



APEX ENGLISH

A2 Business

English Course Book

Classbook + Workbook · 10 Units

Elevated A2+ / B1 Edition · Student Edition

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A2·10B

What I would like to do next

Plans & next steps — from
wish-list to roadmap

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

UNIT A2·1A

Nice to meet you — let me tell you what I do.

Introductions & jobs · A2+ · 50–60 min · Business English



“You have exactly 20 seconds to tell someone who you are and why they should remember you.”

— Networking rule of thumb

Objectives

- Introduce yourself in 4–5 rich sentences (name, role, company, one detail) using linkers (and, but, so, because).
- Use the verb be accurately in positive, negative and question forms, including with adjectives and prepositional phrases.
- Ask open follow-up questions that keep a business conversation going beyond the basics.

Warm-up · Your 20-second pitch

Solo · speaking prep · 4 min

Prepare a 20-second self-introduction for a networking event. It must sound natural, not memorised. Include at least ONE linker (because / so / although).

- Sentence 1 — your name and current role (e.g. 'I'm a project manager at a logistics company').

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- Sentence 2 — where you're based now and, if relevant, where you're originally from.
- Sentence 3 — WHY you do what you do, or ONE thing you're working on this month.

Lead-in · Read between the lines

Match · drag & drop · 5 min

Each line is something a real professional might say. Match it to the situation it comes from.

Term	Meaning
"Hi, I'm Ana — I'm the one you've been emailing about the invoice."	meeting a client for the first time after weeks of email exchange
"Pleased to meet you, Ms. Chen. I've heard excellent things about your team."	first handshake with a senior supplier at a formal meeting
"So, I'm technically new here — it's my second week, if I'm honest."	an intern being open about their situation with a friendly colleague
"Right, I'll let you get on — good talking to you, though."	politely ending a conversation at a networking event
"I'm not the decision-maker on this one, but I can put you in touch with her."	redirecting a client to the right person on your team

Follow-up: Which line sounds MOST like something you would say in English at work? Which one would feel unnatural for you?

Reading · Three professionals introduce themselves

8 min

I'm Marta and I've just turned 29. I'm originally from Porto, although I've been based in Lisbon for the last four years. I'm a product designer at a small fintech, which basically means I spend my days trying to make banking apps less painful to use. It's demanding, but I honestly enjoy it — especially the client workshops, because that's where the real problems come out.

Hello, my name is Ken. I'm Japanese, so my family is still in Osaka, but London has been home for almost six years now. I'm a mechanical engineer at an electric-vehicle start-up, and I'm the only non-European on my team, which turned out to be more interesting than difficult. I'm not the lead engineer — I'm a senior in the drivetrain group — although

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people often assume I am, because I'm the oldest in the room.

Hi, we're Sofia and Diego. We're not related, believe it or not — we just happen to run the same bakery together in São Paulo. Sofia is the head baker and I'm the business side. It's a small operation, so we're both a bit of everything: managers, sales, delivery drivers on a bad day. Our clients are mostly small cafés, although we also supply two restaurants in the neighbourhood.

Comprehension check

1. What best describes Marta's job?

- ☐ A. She codes banking apps.
- ☐ B. She designs user experiences for a fintech.
- ☐ C. She's a workshop facilitator.

2. How does Ken feel about being the only non-European on his team?

- ☐ A. It's a problem for him.
- ☐ B. It turned out fine.
- ☐ C. He doesn't mention it.

3. What is Sofia and Diego's relationship?

- ☐ A. They're a couple.
- ☐ B. They're siblings.
- ☐ C. They're business partners.

Vocabulary in context

Find these expressions in the text and match them to the correct meaning.

Term	Meaning
based in	living or working somewhere as your main location
demanding	requiring a lot of effort or energy
decision-maker	the person who has the authority to say yes or no
a bit of everything	someone who does many different tasks
although	in spite of the fact that (contrast)

True / False / Not Given

Read the profiles again. Choose the correct option.

1. Marta has been working in Lisbon for more than three years.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

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2. Ken is the lead engineer of his team.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

3. Ken's Portuguese is fluent.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

4. Sofia and Diego are siblings.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

5. The bakery supplies more than one restaurant.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

React to the text (discursive)

Answer in 2-3 sentences. There's no single correct answer.

1. Which of the three profiles feels closest to your own working life, and why exactly?

2. Write a mini-profile of yourself in the SAME style (2-3 sentences, at least one linker).

Vocabulary · Jobs, roles and workplaces

8 min

Roles

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Term	Meaning
account manager	the person in charge of the relationship with a specific client
product designer	designs how a product looks, works and feels for the user
operations lead	runs the day-to-day of a team or department
sales representative	sells the company's products or services to clients
HR business partner	supports managers on people-related decisions
financial analyst	studies numbers to help the company make decisions

Smalltalk

Term	Meaning
headquarters (HQ)	the main office of a company
co-worker / colleague	someone you work with
line manager	your direct boss
stakeholder	anyone with an interest in a project (client, boss, team, etc.)
in-house	inside the company, not outsourced
remote / hybrid	working from home / mix of home and office

Practice

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

1. Our ___ are in Frankfurt, but our team is in Lisbon.
2. She's my ___, so I report to her on all my projects.
3. Every project has different ___ — clients, users and internal teams.
4. We build the design ___, so we don't outsource anything.
5. He's an experienced ___, and he handles all our German clients.
6. Since the pandemic, most of our team is fully ___.

Collocations · verbs + work nouns

Match each verb with the natural noun that follows it.

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Term	Meaning
report to	a line manager
run	a small team
handle	a difficult client
attend	a weekly meeting
meet	a tight deadline

Odd one out

Which word doesn't belong to the group? Choose one.

1. line manager · CEO · client · team lead

- ☐ A. line manager
- ☐ B. CEO
- ☐ C. client
- ☐ D. team lead

2. headquarters · branch · office · agenda

- ☐ A. headquarters
- ☐ B. branch
- ☐ C. office
- ☐ D. agenda

3. engineer · designer · Monday · analyst

- ☐ A. engineer
- ☐ B. designer
- ☐ C. Monday
- ☐ D. analyst

Grammar · to be (positive, negative, questions) + subject pronouns

12 min

1. Subject pronouns and their use

I · you · he · she · it · we · they.

In business English we often use they for a company: 'They're one of our biggest clients.'
We use we to represent the company: 'We're based in Berlin.'

2. To be — positive and short forms

I am → I'm · You are → You're · He/She/It is → He's/She's/It's · We are → We're · They are → They're.

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In writing (emails, reports) short forms sound friendly; in formal documents you can keep the full form.

3. Negatives and questions with be

Negative: I'm not / She isn't / They aren't.

Yes-no questions: 'Are you the new account manager?' 'Is she still in that meeting?'

Wh- questions: 'Where's your office?' 'Who's your line manager?' 'Why are they late?'

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Exercise A — Complete with am / is / are

Write the correct form of to be (use short forms where natural).

1. I ___ originally from São Paulo, but I ___ based in Porto now.

2. Marta ___ our new product designer. She ___ great with clients.

3. We ___ a small team, so everyone ___ a bit of everything.

4. You ___ the account manager for the German market, right?

5. Our headquarters ___ in Frankfurt, although most of the team ___ remote.

6. They ___ two of our biggest stakeholders on this project.

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Exercise B — Rewrite in the negative

Rewrite each sentence in the negative, using the short form.

1. I'm the decision-maker on this one.

2. She's in the office today.

3. We're late for the client call.

4. They're happy with the last delivery.

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Exercise C — Turn statements into questions

Write the question the underlined answer replies to.

1. A: ____? B: Yes, I'm the new operations lead.

2. A: ____? B: He's from Osaka, in Japan.

3. A: ____? B: Our HQ is in Berlin.

4. A: ____? B: No, they aren't in a meeting right now.

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Exercise D — Replace with the correct pronoun

Rewrite the sentence using *he, she, it, we* or *they*.

1. Marta is my colleague. → ___ is my colleague.
2. The client's office is on the fifth floor. → ___ is on the fifth floor.
3. Ken and I are in the same drivetrain group. → ___ are in the same drivetrain group.
4. Mr. Silva is our line manager. → ___ is our line manager.
5. Our stakeholders are based in Germany. → ___ are based in Germany.

Describe the picture



Look at the picture. Write 5–6 sentences with *to be*. Say who they are, where they are, what their roles might be, and how the atmosphere looks. Use at least ONE linker.

Target language: This is / These are... · She's / He's the... at... · They're at... so... · It's a bit... although... · I think they are...

Listening · A first meeting at reception

10 min

You will hear a short conversation at the front desk of a small tech company. One person is a new hire; the other is the community manager. Listen carefully — some information is stated directly, some is only implied.

Before you listen

- Which open questions could you ask a new person at work (beyond 'What's your name?')?
- What kind of small detail makes a first-day introduction feel human, not robotic?

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Gist

1. What is the relationship between the two speakers before this moment?

2. Which country is Voice B originally from, and where is he based now?

3. What's the general tone of the conversation?

Detail

1. What's Ana's exact role?

2. Which team is Diego joining, and on which floor?

3. What does Ana give him before he goes up?

Listen and complete

Complete each line with ONE or TWO words.

1. You ___ Diego. Come in.

2. It's finally good to ___ ___ ___ the name.

3. Your team is on the ___ floor, just next to the ___ room.

4. Just ___ if you get lost.

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to when we use it.

Term	Meaning
You must be Diego.	recognising someone you haven't met but expected
It's finally good to put a face to the name.	meeting someone you only knew by email
How was your trip in?	small talk on arrival
I'll walk you up in a second.	offering to accompany someone somewhere
Just shout if you get lost.	informal way of saying 'ask me if you need help'

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Speaking · Introduce yourself in a business context

8 min

Prepare *THREE* sentences (about 20 seconds). Then say them to a partner and answer at least two open follow-up questions.

Writing · Your intro message to a new team

5 min (or homework)

Write a short intro message (40–60 words) to post in your new team's Slack / Teams channel on day one. Include: your name, role, background in *ONE* line, and *ONE* friendly personal detail. Use at least one linker (because / so / although).

Workbook · A2·1A

Nice to meet you — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

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

1. Our ___ are in Frankfurt, although most of the team works remotely.
2. She reports to Ana, her direct ___.
3. We build the whole design team ___ — we don't outsource anything.
4. Our biggest client's ___ handles everything from contracts to renewals.
5. Since 2020, I've been fully ___ and I only go into the office once a month.
6. Every project has different ___ — clients, users and internal teams.

2. to be — am / is / are (positive, negative, question)

Write the correct form of *to be*. Use short forms where natural.

1. I ___ originally from Brazil, but I ___ based in Lisbon now.
2. She ___ (not) the decision-maker on this project — her boss is.
3. ___ they still in the meeting?
4. This ___ my second week at the company.
5. We ___ (not) late — the meeting starts at 10, not 9.

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6. ___ your team fully remote?

7. Ken ___ Japanese, so his family ___ still in Osaka.

3. Register - Formal, informal or closing?

Read each line. Is it FORMAL, INFORMAL or CLOSING?

1. Hey — good to finally meet you!

- ☐ A. Formal
- ☐ B. Informal
- ☐ C. Closing

2. Pleased to meet you, Ms. Chen. I've heard excellent things about your work.

- ☐ A. Formal
- ☐ B. Informal
- ☐ C. Closing

3. Right, I'll let you get on. Good talking to you, though.

- ☐ A. Formal
- ☐ B. Informal
- ☐ C. Closing

4. It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance.

- ☐ A. Formal
- ☐ B. Informal
- ☐ C. Closing

5. So — I'm technically new here. Second week, if I'm honest.

- ☐ A. Formal
- ☐ B. Informal
- ☐ C. Closing

6. Anyway, we should probably wrap this up. Nice chatting.

- ☐ A. Formal
- ☐ B. Informal
- ☐ C. Closing

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. I is originally from Brazil.

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2. She are our new account manager.

3. We is a small team of six people.

4. Are you a engineer?

5. This are my second week here.

6. Where you are from originally?

5. Listening · Three professional intros

Three professionals give their 20-second pitch at a networking event. Listen carefully — one gives more detail than the others.

1. Which speaker gives the **CLEAREST** pitch (name + role + one specific detail)? Why?

2. Which speaker sounds **MOST** nervous, and how do we know?

3. Which speaker gives an unexpected personal detail, and what is it?

6. Writing · Your Slack intro (discursive, 40-60 words)

Write a 40-60 word intro message for your first day in a new team's Slack channel. Include: name, role, **ONE** line about your background, and **ONE** friendly personal detail. Use at least **ONE** linker (and / but / so / because / although).

7. Reflection · Discursive answers on day one

Answer in 2-3 full sentences. There's no single correct answer.

1. In your experience, what's the **ONE** thing that helps a new person feel welcome on day one — and why?

2. What's **ONE** cheap change (zero budget) that any company could make tomorrow to improve day one for a new hire?

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3. Rewrite your own 20-second pitch below in full sentences (60–80 words). Include name, role and ONE current focus.

UNIT A2·1B

This is my team — the people behind the name.

Introductions & jobs · A2+ · 50–60 min · Business English



“You don't hire a job title. You hire a person who happens to have one.”

— An old HR line, still true

Objectives

- Present your team in 5–6 rich sentences: names, roles, one professional detail and one human detail for each person.
- Use possessive adjectives and possessive 's accurately, including tricky pairs (its / it's, their / they're).
- Ask and answer open Wh- questions that go beyond names and jobs.

Warm-up · Team quick-quiz (about your real team)

Quick-quiz · about you · 4 min

Answer these four questions honestly, in your head or in your notebook.

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- How many people are on your team, and how big is it compared to six months ago?
 - Who's been on the team the longest, and how does that shape the dynamic?
 - Who's the newest voice — and who's helping them settle in?
 - In one word: what's the general vibe of your team this month?
-

Lead-in · Guess the role from the description

Quiz · 5 min

Read each short description carefully. Choose the role that fits best.

Follow-up: Which of these descriptions is closest to what YOU actually do (not what your job title says)? Say ONE sentence.

Reading · Meet the team behind Padaria Nova

8 min

This is our team. We're small — only five of us — but we run a busy neighbourhood bakery in Lisbon that supplies twelve local cafés.

Alberto is our founder, and although he officially stepped back last year, his fingerprints are on everything: the recipes, the ovens, even the choice of bread bags. His tiny office is right next to the ovens, which is where he still spends most of his afternoons.

Marta is our shop assistant on paper, but she's basically the face of the bakery. She's 24, she remembers every regular's name, and she runs our Instagram — which, honestly, brings in more new clients than any of our official advertising.

João is our second baker. He starts his shift at 4am, so by the time the rest of us arrive he's already exhausted and quietly amused by everyone else's fresh energy. His sourdough is the reason two restaurants signed with us last quarter.

Ana is our part-time delivery driver and a full-time student. She's only with us three mornings a week, but she's never once been late — which, if you know Lisbon traffic, is almost supernatural.

And then there's me. I'm Sofia, and I'm the new manager. It's my first month, so I'm still learning the rhythm of the place — and, frankly, the recipes.

Comprehension check

1. What role does Alberto play NOW, officially?

- ☐ A. Still the manager.
- ☐ B. He's retired.
- ☐ C. He stepped back, but he's still around.

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2. Why is Marta so valuable to the bakery, beyond her job title?

