR at 15:42 when I attached the wrong spreadsheet and sent it company-wide. I've sent a recall and personal apology to everyone in the last five minutes. Nothing needed from you — I'll debrief with HR tomorrow.'

Listening · Three status updates, one outage

1. Voice B — 'the gateway went down at 09:14 for 40 minutes. I've routed to the backup. No action needed.' Clean and calm.
2. Voice A — 'as you know, the vendor has been having issues since Tuesday' — 15 seconds gone before we know what happened.
3. Voice C — 'this is a disaster, we don't know what happened yet' — no numbers, no actions, no ask.
 1. Routed payments to the backup provider; 82% of orders were going through within 5 minutes; scheduled a debrief for 11:00.
 2. Sentence three — the ask. No 'no action needed' or 'I need X from you'. Reader is left guessing.
 3. 'Disaster' signals lost control. The CEO has to spend energy calming the reporter before dealing with the actual issue.
1. Voice B — because Voice B reports facts, actions and asks in that order. Trust follows structure.
2. Take three minutes offline, breathe, gather one number and one action — then update.
 1. went
 2. routed
 3. through
 4. 11:00
 5. disaster

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. workaround
2. outage
3. escalated
4. rolled back
5. root cause
6. flag

2. Past continuous vs past simple

1. was writing / crashed
2. were testing / spotted
3. was calling / was writing
4. were still processing
5. came / were already
6. was rolling out / went

3. Which status update is stronger?

1. (B) 'At 09:14 the payment gateway went down for 40 minutes.'
2. (B) 'I've routed traffic to the backup — 82% of orders are going through.'
3. (B) 'No action needed from you — next update at 11:00.'
4. (B) 'Root cause: badly configured cache; workaround applied.'

4. Find and fix the mistake

1. I knew there was a problem.
2. When the system crashed, I was writing the report.
3. While we were rolling back, the phones started ringing.
4. The team needed help immediately.

5. Listening — three status updates, one outage

1. Voice B — timestamp, concrete action, clear ask.
2. Voice A — 'as you know, the vendor has been having issues since Tuesday...'.
3. Voice C — 'this is a disaster, we don't know what happened yet.'

7. Case study preview

1. Model: one public statement + private reply to each reviewer. Public statement owns the story; private replies rebuild the individual trust.
2. Model: 'We used to reply to every complaint 24 hours late. We don't anymore.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 8 · B1·8B

The way we used to work

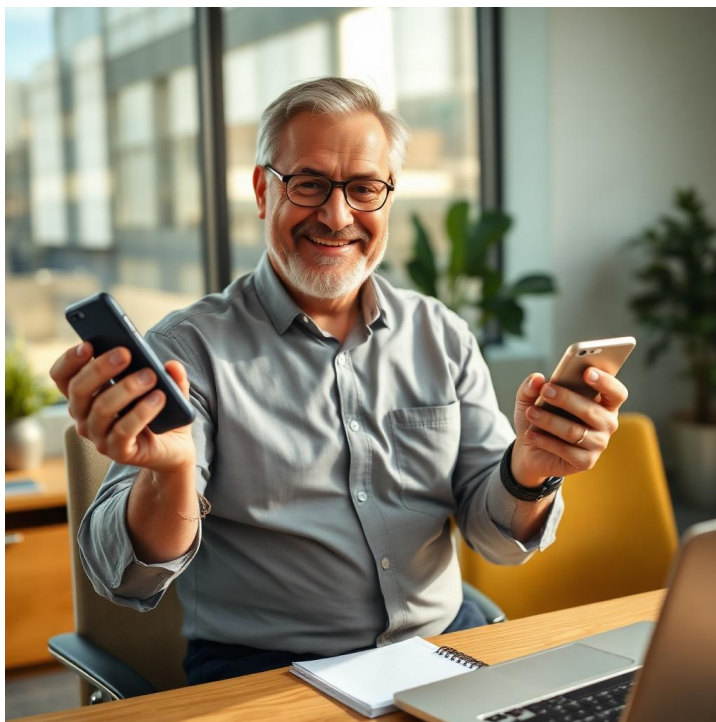
Theme · Problems & solutions

Unit 8 · B1·8B

The way we used to work

Theme: Problems & solutions

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Talk about past habits and past states with 'used to' — and know when to switch to 'would'.
- Compare 'then vs now' in your industry in one calm, non-nostalgic sentence.
- Give six 'process change' phrases that describe how a team improved after an incident.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · One thing you used to do at work

Think of ONE professional habit you used to have and don't anymore. Answer three questions in one sentence each.

What did you used to do?

What happened that changed it?

Are you glad the habit is gone, or do you miss it?

Lead-in: how we used to work — myth or fact?

Six claims about how offices used to work versus how they work now. Vote MYTH or FACT for each. Compare with a partner before the reveal.

kind: myths

1. **claim:** Before email, most business communication happened by fax. · **vote:** FACT · **explain:** For roughly the 1980s–early 1990s, fax was standard for contracts, orders and confirmations. Some industries (Japanese notaries, German real estate) still use it.

2. **claim:** People used to work fewer hours in the 1990s than they do now, on average. · **vote:** MYTH · **explain:** OECD data: average annual hours worked in most Western economies has actually FALLEN since 1990. It feels like more because work bleeds into evenings via smartphones.

3. **claim:** Job interviews used to include an unofficial 'meet the family' step in some industries. · **vote:** FACT · **explain:** Common in banking, law and diplomacy up to the 1980s. Now considered illegal or inappropriate in most Western hiring.

4. **claim:** Most offices in the 1980s had a designated smoking area — inside the office. · **vote:** FACT · **explain:** Indoor office smoking was normal until the mid-1990s in most of Europe and the US. Ashtrays on every desk in the 1970s.

5. **claim:** The average worker used to change jobs less than three times in their whole career. · **vote:** FACT · **explain:** Baby-boomer averages sat around 2–3 employer changes for a full career. Gen Z averages 8–10 in the first 15 years alone.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



6. **claim:** Companies used to reply to customer complaints faster because there were fewer channels. · **vote:** MYTH · **explain:** Response times were WORSE — a written complaint might take 2–3 weeks. It only felt calmer because customers had no expectation of a 2-hour reply.

followUp: Which answer surprised you most? Explain in one sentence.

Reading · The 3-day meeting is dead

There used to be a ritual in most European offices: the annual planning meeting. Three days, everyone flew in, hotels were booked, a moderator was hired, and Post-its covered every wall. People still talk about the food. Not many people talk about the decisions.

The 3-day meeting was designed for a world where you saw your colleagues once a quarter. It made sense in 1995, when video calls didn't really exist and the alternative was writing memos. It doesn't make sense in 2026, when the same team is on a call together three times a week.

What replaced it? Short, structured meetings — 45 minutes, a written agenda, a decision log at the end. Companies that used to do one 3-day offsite now do six 45-minute working sessions across the quarter. Decisions get made in weeks, not once a year. The Post-its are gone. Nobody misses the Post-its.

The people who miss the 3-day meeting most are the ones who never really wanted to make a decision — they wanted to be seen making a decision. That is a very different thing, and the modern format quietly exposes it.

1. Why did the 3-day meeting exist?
 - (A) Because people love hotels
 - (B) Because remote communication was hard
 - (C) Because Post-its work best in bulk
2. What has replaced the 3-day meeting?
 - (A) Longer offsites
 - (B) Six 45-minute working sessions
 - (C) Only asynchronous email
3. According to the text, who misses the 3-day meeting most?
 - (A) People who really wanted to decide
 - (B) People who wanted to be SEEN deciding
 - (C) People who love Post-its

Vocabulary in context

Match the phrase to the meaning.

there used to be a ritual — a habit that everyone repeated

a decision log — a written record of what was agreed

an offsite — a meeting held away from the office

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



to be seen making a decision — to look like you're deciding, without actually deciding

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text.

1. The 3-day meeting was designed for a world with cheap video calls.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
2. Modern replacements produce faster decisions.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
3. The text says Post-its are still useful in 2026.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
4. Some people miss the 3-day meeting for status reasons.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
5. The 3-day meeting was more expensive than the modern format.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly.

1. In your company, is the 3-day meeting alive, dying, or already dead?

2. Is the modern format losing something the old one had?

Scan for meaning

Find the phrase in the text that matches each definition.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. a written record of what was agreed

2. a meeting held away from the office

3. looking like you're deciding without deciding

Vocabulary · Six 'process change' phrases

- a habit** — something you did regularly, often without thinking
- a workflow** — the ordered steps of how work moves through a team
- a bottleneck** — the slowest point, or friction point, in the workflow
- a workaround** — an unofficial fix people invent to skip the bottleneck
- a post-mortem** — the honest review meeting after a problem
- a legacy system** — an old system still in use, usually reluctantly
- to phase out** — to gradually stop using something
- to roll out** — to introduce something to everyone, step by step
- to streamline** — to make a workflow simpler and faster
- to overhaul** — to redesign something completely
- to sunset (a product / a tool)** — to officially end it after a public deadline
- to migrate to** — to move users or data to a new system

practice

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

1. The manual copy-paste step is the biggest ____ in our order-to-invoice flow.

2. We're going to ____ the old CRM by the end of Q3.

3. The team ran a two-hour ____ after the incident and identified three fixes.

4. We ____ the new invoicing tool to the sales team last week — support next.

5. The mainframe is a ____ — nobody wants to touch it, but it still runs payroll.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



6. By December we will have ____ all customer data to the new database.

Collocations · process verbs

Match the verb with the noun.

phase out — the old tool

roll out — a new workflow

streamline — the process

run — a post-mortem

migrate — customer data

remove — a bottleneck

Odd one out

Choose the word that does NOT belong.

1. habit · routine · workflow · deadline

(A) habit

(B) routine

(C) workflow

(D) deadline

2. phase out · sunset · roll out · migrate

(A) phase out

(B) sunset

(C) roll out

(D) migrate

3. bottleneck · workaround · post-mortem · celebration

(A) bottleneck

(B) workaround

(C) post-mortem

(D) celebration

Word building · verb ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

1. to migrate → a ____

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

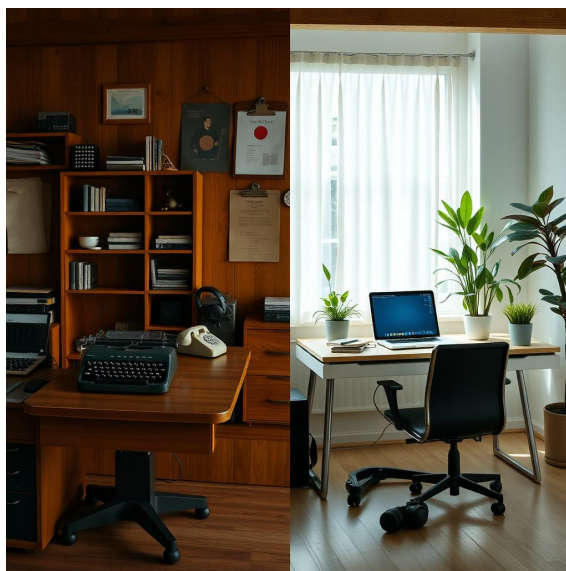


2. to streamline → a ____

3. to overhaul → an ____

4. to remove → a ____

5. to replace → a ____



Grammar · used to / didn't use to / would (past habits)

1. Form: used to + infinitive (past habits & past states) — • We used to fly to Zurich every quarter for the planning meeting. • The office used to be on the third floor.

2. Negative & question: didn't use to / did you use to — • We didn't use to have video calls with the client — everything was by phone. • Did you use to work on Saturdays?

3. 'Would' for past habits (actions only, NOT states) — • Every Monday she would open the mail before anything else. ✓ (habit) • The office would be on the third floor. ✗ (state — use 'used to')

4. NOT the same as 'be used to' / 'get used to' — • I used to work from home. = it was my habit in the past. • I'm used to working from home. = it feels normal now. • I'm getting used to working from home. = it's becoming normal.

5. Common mistake: dropping the 'd' after 'didn't' — • ✓ We didn't use to have Slack. (no 'd' after 'didn't') • ✗ We didn't used to have Slack.

Exercise A — put the verb in the correct form

used to / didn't use to / did you use to.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. We (fly) to Zurich every quarter for the planning meeting.

2. The office (be) on the third floor before we moved.

3. We (not / have) video calls with the client — everything was by phone.

4. (you / work) on Saturdays in your first job?

5. People (smoke) at their desks in most European offices.

6. We (not / send) written apologies — a phone call was enough.

Exercise B — 'used to' or 'would'?

Choose the correct form. If both work, prefer 'used to' for the FIRST mention.

1. The office (be) on the third floor.

2. Every Monday she (open) the physical mail first thing.

3. We (own) a warehouse in Coimbra.

4. Every Friday afternoon the whole team (go) for pastel de nata.

Exercise C — 'used to' vs 'be used to' vs 'get used to'

Choose the correct form.

1. I (work) from home in 2019 — now I'm back in the office.

2. I (work) from home now — I've been doing it for three years.

3. It's my first month in the new office and I (still / get) to the noise.

4. The new CRM is different, but we (get) it.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Exercise D — write the 'then vs now' sentence

Write *ONE* sentence about your work life using 'used to' + a change of habit.

1. About how meetings used to be.

2. About how customer support used to work.

3. About how the office itself looked or felt.

Exercise E — process-change paragraph

Write a 4-sentence paragraph starting: 'After the incident, we changed the way we work.' Use *AT LEAST* two 'used to' + *didn't* sentences *AND* one 'streamline / phase out / roll out' from the vocabulary.

