



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 2 · B1·2A

Tell me about your company

Theme · Companies & products



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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.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



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

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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

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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

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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.

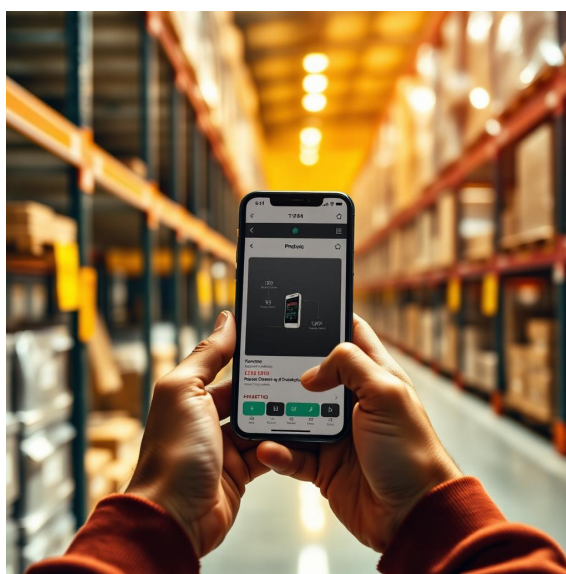
1. to grow → the ____

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)

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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?

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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.

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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.

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**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

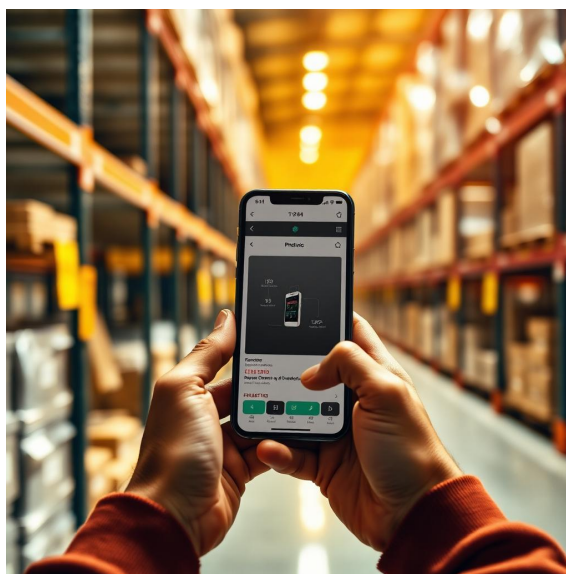
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1. Choose the correct sentence.
 - (A) We founded the company on 2015.
 - (B) We founded the company in 2015.
 - (C) We are founded the company in 2015.
2. "When ____ you start the company?"
 - (A) did
 - (B) do
 - (C) does
3. Which is the BEST short 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.

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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

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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