- ☐ **A.** She's the fastest at the till.
- ☐ **B.** She runs the Instagram that brings in new clients.
- ☐ **C.** She's the boss's daughter.

3. Why did two restaurants sign with the bakery last quarter?

- ☐ **A.** Because of Alberto's contacts.
- ☐ **B.** Because of João's sourdough.
- ☐ **C.** Because of Ana's deliveries.

True / False / Not Given

Choose the correct option based on the text.

1. Alberto is officially in charge of daily operations.

- ☐ **A.** True
- ☐ **B.** False
- ☐ **C.** Not Given

2. Marta is younger than Sofia.

- ☐ **A.** True
- ☐ **B.** False
- ☐ **C.** Not Given

3. João finds the other staff's energy annoying.

- ☐ **A.** True
- ☐ **B.** False
- ☐ **C.** Not Given

4. Ana works with them every day.

- ☐ **A.** True
- ☐ **B.** False
- ☐ **C.** Not Given

5. Sofia has been the manager for less than a month.

- ☐ **A.** True
- ☐ **B.** False
- ☐ **C.** Not Given

Vocabulary · People, roles and small details

8 min

Roles

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Term	Meaning
founder	the person who started the company
co-founder	one of several people who started the company together
senior / junior	more experienced / less experienced
part-time / full-time	few hours per week / standard working hours
shift	the hours you work (morning / night shift)
on paper vs. in practice	the official title / what someone actually does day-to-day

Smalltalk

Term	Meaning
approachable	easy to talk to, feels friendly
low-key / quiet	not loud, prefers to stay in the background
reliable	you can count on this person
in charge of	responsible for
the face of	the public representative of
behind the scenes	doing important work others don't see

Practice

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

1. Ana is very ___ — she has never once been late in six months.
2. He's shy, but incredibly ___ once you get past the first five minutes.
3. Alberto stepped back last year, but ___ he still runs the ovens.
4. Marta is our shop assistant ___, but she's really the face of the bakery.
5. She works ___ the client-success team of eight people.
6. Most of our operations lead's work happens ___ — she keeps everything running.

Collocations · possessive + role/detail

Match the possessive with the noun that follows it naturally.

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Term	Meaning
my	line manager
his	team's morale
her	biggest client
our	founder's original recipes
their	shared workspace

Grammar · Possessive adjectives, possessive 's + Wh-questions

12 min

1. Possessive adjectives + possessive 's

I → my · you → your · he → his · she → her · it → its · we → our · they → their.

For people, we also use 's: Sofia's office, my colleague's laptop, the founder's recipes.

For companies / things, we usually prefer 'of': the size of the team (not 'the team's size', although both exist).

2. Two classic traps: it's/its and they're/their

it's = it is. its = of it. → It's a small team. Its office is upstairs.

they're = they are. their = of them. → They're new. Their desks are on the third floor.

3. Wh- questions with to be

What is your role, exactly? · Where's her office? · Who's in charge of the German market?

· Why are they so quiet today? · How long have you been on this team? (with have you)

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — Choose the right possessive

Complete with *my / your / his / her / our / their / its*.

1. I'm Sofia and this is ___ first month here.

2. Alberto stepped back, but ___ influence is everywhere.

3. Marta remembers every regular's name — that's part of ___ magic.

4. We're a small team, but ___ output surprises people.

5. The two new interns started this week. ___ desks are next to mine.

6. The bakery is 22 years old, and ___ recipes are original.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise B — it's / its · they're / their

Choose the correct form.

1. ___ Monday morning and the shop is already full.

2. Padaria Nova is small, but ___ reputation is huge.

3. The two new hires start today. ___ from the same university.

4. ___ office is on the second floor, right next to ours.

5. ___ a good team, but they're still finding their rhythm.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise C — Ask the right question

Write a Wh- question that fits the answer given.

1. ___? — My name is Diego, but everyone here calls me Digo.

2. ___? — Her office is on the same floor as the design team.

3. ___? — That's Sofia. She's the new manager.

4. ___? — He's been with us for about six years.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise D — Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has *ONE* mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. This is her the office.
2. Its Monday and I'm already tired.
3. What is name your?
4. Their our new interns.
5. The company is 22 years old. It's founder is Alberto.

Describe the picture



Look at the picture. Introduce this team in 5–6 sentences. Use at least three different possessives and at least one linker.

Target language: This is / These are... · Her role is... so... · His job on paper is... · Their team is small, but... · On the whiteboard behind them, you can see...

Listening · Sofia introduces her team in a voice message

10 min

Sofia sends a voice message to a friend to describe her new team at Padaria Nova. Only one voice (hers), but the content is rich: for each colleague, she gives a role, a small human detail and, sometimes, an honest opinion.

Before you listen

- Beyond role and name, which two details actually help you remember a new colleague?

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- When someone describes their team to you, what tells you the team is healthy — vs. quietly struggling?

Gist

1. How does Sofia feel about her team overall?
2. Which team member does Sofia describe with the MOST admiration?
3. What's Sofia's honest feeling about her own role?

Detail

1. What does Sofia say about Alberto's current role, exactly?
2. How does Sofia describe Marta's real value beyond her job title?
3. What time does João start, and why does Sofia mention it?
4. How does Sofia describe Ana's reliability?

Listen and complete

Complete each line with ONE or TWO words.

1. On paper he's retired, ___ ___ he still runs the ovens.
2. She's basically the ___ of the bakery.
3. His sourdough is the reason two restaurants ___ ___ last quarter.
4. She's never once been late, which is almost ___.

Useful phrases from Sofia's message

Match each phrase to what it's doing in the message.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Term	Meaning
On paper he's retired, but in practice...	showing the gap between official role and reality
She's basically the face of the bakery.	summarising someone's real contribution in one line
By the time the rest of us arrive...	comparing timing of two people/teams
If you know Lisbon traffic, this is almost supernatural.	adding a personal / cultural context to a fact
I'm still learning the rhythm of the place.	admitting you're new without sounding weak

Speaking · Introduce your team like a human

8 min

Choose a real (or imaginary) team of 4-5 people. Prepare a 60-second introduction. For each person: give role + ONE professional detail + ONE human detail.

Writing · A team introduction post (60-80 words)

5 min (or homework)

Write a short internal post (60-80 words) to introduce your team (real or imaginary) to a new intern. Cover: team size, THREE people (role + one professional detail + one human detail), and one honest line about the team's current vibe. Use at least TWO linkers.

Workbook · A2·1B

This is my team — Workbook

1. Possessive adjectives + possessive 's

Complete with my / your / his / her / our / their, or with 's where appropriate.

- I'm Sofia and this is ___ first month as manager.
- Alberto stepped back, but ___ influence is still everywhere in the bakery.
- Marta remembers every regular's name — that's part of ___ magic.
- The two interns started this week. ___ desks are next to mine.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

-
5. We're small, but ___ output surprises people.
-
6. Are you the new hire? Sorry, I didn't catch ___ name.
-

2. it's / its · they're / their

Choose the correct form.

1. ___ Monday morning and the shop is already full.
-
2. Padaria Nova is 22 years old and ___ recipes are all original.
-
3. The new hires start today — ___ from the same university.
-
4. ___ office is on the second floor, right next to ours.
-
5. ___ a good team, but they're still finding their rhythm.
-
6. Look at the roll-out — ___ almost done.
-

3. Which Wh- question fits?

Read the answer. Choose the question word that produced it.

1. Answer: 'She's the operations lead — she keeps the whole project on track.'
- ☐ A. What
 - ☐ B. Where
 - ☐ C. Who
2. Answer: 'On paper, I'm a shop assistant. In practice I run the Instagram too.'
- ☐ A. What
 - ☐ B. Where
 - ☐ C. Who
3. Answer: 'Their HQ is in Frankfurt, but the team is mostly remote.'
- ☐ A. What
 - ☐ B. Where
 - ☐ C. Who
4. Answer: 'She's been with us for about six years now.'
- ☐ A. How long
 - ☐ B. Where
 - ☐ C. Who

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

5. Answer: 'That's Sofia — she's our new manager.'

- ☐ A. What
- ☐ B. Where
- ☐ C. Who

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. This is her the office.

2. My name Ana is.

3. Who are that?

4. Their office are on the third floor.

5. The company is 22 years old. It's founder is Alberto.

6. How long you are on this team?

5. Listening · Sofia's voice message about her team

You'll hear the manager describe her team in a short voice message. Listen carefully — some information is stated directly, some is only implied.

1. How would you describe the manager's overall attitude towards her team?

2. Which team member does she describe with the strongest admiration, and how do we know?

3. What is Alberto's real role now, based on what the manager says?

4. Why does the manager mention Lisbon traffic when talking about Ana?

6. Writing · Introduce your team (60–80 words, discursive)

Write 60–80 words. Introduce THREE people from your team (real or imaginary). For each person: role + ONE professional detail + ONE human detail. Use possessive adjectives, and include at least ONE linker (although / but / so / because).

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

7. Reflection · Your team, honestly (discursive)

Answer in 3–4 full sentences each. There's no single correct answer.

1. Who is the ONE person on your team you'd have real trouble replacing, and what makes them hard to replace?

2. Is there a gap between what your team is 'on paper' and what it really does day-to-day? Give one concrete example.

UNIT A2·2A

What we make — the story behind the product

My company & products · A2+ · 50–60 min · Business English



“A company is not a building — it's the thing you keep making, on the mornings when nobody's watching.”

— Rule of the small factory

Objectives

- Describe your company in 5–6 rich sentences: size, main product, market and one differentiator.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

- Use present simple accurately for facts, routines and negatives, plus regular and irregular plurals.
- Ask and answer open questions about a company that go beyond names and numbers.

Warm-up · The one-line pitch of your company

Solo · about you · 4 min

Prepare a one-line pitch of your company (or one you know well). Follow this exact shape: [company] + [what it does] + [for whom] + [one differentiator].

- Example: 'Padaria Nova is a small Lisbon bakery that supplies twelve local cafés with fresh sourdough, using recipes we haven't changed in twenty years.'
- Now write yours in the same shape.
- Say it out loud once — does it still sound natural, or a bit corporate?

Lead-in · Talk about your reality

Discussion · 5 min

Answer these open questions in 2-3 sentences each — no models required.

Reading · Solari — a small Portuguese shoe brand with a stubborn approach

8 min

Solari is a shoe company based in the north of Portugal, near Guimarães. It's small by industry standards — 42 employees — although its shoes now reach customers in more than 30 countries, mostly through independent retailers rather than big chains.

The company makes three product lines: sneakers, sandals and boots. Together they produce around 25,000 pairs a year, which is deliberately low. Solari doesn't compete on volume; it competes on longevity — every pair is designed to be repaired at least twice before it retires.

The factory opens at 8am and closes at 5pm. Fridays finish at 3pm, a small internal tradition that started as an experiment fifteen years ago and never went away. Most of the team works Monday to Friday, and the founder, Marta, still walks the floor every morning before her first coffee.

Solari doesn't use plastic bags or plastic wrapping — all packaging is paper or reused card. It's not a marketing slogan; it's simply how they've always done it, since long before sustainability became a trend.

Comprehension check

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. Why is Solari's production volume deliberately low?

- ☐ **A.** Because they can't hire more people.
- ☐ **B.** Because they compete on longevity, not volume.
- ☐ **C.** Because their factory is too small.

2. How did the '3pm Friday' tradition start?

- ☐ **A.** It was a boss's decision.
- ☐ **B.** It was an experiment that stayed.
- ☐ **C.** It's required by Portuguese law.

3. What does the text imply about Solari's sustainability approach?

- ☐ **A.** It's a recent marketing choice.
- ☐ **B.** It's been part of how they operate for a long time.
- ☐ **C.** They plan to introduce it next year.

True / False / Not Given

Read again and choose the correct option.

1. Solari sells to large retail chains as its main channel.

- ☐ **A.** True
- ☐ **B.** False
- ☐ **C.** Not Given

2. The founder is involved in daily operations.

- ☐ **A.** True
- ☐ **B.** False
- ☐ **C.** Not Given

3. All Solari's employees work on weekends.

- ☐ **A.** True
- ☐ **B.** False
- ☐ **C.** Not Given

4. Solari's shoes are designed to be repairable.

- ☐ **A.** True
- ☐ **B.** False
- ☐ **C.** Not Given

5. Marta founded the company in Guimarães.

- ☐ **A.** True
- ☐ **B.** False
- ☐ **C.** Not Given

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

React to the text (discursive)

Answer in 2-3 full sentences each.

1. Which decision by Solari — low volume, short Fridays, or paper-only packaging — would be hardest to copy for your own company or industry? Why?

2. Rewrite Solari's story as ONE sentence about YOUR company, in the same style.

Vocabulary · Company, products and where they happen

8 min

Roles

Term	Meaning
factory / plant	a place where products are manufactured
warehouse	a large space where products are stored before shipping
showroom	a space where products are displayed for clients
headquarters / HQ	the main office of a company
branch / satellite office	a smaller office in another location
supplier	a company that provides raw materials or services to yours

Smalltalk

Term	Meaning
product line	a group of related products a company makes
in-house	produced or done inside the company
outsource	pay another company to do part of the work
hand-made	made by hand, not by machine
locally sourced	raw materials come from the same region
ship worldwide	send products to customers around the world

Practice

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

1. Solari's ___ is near Guimarães, but they ship to over 30 countries.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. We keep design ___ so we can control quality end-to-end.

3. We ___ some of the packaging to a specialist in Porto.

4. Every pair is ___ by a team of eight artisans.

5. The leather is ___ — from a tannery two hours away.

6. Our online store ___ ___ to more than 30 markets.

Collocations · verb + business noun

Match each verb with the noun that naturally follows.

Term	Meaning
launch	a new product line
run	a small business
expand into	a new market
supply	twelve local cafés
ship	orders overseas

Odd one out

Which word doesn't belong to the group?

1. sneakers · sandals · boots · invoices

- ☐ A. sneakers
- ☐ B. sandals
- ☐ C. boots
- ☐ D. invoices

2. factory · warehouse · showroom · deadline

- ☐ A. factory
- ☐ B. warehouse
- ☐ C. showroom
- ☐ D. deadline

3. supplier · retailer · founder · February

- ☐ A. supplier
- ☐ B. retailer
- ☐ C. founder
- ☐ D. February

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Grammar · Present simple (facts, routines, negatives) + plurals

12 min

1. Present simple for facts and routines

I / you / we / they + base verb. He / she / it + verb-s / -es / -ies.

• We supply twelve cafés. · The factory opens at 8am. · She walks the floor every morning.

2. Negatives and questions

Negative: don't / doesn't + base verb.

Yes-no: Do you ship worldwide? / Does she manage the north region?

Wh-: Where do you source your leather? / How many pairs do you produce a year?

3. Plurals (regular and irregular)

Most: +s (box → boxes when word ends -s/-x/-ch/-sh). -y after consonant → -ies (city → cities). Irregular: man → men, woman → women, child → children, foot → feet.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — Complete with present simple

Use the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. Solari ___ (produce) around 25,000 pairs a year.

2. We ___ (not / compete) on volume — we compete on quality.

3. The factory ___ (open) at 8am, but Marta ___ (arrive) at 7:30.

4. They ___ (ship) to more than 30 countries.

5. She ___ (not / work) on Fridays after 3pm.

6. Our packaging ___ (not / contain) any plastic.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise B — Rewrite in the negative

Rewrite each sentence in the negative.