1. Company scenario: a 40-minute outage exposed a bad on-call process.

Listening · Three founders, three 'then vs now' stories

Three small-business founders describe how their company used to work — and what changed after one specific incident. Decide whose story sounds the most honest, whose sounds the most polished, and whose sounds the most nostalgic.

pre

In your company, what's the ONE process that used to be terrible?

Do founders in your industry admit past mistakes publicly or hide them?

gist

1. Which founder's story is the most concrete?

2. Which founder sounds the most nostalgic?

3. Which founder sounds rehearsed rather than honest?

detail

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. What specific process did Voice B change?

2. What did Voice A actually STOP doing that they used to do?

3. Why does Voice C's polish backfire?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

1. Which founder would you want as a boss during a crisis?

2. What is Voice A afraid to say directly?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does.

"We used to be a real family." — nostalgic — describes feeling, not process

"We used to run payroll manually every month." — concrete past habit — the setup for a change

"Now we do a weekly finance review and two-person approval." — the specific process fix

"We lean into failure and grow through it." — polished, non-specific — a leadership quote

"After the €12,000 payroll bug, we ran a real post-mortem." — names the exact incident that triggered the change

Voice A: You know, we used to be a real family here. Everyone knew everyone. Now, honestly, we're bigger, and I miss those days. We used to have Friday drinks every week, and everyone would stay. I don't know when that stopped. It just... did.

Voice B: So, we used to run payroll manually every month, one person, no review. In April a bug overcharged the tax line by €12,000 across the whole team. After the incident we ran a real post-mortem — root cause was a copy-paste error into the spreadsheet. Now we do a weekly finance review and two-person approval on any payroll change. Zero repeats in five months.

Voice C: We're a company that leans into failure. We used to be scared of mistakes; now we grow through them. Every setback is a stepping stone. I really believe that if you don't fail, you're not moving fast enough. So we embrace it, and we keep going.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases from the audio.

1. We used to be a real ____.

2. We used to run payroll ____ every month.

3. A bug overcharged the tax line by ____ across the whole team.

4. Now we do a weekly finance review and two-person ____.

5. We used to be ____ of mistakes; now we grow through them.

Speaking · Your 60-second 'then vs now'

Prepare a 60-second oral story about your company (or a team you've been in). Use AT LEAST two 'used to' sentences, one 'didn't use to' sentence, ONE named incident that changed things, and ONE specific process fix.

Scene: The onboarding story

A: You: an HR lead. Your onboarding used to take 6 weeks and half of new hires felt lost. Something changed.

B: You: a new hire from last month. React — say what worked and what didn't.

Scene: The support story

A: You: a support lead. Your team used to close tickets in 5+ days. Something changed after one bad review.

B: You: a repeat customer. React — say whether you noticed the change or not.

Scene: The meeting story

A: You: a team lead. Your Monday meeting used to be 3 hours. Something changed after nobody made a decision for 6 weeks.

B: You: a colleague on the same team. React — say if the new format actually works.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class discussion

Discuss briefly.

Is 'we used to be a family' a strength or a red flag when you hear it in an interview?

What is the ONE habit your industry needs to phase out this year?

Are 'then vs now' stories a marketing tool or genuine transparency?

Role-play · the interview question

Student A is the interviewer. Student B is the candidate. A asks: 'Tell me about ONE thing your last team used to do badly — and what changed.' B answers in 60 seconds using 'used to' + one named incident + one specific fix.

Scene: For an ops role

A: Student A: interviewer. Ask the question and one follow-up: 'and what did you personally do?'

B: Student B: candidate. Use one 'used to' + one incident + one fix + your own action.

Scene: For a customer-facing role

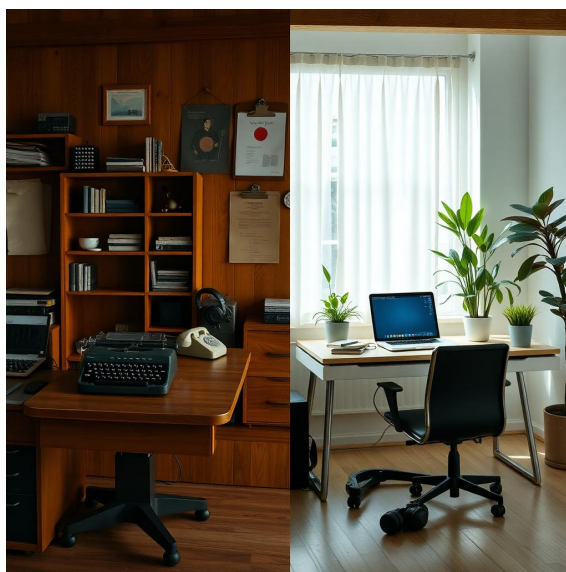
A: Student A: interviewer. Ask the question and one follow-up: 'how would the customer describe the change?'

B: Student B: candidate. Use one 'used to' + one incident + one fix + a customer-visible outcome.

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: bottleneck · phase out · post-mortem · roll out · legacy system · migrated

1. The manual copy-paste step is the biggest ____ in our order flow.

2. We're going to ____ the old CRM by the end of Q3.

3. The team ran a two-hour ____ after the incident.

4. We ____ the new invoicing tool to the sales team last week.

5. The mainframe is a ____ — nobody wants to touch it, but it still runs payroll.

6. By December we will have ____ all customer data to the new database.

2. used to / didn't use to / did you use to

Put the verb in the correct form.

1. We (fly) to Zurich every quarter for the planning meeting.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



-
2. The office (be) on the third floor before we moved.
-
3. We (not / have) video calls with the client — everything was by phone.
-
4. (you / work) on Saturdays in your first job?
-
5. People (smoke) at their desks in most European offices.
-
6. We (not / send) written apologies — a phone call was enough.
-

3. 'used to' vs 'be used to' vs 'get used to'

Choose the correct option.

1. I ____ work from home in 2019 — now I'm back in the office.
(A) used to
(B) am used to
(C) am getting used to
2. I ____ working from home now — I've done it for three years.
(A) used to
(B) am used to
(C) am getting used to
3. It's my first month in the new office and I ____ the noise.
(A) used to
(B) am used to
(C) am still getting used to
4. The new CRM is different, but we ____ it.
(A) used to
(B) are getting used to
(C) used to be

4. Which sentence is stronger?

Choose the version that sounds more honest and concrete.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. Describing a real change:
 - (A) 'We used to be a family.'
 - (B) 'We used to run payroll manually — now two people approve every change.'
 - (C) 'We lean into failure.'
2. Naming what changed:
 - (A) 'After the €12,000 bug, we ran a real post-mortem.'
 - (B) 'We grow through setbacks.'
 - (C) 'Mistakes are stepping stones.'
3. 'Then vs now':
 - (A) 'We didn't use to run a weekly finance review — now we do.'
 - (B) 'Everything is much better now.'
 - (C) 'We embrace change.'
4. In an interview answer:
 - (A) 'Our old process was fine.'
 - (B) 'We used to close support tickets in 5 days; after one 1-star review we cut it to 8 hours.'
 - (C) 'I've always been customer-obsessed.'

5. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has *ONE* mistake.

1. We didn't used to have Slack.

2. Every Monday she would be on the third floor.

3. I'm used to work from home.

4. Did you used to work on Saturdays?

6. Listening — three founders, three 'then vs now' stories

Three small-business founders describe how their company used to work — and what changed after one specific incident.

1. Which founder's story is the most concrete?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. Which founder sounds nostalgic without naming a real change?

3. Which founder sounds rehearsed rather than honest?

Voice A: We used to be a real family here. Now we're bigger. We used to have Friday drinks every week — I don't know when that stopped.

Voice B: We used to run payroll manually, one person, no review. In April a bug overcharged tax by €12,000. After the incident we ran a real post-mortem. Now we do a weekly finance review and two-person approval on any payroll change.

Voice C: We used to be scared of mistakes; now we grow through them. Every setback is a stepping stone. We lean into failure.

7. Writing — your 'then vs now' paragraph

Write a 4–5 sentence paragraph starting: 'After the incident, we changed the way we work.' Use **AT LEAST** two 'used to' sentences, one 'didn't use to' sentence, **ONE** named incident and **ONE** specific process fix. Max 90 words.

8. Case study preview

Before Case Study 8, answer briefly.

1. A food-delivery app gets 40 one-star reviews in one weekend after a bug. Do you send one company statement or reply to each review?

2. The founder wants to say 'we've learned from this'. Rewrite that sentence in a way an actual customer would believe.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Class Book

Reading · The 3-day meeting is dead

1. (B) Because remote communication was hard
2. (B) Six 45-minute working sessions
3. (B) People who wanted to be SEEN deciding
1. (B) False
2. (A) True
3. (B) False
4. (A) True
5. (C) Not Given
1. Model: alive in name only. We still do it once a year — the real decisions happen in the 45-minute sessions between them.
2. Model: yes — informal time. The corridor conversations at the offsite still generate 20% of the real ideas.
1. a decision log
2. an offsite
3. to be seen making a decision

Vocabulary · Six 'process change' phrases

1. bottleneck
2. phase out
3. post-mortem
4. rolled out
5. legacy system
6. migrated
1. (D) deadline
2. (C) roll out
3. (D) celebration
1. migration
2. streamlining / a streamlined process
3. overhaul
4. removal
5. replacement

Grammar · used to / didn't use to / would (past habits)

1. used to fly
2. used to be
3. didn't use to have
4. Did you use to work
5. used to smoke
6. didn't use to send
1. used to be (state)
2. used to open / would open (both fine — habit)
3. used to own (state)
4. used to go / would go (habit)
1. used to work (past habit)
2. 'm used to working (feels normal now)
3. 'm still getting used to the noise
4. 're getting used to it
1. Model: 'We used to spend 3 hours every Monday on a status meeting — now it's a 15-line message in Slack.'
2. Model: 'We used to reply to complaints in 3–5 working days — now our SLA is 2 hours.'
3. Model: 'The office used to be full every Tuesday — now it's only really busy on Wednesdays and Thursdays.'
1. Model: 'After the incident, we changed the way we work. We used to page a single engineer at 3am — now three of us are on rotation. We didn't use to run a post-mortem after every outage; now we do, and we publish it internally within 48 hours. We're phasing out the old paging tool by the end of Q3.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Listening · Three founders, three 'then vs now' stories

1. Voice B — names the incident (the payroll bug), the change (weekly finance review), and the outcome (zero repeats).
2. Voice A — 'we used to be a real family' — talks about the vibe, not the work.
3. Voice C — every sentence is a leadership quote, no incident is ever named.
1. Introduced a weekly finance review + a two-person approval on payroll changes after a bug overcharged tax by €12,000.
2. Nothing specific — 'we used to be a family' is a feeling, not a process. That's the weakness of the story.
3. Every phrase is a LinkedIn quote ('we lean into failure'). Listeners can't tell what was actually different last year vs this year.
1. Voice B — the one who names one incident and one specific change is the one who owns problems in real life.
2. That the 'family' era included bad hiring, bad boundaries, and probably underpaid overtime. 'Family' often means 'no process'.
1. family
2. manually
3. €12,000
4. approval
5. scared

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. bottleneck
2. phase out
3. post-mortem
4. rolled out
5. legacy system
6. migrated

2. used to / didn't use to / did you use to

1. used to fly
2. used to be
3. didn't use to have
4. Did you use to work
5. used to smoke
6. didn't use to send

3. 'used to' vs 'be used to' vs 'get used to'

1. (A) used to
2. (B) am used to
3. (C) am still getting used to
4. (B) are getting used to

4. Which sentence is stronger?

1. (B) 'We used to run payroll manually — now two people approve every change.'
2. (A) 'After the €12,000 bug, we ran a real post-mortem.'
3. (A) 'We didn't use to run a weekly finance review — now we do.'
4. (B) 'We used to close support tickets in 5 days; after one 1-star review we cut it to 8 hours.'

5. Find and fix the mistake

1. We didn't use to have Slack.
2. Every Monday she used to be on the third floor. (state, not habit)
3. I'm used to working from home.
4. Did you use to work on Saturdays?

6. Listening — three founders, three 'then vs now' stories

1. Voice B — payroll bug (€12,000), post-mortem, weekly finance review + two-person approval, zero repeats in 5 months.
2. Voice A — 'we used to be a family' is a feeling, not a process.
3. Voice C — every sentence is a LinkedIn quote; no incident is ever named.

8. Case study preview

1. Model: both — one public statement + a short personal reply to each reviewer. Public statement owns the story; private replies rebuild trust one person at a time.
2. Model: 'On Saturday, 480 of you were charged twice for delivery. We fixed the bug at 11pm. We're refunding automatically today and we've added a second review step so it can't happen again.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 9 · B1-9A

How long have you been doing this?

Theme · Careers & interviews



Unit 9 · B1·9A

How long have you been doing this?

Theme: Careers & interviews

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Talk about ongoing career actions with present perfect continuous ('I've been working on this since March').
- Answer the two most-asked interview questions calmly, with a number and a concrete result.
- Use six high-frequency career verbs and nouns you can drop into any interview or LinkedIn line.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · The last thing you started at work

Think of *ONE* thing you *STARTED* doing at work in the last 6 months and haven't finished yet. Answer in one sentence each.

How long have you been working on it?

What have you learned so far?

What's still unfinished?

Lead-in: career myths — myth or fact?

Six claims about hiring and interviews today. Vote MYTH or FACT for each, then reveal.

kind: myths

1. **claim:** Recruiters typically spend less than 10 seconds on a first CV scan. · **vote:** FACT · **explain:** The classic Ladders eye-tracking study says ~7.4 seconds. Your first line matters far more than your last.