1. We open on Sundays.

2. She works every weekend.

3. They sell to big retail chains.

4. The company outsources its production.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise C — Turn statements into questions

Write the Wh- or yes-no question that fits the answer.

1. A: ____? B: Yes, we ship to over 30 countries.

2. A: ____? B: About 25,000 pairs a year.

3. A: ____? B: Near Guimarães, in the north.

4. A: ____? B: Because we compete on longevity, not volume.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise D — Plurals (regular and irregular)

Write the plural form of each word.

1. box → ____

2. city → ____

3. man → ____

4. child → ____

5. foot → ____

6. supplier → ____

Describe the picture



Look at the picture. Write 5–6 sentences using present simple (and at least one plural). Describe what you see AND what usually happens in this kind of space.

Target language: There is / There are... · In this factory they usually... · Every morning she... · They don't... · The whole team ships...

Listening · A quick company tour with Marta, Solari's founder

10 min

Marta gives a two-minute company tour to a small group of visiting retailers. She goes beyond the standard 'we make shoes' pitch and shares one or two honest details about the business.

Before you listen

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

- When someone gives you a company tour, which two details tell you more than any brochure?
- What's the difference between a factual company description and one that genuinely stays with you?

Gist

1. What is Marta's overall message about Solari?

2. How does Marta feel about being 'small'?

3. What tone does she use throughout the tour?

Detail

1. How many pairs does Solari make per year, according to Marta?

2. Why do they finish at 3pm on Fridays?

3. What does Marta say about their packaging, and why?

Listen and complete

Complete each line with ONE or TWO words.

1. We're ___ small, and that's a choice.

2. Every pair is designed to be ___ at least twice.

3. It ___ ___ ___ fifteen years ago and it never went away.

4. It's not a ___ for us — it's just how we work.

Useful phrases from Marta's tour

Match each phrase to what it does in the tour.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Term	Meaning
Welcome — thanks for coming out here.	warm, informal opening
We're deliberately small, and that's a choice.	framing a limitation as a decision
It started as an experiment, and it never went away.	explaining the origin of a company habit
It's not a slogan for us — it's just how we work.	distancing yourself from marketing language
Thanks again for coming — questions?	closing the tour and opening the floor

Speaking · Talk about your company honestly

8 min

Prepare a 60-second description of your company. Structure: what you make, size, one honest limitation, one genuine differentiator. Then answer two follow-up questions from a partner.

Writing · Your company in 60–80 words (discursive)

5 min (or homework)

Write a 60–80 word description of your company for a supplier's website. Include: size, main product, one specific number, one differentiator, and one honest human line. Use present simple and at least one linker.

Workbook · A2·2A

What we make — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

Complete each sentence with ONE word or phrase from the box. Not all items are used.

- Our main ___ produces 25,000 pairs a year for markets across Europe.
- The Lisbon ___ opened last year — only six people, but it covers the entire southern region.
- All finished stock is stored in a ___ near the airport before shipping.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

-
4. Clients fly in to visit the ___ every season to preview the new models.
 5. Our leather ___ is a small workshop two hours away — we've worked together for eleven years.
 6. Every pair is ___, which is why we can't produce more than 25,000 a year.
 7. We keep the design work ___ so we can iterate quickly without emails.
 8. We ___ the packaging to a specialist — it's cheaper and honestly better than ours.
-

2. Present simple — form

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. Solari ___ (produce) around 25,000 pairs a year.
 2. We ___ (not / open) on Sundays, and we ___ (not / plan) to change that.
 3. ___ they (sell) in Spain, or only in Portugal?
 4. Every pair ___ (cost) around 90 euros to produce.
 5. I ___ (not / know) the exact figure — I'll check with finance.
 6. Where ___ (be) your factory located, and how many people ___ (work) there?
 7. The founder ___ (walk) the floor every morning before her first coffee.
-

3. Positive, negative or question?

Choose the correct type of sentence, and pick the correct plural.

1. 'We're a team of eight, spread across two cities.' is a ___ sentence.
 - ☐ A. question
 - ☐ B. positive
 - ☐ C. negative
2. 'Do you actually ship to smaller retailers, or only chains?' is a ___ sentence.
 - ☐ A. question
 - ☐ B. positive
 - ☐ C. negative

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

3. 'They don't compete on volume — they compete on longevity.' is a ____ sentence.

- ☐ A. question
- ☐ B. positive
- ☐ C. negative

4. The plural of 'box' is ____.

- ☐ A. boxs
- ☐ B. boxes
- ☐ C. box's

5. The plural of 'child' is ____.

- ☐ A. childs
- ☐ B. children
- ☐ C. childrens

6. The plural of 'factory' is ____.

- ☐ A. factorys
- ☐ B. factories
- ☐ C. factory's

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. She work in the Porto office and manage the north region.

2. We doesn't open on Sundays or public holidays.

3. Do she speak English with the international clients?

4. How many peoples are in your operations team?

5. The factory produce 25,000 pair a year.

6. Why you don't sell in the USA?

5. Listening · Voice message from a supplier

A supplier sends a two-minute voice message about a small delay. Listen (or read the transcript) and answer.

1. What is the supplier's main message?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. How does the supplier frame the delay — as a crisis, a routine issue, or somewhere in between?

3. What does the supplier propose to keep the relationship healthy?

6. Writing · 60–80 word company description (discursive)

Write 60–80 words about YOUR company for a new supplier's onboarding form. Include: what you make, size, one specific number, one differentiator, and one honest line about a current challenge. Use present simple.

7. Reflection · Your company's real identity (discursive)

Answer in 3–4 full sentences each. There's no single correct answer.

1. What's ONE thing your company officially says about itself that doesn't quite match the day-to-day reality?

2. If you had to defend your company's size to an investor who wanted you 'to scale', what would you say?

UNIT A2·2B

Around the world — where we actually sell

My company & products · A2+ · 50–60 min · Business English

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



“Enter the markets that already understand you — the others will come later, or they won't. Both are fine.”

— Export sales aphorism

Objectives

- Describe your key markets in richer detail (why each one works, why others don't).
- Use present simple + adverbs of frequency to talk about routines and market habits.
- Compare markets using simple linkers (whereas, but, although).

Warm-up · Your export map

Solo · 4 min

In your head, draw the map: three countries where your company already sells (or wants to), and one reason for each.

- Country 1 — your strongest market. Why does it work?
- Country 2 — a smaller but interesting market. Why is it interesting?
- Country 3 — a market you'd like to enter but haven't yet. What's the blocker?

Lead-in · Rank these markets for YOUR business

Rank · 5 min

Rank these five markets from most attractive (1) to least attractive (5) for your specific business. Then justify your top choice in one sentence.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Reading · Where our clients actually are (and where they aren't)

8 min

Solari sells in six countries, but 82% of our revenue comes from just three: Portugal, Spain and France. Everything else is what we call 'the long tail' — Germany, Italy and Belgium — a few hundred pairs a month, mostly through independent retailers who found us on Instagram.

We don't sell in the USA yet, although we ship a small quantity to a single boutique in New York every month. That relationship started by accident three years ago and we've kept it going, more for the learning than the revenue.

Our website works in four languages — Portuguese, Spanish, English and French. Most clients pay in euros, which keeps accounting simple, although we accept US dollars for the New York boutique.

Every June, the whole sales team flies to Milan for a trade fair. It's the one week of the year when we get to meet almost all our retailers in person, and it usually generates around 30% of our orders for the following autumn.

Comprehension check

1. Which three countries generate most of Solari's revenue?
 - ☐ A. Portugal, Spain, USA
 - ☐ B. Portugal, Spain, France
 - ☐ C. France, Germany, Italy
2. How did the New York relationship start?
 - ☐ A. A planned expansion
 - ☐ B. A trade-fair contact
 - ☐ C. By accident
3. Why does Solari keep the New York client despite low revenue?
 - ☐ A. For prestige
 - ☐ B. For the learning
 - ☐ C. For tax reasons
4. What does 'the long tail' refer to here?
 - ☐ A. Smaller markets that add up
 - ☐ B. Long shipping times
 - ☐ C. Old products still selling

True / False / Not Given

Choose based on the text only.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. Solari has a physical shop in New York.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

2. The Milan fair happens every year in June.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

3. The Milan fair is Solari's most profitable single event.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

4. Solari's website has four languages.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

React to the text (discursive)

Answer in 2-3 full sentences each.

1. Solari keeps a low-revenue client for 'the learning'. Does your company do this — keep any client or project mostly for learning? Why or why not?

2. 82% of Solari's revenue comes from three countries. What percentage of YOUR company's revenue comes from your top three clients or markets, and is that a strength or a risk?

Vocabulary · Markets, products and demand

8 min

Roles

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Term	Meaning
market	a country or region where you sell
export	to sell to another country
import	to buy from another country
revenue	the total money coming into the business
retailer	a shop or platform that sells to end customers
distributor	a company that resells your product in a region

Smalltalk

Term	Meaning
best-seller	the product that sells the most
in stock / out of stock	available now / not available
meet demand	produce enough to satisfy orders
long tail	many small markets that together are significant
enter a market	start selling in a new country or segment
in bulk	in large quantities

Practice

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

1. This model has been our ___ for three seasons in a row.
2. Sorry, size 42 is currently ___ — we'll restock in ten days.
3. We ___ to six European countries plus the USA on a small scale.
4. Our Spanish ___ handles both Portugal and Spain from Madrid.
5. We're planning to ___ ___ in Brazil next year — probably through a local retailer.
6. The autumn orders are big — I hope production can ___ ___.

Collocations · verb + market noun

Match each verb with the correct noun / phrase.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Term	Meaning
launch	a new product
enter	a new market
build	a brand
place	an order
meet	demand

Odd one out

Which word doesn't belong to the group?

1. retailer · distributor · supplier · discount

- ☐ A. retailer
- ☐ B. distributor
- ☐ C. supplier
- ☐ D. discount

2. Portugal · Brazil · Berlin · France

- ☐ A. Portugal
- ☐ B. Brazil
- ☐ C. Berlin
- ☐ D. France

3. brand · product · market · lunch

- ☐ A. brand
- ☐ B. product
- ☐ C. market
- ☐ D. lunch

Grammar · Present simple + adverbs of frequency + simple linkers

12 min

1. Present simple recap

Facts and routines. Third person -s. Negatives with don't/doesn't. Questions with do/does.

2. Adverbs of frequency

always > usually > often > sometimes > rarely > never. Position: BEFORE the main verb; AFTER the verb 'to be'.

• We usually launch in autumn. · The Milan fair is always in June. · She rarely travels in July.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

3. Simple linkers for contrast

but / although / whereas.

- Portugal is our strongest market, but France is growing faster. · Although we don't sell in the USA, we ship a few pairs a month. · Portugal is loyal, whereas France is more price-sensitive.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — Add the adverb in the right position

Rewrite the sentence, placing the adverb correctly.

1. We launch new products in autumn. (usually)

2. The Milan fair is in June. (always)

3. She travels to Madrid on Fridays. (rarely)

4. We accept payments in US dollars. (sometimes)

5. The Spanish distributor is late. (never)

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise B — Combine with 'but' or 'although'

Combine each pair of sentences using the linker given.

1. Portugal is our strongest market. France is growing faster. (but)

2. We don't sell in the USA. We ship a few pairs to New York. (although)

3. The factory is small. It produces 25,000 pairs a year. (although)

4. Portugal is loyal. France is price-sensitive. (whereas)

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise C — Write the question

Write a yes/no or Wh- question that fits the answer.

1. A: ____? B: Yes, we export to Brazil — a few hundred pairs a year.

2. A: ____? B: We sell in six countries.

3. A: ____? B: In Milan, every June.

4. A: ____? B: Because it's already a saturated market for us.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise D — Plurals (in context)

Complete with the correct plural form.

1. We sell in six ____ (country).
2. There are twenty ____ (person) in the sales team.
3. Please bring the ____ (knife) from the packaging room.
4. We ship 200 ____ (box) per week to Spain.

Describe the picture



Look at the picture. Write 5–6 sentences using present simple + at least ONE adverb of frequency + at least ONE contrast linker. Describe what you see AND what usually happens.

Target language: We usually... · The team always... · Although... · ...but... · Every June / month / week...

Listening · Pedro, sales manager, walks a distributor through the map

10 min

Pedro is on a video call with a potential Brazilian distributor. He walks through Solari's current markets and where they don't yet sell.

Before you listen

- If you were the distributor, what would be your first question about a company that already sells in six countries?
- What would tell you more about a brand — where they succeed, or where they don't?

Gist

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. What's Pedro's overall goal in this call?

2. How would you describe his tone?

Detail

1. Which three markets generate most of Solari's revenue?

2. Why is Pedro cautious about the Brazilian market specifically?

3. What does he propose as the next step?

Listen and complete

Complete each line with ONE or TWO words from the audio.

1. Let me ___ ___ ___ the map.

2. That's about 82% of our revenue, ___.

3. I'd rather ___-___ now than disappoint you later.

4. Let's ___ in ten days with numbers on paper.

Useful phrases from the call

Match each phrase to what it does in the conversation.

Term	Meaning
Let me walk you through the map.	structure a presentation
That's about 82% of our revenue, honestly.	give a real number, not a marketing one
We don't sell there yet, and I'll be transparent about why.	flag a limitation upfront
I'd rather under-promise now than disappoint you later.	manage expectations
Let's regroup in ten days with numbers on paper.	close with a concrete next step

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Speaking · Talk about YOUR markets

8 min

Prepare a 60-second walkthrough of your company's market map. Include: your top market, a smaller but interesting one, and one you haven't cracked yet.

Writing · Your export map in 70-90 words (discursive)

5 min (or homework)

Write 70-90 words about YOUR company's market map. Include: top market + one reason, a smaller market + one detail, one market you haven't entered + one honest reason. Use present simple, at least one frequency adverb and at least one contrast linker (although / but / whereas).

Workbook · A2·2B

Around the world — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

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

1. Our biggest ___ is Portugal — 40% of last year's sales.
 2. Total ___ grew 12% last year, mostly from France.
 3. We work with a small ___ in Milan who resells to boutique shops across Italy.
 4. Each independent ___ orders around 30 pairs per season.
 5. Six countries currently ___ our products — none of them fully digitally.
 6. Germany, Italy and Belgium together form our ___ — small but stable.
 7. The autumn orders are huge — I hope production can ___.
 8. We're planning to ___ in Brazil next year through a local partner.
-

2. Present simple + adverbs of frequency

Rewrite each sentence placing the adverb in the correct position (or complete the form).

1. We launch new collections in autumn. (usually)
-

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

-
2. The Milan fair is in June. (always)
-
3. She ___ (travel) to Madrid — only twice a year. (rarely)
-
4. We ___ (not / sell) in the USA, ___ we ___ (ship) a few pairs to New York. (although)
-
5. The Spanish distributor ___ (be) late with payments. (never)
-
6. How many countries ___ you ___ (sell) in?
-

3. Contrast linker: but / although / whereas

Choose the correct linker for each sentence.

1. Portugal is our strongest market, ___ France is growing faster.
- ☐ A. but
 - ☐ B. although
 - ☐ C. whereas
2. ___ we don't sell in the USA, we ship a small quantity monthly.
- ☐ A. But
 - ☐ B. Although
 - ☐ C. Whereas
3. Portugal is loyal, ___ France is very price-sensitive.
- ☐ A. but
 - ☐ B. although
 - ☐ C. whereas
4. The factory is small, ___ it produces 25,000 pairs a year.
- ☐ A. but
 - ☐ B. although
 - ☐ C. whereas
5. ___ Milan is expensive, we go every year.
- ☐ A. But
 - ☐ B. Although
 - ☐ C. Whereas

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. How many countrys do you sell in?
-

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

-
2. We usually launches in autumn.
 3. The Milan fair always is in June.
 4. Although the market is small but we like it.
 5. She travel rarely to Madrid.
 6. We are ship to six country.
-

5. Listening · Sales team weekly stand-up

The sales team runs a five-minute Monday stand-up. Pedro, the manager, updates the team on where each market stands.

1. How does Pedro describe the overall state of the sales pipeline?

2. Which market gets the most airtime, and why?

3. What action does Pedro assign, and to whom?

6. Writing · Weekly market update (discursive)

Write a 70–90 word market update to send to your boss. Include: what's stable, one worry, one opportunity, and one action you've already taken. Use present simple, one frequency adverb and one contrast linker.

7. Reflection · Growth honesty (discursive)

Answer in 3–4 full sentences each.

1. Solari's growth is mostly deliberate. Is YOUR company's international growth a strategy, or a series of accidents that worked?

2. If a distributor from a completely new market emailed you tomorrow, what would you check first before saying yes?

UNIT A2·3A

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

A normal Monday — the invisible engine of the week

Daily routines at work · A2+ · 50–60 min · Business English



"A boring Monday is not a failure — it's a well-designed one."

— Rule of the productive office

Objectives

- Describe your working week in 5–6 sentences using adverbs of frequency in the correct position.
- Use present simple confidently for facts, negatives and Wh-questions about routines and workload.
- Talk beyond 'I check email' — name ONE thing that makes your Monday specifically different from other days.

Warm-up · The shape of your Monday

Solo · about you · 4 min

Answer in your head, then say the answer out loud in ONE sentence — no notes.

- What time does your workday actually start — not officially, but really?
- Which day of the week is quietly your busiest? Why?
- Name ONE thing you do every Monday before 10am that would surprise a new colleague.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Lead-in · Sort the Monday habits

Categorise · put in groups · 5 min

Here are 10 real Monday habits from working professionals. Sort them into 'quietly productive' and 'quietly damaging'. Then compare with a partner — is any habit on BOTH lists depending on the person?

Reading · Rita's Monday, in her own words

10 min

Rita runs a small product team at a software company in Porto — nine engineers, one designer, and one very patient product owner. She's been in the job for four years, and she jokes that she's built her whole career around one belief: 'Boring Mondays make interesting weeks.'

Her Monday doesn't start on Monday. She uses the last hour of Friday to close the week — writing three lines about what shipped, what's stuck and what she plans to attack first on Monday morning. It usually takes twenty minutes; sometimes less. Without it, she says, Monday morning becomes an hour of 'where were we?' before anyone does anything real.

She rarely checks work email before nine, and she almost never opens Slack in the morning. Between nine and ten she goes through the three hardest items on her list — usually the ones she was avoiding on Friday afternoon. 'If I don't touch them by ten, they own the whole week,' she says.

At ten there's a twenty-minute team stand-up. No laptops, no slides — just voices. Each person says what they're blocked on, and Rita's job, she insists, is mostly to remove blockers, not to add opinions. After the stand-up, the team goes quiet until lunch. She never eats at her desk; she walks around the block with a colleague if she can. 'Fifteen minutes outside gives me the second half of the day for free.'

The afternoon is less protected. There are usually one or two meetings, some 1:1s, and always someone knocking with a small crisis. She often finishes at six; occasionally she stays until seven when a release is close, but almost never later than that. 'If I'm still at my desk at eight,' she says, 'it means I planned the day badly, not that I worked hard.'

Comprehension check

1. According to the text, when does Rita's Monday actually begin?

- ☐ A. On Monday morning, at 9am.
- ☐ B. On Friday afternoon, when she closes the previous week.
- ☐ C. On Sunday night, before bed.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. Why does Rita tackle the three hardest tasks between 9 and 10?

- ☐ **A.** Because email is closed at that time.
- ☐ **B.** Because she believes ignoring them lets them 'own' the whole week.
- ☐ **C.** Because her boss requires it.

3. What does Rita see as her main job in the stand-up?

- ☐ **A.** To share her own opinions on every task.
- ☐ **B.** To assign new tasks to the team.
- ☐ **C.** To remove blockers, not add opinions.

4. What does Rita's rule 'not later than eight' really say about her attitude to work?

- ☐ **A.** Long hours are a badge of honour.
- ☐ **B.** Working late usually means the day was badly planned, not that the person is dedicated.
- ☐ **C.** The office closes at eight.

True / False / Not Given

Read again and choose the correct option — 'Not Given' is the honest answer when the text simply doesn't say.

1. Rita has been in her current role for more than three years.

- ☐ **A.** True
- ☐ **B.** False
- ☐ **C.** Not Given

2. Rita checks Slack the moment she opens her laptop on Monday.

- ☐ **A.** True
- ☐ **B.** False
- ☐ **C.** Not Given

3. Rita's team uses slides during the Monday stand-up.

- ☐ **A.** True
- ☐ **B.** False
- ☐ **C.** Not Given

4. Everyone on Rita's team works from the office on Mondays.

- ☐ **A.** True
- ☐ **B.** False
- ☐ **C.** Not Given

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

5. Rita usually walks outside during her lunch break.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

React to the text (discursive)

Choose TWO questions and answer each in 3–4 full sentences. Use adverbs of frequency and at least one specific detail from your own week.

1. Rita says 'Boring Mondays make interesting weeks.' Do you agree, or is a good Monday something else in your job? Give a real example.

2. Which of Rita's habits — the Friday close-down, the 9–10 focus block, or the walking lunch — is most transferable to YOUR job, and which is impossible? Why?

3. Rewrite Rita's philosophy — 'If I'm still at my desk at 8, I planned the day badly' — for your industry. Would it survive intact, or does it need adjusting?

Vocabulary · Work rhythms and workload

8 min

Roles

Term	Meaning
workload	the total amount of work you have to do in a given time
back-to-back meetings	meetings with no gap in between
deep work / focus block	a protected period of concentrated, uninterrupted work
stand-up	a short, daily team meeting, usually done standing up
blocker	something stopping you from making progress
hand-over	passing tasks or information to someone taking over

Smalltalk

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Term	Meaning
early bird / night owl	someone who works best early / late
on autopilot	doing something without really thinking
catch up on	do the work you fell behind on
wrap up	finish something off cleanly
off the clock	outside working hours
a light / heavy week	a week with little / a lot of work

Practice

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

1. My ___ this week is manageable — three deliverables and no fires.
2. I've got ___ ___ ___ meetings from 10 to 4 — no lunch.
3. I need a two-hour ___ ___ tomorrow morning to finish the deck.
4. In our team the daily ___ ___ ___ is at 9:30, twenty minutes maximum.
5. The main ___ on the release is legal — they haven't signed off yet.
6. Before my holiday I did a two-hour ___ with the colleague covering my accounts.
7. I'll deal with that Monday morning — I'm ___ ___ ___ now.
8. It's a ___ week — I'm mostly catching up on admin.

Collocations · high-frequency verb + noun

Match each verb with the noun that naturally follows in a workplace context.

Term	Meaning
book	a focus block
clear	your inbox
meet	a deadline
raise	a blocker
run	a stand-up
hand over	an account

Odd one out

Which word doesn't fit the group?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. blocker · deadline · workload · sandwich

- ☐ A. blocker
- ☐ B. deadline
- ☐ C. workload
- ☐ D. sandwich

2. stand-up · 1:1 · retrospective · umbrella

- ☐ A. stand-up
- ☐ B. 1:1
- ☐ C. retrospective
- ☐ D. umbrella

3. wrap up · catch up · hand over · fall down

- ☐ A. wrap up
- ☐ B. catch up
- ☐ C. hand over
- ☐ D. fall down

Grammar · Adverbs of frequency + present simple (positive, negative, questions)

12 min

1. Adverbs of frequency — position

always (100%) · usually / often (~80%) · sometimes (~50%) · rarely / hardly ever (~10%) · never (0%).

Position: BEFORE the main verb, AFTER 'to be' and auxiliaries.

- I always check email first. · She is never late. · We have often finished by six.

2. Present simple — negatives and questions

Negative: don't / doesn't + base verb. · Rita doesn't check email before nine.

Yes-no: Do you usually work from home on Mondays? · Does the team run a Monday stand-up?

Wh-: How often do you have back-to-back meetings? · What time do you usually wrap up?

3. 'Hardly ever' and 'almost never' — softer than 'never'

'Hardly ever' and 'almost never' mean very rarely, but they leave the door open. Useful when 'never' would be too strong.

- I hardly ever answer email at weekends. · She almost never stays past seven.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — Put the adverb in the correct position

Rewrite the sentence with the adverb in brackets in the correct position.

1. She checks Slack in the morning. (rarely)

2. We have a stand-up at 10. (always)

3. He is late for the Monday meeting. (never)

4. They finish before six. (hardly ever)

5. I take a proper lunch break. (usually)

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise B — Positive → negative

Rewrite each sentence in the negative, keeping the adverb of frequency where possible.

1. Rita usually starts with email.

2. We often stay past seven.

3. He always eats at his desk.

4. The team runs a slide-based stand-up.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise C — Write the question

Write the Wh- or yes-no question that fits the answer given.

1. A: ____? B: About once a month, when a release is close.

2. A: ____? B: Yes, we always run a stand-up at 10 — no laptops.

3. A: ____? B: Around 6pm, usually.

4. A: ____? B: Because if I don't touch them by 10, they own the week.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise D — 'Hardly ever' or 'always'? Choose what's true FOR YOU

Complete each sentence with the adverb that reflects your reality — then be ready to justify it in one sentence.

1. I ___ (adverb) answer work email before 9am.
2. My team ___ (adverb) has back-to-back meetings on Mondays.
3. I ___ (adverb) take a proper lunch break away from my desk.

Describe the picture



Look at the picture. Write 5–6 sentences using adverbs of frequency and present simple. Describe what you see AND what usually happens on a working Monday in this kind of setup.

Target language: On a normal Monday, she usually... · There is / There are... · She rarely / hardly ever... · She always starts with... · By ten, she has usually...

Listening · A Monday-morning voice note from Rita to her mentor

10 min

Rita records a two-minute voice note to her mentor Ana. She's had a rough Friday and she's using the voice note to reset her plan for the week. One voice, natural pace.

Before you listen

- When you have to reset your week, what do you name first — the biggest task, or the person you need to talk to?
- In a voice note (not a written message), which detail usually leaks out that you wouldn't put in writing?

Gist

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. What is the overall reason Rita is recording this voice note?

2. What is Rita's general attitude in the recording?

3. Who is the recording for, and why does that matter?

Detail

1. What is the ONE task Rita says she wants to attack between 9 and 10 on Monday?

2. Why doesn't Rita want to move the Monday stand-up, even though Friday was chaotic?

3. What specific thing does Rita ask Ana for at the end of the voice note?

Listen and complete

Complete each line with ONE, TWO or THREE words.

1. Just a quick one, Ana — ____ straight away.

2. Honestly, Friday ____ from me.

3. The one I've been quietly ____.

4. I don't want to move the ____ — the team needs it more than I do.

5. Would ____ on Wednesday work — walking call, nothing formal?

Useful phrases from Rita's voice note

Match each phrase to what it does inside the message.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Term	Meaning
Just a quick one, Ana — no need to reply straight away.	opening a voice note with low pressure
Honestly, Friday got away from me.	admitting the week didn't go to plan
So here's what I want to try on Monday.	signalling a plan is coming next
The one I've been quietly avoiding.	naming the task you know you dodged
Would fifteen minutes on Wednesday work?	making a specific, small ask

Speaking · Reset your own week out loud

8 min

Prepare a 60-second 'Monday reset' about YOUR week. Structure: (1) one honest thing that went badly last week; (2) the ONE task you'll attack first on Monday and why; (3) one small ask to a colleague or mentor.

Writing · Your Monday, honestly (discursive)

8 min (or homework)

Write 80–100 words about YOUR real Monday — not the ideal version. Include: (1) two adverbs of frequency in the correct position; (2) one specific detail (a number, a time, a name); (3) one honest sentence about what usually goes wrong. Finish with ONE thing you'll try differently next Monday.

Workbook · A2·3A

A normal Monday — Workbook

1. Vocabulary in context

Complete each sentence with ONE word or phrase from the box. Two items are extra.

1. Every Monday I ___ the week with a quick 15-minute team stand-up.
2. After the weekend I need to ___ emails before I can start real work.
3. My ___ is heavy at the moment — I'm working late almost every day.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

-
4. On Tuesdays I have ___ meetings from 9 to 1, with no breaks.
-
5. I try to ___ my team leader every Monday morning to align priorities.
-
6. When everything feels urgent, you have to ___ and choose two or three key tasks.
-

2. Adverbs of frequency & present simple

Rewrite the sentence putting the adverb / frequency phrase in the correct position.

1. (usually) She checks Slack before she opens her inbox.
-
2. (hardly ever) I take a proper lunch break on Mondays.
-
3. (once a week) We have a one-to-one with our manager.
-
4. (rarely) He is available before 10am.
-
5. (three times a month) They travel to the head office.
-
6. (almost never) I answer work messages after 8pm.
-

3. Which sentence is more natural at work?

Choose the more professional / natural option.

1. You want to say your Monday is very busy.
- ☐ A. My Monday is very full on.
 - ☐ B. My Monday is pretty packed.
 - ☐ C. My Monday has a lot.
2. You want to ask a colleague about their weekly routine.
- ☐ A. How is your week normally?
 - ☐ B. What does a typical week look like for you?
 - ☐ C. How your week is?
3. You want to say you deal with emails first.
- ☐ A. First of all, I go through my inbox.
 - ☐ B. First of all, I do my emails.
 - ☐ C. In first, I check emails.
4. You want to say your afternoon is calmer.
- ☐ A. My afternoon is more calm.
 - ☐ B. The afternoon tends to be quieter.
 - ☐ C. In afternoon is quiet.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

5. You want to soften a strong statement.

- ☐ A. I never do overtime.
- ☐ B. I try not to do overtime if I can avoid it.
- ☐ C. Overtime, no.

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. She is always arriving late on Mondays.

2. I no take a lunch break usually.

3. How often you check your email?

4. He works from home two times for week.

5. We have every Monday a team meeting.

5. Listening — Rita's Monday voice note

Rita, a project coordinator, sends a short voice message to her manager on Monday morning. Listen (or read the transcript) and answer.

1. What are the THREE main tasks Rita mentions for today?

2. Which task is she most worried about, and why?

3. What does she ask her manager to do?

4. How would you describe her tone?

6. Writing — describe your typical Monday (90-110 words)

Write a short professional description of YOUR typical Monday at work. Include: (a) how you start the day, (b) two or three key tasks, (c) one thing that is often difficult, (d) one small habit that helps you. Use at least THREE adverbs of frequency (usually, often, rarely, almost never, etc.).