2. **claim:** 'Culture fit' is a legally protected criterion in most European hiring. · **vote:** MYTH · **explain:** It's a vague preference, not a protected criterion — and it's increasingly seen as a source of bias. 'Skills fit' is the safer frame.

3. **claim:** For most B2B roles, LinkedIn now generates more interviews than job-board applications. · **vote:** FACT · **explain:** For qualified white-collar candidates, warm intros + LinkedIn typically produce 2–3× the interview rate of cold applications.

4. **claim:** Sending a thank-you email after an interview measurably improves offer rate. · **vote:** FACT · **explain:** Roughly 68% of hiring managers say a short, personal follow-up affects their view. It's a low-cost, high-return move.

5. **claim:** Cover letters are dead — nobody reads them anymore. · **vote:** MYTH · **explain:** For senior and specialist roles a short, personalised paragraph still moves the needle. The 500-word template is dead; the 4-line note is not.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



6. **claim:** Salary is the #1 reason people leave a job. · **vote:** MYTH · **explain:** Most exit surveys (Gallup, McKinsey) put manager quality and career growth AHEAD of salary. Salary is the reason people give — not the reason they leave.

followUp: Which answer surprised you most? Explain in one sentence.

Reading · The 90-second answer

Every interview opens with the same question. The wording varies — 'tell me about yourself', 'walk me through your background', 'how did you end up here?' — but the shape is identical. And most candidates get it wrong in exactly the same way: they treat it as a life story instead of a professional pitch.

A good answer is 90 seconds long. It has three sentences. Sentence one: what you've been doing recently, in present perfect continuous ('I've been leading a data team of six at a fintech in Lisbon for the last two years'). Sentence two: what you've achieved, in present perfect with a number ('We've cut reporting time by 70% and shipped a new dashboard used by 40 people daily'). Sentence three: why THIS role, in one honest line ('I'm here because your product is the one my team keeps quoting').

Ninety seconds is not a hard limit; it's an insurance policy. Under 60 seconds and you sound underprepared; over two minutes and the interviewer stops listening. Ninety seconds gives you a number, a result and a reason — which is the whole job.

The reason candidates struggle is that they've been asked 'tell me about yourself' hundreds of times in their life — at parties, at family dinners, on first dates — and always answered with autobiography. An interview is not a party. Cut the autobiography. Lead with the number.

1. How long should the ideal opening answer be?
 - (A) 30 seconds
 - (B) 90 seconds
 - (C) 3 minutes
2. Sentence one should use which tense?
 - (A) Past simple
 - (B) Present perfect continuous
 - (C) Future perfect
3. Why do candidates struggle with 'tell me about yourself'?
 - (A) It's too technical
 - (B) They answer with autobiography instead of a pitch
 - (C) Interviewers ask it in different words

Vocabulary in context

Match the phrase to the meaning.

a professional pitch — a short structured summary of what you offer

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



shipped a new dashboard — delivered and released it into use
an insurance policy — a safety measure in case things go wrong
the whole job (of the answer) — everything the answer needs to do

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text.

1. 'Tell me about yourself' has a fixed wording across companies.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
2. Under 60 seconds sounds underprepared.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
3. Ninety seconds is a legal maximum.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
4. Autobiography is the wrong register for an interview.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
5. Interviewers always time the answer with a stopwatch.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly.

1. In your country, is 'tell me about yourself' answered as autobiography or as a pitch?

2. Is 90 seconds realistic for a senior candidate?

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Scan for meaning

Find the phrase in the text that matches each definition.

1. a short structured summary of what you offer

2. delivered and released into use

3. a personal history from childhood onwards

Vocabulary · Six career verbs and nouns

a track record — your history of concrete results

a role / a remit — the job title plus the scope of responsibility

a hiring manager — the person who makes the offer (not the recruiter)

the shortlist — the final 3–5 candidates

the notice period — the time you must give before leaving

a counter-offer — your current employer's response to keep you

to apply for — to submit for a role

to shortlist — to select for the final round

to reach out (to) — to contact informally

to follow up — to send a second message after silence

to onboard — to bring a new hire up to speed

to hand in your notice — to officially resign

practice

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

1. She has a strong ____ in B2B sales — three years, three exceeded quotas.

2. The ____ told me they'd like to meet on Thursday.

3. I made the ____ of five candidates for the final round.

4. My ____ is three months, which will slow the start date.

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5. They came back with a ____ — 15% more and a promotion in six months.

6. I'll ____ next week if I haven't heard anything by Friday.

Collocations · career phrases

Match the verb with the noun.

apply for — a role

make — the shortlist

hand in — your notice

accept — an offer

reach out to — a recruiter

onboard — a new hire

Odd one out

Choose the word that does NOT belong.

1. role · position · shortlist · title

(A) role

(B) position

(C) shortlist

(D) title

2. apply · onboard · shortlist · resign

(A) apply

(B) onboard

(C) shortlist

(D) resign

3. recruiter · candidate · hiring manager · notice period

(A) recruiter

(B) candidate

(C) hiring manager

(D) notice period

Word building · verb ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

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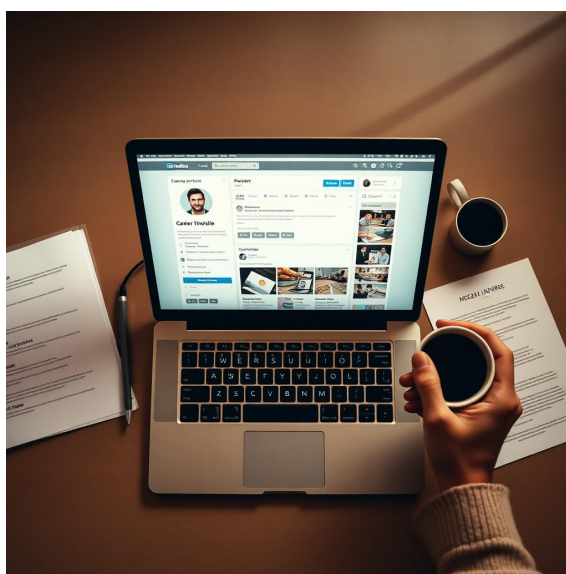
1. to apply → an ____

2. to hire → a ____

3. to promote → a ____

4. to resign → a ____

5. to interview → an ____



Grammar · Present perfect continuous

1. Form: have/has + been + verb-ing — • I have been working on this since March. • She has been leading the team for two years.

2. Use: an action that STARTED in the past and is STILL going — • I've been learning Portuguese for six months. (still learning) • We've been rebuilding the pricing model since January. (still rebuilding)

3. FOR (a duration) vs SINCE (a starting point) — • for two years / for six months / for a long time • since March / since 2022 / since I joined

4. Present perfect continuous vs present perfect simple — • Continuous: focus on the ONGOING activity → 'I've been writing the report all morning.' • Simple: focus on the RESULT / how many → 'I've written three reports this week.'

5. State verbs (know, own, need, have=possess) — **no continuous** — • I've known him for ten years. (NOT: I've been knowing.) • She's had that role since 2021. (NOT: She's been having.)

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**Exercise A — put the verbs in present perfect continuous or simple**

Choose the more natural form.

1. I (work) on this proposal since 8am and I'm exhausted.

2. She (send) 40 emails this morning.

3. We (rebuild) the pricing model since January.

4. They (interview) five candidates for that role.

5. I (learn) Portuguese for six months but I still can't order coffee.

6. He (know) the CFO for ten years.

Exercise B — find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake.

1. I've been knowing her since 2018.

2. She has been leading the team since two years.

3. We've been shipped three features this quarter.

4. I am working here since March.

Exercise C — for or since?

Complete with 'for' or 'since'.

1. I've been working here ____ March.

2. We've been rebuilding the site ____ six weeks.

3. She's been leading the team ____ 2023.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. They've been interviewing ____ nearly a month.

5. I've been reaching out to recruiters ____ Monday.

Exercise D — your own 'I've been...' line

Write *ONE* true sentence about *YOUR* work using present perfect continuous + a duration.

1. About your current role.

2. About a project.

3. About a skill you're building.

Exercise E — the 90-second answer

Write your 3-sentence 'tell me about yourself' answer. Sentence 1: present perfect continuous + duration. Sentence 2: present perfect simple + a number and a result. Sentence 3: one honest reason for *THIS* role. Max 90 words.

1. Prompt: you're interviewing for an operations manager role at a scale-up.

Listening · Three answers to 'tell me about yourself'

Three candidates apply for the same B1-level operations role. Listen to their opening answer and decide which one you'd invite to the next round, which one you'd coach, and which one you'd politely decline.

pre

In your own last interview, how long did YOUR opening answer last?

What is the ONE phrase you're tired of hearing candidates use?

gist

1. Which candidate stays close to 90 seconds and leads with a number?

2. Which candidate tells a life story instead of a pitch?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



3. Which candidate is too short and sounds underprepared?

detail

1. What specific number does Candidate B mention?

2. Why does Candidate A lose the interviewer?

3. What does Candidate C forget to say?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

1. Which candidate has probably rehearsed the answer?

2. What should Candidate A do BEFORE the next interview?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does.

"I've been leading operations for the last three years..." — opens with duration + role (present perfect continuous)

"We've cut errors from 4% to 0.6%." — reports a concrete result with numbers

"I'm here because your onboarding flow is the one my team keeps quoting." — gives one honest reason for THIS role

"So, I was born in Braga, went to school there..." — opens with autobiography (wrong register)

"Yeah, that's me." — trails off without a reason

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Candidate A: So, I was born in Braga, went to school there, my father was actually an engineer, so I always liked technical things. I studied management at university, my first job was in retail — it was a small shop but a great learning experience — then I moved to logistics, and after four years I moved to my current company, where I've been for about, I don't know, five or six years now, doing a bit of everything really.

Candidate B: Sure. I've been leading operations for a 40-person e-commerce company in Porto for the last three years. In that time we've cut order-processing errors from 4% to 0.6% and doubled weekly volume without adding headcount. I'm here because your onboarding flow is the one my team keeps quoting to me — I'd like to help build it.

Candidate C: Hi. So I've worked in operations for a while. Currently at a small logistics company. I saw the job, I thought it looked good, and I applied. Yeah, that's me.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases from the audio.

1. I've been ____ operations for a 40-person e-commerce company in Porto for the last three years.

2. We've ____ order-processing errors from 4% to 0.6%.

3. I'm here ____ your onboarding flow is the one my team keeps quoting to me.

4. I've worked in operations ____ a while.

5. I saw the job, I thought it looked good, and I ____.

Speaking · Your 90-second pitch

Prepare and deliver your OWN 90-second 'tell me about yourself' answer. Three sentences: present perfect continuous + duration; present perfect simple + a number and result; one honest reason for the role. Then role-play the interviewer's first follow-up question.

Scene: Role 1 — Operations Manager at a Porto scale-up

A: You: the candidate. Deliver your 90-second pitch, then answer the follow-up: 'What went wrong in the last 12 months, and what did you learn?'

B: You: the hiring manager. React — probe the number, push on the reason, or ask about the last mistake.

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**Scene:** Role 2 — Junior Product Manager at a fintech

A: You: the candidate (2 years experience). Deliver the 90-second pitch, then answer: 'Why product, and why now?'

B: You: the hiring manager. React — challenge the transition, ask about the last product decision you owned.

Scene: Role 3 — Head of Customer Success at a SaaS company

A: You: the candidate. Deliver the 90-second pitch, then answer: 'What's the ONE metric you've moved that you're proudest of?'

B: You: the CEO. React — ask how you'd move it in the FIRST 90 days here.

Class discussion

Discuss briefly.

In your industry, is 'tell me about yourself' answered with a number, or with a story?

What's the ONE question in interviews you dread most, and why?

Is a rehearsed answer a strength or a weakness in an interview?

Role-play · the follow-up question that surprises you

Student A delivers the 90-second pitch. Student B (interviewer) asks ONE surprise follow-up. A answers in ONE calm sentence, present perfect continuous where possible.

Scene: 'What have you been doing to grow, outside your day job?'

A: Student A: the candidate. Answer in ONE sentence using present perfect continuous.

B: Student B: the interviewer. React with one probing follow-up.

Scene: 'Why haven't you been promoted in the last three years?'

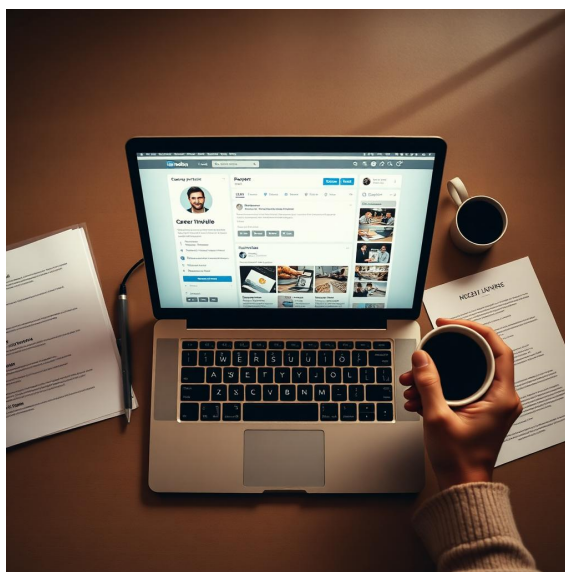
A: Student A: answer honestly, without defending or blaming.

B: Student B: react — accept, or push harder.