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

7. Reading & discursive reflection

Re-read the classbook text about Rita's Monday. Then write a short discursive answer (100–130 words).

1. In your opinion, is Rita's Monday routine sustainable in the long term? Justify your answer with TWO reasons, and suggest ONE concrete change she could make.

UNIT A2·3B

How often do you...? — the honest version

Daily routines at work · A2+ · 50–60 min · Business English

“Show me your calendar for two weeks, and I'll tell you what you actually care about.”

— A useful management proverb

Objectives

- Ask and answer specific questions with 'how often' + present simple about workload, meetings and follow-ups.
- Understand a longer listening where two colleagues honestly compare their weekly rhythms — including what they wish were different.
- Write a short discursive paragraph (80–100 words) contrasting frequency in your team versus one you know from outside.

Warm-up · Frequency reality check

Solo · about you · 4 min

Answer each question with a specific frequency (never / rarely / sometimes / often / usually / always) AND one honest sentence of context.

- How often do you leave a meeting thinking 'that could have been an email'?
 - How often do you actually block time in your calendar for deep work — and defend it when someone tries to move it?
 - How often do you get to Friday without touching the ONE task you promised yourself on Monday?
-

Lead-in · Odd one out (with a twist)

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

In each line, three words belong together and one is the odd one — but you must also say WHY, in one sentence, using an adverb of frequency.

Reading · Three colleagues, three completely different weeks

10 min

In the same open-plan office in Lisbon, three colleagues run their weeks in radically different ways — and, honestly, all three ways work. What matters isn't which style is 'right'; it's whether the person is aware of their own pattern.

Ana is famously organised. She writes her to-do list on Sunday evening — not Monday morning — and she almost never forgets a meeting. She reviews her calendar every day, colour-codes it, and blocks ninety-minute focus periods before opening email. The downside? Ana finds it very hard to say yes to last-minute requests, and colleagues sometimes call her 'unapproachable' behind her back, even though she's simply protecting her time.

Tomás is the opposite. He rarely plans in advance and he often walks into Monday's stand-up without notes. In theory, that sounds chaotic — but he's a genuinely fast thinker, and he usually solves problems in real time that Ana wouldn't have predicted on Sunday. The cost is that Tomás regularly forgets small follow-ups: a promised email, a shared document, a name he was supposed to introduce. His teammates say he's brilliant on the day and unreliable the week after.

Sofia works from home two days a week and from the office three. She usually starts at 8 and finishes at 5, and she hardly ever takes a proper lunch break — she'll eat at her desk while replying to messages. She's the person everyone thanks in retrospectives, because she quietly clears the small things nobody else wants to do. The problem is that Sofia rarely takes credit, so her workload keeps growing invisibly. Her manager has started asking her, every Friday, 'What did you do this week that no one saw?'

Comprehension check

1. According to the text, what is the real point about the three colleagues' different styles?

- ☐ **A.** Ana's style is the correct one.
- ☐ **B.** Tomás's improvisation is superior.
- ☐ **C.** All three styles work — what matters is being aware of your own pattern.

2. What is the hidden downside of Ana's protection of her time?

- ☐ **A.** She misses deadlines.
- ☐ **B.** Colleagues sometimes see her as unapproachable.
- ☐ **C.** She works too many hours.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

3. According to the text, when is Tomás at his best, and when is he weakest?

- ☐ A. Best on the day; weakest with follow-ups the week after.
- ☐ B. Best with follow-ups; weakest under pressure.
- ☐ C. Best on Mondays; weakest on Fridays.

4. Why does Sofia's manager ask her 'What did you do this week that no one saw?' every Friday?

- ☐ A. Because Sofia doesn't do enough visible work.
- ☐ B. Because Sofia's workload grows invisibly and she rarely takes credit.
- ☐ C. Because the company requires a Friday report.

True / False / Not Given

Choose 'Not Given' when the text simply doesn't say.

1. Ana prepares her weekly plan before Monday morning.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

2. Tomás is the youngest of the three colleagues.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

3. Sofia takes a full lunch break every day.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

4. All three colleagues work in the same office in Lisbon.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

5. Ana has been the team's manager for five years.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

React to the text (discursive)

Choose TWO questions and answer each in 3–4 full sentences. Use adverbs of frequency and at least one specific detail from your own team.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. Which of the three — Ana, Tomás or Sofia — is closest to your own working style? Where does the resemblance break down?

2. The text says 'what matters isn't which style is right; it's whether the person is aware of their own pattern.' Do you agree, or does one style clearly beat the others in your industry? Give a real example.

3. Sofia's manager asks her every Friday: 'What did you do this week that no one saw?' Would that question help YOU, or would it feel intrusive? Why?

Vocabulary · Calendars, meetings and time pressure

8 min

Roles

Term	Meaning
schedule (verb / noun)	to plan something for a specific time; the plan itself
agenda	the list of topics for a meeting
appointment	a fixed time to meet someone specific
recurring meeting	a meeting that repeats (weekly, monthly)
1:1 (one-to-one)	a regular meeting between a manager and a direct report
retrospective	a meeting to review what worked and what didn't

Smalltalk

Term	Meaning
running late	arriving after the agreed time
on time	not late, not early
ahead of schedule / behind schedule	earlier / later than the plan
a free slot	an open time in your calendar
back-to-back	with no gap in between
a hard stop	a time you absolutely cannot go past

Practice

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

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. Let's ___ the review for Thursday afternoon — I've got a ___ ___ at 4.
2. Can you send the ___ before we meet? I don't want a 'let's discuss whatever comes up' session.
3. I'm ___ ___ meetings from 9 to 3 — I'll reply after that.
4. I've got a ___ ___ at 5 today — school pickup.
5. Our ___ every second Friday reviews the sprint honestly — what worked, what didn't.
6. My ___ ___ with my manager is thirty minutes every Tuesday.
7. Sorry, I'm ___ ___ — I'll be there in five minutes.
8. We're two days ___ ___ on the migration, thanks to the extra tester.

Collocations · calendar verbs + noun

Match each verb with the noun / phrase that naturally follows in a workplace context.

Term	Meaning
book	a slot
cancel	a recurring meeting
push	a deadline
free up	the afternoon
stick to	the schedule
reschedule	the 1:1

Odd one out

Which word or phrase doesn't fit the group?

1. 1:1 · stand-up · retrospective · lunch break
 - ☐ A. 1:1
 - ☐ B. stand-up
 - ☐ C. retrospective
 - ☐ D. lunch break
2. on time · ahead of schedule · behind schedule · in the rain
 - ☐ A. on time
 - ☐ B. ahead of schedule
 - ☐ C. behind schedule
 - ☐ D. in the rain

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

3. at · on · in · and

- ☐ A. at
- ☐ B. on
- ☐ C. in
- ☐ D. and

Grammar · 'How often...?' + prepositions of time (at / on / in) + present simple

12 min

1. 'How often...?' — the frequency question

Structure: How often + do/does + subject + base verb?

- How often do you have 1:1s with your manager? · How often does the team run a retrospective?

Common answers: 'Every Tuesday.' · 'Once a fortnight.' · 'Rarely — maybe twice a year.'

2. Prepositions of time — at / on / in

AT + clock times, meal times, weekend/night (BrE): at 9am · at lunch · at the weekend · at night.

ON + days and dates: on Monday · on the 3rd of April · on my birthday.

IN + months, years, seasons, parts of the day: in June · in 2025 · in summer · in the morning.

3. 'Every' — no preposition

'Every' takes NO preposition: every day · every Monday · every two weeks · every quarter.

✗ on every Monday · ✓ every Monday.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — Fill the preposition (at / on / in / —)

Complete each sentence with the correct preposition, or a dash (—) when no preposition is needed.

1. The stand-up is ___ 9:30 ___ weekdays.

2. We do a retrospective ___ every second Friday.

3. She always takes her holiday ___ August.

4. I'll send the deck ___ the morning ___ Monday.

5. The office is closed ___ the weekend.

6. We launched the product ___ 2024, ___ Q4.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise B — Write a 'How often...?' question

Write the natural 'How often...?' question that fits the answer.

1. A: ____? B: Twice a week — Tuesdays and Thursdays.

2. A: ____? B: Every second Friday.

3. A: ____? B: Almost never — maybe once a quarter, if it's urgent.

4. A: ____? B: Every Tuesday morning, 30 minutes.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise C — Present simple: negatives and Wh- questions

Rewrite each sentence as instructed.

1. Make negative: 'We schedule status meetings every day.'

2. Make question: 'She has a hard stop at 5.' → (What time...?)

3. Make question: 'They cancel the Monday meeting when it's a bank holiday.' → (When...?)

4. Make negative: 'Ana attends every optional workshop.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise D — Reality check (write your own true answers)

Answer each question truthfully with a full sentence. Use an adverb of frequency AND at least one specific time expression.

1. How often do you sit in a meeting that could have been an email?
2. How often do you take a proper lunch break away from your desk?
3. How often does your team run a retrospective, and do you find it useful?

Describe the picture



Look at the picture. Write 5–6 sentences using 'how often' + adverbs of frequency + prepositions of time. Describe what each person probably does in a normal week — not just what you see, but the pattern you can guess.

Target language: Every Monday, she probably... · He rarely / hardly ever... · At 9am on weekdays... · How often does she...? · In the mornings, she usually...

Listening · Ana and Tomás compare their weeks over coffee

10 min

Two colleagues — Ana (organised planner) and Tomás (last-minute improviser) — grab a coffee on Wednesday afternoon and honestly compare how their weeks actually look. Natural pace, two voices.

Before you listen

- When two colleagues with very different styles talk honestly, what usually surprises the listener?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

- Which specific detail would tell you more about someone's real week than their job title?

Gist

1. What is the general topic of the conversation?

2. What is the tone between them?

3. By the end, what do they agree on?

Detail

1. How often does Ana say she plans her week in advance?

2. What does Tomás admit he 'almost never' does, and what's the cost?

3. What specific experiment do they agree to try next week?

Listen and complete

Complete each line with ONE, TWO or THREE words.

1. Honestly? ___ ___ evening, about twenty minutes, with tea.

2. You're going to laugh at me, but I ___ ___ write follow-ups down.

3. The follow-ups — that's ___ ___ ___.

4. For one week I'll leave ___ ___ unplanned every day.

5. Shall we ___ it for a week and compare?

Useful phrases from the conversation

Match each phrase to what it does in the dialogue.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Term	Meaning
Honestly? Every Sunday evening.	answering 'how often' with a specific time
You're going to laugh at me, but...	signalling a slightly embarrassing admission
The follow-ups — that's where I fall down.	naming a specific weakness
Fair enough — I do the opposite.	conceding a point and pivoting
Shall we try it for a week and compare?	proposing a small experiment

Speaking · Interview your partner honestly

8 min

Prepare four honest 'How often...?' questions about your partner's work week. Include at least one uncomfortable question. Interview for 60 seconds, then swap.

Writing · Compare two teams (discursive)

8 min (or homework)

Write 80–100 words comparing YOUR team's weekly rhythm to a team you know from outside (a friend's team, a client, a former job). Use 'how often', at least three adverbs of frequency and two prepositions of time. Finish with ONE honest sentence: which team's rhythm you would rather live with, and why.

Workbook · A2·3B

How often do you...? — Workbook

1. Vocabulary in context

Complete each sentence with ONE word or phrase from the box. Two items are extra.

1. Sorry, something urgent came up — could we ___ our call for tomorrow?
2. I try not to ___ myself: two meetings at the same time is a disaster.
3. This week is really ___ — I have almost no free slots.
4. Meetings often ___ by 10–15 minutes, which delays everything else.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

-
5. I always ___ Friday afternoon to plan the following week.
-
6. Our two calendars ___ on Wednesday — can one of us move?
-

2. Prepositions of time & frequency questions

Complete with the correct preposition (at / on / in) or the correct question form.

1. The board meeting is ___ 9.30 ___ Monday morning ___ March.
-
2. We have team drinks ___ the last Friday ___ every month.
-
3. ___ often ___ you review your KPIs?
-
4. ___ many one-to-ones ___ your manager ___ you have a month?
-
5. I don't usually work ___ weekends, but ___ the moment I am.
-
6. She'll get back to you ___ the end of the day.
-

3. Which sentence is more natural at work?

Choose the more professional / natural option.

1. Politely proposing a new time for a call.
- ☐ A. Would 3pm on Thursday work for you?
 - ☐ B. 3pm Thursday, ok?
 - ☐ C. Can be 3pm Thursday?
2. Asking about someone's weekly routine.
- ☐ A. How often you go office?
 - ☐ B. How often do you go into the office?
 - ☐ C. You go often to office?
3. Saying you rarely check email after work.
- ☐ A. I hardly ever check my email in the evenings.
 - ☐ B. I never no check email evening.
 - ☐ C. In evening I no email.
4. Asking a colleague to move a meeting.
- ☐ A. Could we possibly push our meeting to 4?
 - ☐ B. Push meeting to 4 possible?
 - ☐ C. Can move to 4?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

5. Saying two meetings overlap.

- ☐ A. My two meetings are clashing at 11.
- ☐ B. My two meetings are same hour.
- ☐ C. I have double at 11.

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. How often you have one-to-ones with your boss?

2. The kick-off meeting is on 9 o'clock.

3. I go three times to the office for a week.

4. We have never meetings on Fridays afternoon.

5. The workshop is in Monday in the morning.

5. Listening — a scheduling call

Two colleagues, Elif and Bruno, try to find a time for a 45-minute meeting this week. Listen (or read the transcript) and answer.

1. Why can't they meet on Tuesday afternoon?

2. What time do they finally agree on, and on which day?

3. What does Bruno promise to do BEFORE the meeting?

4. Who suggests moving the meeting off-site, and why is the idea rejected?

6. Writing — a scheduling email (80-100 words)

Write a short, polite email to a colleague. You need a 30-minute call this week. Propose TWO possible time slots, explain briefly why the call is important, and offer to send an agenda in advance.

7. Reading & discursive reflection

Re-read the classbook text about three colleagues with very different weekly routines. Then write a short discursive answer (100-130 words).

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. Which of the three routines is closest to yours, and which is furthest? What are the main advantages and disadvantages of the routine that is furthest from yours? Justify with concrete examples.

UNIT A2-4A

Talking about prices with confidence

Numbers, prices & orders · A2+ · 55–65 min · Business English



“Price is what you pay. Value is what you get.”

— — Warren Buffett

Objectives

- Discuss prices, discounts and value with a client using natural business phrases.
- Understand a real-world listening between a buyer and a supplier negotiating price.
- Write a short professional message (90–110 words) justifying a price to a customer.

Warm-up · Quick starter

Solo · about you · 3 min

Think about the last thing you bought for work. Answer these 3 questions in your head — no writing needed.

- Was it good value for money? Why / why not?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

-
- Did you compare prices before buying? Where?
 - In your role, who usually decides how much to spend?
-

Lead-in · Brainstorm: what makes a price fair?

Brainstorm · quick list · 6 min

You have 90 seconds. In pairs, brainstorm as many factors as possible that make a business customer feel a price is fair. Write your top 5. Then compare with another pair.

Reading · The price conversation nobody wants to have

10 min

Every account manager knows the feeling. The client opens the meeting and says: 'We need to talk about the price.' It usually means one thing — they think it's too high.