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: track record · hiring manager · shortlist · notice period · counter-offer · follow up

1. She has a strong ____ in B2B sales — three exceeded quotas in three years.

2. The ____ told me they'd like to meet on Thursday.

3. I made the ____ of five candidates for the final round.

4. My ____ is three months, which will slow the start date.

5. They came back with a ____ — 15% more and a promotion in six months.

6. I'll ____ next week if I haven't heard by Friday.

2. Present perfect continuous or simple?

Choose the more natural form.

1. I (work) on this proposal since 8am and I'm exhausted.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. She (send) 40 emails this morning.

3. We (rebuild) the pricing model since January.

4. They (interview) five candidates for that role.

5. I (learn) Portuguese for six months but I still can't order coffee.

6. He (know) the CFO for ten years.

3. For or since?

Complete with 'for' or 'since'.

1. I've been working here ____ March.

2. We've been rebuilding the site ____ six weeks.

3. She's been leading the team ____ 2023.

4. They've been interviewing ____ nearly a month.

5. I've been reaching out to recruiters ____ Monday.

4. Which 'tell me about yourself' answer is stronger?

Choose the version that would move you to the next round.

1. Sentence 1 (opener):

(A) 'I was born in Braga and went to school there...'

(B) 'I've been leading operations for a 40-person company in Porto for the last three years.'

(C) 'I've worked in operations for a while.'

2. Sentence 2 (result):

(A) 'I've done many things.'

(B) 'We've cut errors from 4% to 0.6% and doubled weekly volume.'

(C) 'I'm very passionate about operations.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



3. Sentence 3 (reason):

- (A) 'I saw the job and I applied.'
- (B) 'I'm here because your onboarding flow is the one my team keeps quoting.'
- (C) 'I need a change.'

5. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake.

1. I've been knowing her since 2018.

2. She has been leading the team since two years.

3. We've been shipped three features this quarter.

4. I am working here since March.

6. Listening — three candidates, one 'tell me about yourself'

Three candidates open with different answers to the same question. Who moves forward, who gets coached, who gets rejected?

1. Which candidate stays close to 90 seconds and leads with a number?

2. Which candidate tells a life story instead of a pitch?

3. Which candidate is too short and sounds underprepared?

Candidate A: So, I was born in Braga, went to school there, my father was an engineer, so I always liked technical things. I studied management at university, my first job was in retail — a small shop but a great learning experience — then I moved to logistics, and after four years I moved to my current company, where I've been for about five or six years now, doing a bit of everything really.

Candidate B: Sure. I've been leading operations for a 40-person e-commerce company in Porto for the last three years. In that time we've cut order-processing errors from 4% to 0.6% and doubled weekly volume without adding headcount. I'm here because your onboarding flow is the one my team keeps quoting to me — I'd like to help build it.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Candidate C: Hi. So I've worked in operations for a while. Currently at a small logistics company. I saw the job, it looked good, and I applied. Yeah, that's me.

7. Writing — your 90-second pitch

Write your own three-sentence 'tell me about yourself' answer. Sentence 1: PPC + duration. Sentence 2: present perfect simple + a number/result. Sentence 3: one honest reason for the role. Max 90 words.

8. Case study preview

Before Case Study 9, answer briefly.

1. You have two great finalists and one job. What's the SINGLE piece of information that most influences your decision?

2. How do you reject the loser without burning the bridge?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Class Book

Reading · The 90-second answer

1. (B) 90 seconds
2. (B) Present perfect continuous
3. (B) They answer with autobiography instead of a pitch
1. (B) False
2. (A) True
3. (B) False
4. (A) True
5. (C) Not Given
1. Model: mostly autobiography — school, first job, and then now. The pitch answer sounds foreign, but it works.
2. Model: yes — the more senior you are, the more you have to leave OUT. Discipline signals seniority.
1. a professional pitch
2. shipped a new dashboard
3. autobiography

Vocabulary · Six career verbs and nouns

1. track record
2. hiring manager
3. shortlist
4. notice period
5. counter-offer
6. follow up
1. (C) shortlist
2. (D) resign
3. (D) notice period
1. application
2. hire (or 'hiring')
3. promotion
4. resignation
5. interview (also: interviewer / interviewee)

Grammar · Present perfect continuous

1. have been working
2. has sent
3. have been rebuilding
4. have interviewed
5. have been learning
6. has known
1. I've known her since 2018.
2. She has been leading the team for two years.
3. We've shipped three features this quarter.
4. I've been working here since March.
1. since
2. for
3. since
4. for
5. since
1. Model: 'I've been running the customer-support team at a Lisbon SaaS company for the last 18 months.'
2. Model: 'I've been rebuilding our onboarding flow since March — the drop-off is already down 22%.'
3. Model: 'I've been studying data analysis in the evenings for about a year.'
1. Model: 'I've been leading operations for a 40-person e-commerce company in Porto for the last three years. In that time we've cut order-processing errors from 4% to 0.6% and doubled weekly volume without adding headcount. I'm here because your product-market fit looks like the moment I've enjoyed most in every job I've

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had.'

Listening · Three answers to 'tell me about yourself'

1. Candidate B — three sentences, one duration, one specific result, one clear reason.
2. Candidate A — starts with school, first job, and by minute two hasn't reached the current role.
3. Candidate C — 20 seconds, no number, no reason. Ends with '...yeah, that's me.'
1. 'We've cut order-processing errors from 4% to 0.6% in three years.'
2. By minute 2 the interviewer has not heard about the CURRENT role. The autobiography kills attention.
3. Any reason for wanting THIS role. No 'I'm here because...' sentence at all.
1. Candidate B — the structure is too clean to be improvised. That's a positive, not a negative.
2. Cut the first 60 seconds entirely. Start at the CURRENT role, in present perfect continuous, with a duration.
1. leading
2. cut
3. because
4. for
5. applied

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Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. track record
2. hiring manager
3. shortlist
4. notice period
5. counter-offer
6. follow up

2. Present perfect continuous or simple?

1. have been working
2. has sent
3. have been rebuilding
4. have interviewed
5. have been learning
6. has known

3. For or since?

1. since
2. for
3. since
4. for
5. since

4. Which 'tell me about yourself' answer is stronger?

1. (B) 'I've been leading operations for a 40-person company in Porto for the last three years.'
2. (B) 'We've cut errors from 4% to 0.6% and doubled weekly volume.'
3. (B) 'I'm here because your onboarding flow is the one my team keeps quoting.'

5. Find and fix the mistake

1. I've known her since 2018.
2. She has been leading the team for two years.
3. We've shipped three features this quarter.
4. I've been working here since March.

6. Listening — three candidates, one 'tell me about yourself'

1. Candidate B — three sentences, one duration, one specific result, one clear reason.
2. Candidate A — school, first job, and by minute two hasn't reached the current role.
3. Candidate C — 20 seconds, no number, no reason.

8. Case study preview

1. Model: how they'd spend the first 90 days. Anyone can look good on paper — very few describe the first 90 days concretely.
2. Model: name what you'll remember about their process, offer ONE concrete thing (feedback call, intro, second look in 12 months), keep it under 100 words.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 9 · B1-9B

The interview process

Theme · Careers & interviews



Unit 9 · B1·9B

The interview process

Theme: Careers & interviews

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Handle the four most-asked interview questions without freezing (strengths, weaknesses, gap, salary).
- Ask three sharp candidate-side questions at the end that reveal what the role is actually like.
- Use present perfect continuous naturally in interview answers — with numbers, not fluff.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · The question you dread most

Think of the ONE interview question that makes you anxious. Answer three quick questions in one sentence each.

What's the question?

Why is it hard for you?

What would a calm 30-second answer sound like?

Lead-in: what would you say?

Four tricky moments from the interview process. For each, choose the option that keeps you in the running WITHOUT sounding fake. There is one clearly better answer per case.

kind: scenarios

1. **title:** The classic weakness question · **setup:** 'What's your biggest weakness?' You have 30 seconds.

2. **title:** The two-year employment gap · **setup:** There's a 24-month gap on your CV between your last two roles. The interviewer notices.

3. **title:** 'What are your salary expectations?' · **setup:** You know the role's realistic range is €55–70k. You don't want to underprice or overshoot on the first call.

4. **title:** The good question to ask at the end · **setup:** The interviewer says: 'Do you have any questions for me?' You want to sound curious, not desperate.

followUp: Which of your answers was the closest call? Explain in one sentence.

Reading · The five stages of a modern interview process

Ten years ago, most job interviews had two stages: a phone screen and a face-to-face. Today the median process for a mid-level white-collar role has FIVE — a recruiter call, a hiring-manager call, a technical or case task, a panel round, and a final leadership conversation. On paper it sounds thorough. In practice it takes six weeks and quietly excludes candidates who are already working full-time.

Stage one is the recruiter call. It's about fit and salary. Twenty minutes. Say the number.

Stage two is the hiring manager. It's about the 90-second answer, one or two real projects, and whether you can talk about work without defending yourself. Forty-five minutes. Bring one number per answer.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Stage three is the task — a case, a coding exercise, a portfolio review. Companies say it takes 'two to three hours'. It usually takes six. This is where the process gets unfair, because juniors and career changers spend the six hours and seniors don't. Increasingly, the good companies pay for it.

Stage four is the panel. Three to five people you'll work with, forty-five minutes, rapid-fire questions. Your job is not to be brilliant. Your job is to be the same person you were on the recruiter call — same numbers, same story, same energy at 5pm as at 10am.

Stage five is the final. It's not really an interview; it's a mutual decision. If you're there, they want to hire you. Your job is to ask the ONE question you still don't know the answer to, and to trust the answer you get.

1. How many stages does a typical modern process now have?

- (A) Two
- (B) Three
- (C) Five

2. What is the point of the recruiter call?

- (A) Deep skills evaluation
- (B) Fit and salary
- (C) Reference checks

3. Why is the task stage unfair, per the text?

- (A) The tasks are too easy
- (B) Juniors spend more time on it than seniors
- (C) Only remote candidates get one

Vocabulary in context

Match the phrase to the meaning.

a phone screen — a short initial call to filter candidates

a case task — a work sample given during the process

the panel — a group interview with several colleagues at once

rapid-fire questions — many short questions in quick succession

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text.

1. Most processes today take about a week.

- (A) True
- (B) False
- (C) Not Given

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2. Case tasks usually take longer than companies estimate.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
3. Some companies pay for the case task.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
4. The final stage is more about mutual choice than evaluation.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
5. Panel interviews always include the CEO.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly.

1. In your industry, do 5-stage processes filter for the best candidates — or for candidates with the most free time?

2. Should companies pay for the case task?

Scan for meaning

Find the phrase in the text that matches each definition.

1. a group interview with several colleagues at once

2. a short initial call about salary and fit

3. the moment when it's really a mutual decision

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Vocabulary · Six interview verbs and nouns

a phone screen / screening call — a short initial call to filter candidates

a panel interview — several interviewers at the same time

a case task / case study — a written or spoken work sample

the final round — the last interview before an offer

the offer / an offer letter — the formal proposal outlining terms of employment

the reference check — when a company calls your past managers

to shortlist someone — to keep in the final group

to reject someone — to say no formally

to ghost someone — to stop replying with no reason

to negotiate an offer — to discuss the terms before saying yes

to accept / decline an offer — to say yes / no formally

to reschedule — to move an interview to another date

practice

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

1. The ____ took 20 minutes and covered salary and start date.

2. I'll ____ the offer tomorrow after I sleep on it.

3. They asked me to do a ____ — a two-hour spreadsheet exercise.

4. The company ____ me for two weeks after the final — no reply at all.

5. I need to ____ the interview because I'm sick.

6. In the ____, they usually call two of your past managers.

Collocations · interview phrases

Match the verb with the noun.

pass — the phone screen

negotiate — an offer

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reschedule — an interview

accept — the position

decline — an offer

ghost — a candidate

Odd one out

Choose the word that does NOT belong.

1. phone screen · panel · offer · onboarding

(A) phone screen

(B) panel

(C) offer

(D) onboarding

2. accept · decline · negotiate · ghost

(A) accept

(B) decline

(C) negotiate

(D) ghost

3. recruiter · hiring manager · candidate · commute

(A) recruiter

(B) hiring manager

(C) candidate

(D) commute

Word building · verb ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

1. to negotiate → a ____

2. to reject → a ____

3. to select → a ____

4. to refer → a ____

5. to decide → a ____

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Grammar · Present perfect continuous — the interview version

- 1. Answer 'how long?' with FOR + duration or SINCE + starting point** — • 'I've been leading this team FOR two years.' • 'I've been running the roadmap SINCE January.'
- 2. Signal 'still ongoing' — perfect for interviews** — • 'I've been building this dashboard' (still building — sounds current) • 'I built this dashboard' (finished — sounds distant)
- 3. Use present perfect SIMPLE for the number / result** — • Ongoing: 'I've been rebuilding the pricing model since January.' • Result: 'We've moved conversion from 2.1% to 3.4%.' • Best answer uses BOTH: 'I've been rebuilding it since January — we've moved conversion from 2.1% to 3.4%.'
- 4. Weakness answers: perfect continuous shows growth** — • 'I've been learning to give harder feedback earlier.' • 'I've been working on delegating more instead of stepping in.'
- 5. Avoid state verbs in continuous form** — • ✓ 'I've known the CFO since 2019.' • ✗ 'I've been knowing...'

Exercise A — put the verbs in the right form

Present perfect simple or continuous.

1. I (work) here for three years.

2. We (ship) five features this quarter.

3. She (lead) the team since 2022.

4. I (know) the founder for ten years.

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5. They (interview) candidates for six weeks now.

6. We (hire) three engineers this month.

Exercise B — rewrite the weakness answer using present perfect continuous

Turn each 'weakness' into a growth answer using PPC.

1. I sometimes wait too long to give feedback.

2. I don't delegate enough.

3. I say yes to too many things.

Exercise C — for or since?

Complete with 'for' or 'since'.

1. I've been in this role ____ two years.

2. We've been interviewing ____ mid-March.

3. She's been my manager ____ she joined in 2023.

4. The process has been running ____ six weeks.

5. I've been reaching out to recruiters ____ Monday.

Exercise D — the two-sentence answer

For each question, write ONE PPC sentence + ONE result sentence.

1. 'What have you been focusing on in your current role?'

2. 'What's a skill you've been building outside work?'

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Exercise E — full answer to 'why should we hire you?'

Write a 3-sentence answer. Sentence 1: PPC + duration (what you've been doing). Sentence 2: present perfect simple + number (the result). Sentence 3: one honest reason for THIS role. Max 90 words.

1. Role: Head of Customer Success at a B2B SaaS.

Listening · Two candidates, one panel

The final panel round for a Head of Marketing role. Two candidates answer the same four questions. Listen and decide who to make the offer to — and one thing you'd say to the other in the rejection call.

pre

In your industry, do panels usually decide by consensus, or by the loudest voice in the room?

What's ONE question you'd add to any panel?

gist

1. Which candidate answers with numbers, and which with adjectives?

2. Which candidate asks a sharp question at the end?

3. Which candidate handles the weakness question well?

detail

1. What specific number does Candidate B mention?

2. Why does Candidate A weaken their own answer?

3. What is Candidate B's honest reason for wanting this role?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

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1. Which candidate is likely to negotiate the offer harder?

2. What ONE piece of feedback would help Candidate A most?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does.

"I've been leading marketing at a B2B SaaS for four years." — opens with PPC + duration (grounded)

"We've grown MQLs 40% year-on-year." — supports the claim with a number

"I've been learning to say no to good ideas so the great ones ship." — handles weakness with growth framing

"What has surprised you most about the last two hires in this role?" — closes with a sharp candidate-side question

"I think I'm kind of a strategic person." — hedges (weakens the claim)

Candidate A: So, I think I'm kind of a strategic person, I like the big picture, I've been in marketing for a while and I think I bring a lot of creativity and passion. I think this role sounds interesting and I've been kind of looking for something new. My weakness is probably that I care too much about the work. And, um, do you know how the holiday policy works here?

Candidate B: I've been leading marketing at a B2B SaaS in Barcelona for four years. In that time we've grown MQLs 40% year-on-year and cut CAC from €340 to €190. On the weakness side, I've been learning to say no to good ideas so the great ones actually ship. And one question for you: what has surprised you most about the last two hires in this role?

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases from the audio.

1. I've been ____ marketing at a B2B SaaS in Barcelona for four years.

2. We've grown MQLs 40% year-on-year and cut CAC from €340 to ____.

3. I've been ____ to say no to good ideas so the great ones ship.

4. What has ____ you most about the last two hires in this role?

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5. I think I'm kind of a ____ person.

Speaking · The 45-minute hiring-manager call, in 8 minutes

Role-play the middle of a hiring-manager call: three questions, three answers, one candidate-side question at the end. Use present perfect continuous in your first answer, present perfect simple in the second, and one sharp question of your own to close.

Scene: Question 1: 'What have you been focusing on in your current role?'

A: Student A: candidate. Answer using PPC + duration + ONE number.

B: Student B: hiring manager. Probe: 'What went wrong on the way?'

Scene: Question 2: 'What's your biggest weakness right now?'

A: Student A: candidate. Use PPC to show a real growth area — no clichés.

B: Student B: hiring manager. Reaction: accept, or push for a second one.

Scene: Question 3 (candidate side): 'What has surprised you most about the last six months in this team?'

A: Student A: candidate. Ask the question.

B: Student B: hiring manager. Answer as honestly as you can.

Class discussion

Discuss briefly.

In your industry, what's the ONE weakness that's genuinely disqualifying?

Is a 5-stage process a sign of a mature company or a slow one?

How would you react if a company ghosted you after the final round?

Role-play · the salary conversation

Student A is the candidate, Student B is the recruiter. B asks the salary question. A answers using the anchor-then-package formula.

Scene: Role: Senior Product Designer, realistic range €55–70k.

A: Student A: 'I'd be looking in the region of €62–70k, but the whole package matters.'

B: Student B: react — push down, push up, or accept the anchor.

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Scene: Role: Head of Operations, realistic range €80–100k.

A: Student A: anchor + one reason based on scope.

B: Student B: react — mention budget, or ask for flexibility on start date.

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Workbook — home practice



1. Vocabulary gap-fill

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

Word bank: phone screen · case task · panel interview · final round · offer · reference check

1. The ____ took 20 minutes and covered salary and start date.

2. They asked me to do a ____ — a two-hour spreadsheet exercise.

3. I have five interviewers on Thursday — it's the ____.

4. I've made it to the ____ — one more conversation with the CEO.

5. The ____ came in on Friday: €68k + bonus.

6. In the ____, they usually call two of your past managers.

2. Present perfect continuous or simple?

Choose the more natural form.

1. I (work) here for three years.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. We (ship) five features this quarter.

3. She (lead) the team since 2022.

4. I (know) the founder for ten years.

5. They (interview) candidates for six weeks now.

6. We (hire) three engineers this month.

3. Which interview answer is stronger?

Choose the answer that would move you to the next round.

1. 'What's your biggest weakness?'

(A) 'I'm a perfectionist — I care too much.'

(B) 'I've been learning to give harder feedback earlier — I used to wait weeks.'

(C) 'I don't really have any weaknesses that would affect this role.'

2. 'What are your salary expectations?'

(A) 'Whatever you think is fair.'

(B) 'I'd be looking in the region of €62–70k, but the whole package matters.'

(C) '€120k, non-negotiable.'

3. 'Do you have any questions for me?'

(A) 'What's the salary?'

(B) 'What has surprised you most about working here in the last six months?'

(C) 'No, I think you've covered everything.'

4. 'Tell me about a 24-month gap on your CV.'

(A) 'That's personal.'

(B) 'I took time to care for a family member. During that time I completed a data course and started freelancing.'

(C) 'I couldn't find a job.'

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake.

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1. I've been in this role since two years.

2. She's been knowing the CFO since 2019.

3. We've been ship five features this quarter.

4. I am interviewing for three months already.

5. Listening — two candidates, one panel

The final panel for a Head of Marketing role. Two candidates answer the same questions. Which one gets the offer?

1. Who answers with numbers and who with adjectives?

2. Who asks a sharp candidate-side question?

3. Who handles the weakness question best, and how?

Candidate A: So, I think I'm kind of a strategic person, I like the big picture, I've been in marketing for a while and I think I bring a lot of creativity and passion. This role sounds interesting and I've been kind of looking for something new. My weakness is probably that I care too much about the work. And, do you know how the holiday policy works here?

Candidate B: I've been leading marketing at a B2B SaaS in Barcelona for four years. In that time we've grown MQLs 40% year-on-year and cut CAC from €340 to €190. On the weakness side, I've been learning to say no to good ideas so the great ones actually ship. And one question for you: what has surprised you most about the last two hires in this role?

6. Writing — your weakness answer

Write a 3-sentence answer to 'What's your biggest weakness right now?'. Use present perfect continuous to signal growth. Include one specific past behaviour ('I used to...') and one specific present behaviour ('now I...'). No clichés. Max 60 words.

7. Case study preview

Before Case Study 9, answer briefly.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. Two finalists, one role. What's the ONE deciding factor for you — track record, culture fit, first-90-days plan, or cost?

2. How do you write a rejection that keeps the door open?

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Answer key — Class Book

Reading · The five stages of a modern interview process

1. (C) Five
2. (B) Fit and salary
3. (B) Juniors spend more time on it than seniors
1. (B) False
2. (A) True
3. (A) True
4. (A) True
5. (C) Not Given
1. Model: often the second. The best candidate is often already employed and can't do six hours of unpaid case work.
2. Model: yes above ~4 hours. It's the cleanest signal that they respect your time.
1. the panel
2. the recruiter call
3. stage five is the final

Vocabulary · Six interview verbs and nouns

1. phone screen
2. accept
3. case task
4. ghosted
5. reschedule
6. reference check
1. (D) onboarding
2. (D) ghost
3. (D) commute
1. negotiation
2. rejection
3. selection
4. reference / referral
5. decision

Grammar · Present perfect continuous — the interview version

1. have been working
2. have shipped
3. has been leading
4. have known
5. have been interviewing
6. have hired
1. I've been learning to give feedback earlier — I used to wait weeks, now I try in the first days.
2. I've been working on delegating more, especially the parts I know I could do faster myself.
3. I've been practising saying 'not this quarter' without feeling I have to justify it.
1. for
2. since
3. since
4. for
5. since
1. Model: 'I've been focusing on our onboarding flow since March. We've cut drop-off in the first 7 days from 34% to 21%.'
2. Model: 'I've been studying data analysis in the evenings for about a year. I've built two internal dashboards our team now uses weekly.'
1. Model: 'I've been running customer success for a 60-person SaaS in Madrid for four years. We've moved gross retention from 82% to 94% and built a health-score system that flags churn 8 weeks earlier. I'm here because your product-led growth motion is exactly the transition I want to lead next.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Listening · Two candidates, one panel

1. Candidate B answers with numbers ('grown MQLs 40%', 'shipped 6 campaigns'). Candidate A answers with adjectives ('strategic', 'passionate', 'creative').
2. Candidate B — 'what has surprised you most about the last two hires in this role?'. Candidate A asks about holiday policy.
3. Candidate B — 'I've been learning to say no to good ideas so the great ones ship.'
1. 'MQL volume up 40% year-on-year and CAC down from €340 to €190.'
2. Uses 'I think' and 'kind of' four times in 60 seconds. Confidence leaks out.
3. 'You're the first company I've seen where marketing owns the pricing page — that's where I want to work.'
1. Candidate B — clear numbers, confident language, and a sharp question at the end all signal a candidate who knows their market value.
2. 'Bring one number per answer.' Adjectives don't survive panel comparison; numbers do.
1. leading
2. €190
3. learning
4. surprised
5. strategic

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Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. phone screen
2. case task
3. panel interview
4. final round
5. offer
6. reference check

2. Present perfect continuous or simple?

1. have been working
2. have shipped
3. has been leading
4. have known
5. have been interviewing
6. have hired

3. Which interview answer is stronger?

1. (B) 'I've been learning to give harder feedback earlier — I used to wait weeks.'
2. (B) 'I'd be looking in the region of €62–70k, but the whole package matters.'
3. (B) 'What has surprised you most about working here in the last six months?'
4. (B) 'I took time to care for a family member. During that time I completed a data course and started freelancing.'

4. Find and fix the mistake

1. I've been in this role for two years.
2. She's known the CFO since 2019.
3. We've shipped five features this quarter.
4. I've been interviewing for three months already.

5. Listening — two candidates, one panel

1. Candidate B → numbers ('MQLs 40%', 'CAC €340 → €190'). Candidate A → adjectives ('strategic', 'passionate').
2. Candidate B — 'what has surprised you most about the last two hires in this role?'. Candidate A asks about holiday.
3. Candidate B — 'I've been learning to say no to good ideas so the great ones ship.' Growth framing with PPC.

7. Case study preview

1. Model: first-90-days plan. It's the only signal that separates 'good candidate' from 'good hire for THIS company'.
2. Model: name what you'll remember, be specific about why they aren't the pick this time, offer ONE concrete thing (feedback call, intro, second look in 12 months).

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 10 · B1·10A

If we launched next month...

Theme · Planning ahead

Unit 10 · B1·10A

If we launched next month...

Theme: Planning ahead

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Talk about hypothetical business plans using the 2nd conditional ('If we hired two people, we'd double output').
- Read and write a one-page annual plan around three anchors: goals, bets, and one number per bet.
- Use six high-frequency planning nouns and verbs (roadmap, milestone, KPI, target, forecast, prioritise).

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · The one plan you never wrote down

Think of **ONE** thing you've been meaning to plan properly at work (a launch, a hire, a rebrand). Answer three questions in one sentence each.

What is it?

Why hasn't it been planned yet?

If you had 30 minutes today, what would you write down first?

Lead-in: predict the year

Six 'what if' predictions about the next 12 months in a typical mid-sized company. For each, decide **LIKELY** or **UNLIKELY**, then reveal.

kind: predictions

1. **claim:** If we ran **ONE** product launch per quarter instead of three, revenue would grow faster. · **vote:** **LIKELY** · **explain:** Focus beats volume. Fewer, better launches outperform many mediocre ones for most B2B companies under 200 people.

2. **claim:** If we froze hiring for six months, our operating margin would double. · **vote:** **UNLIKELY** · **explain:** It usually improves margin 5–15%, not 100%. Hiring costs are rarely the biggest line item; wrong pricing usually is.

3. **claim:** If we cut our meeting hours by 50%, our shipped-feature count would go up. · **vote:** **LIKELY** · **explain:** For engineering-heavy teams, meeting time is the single biggest predictor of throughput. The correlation is well documented.

4. **claim:** If we raised prices 10%, we would lose more than 10% of customers. · **vote:** **UNLIKELY** · **explain:** Most B2B companies under-price by 15–30%. A 10% raise typically loses 2–5% of customers — net revenue up.

5. **claim:** If we opened a second office in a new city, communication problems would **DOUBLE** overnight. · **vote:** **LIKELY** · **explain:** Distributed teams pay a real coordination tax in the first 6–9 months. Companies that plan it (docs, rituals) absorb it; companies that don't, don't.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



6. **claim:** If we asked our top 10 customers what they'd pay for, half our roadmap would change. ·
vote: LIKELY · **explain:** This is the classic 'we should have done it earlier' finding — 60–70% of surveyed roadmaps do shift after real customer interviews.

followUp: Which answer would you most like to test at your own company? Explain in one sentence.