The instinct is to give a discount immediately, just to keep the client happy. Experienced sales professionals know this is often a mistake. A quick discount can save the deal today, but it also tells the client that your first price was never the real price.

A better approach is to slow the conversation down. Ask questions: 'When you say the price is high, are you comparing it with another supplier, or with your internal budget?' The answer completely changes the strategy.

If it's a budget issue, you can look at payment terms, smaller quantities, or a phased delivery. If it's a competitor, you talk about value — quality, service, reliability, and hidden costs the competitor is not showing.

Cutting the price should always be the last option, not the first. Because once you cut it, going back up is almost impossible.

Comprehension check

1. According to the text, giving a quick discount is...

- ☐ A. a smart move that saves the deal
- ☐ B. often a mistake because it damages trust in your pricing
- ☐ C. the standard response for experienced sellers
- ☐ D. always necessary to keep the client

2. The suggested first step when a client says the price is too high is to...

- ☐ A. offer a 10% discount
- ☐ B. ask what exactly they are comparing it with
- ☐ C. walk away from the deal
- ☐ D. increase the price to negotiate down

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

3. If the problem is the client's budget, the article suggests...

- ☐ **A.** changing payment terms or quantities
- ☐ **B.** immediately reducing the unit price
- ☐ **C.** sending them to a competitor
- ☐ **D.** waiting one month

4. The main message of the last paragraph is that...

- ☐ **A.** prices should be cut early to close deals fast
- ☐ **B.** once you lower a price, raising it later is very difficult
- ☐ **C.** clients always accept the first offer
- ☐ **D.** value is less important than price

True, False, or Not Given?

Base your answer only on the text.

1. The text says most clients accept the first price without discussion.

- ☐ **A.** True
- ☐ **B.** False
- ☐ **C.** Not Given

2. According to the text, understanding WHY the client thinks the price is high is essential.

- ☐ **A.** True
- ☐ **B.** False
- ☐ **C.** Not Given

3. The text recommends specific discount percentages for different industries.

- ☐ **A.** True
- ☐ **B.** False
- ☐ **C.** Not Given

4. The text argues that talking about value is a better response than cutting price when a competitor is involved.

- ☐ **A.** True
- ☐ **B.** False
- ☐ **C.** Not Given

Discursive writing · Reflect on the text (120-150 words)

Choose ONE of the questions below and write a short discursive answer. Support your view with a concrete example from your work or industry.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. Do you agree that offering a discount too quickly damages the seller's credibility? Justify your view with at least ONE example.

2. Think of a time when you (or your company) had to justify a higher price than the competition. What arguments worked, and which ones didn't?

Vocabulary · Talking about price and value

8 min

Roles

Term	Meaning
quote / quotation	the official price a supplier gives in writing
margin	the profit left after costs are removed
markup	the amount added to the cost to set the selling price
unit price	the price per single item
bulk discount	a lower price for buying large quantities
payment terms	when and how the client pays (e.g. 30 days net)

Smalltalk

Term	Meaning
overpriced	too expensive for what it offers
competitive	similar to or better than the market price
value for money	good quality at a fair price
a ballpark figure	an approximate price, not final
to haggle / to negotiate	to discuss to reduce the price
to match a price	to offer the same price as a competitor

Practice

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

1. Could you give me a ___ for 500 units? We need something in writing.

2. Our ___ on this product line is very tight — under 8%.

3. For orders over 1,000 pieces, we can offer a ___.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

-
4. Their offer is 15% cheaper, but I think 90 days is fair — can you ___ their price?
-
5. Honestly, at 200 euros a licence, I find it a bit ___ compared to alternatives.
-
6. I don't have exact numbers yet — as a ___, we're around 40k.
-

Collocations · verbs that go with price / offer

Match each verb with the correct completion.

Term	Meaning
raise	prices (make them higher)
undercut	a competitor (offer a lower price)
negotiate	payment terms
waive	a fee (cancel it as a favour)
quote	a price (give an official number)

Odd one out — which word doesn't fit?

Choose the word that doesn't belong to the group.

1. quote · estimate · invoice · guess

- ☐ A. quote
- ☐ B. estimate
- ☐ C. invoice
- ☐ D. guess

2. overpriced · pricey · steep · a bargain

- ☐ A. overpriced
- ☐ B. pricey
- ☐ C. steep
- ☐ D. a bargain

3. margin · markup · profit · deadline

- ☐ A. margin
- ☐ B. markup
- ☐ C. profit
- ☐ D. deadline

Grammar · Quantifiers & comparatives with prices

14 min

1. How much / how many + quantifiers

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

How MUCH + uncountable: How much does it cost? How much revenue?

How MANY + countable: How many units? How many suppliers?

Softeners: a bit / a little (uncountable), a few (countable), quite a lot of (both).

2. Comparatives for negotiating

cheaper / more expensive than · slightly / significantly / considerably more expensive ·
roughly / around the same price · nowhere near as expensive as.

3. Enough / too / not enough

The price is too high. · The margin isn't high enough. · We don't have enough time to negotiate. · There aren't enough units in stock.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — Complete with the correct quantifier or comparative

Use *ONE* word or short phrase.

1. Their offer is ___ more expensive than ours — only 3% higher.

2. We simply don't have ___ margin on this product to give a big discount.

3. How ___ suppliers did you contact before choosing us?

4. The new supplier is ___ as reliable as the old one — service is much worse.

5. For an urgent delivery, 48 hours is ___ short — we can't guarantee it.

6. Could you give me a ___ of a discount on the software licence?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise B — Rewrite as a negotiation-friendly sentence

Reformulate the direct sentence into something more diplomatic.

1. Your price is too high.

2. That's expensive.

3. I want a discount.

4. Your competitor is cheaper.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise C — Form the question

Write a natural business question.

1. (how much / discount / for 500 units)

2. (payment terms / flexible)

3. (any / hidden costs / this quote)

4. (price / include / delivery)

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise D — Discursive writing (60-80 words)

Write a short paragraph explaining, in your own words, the difference between 'price' and 'value' in your industry. Use at least TWO comparatives and ONE quantifier.

1. Your paragraph:

Describe the picture



Look at the picture. Imagine you are the owner of this café. Write 5-6 sentences using the unit grammar (quantifiers + comparatives). Talk about your prices, how they compare with the competition, and what makes them fair.

Target language: Our prices are slightly / significantly... than... · We don't have enough... to... · How much / How many...? · It's nowhere near as... as... · Quite a lot of our customers...

Listening · A supplier defends the price

10 min

Sofia (procurement, Voice A) is negotiating with Daniel (sales, Voice B) on a repeat order. She wants a better price. Daniel needs to defend the current offer without losing the client.

Before you listen

- What arguments do you expect the buyer to use to ask for a lower price?
- What arguments do you expect the seller to use to defend the price?

Gist

1. What is the buyer's main argument for a lower price?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. Does the seller agree to reduce the unit price?

Detail

1. By how much is the competitor's offer cheaper?

2. What TWO concessions does Daniel finally offer instead of a price cut?

3. What does Sofia say she will do at the end of the call?

Listen and complete

Complete each gap with ONE or TWO words.

1. Sofia says the other supplier came in ___ cheaper.

2. Daniel refuses to cut the unit price because his ___ is already very tight.

3. Instead of a discount, he offers ___-day payment terms.

4. Sofia agrees to confirm by ___.

Useful negotiation phrases

Match each phrase to its function.

Term	Meaning
I appreciate the offer, but...	soften a disagreement
Is there any flexibility on...?	ask for a concession diplomatically
What I can do is...	propose an alternative concession
Let me get back to you on that.	buy time before committing
Just to make sure we're aligned...	check understanding

Speaking · Defend, negotiate, decide

10 min

Prepare a short 60-second talk, then take part in a mini-negotiation with your partner.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Writing · A professional reply defending a price

10 min (or homework)

A client has emailed asking for a 10% discount. Write a 90–110 word reply. Politely decline the discount, but offer TWO alternative concessions (e.g. payment terms, free delivery, extended warranty). Use at least ONE comparative and ONE softener from this unit.

Workbook · A2·4A

Talking about prices with confidence — Workbook

1. Vocabulary in context

Complete each sentence with ONE word or phrase from the box. Two items are extra.

1. Could you send me a written ___ for 300 licences by tomorrow?
2. Our ___ on this product is under 10%, so there's very little room to negotiate.
3. For orders above 1,000 units, we can offer a proper ___.
4. It's not the cheapest option, but the service is excellent — real ___.
5. I don't have exact numbers yet — as a ___, we're looking at around 45k.
6. Their competitor came in at 20 euros; can you ___ that offer?

2. Comparatives, quantifiers & softeners

Rewrite each direct sentence in a more diplomatic, negotiation-friendly form.

1. Your price is too high.

2. That's expensive.

3. I want a discount.

4. Their offer is 3% cheaper.

5. There's no margin left on this product.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

6. Your competitor is much cheaper.

3. Which sentence is more natural in a price conversation?

Choose the more professional / natural option.

1. You want to say the offer is 15% higher than expected.
 - ☐ A. Your price is very much bigger than we thought.
 - ☐ B. Your price is significantly higher than we had anticipated.
 - ☐ C. Price too high for us.
2. You want to ask for room to negotiate, politely.
 - ☐ A. Is there any flexibility on the pricing?
 - ☐ B. Give me discount please.
 - ☐ C. You must lower the price.
3. You want to defend a higher price using value.
 - ☐ A. We are more expensive but we are better, ok?
 - ☐ B. Our offer includes support and warranty that the cheaper option doesn't cover.
 - ☐ C. Cheap is bad, always.
4. You want to postpone a decision politely.
 - ☐ A. Let me get back to you on that.
 - ☐ B. I no can decide now.
 - ☐ C. Wait please, I think.
5. You want to propose a non-price concession.
 - ☐ A. What I can do is offer you 60-day payment terms.
 - ☐ B. I give you 60 days for pay.
 - ☐ C. Money later, ok?

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. How much units do you need this quarter?

2. Our margin isn't enough high to give a 15% discount.

3. Their offer is more cheap than ours.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

-
4. Can you match to their price?
 5. We have quite lot of clients asking for that discount.
 6. The price is nowhere as competitive as last year's.
-

5. Listening — a phone call about a quote

A client, Ana, calls her account manager, Pedro, to react to a recent quote. Listen (or read the transcript) and answer.

1. What is Ana's main problem with Pedro's quote?
 2. What does Pedro refuse to change, and why?
 3. What TWO alternative concessions does he offer?
 4. What is the final agreement at the end of the call?
-

6. Writing — email reply defending a price (100-120 words)

A client has emailed you asking for a 12% discount on your latest quote. Write a polite reply that (a) acknowledges their request, (b) explains why you cannot match the discount, (c) offers TWO alternative concessions (e.g. payment terms, free delivery, additional service), and (d) invites them to reply if they'd like to discuss it further. Use at least ONE comparative and ONE softener from the unit.

7. Reading & discursive reflection

Re-read the classbook article 'The price conversation nobody wants to have'. Then answer in 100-130 words.

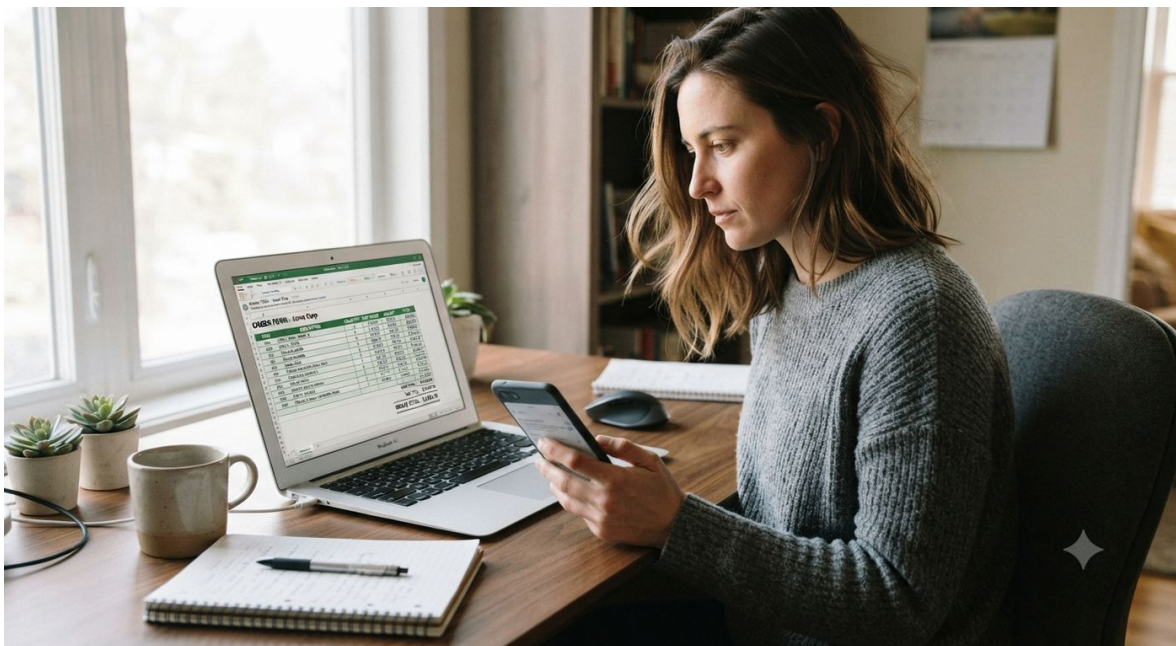
1. The text argues that cutting the price should always be the LAST option in a negotiation. In your industry, is this realistic? Give at least ONE concrete reason for and ONE against.
-
-
-

UNIT A2·4B

Placing and confirming a B2B order

Numbers, prices & orders · A2+ · 55-65 min · Business English

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



"A confirmed order is a promise on both sides."

— Supply-chain principle

Objectives

- Place a professional B2B order by phone or email, including quantity, price, delivery and payment.
- Confirm order details and spot potential problems before they escalate.
- Write a clear, well-structured order confirmation email (100–120 words).

Warm-up · Quick starter

Solo · about you · 3 min

Think about a recent order you (or your team) placed at work. Answer in your head.

- Was it done by phone, email, or online portal?
- Did anything go wrong — wrong quantity, late delivery, wrong invoice?
- How was the problem solved — or not solved?

Lead-in · Would you rather?

Would you rather · choose one, defend it · 6 min

For each dilemma, choose A or B, then defend your choice in 2–3 sentences. There is no right answer — the point is to argue.

Reading · Why B2B orders go wrong

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Ask any experienced buyer or supplier what causes most order problems, and you will hear the same three answers: unclear specifications, weak confirmation habits, and last-minute changes that are never put in writing.

The first problem — unclear specifications — happens when the buyer assumes the supplier already knows what they want. 'Send us the usual, but a bit bigger' is not a specification; it's a guess. Professional orders always include model, size, colour, quantity and unit price, even for repeat purchases.

The second problem is confirmation. Many orders are agreed on the phone and never confirmed by email. Six weeks later, when the wrong product arrives, nobody can prove what was really discussed. A one-line email — 'Just to confirm: 200 units of model X-42, at 18 euros per unit, delivery on the 15th' — solves 80% of these disputes before they happen.

The third problem is silent changes. The buyer decides they need 220 units instead of 200 and mentions it in a phone call. The supplier is not sure they heard 220 or 20. Nobody updates the confirmation email. The order arrives wrong, and both sides feel cheated.