Reading · The one-page plan

Every company has too many plans. A five-year vision. A three-year strategy. An annual budget. A quarterly OKR document. A weekly sprint. Somewhere between the five-year vision and the weekly sprint, the actual work goes missing.

The one-page plan is the fix. It has three sections, no more. Section one: THREE goals for the year, written as verbs ('grow revenue to €5M', 'ship v2 of the platform', 'hire a Head of Sales'). Section two: THREE bets — the things you'll do that you can't yet prove will work. Section three: ONE number per bet — the single metric that will tell you, in six months, whether the bet is working.

If you can't fit it on one page, it's not a plan; it's a wish list. Everyone knows this and almost nobody does it, because writing down THREE goals means saying no to fifteen others. That's the whole exercise. The one-page plan is not about writing. It's about deleting.

The best time to write the one-page plan is the last week of December, in a quiet room, on paper. The second-best time is now. If you started it this afternoon and finished it by Friday, you'd already be ahead of most of your industry.

1. How many sections does the one-page plan have?
 - (A) Two
 - (B) Three
 - (C) Five
2. What is section three?
 - (A) A budget breakdown
 - (B) One number per bet
 - (C) A list of hires
3. Why do most people not write a one-page plan, according to the text?
 - (A) It takes too long
 - (B) It means saying no to other things
 - (C) The template is hard to find

Vocabulary in context

Match the phrase to the meaning.

a bet — an action you take without proof it will work

a metric that will tell you — a specific number you can measure later

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



a wish list — many things you want, without priorities

on paper, in a quiet room — away from screens and distractions

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text.

1. A one-page plan should include exactly three goals.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
2. The plan should include the CEO's biography.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
3. The exercise is really about deleting, not writing.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
4. Most companies write a proper one-page plan every year.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
5. The best time to write it is January 1st.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly.

1. In your company, is 'the plan' one page, or fifty?

2. What's harder for you: writing goals or deleting the ones that don't fit?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Scan for meaning

Find the phrase in the text that matches each definition.

1. an action you take without knowing it will work

2. many things you want, without priorities

3. the specific number that tells you the bet is working

Vocabulary · Six planning nouns and verbs

a roadmap — a visual plan of what ships when

a milestone — a checkpoint on the way to a bigger goal

a KPI (key performance indicator) — the number you track weekly

a target — the specific number you're aiming for

a forecast — your best estimate of a future number

a bottleneck — the one friction point slowing everything else down

to prioritise — to decide what comes first

to deprioritise / drop — to move something OFF the plan

to forecast — to estimate a future number

to hit a target — to reach the specific number

to miss a target — to fall short of the number

to revise the plan — to change it based on new information

practice

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

1. Our Q3 ____ is €1.2M in new bookings.

2. The single biggest ____ right now is finance approvals — everything waits on them.

3. We need to ____ mobile over desktop for the next two quarters.

4. The ____ shows three launches, one hire, and one integration.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



5. We're going to ____ the plan after the July numbers come in.

6. We ____ the target by 4% last quarter — small miss, real one.

Collocations · planning phrases

Match the verb with the noun.

set — a target

hit — a milestone

revise — the forecast

own — a KPI

drop — a project

unblock — a bottleneck

Odd one out

Choose the word that does NOT belong.

1. target · KPI · forecast · notice period

(A) target

(B) KPI

(C) forecast

(D) notice period

2. roadmap · milestone · bottleneck · onboarding

(A) roadmap

(B) milestone

(C) bottleneck

(D) onboarding

3. prioritise · deprioritise · revise · resign

(A) prioritise

(B) deprioritise

(C) revise

(D) resign

Word building · verb ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. to plan → a ____

2. to prioritise → a ____

3. to forecast → a ____

4. to invest → an ____

5. to decide → a ____



Grammar · 2nd conditional (light) for hypothetical plans

1. Form: IF + past simple, WOULD + verb — • 'If we hired two engineers, we would ship v2 by June.' • 'If prices went up 10%, we'd lose about 3% of customers.'

2. Use: an unreal / hypothetical situation you're THINKING about — • 'If we launched in September, we'd have three months of feedback before year-end.' • 'If I had one more week, I'd rewrite the landing page.'

3. WERE (not was) with 'if I' in careful business English — • ✓ 'If I were the CEO, I'd cut the roadmap in half.' • Both are fine in speech, but 'were' is safer in writing.

4. Contrast: 1st vs 2nd conditional — • 1st (real / likely): 'If we hit €5M, we'll open a second office.' • 2nd (hypothetical / less likely): 'If we hit €10M, we'd open a US office.'

5. Softening: 'would' + verb makes plans sound less pushy — • Direct: 'We need three more people.' • Softened: 'If we had three more people, we'd move twice as fast.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

**Exercise A — put the verbs in 2nd conditional**

Use *IF + past simple, WOULD + verb*.

1. If we (hire) a Head of Sales, we (double) pipeline in six months.

2. If prices (go) up 10%, we (lose) about 3% of customers.

3. If I (be) you, I (drop) that project.

4. If we (launch) in Q4, we (have) proper data before the board meeting.

5. If we (rewrite) the pricing page, conversion (probably improve) 20%.

6. If we (freeze) hiring, margin (rise) but growth (slow).

Exercise B — find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has *ONE* mistake.

1. If we would hire two engineers, we would ship v2.

2. If I was the CEO, I will cut the roadmap in half.

3. If prices go up 10%, we would lose 3% of customers.

4. If we had more time, we solve it properly.

Exercise C — 1st or 2nd conditional?

Choose the more natural form based on how *LIKELY* the situation is.

1. Realistic Q3 plan: 'If we (hit) €1.2M, we (open) a Porto office.'

2. Wild scenario: 'If we (grow) 10× in one year, we (need) a new CFO.'

3. Board question: 'If competitor A (buy) competitor B, what (we do)?'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. Team question: 'If Sofia (get) the promotion next month, who (take over) her role?'

Exercise D — your own hypothetical plan

Write ONE 2nd-conditional sentence about YOUR job or company.

1. A cost you'd cut.

2. A hire you'd make.

3. A launch you'd delay.

Exercise E — your one-page plan opener

Write your own 3-sentence opener to a one-page annual plan. Sentence 1: your #1 goal as a verb + a number. Sentence 2: your #1 bet, phrased as a 2nd conditional ('If we did X, we'd...'). Sentence 3: the ONE number that will tell you it's working. Max 90 words.

1. Prompt: you run marketing at a Portuguese B2B SaaS. €2M ARR today, targeting €3M by December.

Listening · Three founders present their one-page plan

A pre-seed accelerator's demo day. Three founders each get 90 seconds to walk through the one-page plan for the next 12 months. Listen and decide which one you'd invest in, which one you'd give feedback to, and which one you'd politely pass on.

pre

In your own job, if you had 90 seconds to explain next year's plan, could you?

What is the ONE number about your work you check most often?

gist

1. Which founder has a real one-page plan (three goals, three bets, three numbers)?

2. Which founder pitches a vision without a number?

3. Which founder has too many goals to be credible?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



detail

1. What specific numbers does Founder B mention?

2. What is Founder B's biggest bet, in one line?

3. What is the ONE metric that will tell Founder B the bet is working?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

1. What has Founder C likely NOT done yet?

2. Why does Founder B's plan sound more credible than Founder A's?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does.

"Our #1 goal is to grow ARR from €800k to €2.4M." — states the top goal with two numbers

"If we replaced sales-led with self-serve, we'd cut CAC in half." — 2nd conditional to describe the biggest bet

"The one number that will tell us it's working is..." — names the single metric that proves the bet

"We want to become the leading platform in Europe." — vague vision — no number, no bet

"...and also community, and events, and a podcast, and a book club." — wish list — no priorities

Founder A: Hi. So, we're building something really exciting. Our vision is to become the leading platform in Europe for small businesses. We're passionate about design, we care deeply about our users, and we've been iterating really fast this quarter. Next year we want to grow a lot, hire great people, and build the best product on the market. Thank you.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Founder B: Three goals this year. One: grow ARR from €800k to €2.4M. Two: ship v2 of the platform by end of June. Three: four hires — one per quarter — starting with a Head of Growth. Our biggest bet: if we replaced our sales-led motion with a self-serve free trial, we'd cut CAC in half and open the SMB market that we currently can't afford. The one number that will tell us it's working is free-trial-to-paid conversion above 4% by end of Q2. If we hit it, we double down. If we don't, we go back to sales-led.

Founder C: OK, so for next year we're doing a lot. We're growing the team, launching in France, redesigning the app, starting a podcast, moving to a new office, hiring a Head of Everything, exploring the Middle East, doing three big launches, and also community, and events, and a book club, and, um, some AI features. It's going to be a very busy year.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases from the audio.

1. Our #1 goal is to grow ARR from €800k to ____.

2. Ship v2 of the platform by end of ____.

3. If we replaced our sales-led motion with a self-serve free trial, we'd cut CAC ____.

4. Free-trial-to-paid conversion above ____% by end of Q2.

5. It's going to be a very ____ year.

Speaking · Pitch your own 90-second plan

Prepare and deliver YOUR own 90-second annual plan. Three sentences: #1 goal with a number; #1 bet as a 2nd conditional ('If we did X, we'd...'); the ONE number that will tell you it's working. Then role-play the investor's / boss's first follow-up question.

Scene: Role 1 — you run marketing at a €2M-ARR Portuguese B2B SaaS

A: You: the marketing lead. Deliver the 90-second plan. Then answer: 'Why not just increase ad spend?'

B: You: the CEO. Push on the number: 'What happens if the bet doesn't work by Q2?'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Scene: Role 2 — you run operations at a 30-person e-commerce brand

A: You: the ops lead. Deliver the plan. Then answer: 'What's the biggest thing you're deprioritising?'

B: You: the founder. React — challenge the drop, defend a project you love.

Scene: Role 3 — you're the founder of a 12-person agency, pitching to a lead investor

A: You: the founder. Deliver the plan. Then answer: 'What would make you double the bet in Q3?'

B: You: the investor. React — probe the assumption behind the ONE number.

Class discussion

Discuss briefly.

In your company, does the annual plan actually fit on one page?

Is a 'bet' respected in your culture, or seen as a risk to punish?

What's the ONE number you'd add to your team's weekly review starting Monday?

Role-play · the 'if we had...' conversation

Student A raises a hypothetical resource ('if we had X'). Student B (the boss / CFO) reacts. Both use 2nd conditional at least once.

Scene: 'If we had two more designers, we'd ship the whole roadmap by September.'

A: Student A: the design manager. Make the case with ONE number.

B: Student B: the CFO. React — trade-off with hiring freeze.

Scene: 'If we dropped the German launch, we'd save €120k and finish v2 six weeks earlier.'

A: Student A: the head of product. Argue the trade.

B: Student B: the CEO. Push back — Germany is the CEO's personal bet.

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: roadmap · milestone · KPI · target · forecast · bottleneck

1. Our Q3 ____ is €1.2M in new bookings.

2. The biggest ____ right now is finance approvals — everything waits on them.

3. The ____ shows three launches, one hire, and one integration.

4. We track weekly active users as our main growth ____.

5. The Q2 ____ says €880k — 12% below plan.

6. Shipping v2 by end of June is our first big ____.

2. 2nd conditional — put the verbs in the right form

IF + past simple, WOULD + verb.

1. If we (hire) a Head of Sales, we (double) pipeline in six months.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. If prices (go) up 10%, we (lose) about 3% of customers.

3. If I (be) you, I (drop) that project.

4. If we (launch) in Q4, we (have) proper data before the board meeting.

5. If we (rewrite) the pricing page, conversion (probably improve) 20%.

6. If we (freeze) hiring, margin (rise) but growth (slow).

3. 1st or 2nd conditional?

Choose the more natural form based on how LIKELY the situation is.

1. Realistic Q3 plan:

(A) 'If we hit €1.2M, we open a Porto office.'

(B) 'If we hit €1.2M, we'll open a Porto office.'

(C) 'If we hit €1.2M, we'd open a Porto office.'

2. Wild 10× scenario:

(A) 'If we grew 10× in a year, we need a new CFO.'

(B) 'If we grow 10× in a year, we would need a new CFO.'

(C) 'If we grew 10× in a year, we'd need a new CFO.'

3. Hypothetical board question:

(A) 'If competitor A buys competitor B, what will we do?'

(B) 'If competitor A bought competitor B, what would we do?'

(C) 'If competitor A would buy competitor B, what would we do?'

4. Which one-page-plan sentence is stronger?

Choose the version that a serious investor or CEO would take more seriously.

1. Goal:

(A) 'Grow the business a lot next year.'

(B) 'Grow ARR from €800k to €2.4M.'

(C) 'Become the leading platform in Europe.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. Bet:

- (A) 'We're going to do content and community and events.'
- (B) 'If we replaced sales-led with self-serve, we'd cut CAC in half.'
- (C) 'We're passionate about growth.'

3. Number:

- (A) 'A lot of new users.'
- (B) 'Free-trial-to-paid conversion above 4% by end of Q2.'
- (C) 'Whatever we can get.'

5. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake.

1. If we would hire two engineers, we would ship v2.

2. If I was the CEO, I will cut the roadmap in half.

3. If prices go up 10%, we would lose 3% of customers.

4. If we had more time, we solve it properly.

6. Listening — three founders, one demo day

Three founders pitch a one-page plan in 90 seconds. Who gets funded, who gets feedback, who gets a polite pass?

1. Which founder has a real one-page plan?

2. Which founder pitches a vision without any number?

3. Which founder has too many goals to be credible?

Founder A: Hi. Our vision is to become the leading platform in Europe for small businesses. We're passionate, we care deeply, and we've been iterating really fast. Next year we want to grow a lot, hire great people, and build the best product. Thank you.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Founder B: Three goals. Grow ARR from €800k to €2.4M. Ship v2 by end of June. Four hires — one per quarter. Biggest bet: if we replaced sales-led with a self-serve free trial, we'd cut CAC in half and open the SMB market. The one number that will tell us it's working: free-trial-to-paid above 4% by end of Q2.

Founder C: For next year we're doing a lot. Growing the team, launching in France, redesigning the app, starting a podcast, moving offices, hiring a Head of Everything, exploring the Middle East, three big launches, community, events, a book club, some AI features. Very busy year.

7. Writing — your own one-page plan opener

Write a 3-sentence opener to a one-page annual plan for your job. Sentence 1: your #1 goal as a verb + a number. Sentence 2: your #1 bet, phrased as a 2nd conditional. Sentence 3: the ONE number that will tell you it's working. Max 90 words.

8. Case study preview

Before Case Study 10, answer briefly.

1. You're planning next year for a Portuguese family business. What's the SINGLE biggest hypothetical decision you'd stress-test with a 2nd conditional?

2. How do you politely disagree with the founder's Q1 priority in front of the team?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Class Book

Reading · The one-page plan

1. (B) Three
2. (B) One number per bet
3. (B) It means saying no to other things
1. (A) True
2. (C) Not Given
3. (A) True
4. (B) False
5. (B) False
1. Model: fifty — a deck, a Notion, a spreadsheet, and nobody knows which is current. The one-pager would be a real change.
2. Model: deleting. Writing feels productive; deleting feels like losing.
1. a bet
2. a wish list
3. one number per bet

Vocabulary · Six planning nouns and verbs

1. target
2. bottleneck
3. prioritise
4. roadmap
5. revise
6. missed
1. (D) notice period
2. (D) onboarding
3. (D) resign
1. plan / planner / planning
2. priority
3. forecast (also: forecaster)
4. investment / investor
5. decision

Grammar · 2nd conditional (light) for hypothetical plans

1. hired · would double
2. went · would lose
3. were (or was) · would drop
4. launched · would have
5. rewrote · would probably improve
6. froze · would rise · would slow
1. If we hired two engineers, we would ship v2. (no 'would' in the IF clause)
2. If I were the CEO, I would cut the roadmap in half. (2nd conditional needs 'would' not 'will')
3. If prices went up 10%, we'd lose 3% of customers. (both clauses must match hypothetical)
4. If we had more time, we would solve it properly. ('would' missing)
1. hit / will open (1st — the target is realistic)
2. grew / would need (2nd — 10× is hypothetical)
3. bought / would we do (2nd — hypothetical)
4. gets / will take over (1st — realistic near-term)
1. Model: 'If I cut our SaaS-tools budget by 20%, we'd save €4,000 a month with almost no impact.'
2. Model: 'If we hired a designer, we'd stop losing a day per week to Canva work.'
3. Model: 'If we delayed the mobile app by six weeks, we'd ship it without the bugs we currently have.'
1. Model: 'Our #1 goal this year is to grow ARR from €2M to €3M. Our biggest bet is a switch from paid ads to content: if we published two deep pieces per week and hired one content lead, we'd cut CAC by 30% and open a lasting channel. The one number that will tell us it's working: organic-source pipeline at €150k by Q3.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Listening · Three founders present their one-page plan

1. Founder B — clean structure, verbs, numbers. Ninety seconds, no fluff.
2. Founder A — 'we want to become the leading platform in Europe' but no specific goal, no metric.
3. Founder C — nine goals in 90 seconds. That's not a plan.
1. 'Grow ARR from €800k to €2.4M. Ship v2 by June. One hire per quarter — total four.'
2. 'If we replaced our sales-led motion with a self-serve free trial, we'd cut CAC in half and open the SMB market.'
3. Free-trial-to-paid conversion above 4% by end of Q2.
1. The 'deleting' part of the plan. Nine goals means no priorities.
2. Verbs and numbers beat adjectives. 'Grow to €2.4M' beats 'become the leading platform'.
1. €2.4M
2. June
3. in half
4. 4
5. busy

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. target
2. bottleneck
3. roadmap
4. KPI
5. forecast
6. milestone

2. 2nd conditional — put the verbs in the right form

1. hired · would double
2. went · would lose
3. were (or was) · would drop
4. launched · would have
5. rewrote · would probably improve
6. froze · would rise · would slow

3. 1st or 2nd conditional?

1. (B) 'If we hit €1.2M, we'll open a Porto office.'
2. (C) 'If we grew 10× in a year, we'd need a new CFO.'
3. (B) 'If competitor A bought competitor B, what would we do?'

4. Which one-page-plan sentence is stronger?

1. (B) 'Grow ARR from €800k to €2.4M.'
2. (B) 'If we replaced sales-led with self-serve, we'd cut CAC in half.'
3. (B) 'Free-trial-to-paid conversion above 4% by end of Q2.'

5. Find and fix the mistake

1. If we hired two engineers, we would ship v2. (no 'would' in the IF clause)
2. If I were the CEO, I would cut the roadmap in half.
3. If prices went up 10%, we'd lose 3% of customers.
4. If we had more time, we would solve it properly.

6. Listening — three founders, one demo day

1. Founder B — three goals, three bets, three numbers.
2. Founder A — 'become the leading platform in Europe' with no metric.
3. Founder C — nine goals in 90 seconds is a wish list.

8. Case study preview

1. Model: 'If we stopped selling to restaurants and only sold direct-to-consumer, what would happen to margin and to volume?' — the answer usually reshapes the whole plan.
2. Model: '(Founder), I'd rather we tested the direct-to-consumer bet before we invested more in restaurants — if we did that, we'd know by end of Q2 which channel deserves next year's money.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 10 · B1·10B

Looking back, looking ahead

Theme · Planning ahead



Unit 10 · B1·10B

Looking back, looking ahead

Theme: *Planning ahead*

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Run a short quarterly review in English: what worked, what didn't, what changes for next quarter.
- Use 2nd conditional to reframe past problems as future decisions ('If we started again, we'd...').
- Use six high-frequency review verbs and nouns (retrospective, blocker, lesson learned, follow-up action, deprioritise, sign-off).

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · Your last quarter in one sentence

Describe the last three months of your work in exactly one sentence each — no adjectives, only verbs and numbers.

The single most useful thing you shipped or finished.

The single thing that took longer than it should have.

The single thing you would do differently if you started the quarter again.

Lead-in: agony aunt · quarterly-review mailbox

Four short letters from real teams heading into a quarterly review. For each, write your ONE-sentence advice in the box, then reveal the model answer.

kind: advice

1. **from:** — Head of Product, 40-person SaaS · **letter:** We hit only 60% of our Q3 roadmap. Nobody wants to say it. Our review is on Monday. Do we call it a miss, or reframe as 'partial success'? ·

model: Call it a miss, honestly, in one sentence — then spend 80% of the review on the ONE change for next quarter. 'Reframing' costs credibility.

2. **from:** — Founder, 12-person agency · **letter:** One of our biggest bets failed completely. I know why. Do I present the postmortem myself, or ask the person who owned it to do it? · **model:** The person who owned it presents — with your public support. Otherwise you rob them of the growth and signal that only leaders can talk about failure.

3. **from:** — Ops Manager, e-commerce · **letter:** Every retro turns into a blame session. People stop being honest by minute 20. What ONE rule would you add? · **model:** Rule: talk about SYSTEMS not PEOPLE. Replace 'X was late' with 'our handoff between design and dev has no owner'. Cuts blame in half.

4. **from:** — Team Lead, 6-person data team · **letter:** My CEO wants us to plan the next 12 months. My team can barely plan the next 4 weeks. Where do I start? · **model:** Start with the quarter, not the year. 90 days is the longest horizon a team can plan without losing touch with reality. The year is a rough map, not a contract.

followUp: Which letter is closest to a real situation on YOUR team? Explain in one sentence.

Reading · The 45-minute quarterly review

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



A good quarterly review takes 45 minutes and answers three questions: what did we do, what did we learn, what changes for next quarter. It should NOT be a two-hour slide-fest, a self-congratulation session, or a search for someone to blame.

The first 15 minutes are data. Not opinions — data. Every team brings ONE slide: three numbers, one lesson, one follow-up action. If your slide has more than five lines of text, you haven't done the work.

The middle 15 minutes are the honest conversation. Not 'what went well' (everyone lies), but 'if we started this quarter again, what would we do differently?'. This is where 2nd conditional does the real work. 'If we'd hired the designer in April, we would have shipped v2 in July, not September.'

The last 15 minutes are the ONE change. Not five changes, not a new strategy — one specific change to the way you work, decided in the room, owned by one person, reviewed at the next retrospective. If you leave the meeting with ten follow-up actions, you'll do zero.

Companies that run this meeting well pay a lot less for consultants, because their teams already know what's broken and how to fix it.

1. How long should a good quarterly review take?
 - (A) Fifteen minutes
 - (B) Forty-five minutes
 - (C) Half a day
2. What does each team bring for the data section?
 - (A) A deck of ten slides
 - (B) One slide with three numbers, one lesson, one follow-up
 - (C) A full quarterly report
3. How many changes should the meeting produce?
 - (A) Zero
 - (B) One
 - (C) Ten

Vocabulary in context

Match the phrase to the meaning.

a retrospective (retro) — a meeting to review what happened and improve

a follow-up action — a specific task decided at a meeting

a self-congratulation session — a meeting where people only say positive things

a search for someone to blame — a meeting where people look for a person at fault

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. The middle 15 minutes are for 'what went well'.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
2. The meeting should produce one specific change.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
3. The reviewer takes notes on paper.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
4. Companies that run this well spend less on consultants.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given
5. Slides should have at most five lines of text.
(A) True
(B) False
(C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly.

1. In your company, is the quarterly review 45 minutes or two hours?

2. Would asking 'if we started again, what would we do differently?' be normal or too direct on your team?

Scan for meaning

Find the phrase in the text that matches each definition.

1. the honest hypothetical question to ask in the middle 15 minutes

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. a meeting where people only say positive things

3. one specific change to the way you work

Vocabulary · Six review verbs and nouns

a retrospective (retro) — a meeting to review and improve

a blocker — a friction point stopping the work from progressing

a lesson learned — a fact from the past you'll act on next time

a follow-up action — a task decided at the meeting

sign-off — the final approval before a decision goes live

a postmortem — an honest analysis after something failed

to deprioritise — to move something OFF the plan

to escalate — to push a problem to a higher decision-maker

to unblock — to remove what's stopping progress

to sign off (on) — to formally approve

to reprioritise — to change the order of importance

to close the loop — to send a final update so nothing is left open

practice

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

1. The biggest ____ in Q3 was legal approvals — everything else waited on them.

2. We need the CEO's ____ before we announce the price change.

3. I've been trying to ____ this ticket for two weeks — I have to escalate.

4. One clear ____: never launch a new feature the week of a big campaign.

5. Please ____ your action items in the meeting notes so we can track them.

6. After the outage, we ran a full ____ on Friday afternoon.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Collocations · review phrases

Match the verb with the noun.

run — a retrospective

unblock — the team

capture — a lesson learned

sign off on — the plan

escalate — a blocker

close — the loop

Odd one out

Choose the word that does *NOT* belong.

1. retro · postmortem · lesson learned · onboarding

(A) retro

(B) postmortem

(C) lesson learned

(D) onboarding

2. blocker · bottleneck · milestone · escalation

(A) blocker

(B) bottleneck

(C) milestone

(D) escalation

3. sign off · approve · unblock · resign

(A) sign off

(B) approve

(C) unblock

(D) resign

Word building · verb ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

1. to review → a ____

2. to escalate → an ____

3. to approve → an ____

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. to plan → a ____

5. to deliver → a ____



Grammar · 2nd conditional to review the past and shape the future

- 1. Use 2nd conditional to make hindsight less painful** — • 'If we started this quarter again, we would hire the designer in April.' • Softer than 'we should have hired the designer in April'.
- 2. Combine 2nd conditional with a specific number for credibility** — • 'If we had two more sales reps, we'd close 30% more pipeline.' • Numbers force honesty — no fluff.
- 3. Question form: 'What would happen if...?'** — • 'What would happen if we deprioritised Germany for two quarters?' • Great for kicking off a decision without pushing your view first.
- 4. 'Would rather' + past simple = polite preference** — • 'I'd rather we finished v2 before starting v3.' • 'They'd rather we escalated the blocker to Sofia this week.'
- 5. Avoid mixing 'will' and 'would' in the same sentence** — • ✗ 'If we hired, we will ship earlier.' • ✓ 'If we hired, we would ship earlier.'

Exercise A — 2nd conditional in review sentences

Put the verbs in the correct form.

1. If we (start) again, we (bring) legal in on day one.

2. If we (have) a real project manager, the launch (not slip) by three weeks.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



3. If Sofia (own) the ticket, it (be) done by now.

4. What (happen) if we (deprioritise) Germany for two quarters?

5. I (rather) we (finish) v2 before starting v3.

Exercise B — rewrite the criticism as a 2nd conditional

Turn each direct criticism into a softer 'if...would' sentence.

1. You didn't tell us about the risk early enough.

2. Legal always blocks everything.

3. The team is too small for the plan.

4. Marketing doesn't understand product.

Exercise C — 'would rather' + past simple

Rewrite each preference using 'would rather + past simple'.