None of these problems require expensive software. They require a habit: every important detail, in writing, before the goods leave the warehouse.

Comprehension check

1. According to the text, the MAIN cause of order problems is...

- ☐ A. software issues
- ☐ B. unclear specifications, weak confirmation and undocumented changes
- ☐ C. slow delivery times
- ☐ D. poor product quality

2. 'Send us the usual, but a bit bigger' is presented as an example of...

- ☐ A. a professional order
- ☐ B. a clear specification
- ☐ C. an unclear, risky instruction
- ☐ D. a legal contract

3. The one-line confirmation email is described as solving about...

- ☐ A. 10% of disputes
- ☐ B. 50% of disputes
- ☐ C. 80% of disputes
- ☐ D. all disputes

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

4. The final paragraph argues that the solution is mainly a matter of...

- ☐ A. buying new technology
- ☐ B. hiring more staff
- ☐ C. changing personal habits
- ☐ D. signing longer contracts

True, False, or Not Given?

Base your answer only on the text.

1. The text says that repeat orders never need detailed specifications.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

2. According to the text, most order disputes could be avoided with a short written confirmation.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

3. The text recommends specific procurement software products.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

4. The article suggests that verbal changes are dangerous when they are not updated in writing.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

Discursive writing · Reflect on the text (120-150 words)

Choose ONE prompt. Answer in a short discursive paragraph, using examples from your own experience where possible.

1. Do you agree that most order problems are caused by weak habits rather than by bad suppliers? Justify.

2. In your industry, is it realistic to always confirm orders in writing? What are the practical obstacles?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Vocabulary · Ordering and confirming

8 min

Roles

Term	Meaning
purchase order (PO)	the official document sent by the buyer to place an order
lead time	the time between placing an order and receiving it
specifications (specs)	the technical details of what is ordered
SKU / reference number	a unique code identifying a specific product
back-ordered	ordered but not yet available; the customer waits
advance payment / deposit	money paid before the goods are delivered

Smalltalk

Term	Meaning
to place an order	to make the formal request
to confirm receipt	to say the goods / message arrived
to chase an order	to contact the supplier to check progress
to expedite	to speed up delivery
to cancel / to amend an order	to withdraw / to change it
shipping fee	the cost of transporting the goods

Practice

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

1. Please quote the ___ number when you contact customer service.
2. Our standard ___ for custom items is four to six weeks.
3. The client hasn't heard anything for a week — could you ___ the order?
4. We require a 30% ___ before we start production.
5. Model X-42 is currently ___, so you will receive it in mid-October.
6. For an extra fee we can ___ the shipment and get it to you in 48 hours.

Collocations · verbs that go with 'order'

Match each verb with the most natural completion.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Term	Meaning
raise / place	an order
confirm	receipt of the order
amend	the specifications
cancel	the order in writing
acknowledge	the purchase order

Odd one out — which word doesn't fit?

Choose the word that doesn't belong.

1. PO · quotation · invoice · lunch break

- ☐ A. PO
- ☐ B. quotation
- ☐ C. invoice
- ☐ D. lunch break

2. expedite · speed up · fast-track · postpone

- ☐ A. expedite
- ☐ B. speed up
- ☐ C. fast-track
- ☐ D. postpone

3. spec · SKU · reference number · umbrella

- ☐ A. spec
- ☐ B. SKU
- ☐ C. reference number
- ☐ D. umbrella

Grammar · Determiners & polite offers for ordering

14 min

1. this / that / these / those in orders

this / these — the item near you or being pointed to: 'This model is the one we ordered last time.'

that / those — the item at a distance or referred to abstractly: 'Those units you delivered last week were fine, but these are damaged.'

2. Polite modals for placing / confirming orders

Could you send me a quote for...?

I'd like to place an order for...

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Would it be possible to bring the delivery forward?

Just to confirm, we're talking about... — used to check details.

3. Some / any / a few / a couple of

Some — positive: 'We need some replacements.'

Any — questions & negatives: 'Do you have any in stock?' / 'We don't have any left.'

A few / a couple of — small countable amount: 'A couple of units are damaged.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — Complete with the correct determiner

Choose *this / that / these / those / some / any / a few*.

1. Could you check ___ boxes I just brought in? I think two are damaged.

2. Do you have ___ of the X-42 units left in stock?

3. We need ___ replacements urgently — at least ten.

4. Remember ___ order we placed back in June? It's still open.

5. ___ of the pieces are cracked, but the majority are fine.

6. Are ___ specifications final, or do you still want to change something?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise B — Make it more polite / more professional

Reformulate each sentence using a polite modal or a softener.

1. Send me a quote for 500 units.

2. I want to change the delivery date.

3. Confirm the price now.

4. Cancel my order.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise C — Ask the right question to close the order

Write a natural business question that clarifies the missing detail.

1. (lead time / this model)

2. (payment terms / net 30 / net 60)

3. (delivery / included / price)

4. (amendments / possible / after PO)

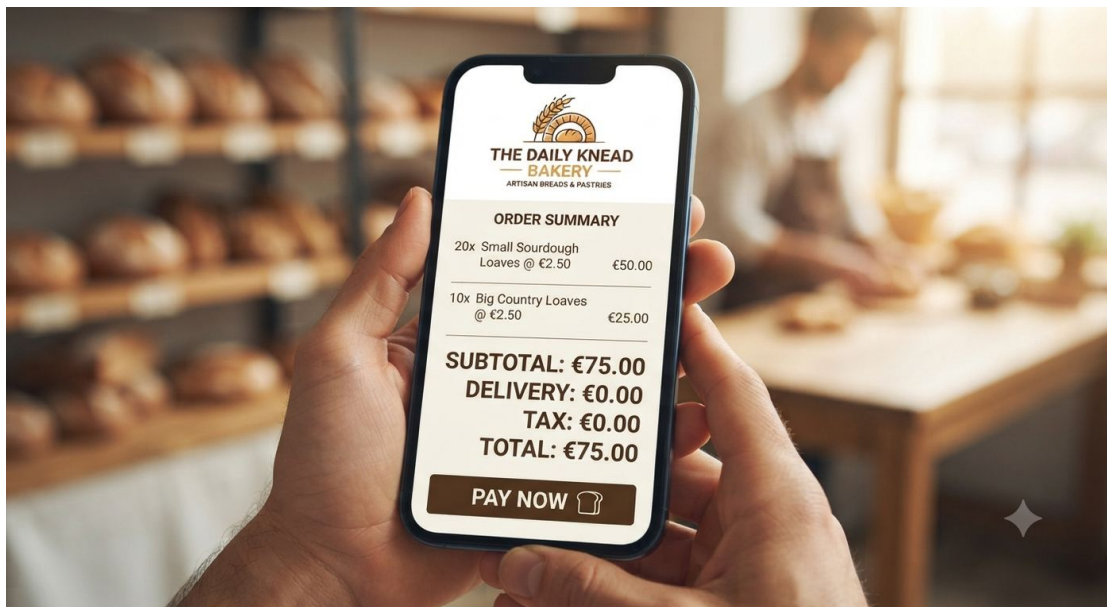
Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise D — Discursive writing (60-80 words)

Write a short paragraph describing your company's typical ordering process. Use at least ONE polite modal, ONE determiner (this/these/those), and ONE quantifier (some / any / a few).

1. Your paragraph:

Describe the picture



Look at the picture. Imagine you are the buyer just before sending this order. Write 5-6 sentences using the unit grammar (this/these/those + polite modals). Check quantities, confirm price, mention lead time and payment terms.

Target language: Could you confirm that these... · I'd like to place an order for... · Would it be possible to... · Just to confirm, this order is... · A few of these items...

Listening · Confirming an order that almost went wrong

10 min

Voice A (Nadia, hotel operations manager) is on the phone with Voice B (Rui, the bakery's account manager). They confirm tomorrow's order — and spot a mistake just in time.

Before you listen

- What details do you expect them to check?
- What kind of mistake do you think they will find?

Gist

1. What is the main purpose of the call?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. What mistake is discovered during the call?

Detail

1. How does Rui find the mistake?

2. What is the corrected order?

3. What does Rui promise to do immediately after the call?

Listen and complete

Complete with ONE or TWO words.

1. Nadia is calling to ___ tomorrow's delivery.

2. The correct number of small loaves is ___.

3. Delivery must be at ___, not 6.30.

4. Rui will send an ___ email in 15 minutes.

Useful confirmation phrases

Match each phrase to its function.

Term	Meaning
Just to double-check...	verify a detail
Bear with me a second.	ask for a moment to check
That's not quite what I have here.	politely flag a mismatch
Let me read it back to you.	confirm details by repeating them
I'll drop you an email to confirm.	promise a written follow-up

Speaking · Confirm, catch mistakes, close the deal

10 min

Prepare a 60-second talk, then take part in a confirmation call role-play with your partner.

Writing · Order confirmation email

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Write a 100–120 word order confirmation email from supplier to client. Include: (a) PO reference number, (b) product model and quantity, (c) unit price and total, (d) delivery date, (e) payment terms, (f) a polite closing line inviting the client to reply if anything is incorrect. Use at least TWO polite modals and ONE 'just to confirm' phrase from this unit.

Workbook · A2·4B

Placing and confirming a B2B order — Workbook

1. Vocabulary in context

Complete each sentence with ONE word or phrase from the box. Two items are extra.

1. Could you send us a copy of the ___ number so we can track the invoice?
2. The standard ___ for custom parts is four to six weeks.
3. Model X-42 is currently ___ — you should receive it in mid-October.
4. We need this batch urgently — is there any way to ___ the shipment?
5. Please quote our reference when you ___ receipt of this order.
6. We haven't heard anything for a week — could you ___ our order with the supplier?

2. Determiners & polite modals

Complete each sentence with the correct determiner (this/that/these/those/some/any/a few) or reformulate as a polite modal question.

1. Could you check ___ boxes I brought in? I think two are damaged.
2. Do you have ___ of the X-42 units left in stock?
3. Remember ___ order we placed back in June? It's still open.
4. ___ of the pieces are cracked, but the majority are fine.
5. (Reformulate politely) 'Send me a quote for 500 units.'
6. (Reformulate politely) 'I want to change the delivery date.'

3. Which sentence is more natural in an order call?

Choose the more professional / natural option.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

-
1. You want to check details before closing the order.
 - ☐ A. Just to double-check, is it 25 or 20 units?
 - ☐ B. You sure 25 or 20?
 - ☐ C. Repeat number please.
 2. You want to politely flag a mismatch in the numbers.
 - ☐ A. That's wrong.
 - ☐ B. That's not quite what I have here.
 - ☐ C. You are mistaken.
 3. You want to buy 30 seconds to look up the details.
 - ☐ A. Wait one moment yes.
 - ☐ B. Bear with me a second — I'm pulling it up now.
 - ☐ C. Stop, I look.
 4. You want to promise a written confirmation.
 - ☐ A. I'll drop you an email to confirm.
 - ☐ B. I write later maybe.
 - ☐ C. Confirmation on paper coming.
 5. You want to propose a compromise on delivery time.
 - ☐ A. Six is impossible; would seven work?
 - ☐ B. Six no. Seven ok?
 - ☐ C. No six, yes seven maybe.

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. Can you confirm the reception of the PO?

2. How many time do we have before the deadline?

3. I would like place an order for 300 units.

4. The delivery is at Tuesday morning.

5. We have some units left, but there aren't some replacements.

6. Please to send a confirmation email.

5. Listening — a last-minute change to an order

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Marta (buyer) calls Tomás (supplier) 24 hours before delivery to ask for a change. Listen (or read the transcript) and answer.

1. What TWO changes does Marta want to make?
 2. Which change does Tomás fully accept, and which does he only partially accept?
 3. What does Tomás ask Marta to send after the call?
 4. How would you describe the tone of the call?
-

6. Writing — order confirmation email (100-120 words)

Write an order confirmation email from supplier to client for a repeat order. Include: PO reference, product model and quantity, unit price and total, delivery date, payment terms, and a polite closing line inviting the client to reply if anything is incorrect. Use at least TWO polite modals and ONE 'just to confirm' phrase from the unit.

7. Reading & discursive reflection

Re-read the classbook article 'Why B2B orders go wrong'. Then answer in 100-130 words.

1. The article claims that most order problems are caused by 'weak habits, not bad suppliers'. Do you agree? Justify with a concrete example from your work or industry.
-
-
-

UNIT A2-5A

Planning a business trip that actually works

Business travel · A2+ · 55-65 min · Business English

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



"A well-planned trip is half the meeting."

— Sales team folklore

Objectives

- Talk about future business travel using present continuous, going to and will accurately.
- Understand a real conversation between a traveller and a travel manager about a complex itinerary.
- Write a short professional message (90-110 words) proposing changes to a colleague's trip plan.

Warm-up · Quick starter

Solo · about you · 3 min

Think about your last work trip (or a trip you'd like to take). Answer these 3 questions in your head — no writing needed.

- What went well — and what went wrong?
- Who paid, and who approved the expenses?
- Would you do the same trip again? Why / why not?

Lead-in · Predict the traveller's biggest headache

Predict · MCQ before the reading · 6 min

Before you read the article below, predict the answers to these questions. Then check as you read.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Reading · Why business trips fall apart

10 min

Ask any experienced business traveller and they will tell you the same thing: the flight is almost never the problem. What ruins a trip is usually much smaller — a badly planned connection, an approval that arrives too late, a hotel that is technically 'in the city' but forty minutes from the client.

Studies show that more than half of all business trips are changed at least once after being booked. Meetings move, colleagues fall ill, clients postpone. A traveller who doesn't build flexibility into the plan will spend the trip on the phone with the travel desk instead of preparing for the meeting.

Booking early is still the single biggest lever for cost. Flights booked fourteen days in advance are, on average, thirty per cent cheaper than those booked in the same week. But early booking only works if the traveller knows how to change the ticket without losing everything — which means understanding the fare rules before, not after, buying the ticket.

The final trap is the hotel. Companies love a low nightly rate, but a cheap hotel in a bad location can cost more in taxis than the room saves. A short walk to the client is worth twenty euros a night, every time.

The best travellers, in the end, aren't the ones who never have problems. They're the ones who plan for problems — and still make the meeting on time.

Comprehension check

1. According to the text, the biggest cause of stress on a business trip is usually...

- ☐ **A.** the flight itself
- ☐ **B.** small logistical problems around the flight
- ☐ **C.** the meeting content
- ☐ **D.** the return journey

2. The article suggests that booking a flight two weeks in advance...

- ☐ **A.** is a waste of time
- ☐ **B.** typically saves around 30% on the fare
- ☐ **C.** always guarantees a refund
- ☐ **D.** is only worth it for international trips

3. The main problem with 'cheap' hotels, according to the text, is that...

- ☐ **A.** they have poor breakfast
- ☐ **B.** the total cost may end up higher because of transport
- ☐ **C.** the Wi-Fi is unreliable
- ☐ **D.** they refuse corporate bookings

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

4. The best business travellers, in the author's view, are those who...

- ☐ A. never have any problems
- ☐ B. anticipate problems and plan for them
- ☐ C. always book last-minute
- ☐ D. avoid business trips altogether

True, False, or Not Given?

Base your answer only on the text.