1. I prefer to escalate the blocker on Monday.

2. The team prefers to finish v2 before starting v3.

3. The CEO prefers a 45-minute review, not a 2-hour one.

Exercise D — 'what would happen if...?' questions

Write ONE 'what would happen if...?' question for each meeting.

1. Quarterly review, missed 40% of the roadmap.

2. Hiring review, budget for two roles, three teams asking.

3. Sales review, pipeline down 20%.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Exercise E — your own retrospective slide

Write your own ONE-slide quarterly review in FIVE lines. Line 1: 3 numbers. Line 2: 1 lesson learned. Line 3: 1 follow-up action + owner + date. Line 4: 1 blocker to escalate. Line 5: 1 sentence in 2nd conditional starting with 'If we started this quarter again, we would...'.

1. Prompt: you're the head of a 5-person marketing team at a Portuguese e-commerce brand.
-

Listening · Two teams, one quarterly review

Two team leads present the same quarter to the same CEO. Same numbers, very different tone. Listen and decide which team will improve next quarter and which one will repeat the same mistakes.

pre

In your last review, was the honesty level 3/10 or 8/10?

What is the ONE sentence you'd like to hear from your boss at the start of a review?

gist

1. Which team lead opens with numbers, and which opens with excuses?
-
-

2. Which team lead names ONE specific change for next quarter?
-
-

3. Which team lead uses 2nd conditional to review the past honestly?
-
-

detail

1. What specific numbers does Team B report?
-
-

2. What is Team B's ONE follow-up action for next quarter?
-
-

3. Why does Team A's review lose the CEO?
-
-

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

1. Why does Team B's honesty about the miss increase, not decrease, the CEO's trust?

2. What should Team A do BEFORE the next quarterly review?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does.

"We hit 92% of the roadmap and missed the €1.5M target by 4%." — opens with the honest number

"If we had brought legal in at the start of April, we would not have slipped the launch by three weeks." — reviews the past with a specific 2nd/3rd conditional

"We're deprioritising Germany and giving that budget to content in Portugal and Spain." — one specific change with an owner and a budget

"It's been a difficult quarter for the whole industry." — opens with an excuse (loses trust)

"We're going to look at everything and come back with a plan." — vague follow-up (no owner, no date)

Team A lead: So, look, it's been a difficult quarter for the whole industry. The macro is tough, the competitors are aggressive, and honestly the team has been under a lot of pressure. We're proud of the work we've done. We're going to look at everything and come back with a plan for next quarter. Any questions?

Team B lead: Quick review. Three numbers: revenue €1.44M — target was €1.5M, so 4% short. CAC €55 — target was €50, 10% over. NPS 52, target was 45, so 7 points up. One lesson: if we had brought legal in at the start of April, we would not have slipped the launch by three weeks. One change: we're deprioritising Germany this quarter and moving the €80k budget to content in Portugal and Spain — Sofia owns it, weekly check-in for the first six weeks. And one thing I need from you: sign-off by Friday, because contracts start Monday.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases from the audio.

1. Revenue €1.44M — target was €1.5M, so ____% short.

2. If we had brought legal in at the start of April, we would ____ slipped the launch by three weeks.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



3. We're ____ Germany this quarter and moving the €80k budget to content in Portugal and Spain.

4. One thing I need from you: sign-off ____ Friday.

5. It's been a ____ quarter for the whole industry.

Speaking · Run your own 5-minute review

In pairs. Student A: run a 3-minute review of a real (or invented) recent quarter. Structure: 3 numbers · 1 lesson · 1 change · 1 sentence using 2nd conditional ('If we started again, we'd...'). Student B: listen and ask the ONE follow-up question you'd want the CEO to ask.

Scene: Role 1 — Marketing lead, missed the pipeline target by 15%

A: You: the marketing lead. Open with the number. Use ONE 2nd conditional to review the miss.

B: You: the CFO. Ask: 'What would you do differently if the budget were 20% smaller next quarter?'

Scene: Role 2 — Product lead, shipped v2 but with three known bugs

A: You: the product lead. Own the trade-off. Say the ONE thing you'd change.

B: You: the CEO. Ask: 'If we froze the roadmap for four weeks, what would you fix first?'

Scene: Role 3 — Ops lead, one big customer nearly churned

A: You: the ops lead. Explain what you learned and what changes.

B: You: the founder. Ask: 'If the same customer signalled churn tomorrow, who owns the first response?'

Class discussion

Discuss briefly.

In your culture, is admitting a miss in front of leadership seen as strength or weakness?

What's the ONE thing you'd change about how your team runs its review?

Would 'if we started again, we'd...' feel natural on your team, or too raw?

Role-play · the polite disagreement

Student A proposes a change. Student B disagrees politely, using 'would rather' + past simple. Then A reacts with a 2nd conditional.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Scene: 'Let's drop the German launch next quarter.'

A: Student A: propose the drop with ONE reason.

B: Student B: 'I'd rather we ran a smaller German launch than dropped it entirely — if we did that, we'd keep the pipeline alive at 30% of the cost.'

Scene: 'Let's freeze all hiring for six months.'

A: Student A: propose the freeze.

B: Student B: 'I'd rather we froze senior hires and kept the two junior roles — if we did that, margin would still improve without slowing product.'

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: retrospective · blocker · lesson learned · follow-up action · sign-off · postmortem

1. We ran a proper ____ the Friday after the outage.

2. Legal approvals are the biggest ____ this quarter.

3. Every ____ ends with one owner and one date.

4. We need the CEO's ____ before we can announce the change.

5. One clear ____: never launch a feature the same week as a big campaign.

6. The quarterly ____ takes 45 minutes, not two hours.

2. 2nd conditional in review sentences

Put the verbs in the correct form.

1. If we (start) again, we (bring) legal in on day one.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. If we (have) a real project manager, the launch (not slip) by three weeks.

3. If Sofia (own) the ticket, it (be) done by now.

4. What (happen) if we (deprioritise) Germany for two quarters?

5. I (rather) we (finish) v2 before starting v3.

3. Which review answer is stronger?

Choose the answer that would build MORE trust with a CEO or investor.

1. 'How did the quarter go?'

(A) 'It's been a difficult quarter for the whole industry.'

(B) 'We hit 92% of the roadmap and missed the €1.5M target by 4%.'

(C) 'We're really proud of the team.'

2. 'What did you learn?'

(A) 'We learned a lot.'

(B) 'If we had brought legal in at the start of April, we would not have slipped the launch by three weeks.'

(C) 'Every quarter is a lesson.'

3. 'What's changing next quarter?'

(A) 'We're going to look at everything and come back with a plan.'

(B) 'We're deprioritising Germany and moving the €80k budget to content in Portugal and Spain.'

(C) 'We'll be more strategic.'

4. 'Any blockers to escalate?'

(A) 'A few, but we're managing.'

(B) 'Yes: no design bandwidth for the January push — needs Sofia's sign-off on a freelancer by Friday.'

(C) 'It's fine.'

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake.

1. If we had a real PM, the launch will not slip.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. I would rather we finish v2 before starting v3.

3. What would happen if we would deprioritise Germany?

4. If I was the CEO, I sign off on the freelancer today.

5. Listening — two teams, one quarterly review

Two team leads present the same numbers to the same CEO. Who improves next quarter, who repeats the same mistakes?

1. Who opens with numbers, who opens with excuses?

2. Who names ONE specific change with an owner and a date?

3. Who uses 2nd conditional to review the past honestly?

Team A lead: So, look, it's been a difficult quarter for the whole industry. The macro is tough, the competitors are aggressive, and the team has been under a lot of pressure. We're proud of the work we've done. We're going to look at everything and come back with a plan for next quarter. Any questions?

Team B lead: Quick review. Three numbers: revenue €1.44M — 4% short of target. CAC €55, 10% over. NPS 52, 7 points up. One lesson: if we had brought legal in at the start of April, we would not have slipped the launch by three weeks. One change: we're deprioritising Germany and moving the €80k budget to content in Portugal and Spain — Sofia owns it, weekly check-in. And one ask: sign-off by Friday, contracts start Monday.

6. Writing — your own ONE-slide review

Write your own quarterly review in FIVE lines. Line 1: 3 numbers. Line 2: 1 lesson learned. Line 3: 1 follow-up action + owner + date. Line 4: 1 blocker to escalate. Line 5: 1 sentence starting with 'If we started this quarter again, we would...'

7. Case study preview

Before Case Study 10, answer briefly.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. You're helping a family business write the ONE change for next year. What's the ONE question you'd ask the founder before you start?

2. The founder disagrees with your recommended #1 bet. How do you argue?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Class Book

Reading · The 45-minute quarterly review

1. (B) Forty-five minutes
2. (B) One slide with three numbers, one lesson, one follow-up
3. (B) One
1. (B) False
2. (A) True
3. (C) Not Given
4. (A) True
5. (A) True
1. Model: two hours, with 40 slides. The 45-minute version would feel almost impolite — and much more useful.
2. Model: too direct in most European corporate cultures — but healthier than 'what went well'.
1. 'if we started this quarter again, what would we do differently?'
2. a self-congratulation session
3. the ONE change

Vocabulary · Six review verbs and nouns

1. blocker
2. sign-off
3. unblock
4. lesson learned
5. close the loop
6. postmortem
1. (D) onboarding
2. (C) milestone
3. (D) resign
1. review / reviewer
2. escalation
3. approval
4. plan / planner / planning
5. delivery / deliverable

Grammar · 2nd conditional to review the past and shape the future

1. started · would bring
2. had · would not slip
3. owned · would be
4. would happen · deprioritised
5. would rather · finished
1. If we had known about the risk earlier, we would have re-planned the sprint.
2. If we brought legal in at the start of each project, the sign-off wouldn't be a blocker at the end.
3. If the team were two people bigger, we would ship the plan without cutting quality.
4. If marketing and product ran one shared retro per quarter, briefs would be much cleaner.
1. I'd rather we escalated the blocker on Monday.
2. The team would rather we finished v2 before starting v3.
3. The CEO would rather we ran a 45-minute review, not a 2-hour one.
1. 'What would happen if we cut the roadmap in half and shipped 100% of what's left?'
2. 'What would happen if we hired zero people this quarter and freed the budget for freelancers?'
3. 'What would happen if we called every closed-lost from Q1 personally in the next two weeks?'
1. Model: Numbers: revenue €1.4M (target €1.5M · -7%). CAC €48 (target €40 · -20%). Email list 32k (+12%). Lesson: paid social CAC keeps rising above target when we don't run any organic campaign in parallel. Action: launch weekly LinkedIn series · owner: Ana · start 5 Jan · first check 15 Feb. Blocker to escalate: no design bandwidth for the January push — needs Sofia's sign-off on a freelancer. If we started this quarter again, we would run one organic campaign per month from the first week — not from month two.

Listening · Two teams, one quarterly review

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. Team B opens with numbers ('hit 92% of the roadmap, missed the €1.5M target by 4%'). Team A opens with context ('it's been a difficult quarter for the whole industry...').
2. Team B — 'We're deprioritising Germany and giving that budget to content in Portugal and Spain.'
3. Team B — 'If we had brought legal in at the start of April, we would not have slipped the launch by three weeks.'
1. 'Revenue €1.44M (target €1.5M, -4%). CAC €55 (target €50, +10%). NPS 52 (target 45, +7 pts).'
2. 'Deprioritise Germany, move the €80k budget to content in Portugal and Spain, weekly check-in for the first six weeks.'
3. No numbers in the first two minutes, three excuses, no ONE change. The CEO knows the meeting was performative, not real.
1. Because the number is small (-4%) and the response is specific. Honesty + a plan is safer than 'we hit everything'.
2. Write the one-page plan for Q1 first, so the review is against a plan they actually made, not against post-hoc goals.
1. 4
2. not have
3. deprioritising
4. by
5. difficult

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. postmortem
2. blocker
3. follow-up action
4. sign-off
5. lesson learned
6. retrospective

2. 2nd conditional in review sentences

1. started · would bring
2. had · would not slip
3. owned · would be
4. would happen · deprioritised
5. would rather · finished

3. Which review answer is stronger?

1. (B) 'We hit 92% of the roadmap and missed the €1.5M target by 4%.'
2. (B) 'If we had brought legal in at the start of April, we would not have slipped the launch by three weeks.'
3. (B) 'We're deprioritising Germany and moving the €80k budget to content in Portugal and Spain.'
4. (B) 'Yes: no design bandwidth for the January push — needs Sofia's sign-off on a freelancer by Friday.'

4. Find and fix the mistake

1. If we had a real PM, the launch would not slip. ('would' not 'will')
2. I would rather we finished v2 before starting v3. (past simple after 'would rather')
3. What would happen if we deprioritised Germany? (no 'would' in the IF clause)
4. If I were the CEO, I would sign off on the freelancer today.

5. Listening — two teams, one quarterly review

1. Team B → numbers ('92% of the roadmap, missed €1.5M by 4%'). Team A → context ('difficult quarter for the industry').
2. Team B — 'deprioritise Germany, move €80k to content in PT/ES, Sofia owns it, weekly check-in for six weeks'.
3. Team B — 'If we had brought legal in at the start of April, we would not have slipped the launch by three weeks.'

7. Case study preview

1. Model: 'If you could keep ONE thing exactly as it is today, and change everything else, what would you keep?' — the answer reveals the real priority.
2. Model: with ONE 2nd conditional and ONE number — 'if we tested it in one region for one quarter, we'd know by June whether it works, at €30k risk. Full launch waits on that test.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class