1. The text says more than half of business trips are modified after booking.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

2. The article claims that the flight is usually the main problem on a trip.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

3. The text recommends specific airlines for business travel.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

4. According to the text, a short walk to the client is worth paying more for the hotel.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

Discursive writing · Reflect on the text (120-150 words)

Choose ONE question and write a short discursive answer. Support your view with a concrete example.

1. The article argues that a cheap hotel in a bad location often costs MORE than a slightly more expensive one nearby. Do you agree? Justify with a real or realistic example.

2. How much flexibility should a travel policy allow employees when booking flights and hotels? Give at least ONE argument for tight rules and ONE for freedom.

Vocabulary · Business travel essentials

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Roles

Term	Meaning
itinerary	the full plan of a trip (flights, hotels, meetings)
layover / stopover	a stop between two connecting flights
expense report	the document listing what the company reimburses
per diem	a daily allowance for meals and small costs on a trip
corporate rate	a discounted price negotiated with hotels or airlines
boarding pass	the document that lets you get on the plane

Smalltalk

Term	Meaning
to check in (online)	to confirm your seat before arriving at the airport
to reschedule a flight	to change the date or time of a booked flight
a red-eye	an overnight flight that arrives early morning
jet-lagged	tired because of a change in time zones
carry-on / hand luggage	the small bag you take into the cabin
to claim expenses	to ask the company to pay you back for trip costs

Practice

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

1. Can you send me the full ___ for next week's Berlin trip?
2. We booked a two-hour ___ in Frankfurt to be safe with the connection.
3. Please submit your ___ within five working days of the trip.
4. The company pays a ___ of 45 euros a day for meals and taxis.
5. This hotel has a ___ with our company — around 15% off.
6. I always ___ online — I hate queues at the airport.

Collocations · verbs for business travel

Match each verb with the correct completion.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Term	Meaning
book	a flight / a hotel
miss	a connection
reschedule	a meeting
claim	expenses
check	in online

Odd one out — which word doesn't fit?

Choose the word that doesn't belong.

1. itinerary · schedule · agenda · invoice

- ☐ A. itinerary
- ☐ B. schedule
- ☐ C. agenda
- ☐ D. invoice

2. layover · stopover · connection · warranty

- ☐ A. layover
- ☐ B. stopover
- ☐ C. connection
- ☐ D. warranty

3. carry-on · hand luggage · cabin bag · discount

- ☐ A. carry-on
- ☐ B. hand luggage
- ☐ C. cabin bag
- ☐ D. discount

Grammar · Talking about future plans (present continuous · going to · will)

14 min

1. Present continuous for fixed arrangements

Use for future plans that are already scheduled (ticket bought, meeting agreed). · I'm flying to Madrid on Tuesday. · We're meeting the client at 10.

2. 'going to' for intentions and decisions already made

Use for plans not yet fixed as an arrangement. · I'm going to book the hotel this afternoon. · We're going to try a new supplier next quarter.

3. 'will' for spontaneous decisions, offers and predictions

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Use for decisions made at the moment of speaking, offers, and predictions with no evidence. · I'll take the earlier flight. · I'll send you the itinerary. · Traffic will probably be heavy.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — Choose the best future form

Complete with present continuous, 'going to' or 'will'.

1. My flight ___ (leave) at 6:40 tomorrow — I already have the boarding pass.

2. Don't worry about the taxi — I ___ (call) one right now.

3. We ___ (visit) the Frankfurt office next month, but the exact date isn't fixed yet.

4. The client ___ (meet) us at reception at 9am — she confirmed by email.

5. I think traffic ___ (be) terrible on Friday afternoon.

6. I ___ (book) the hotel this evening — I just need to check the budget first.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise B — Rewrite in a more professional register

Rewrite each sentence in a way you'd send to a colleague by email.

1. I want change my flight.

2. Maybe I go by train, not sure.

3. You want me pick you up?

4. Tomorrow we have meeting with client at 9.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise C — Form the question

Write a natural business question about the future.

1. (when / you / fly / to Berlin)

2. (who / going to / meet / the client / at the airport)

3. (what time / your flight / arrive)

4. (you / need / hotel / for Thursday night)

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise D — Discursive writing (60–80 words)

Describe your travel plans for the next three months (real or invented). Use ALL THREE forms: present continuous (at least one fixed arrangement), 'going to' (one intention) and 'will' (one prediction or offer).

1. Your paragraph:

Describe the picture



Look at the picture. Imagine you are this traveller. Write 5–6 sentences about your trip using all three future forms (present continuous · going to · will). Include one fixed arrangement, one intention, and one prediction.

Target language: I'm flying / meeting / leaving... · I'm going to... · I'll probably... · The client is expecting me at... · I think... will...

Listening · A last-minute change to the itinerary

10 min

Marina (traveller, Voice A) calls Rui (travel manager, Voice B) the evening before a two-city trip. Her Monday meeting has been moved and she needs to change flights and a hotel.

Before you listen

- What changes to a booked trip do you think are usually easiest — and hardest?
- What information will Marina need to give Rui before he can help her?

Gist

1. What is the main reason Marina is calling Rui?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. Does Rui fully solve the problem on this call?

Detail

1. How much extra will the flight change cost?

2. What does Rui offer instead of a full hotel change?

3. By when will Rui send the new itinerary?

Listen and complete

Complete each gap with ONE or TWO words.

1. Marina's Monday meeting has been moved to ____.

2. The flight change will cost around ____ euros extra.

3. Rui will extend the hotel by ____ night at the corporate rate.

4. The new itinerary will arrive by ____ the next morning.

Useful phrases for changing plans

Match each phrase to its function.

Term	Meaning
I'm afraid something's come up...	signal a change with a soft opening
Would it be possible to...?	ask for a change politely
Let me check availability and get back to you.	buy time to find an option
I'll send you the new details by email.	confirm the next concrete step
Just to double-check...	verify a detail before confirming

Speaking · Plan, change, confirm

10 min

Prepare a short 60-second talk, then role-play a live conversation with your partner.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Writing · Propose changes to a trip plan (90-110 words)

10 min (or homework)

A colleague has sent you a draft itinerary for a joint trip next month. Write a short professional reply that (a) confirms one part of the plan, (b) proposes ONE concrete change with a reason, and (c) suggests a next step. Use at least one example of each future form (present continuous · going to · will).

Workbook · A2·5A

Planning a business trip that actually works — Workbook

1. Vocabulary in context

Complete each sentence with ONE word or phrase from the box. Two items are extra.

1. Could you send me the full ___ for next week's Berlin trip by Friday?
2. We booked a two-hour ___ in Frankfurt to be safe with the connection.
3. Please submit your ___ within five working days of the trip.
4. The company pays a ___ of 45 euros a day for meals and small costs.
5. This hotel has a ___ with our company — around 15% off.
6. The client moved the meeting to Tuesday, so I'll have to ___ my flights.

2. Future forms · present continuous, going to, will

Rewrite each direct sentence in a professional way, using the future form suggested in brackets.

1. I want change my flight. (going to)
2. Tomorrow I have meeting with client at 9. (present continuous)
3. Maybe I book the hotel later, I decide now. (will)
4. We plan to visit the Munich office next month, but no date yet. (going to)
5. Traffic on Friday afternoon: probably heavy. (will)
6. The client meets us at reception at 9 — confirmed. (present continuous)

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

3. Which sentence is more natural in a business travel email?

Choose the more professional / natural option.

1. You want to propose a change to a booked itinerary.
 - ☐ A. Would it be possible to move the return flight to Wednesday morning?
 - ☐ B. You must change my ticket for Wednesday morning.
 - ☐ C. Change flight please Wednesday.
2. You want to confirm you'll take care of a small task.
 - ☐ A. I'll send you the new itinerary by 9am tomorrow.
 - ☐ B. Maybe I send new itinerary later.
 - ☐ C. Itinerary tomorrow morning, ok?
3. You want to soften a warning about extra cost.
 - ☐ A. The change will cost you 85 euros. Deal with it.
 - ☐ B. I'm afraid the fare difference and change fee come to around 85 euros.
 - ☐ C. Change is 85, that's the price.
4. You want to check a detail politely before confirming.
 - ☐ A. Just to double-check — you'd like to keep the same airline, correct?
 - ☐ B. Same airline, yes no?
 - ☐ C. You keep airline?
5. You want to make a soft prediction about a meeting.
 - ☐ A. I think Thursday will be a long day, so a light lunch is probably best.
 - ☐ B. Thursday day long, small lunch.
 - ☐ C. You must eat light Thursday.

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. I will to book the hotel this afternoon.

2. My flight leave at 6:40 tomorrow, I have already the boarding pass.

3. We are going visit the Frankfurt office next month.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

4. What time your flight arrives?

5. Don't worry — I call a taxi right now.

6. The client will to meet us at reception.

5. Listening — a last-minute change to a flight

Bruno calls his travel manager, Rita, the day before a trip to ask for a change. Listen (or read the transcript) and answer.

1. What TWO changes does Bruno need to make?

2. How much will the change cost the company?

3. What does Rita ask Bruno to do after the call?

4. By when will Rita send the updated itinerary?

6. Writing — propose changes to a trip plan (90-110 words)

A colleague has sent you the draft itinerary for a joint client trip. Write a short professional reply that (a) confirms one part of the plan, (b) proposes ONE concrete change with a reason, and (c) suggests a next step. Use at least one example of each future form (present continuous · going to · will).

7. Reading & discursive reflection

Re-read the classbook article 'Why business trips fall apart'. Then answer in 100-130 words.

1. The article claims that most trip problems come from small logistical mistakes — not from the flight itself. Do you agree? Justify with a concrete example.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

UNIT A2-5B

Navigating a new city as a business traveller

Business travel · A2+ · 55-65 min · Business English



"The traveller sees what he sees. The tourist sees what he has come to see."

— — G. K. Chesterton

Objectives

- Ask for and give directions, transport advice and local tips using polite modals (could / would / shall).
- Understand a realistic conversation between a visitor and a local colleague giving practical guidance.
- Write a short professional welcome message (90-110 words) to a visiting colleague, with clear logistics.

Warm-up · Quick starter

Solo · about you · 3 min

Think about the last new city you visited for work. Answer these 3 questions in your head.

- How did you get from the airport to the hotel?
- What is one thing that surprised you about the local transport?
- If a colleague visited YOUR city tomorrow, what is the FIRST thing you'd tell them?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Lead-in · Discussion: locals vs. apps

Discuss · pairs · 6 min

In pairs, discuss these three questions. Give a reason for each answer.

Reading · Small talk, big shortcuts

10 min

Any experienced business traveller will tell you the same thing. The apps on your phone are useful — but they will never beat a five-minute conversation with a local colleague on your first morning.

Maps show you the fastest route. What they don't show you is the safest street at eleven at night, the metro station that is closed for repairs, or the pharmacy near the office that speaks English. That kind of information lives in people, not in software.

The problem is that many visitors don't ask. Some are afraid to look unprofessional; others assume that a two-minute conversation isn't worth the interruption. Both are mistakes. In most cultures, being asked for local advice is a compliment, not a burden — and the person you ask will almost always feel closer to you afterwards.

There is, of course, a right way to ask. 'Could you tell me...?' works better than 'Where is...?'. Offering to buy a coffee for a five-minute chat works even better. And thanking the person specifically — 'thanks for saving me twenty minutes' — turns a small favour into the start of a real professional relationship.

The traveller who arrives with a map and a phone survives. The traveller who arrives with good questions builds a network.

Comprehension check

1. The main message of the text is that...

- ☐ A. map apps are always wrong
- ☐ B. local human advice adds value that apps can't replace
- ☐ C. business travellers should avoid asking questions
- ☐ D. hotels should offer better maps

2. According to the text, many visitors don't ask locals for advice because...

- ☐ A. they can't speak the language
- ☐ B. they are afraid it will look unprofessional or be a burden
- ☐ C. they don't have time
- ☐ D. they prefer to be alone

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

-
- 3.** The article suggests that a polite request like 'Could you tell me...?' is...
- ☐ **A.** too formal to be useful
 - ☐ **B.** more effective than a direct question
 - ☐ **C.** considered rude in most cultures
 - ☐ **D.** only appropriate in emails
- 4.** The final paragraph implies that asking good local questions is a way to...
- ☐ **A.** save money on transport
 - ☐ **B.** avoid speaking English
 - ☐ **C.** build a professional network, not just find directions
 - ☐ **D.** get free coffee

True, False, or Not Given?

Base your answer only on the text.

- 1.** The text says map apps are useless for business travellers.
- ☐ **A.** True
 - ☐ **B.** False
 - ☐ **C.** Not Given
- 2.** According to the article, offering coffee in exchange for a chat is a good tactic.
- ☐ **A.** True
 - ☐ **B.** False
 - ☐ **C.** Not Given
- 3.** The text gives statistics about how often visitors get lost.
- ☐ **A.** True
 - ☐ **B.** False
 - ☐ **C.** Not Given
- 4.** Thanking someone specifically strengthens the professional relationship, according to the text.
- ☐ **A.** True
 - ☐ **B.** False
 - ☐ **C.** Not Given

Discursive writing · Reflect on the text (120–150 words)

Choose ONE question and write a short discursive answer.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. The article claims that asking a local for advice is 'a compliment, not a burden'. Do you agree? Would this be true in every professional culture? Justify with a concrete example.

2. Think of a business trip where the difference between 'surviving' and 'succeeding' came down to ONE piece of local advice. What was it, and what did you learn?

Vocabulary · Getting around & giving guidance

8 min

Roles

Term	Meaning
public transport	buses, trams, metro — shared services
rush hour	the busiest travel times, usually morning and evening
a single / a return	a one-way ticket / a round-trip ticket
a landmark	a famous building or place used to find your way
a shortcut	a quicker route than the obvious one
walking distance	close enough to reach on foot

Smalltalk

Term	Meaning
to grab a taxi	to catch a taxi quickly
to head to / for	to go towards a place
just around the corner	very close, only seconds away
to get lost	to lose your way
off the beaten track	not touristy — quieter, more local
a heads-up	a useful warning or piece of information in advance

Practice

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

1. The office is in ___ — you don't need a taxi.

2. Try to avoid the metro during ___ — it's really packed.

3. The bakery you liked is ___, just past the pharmacy.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

4. Quick __: the tram is faster than the bus after 5pm.

5. This restaurant is __ — very few tourists, all locals.

6. It's late, let's just __ back to the hotel.

Collocations · verbs for getting around

Match each verb with the correct completion.

Term	Meaning
take	the metro / a taxi
get	off at the third stop
give	someone directions
ask for	the way
head	for the exit

Odd one out — which word doesn't fit?

Choose the word that doesn't belong.

1. landmark · shortcut · crossroads · invoice

- ☐ A. landmark
- ☐ B. shortcut
- ☐ C. crossroads
- ☐ D. invoice

2. single · return · one-way · warranty

- ☐ A. single
- ☐ B. return
- ☐ C. one-way
- ☐ D. warranty

3. rush hour · off-peak · commute · deadline

- ☐ A. rush hour
- ☐ B. off-peak
- ☐ C. commute
- ☐ D. deadline

Grammar · Polite modals (could · would · shall · might)

14 min

1. 'Could' and 'would' for polite requests

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Could you + verb? — a soft request. · Could you tell me the way to the office?

Would you mind + -ing? — even softer, especially for slightly inconvenient favours. ·

Would you mind checking the address for me?

2. 'Shall' and 'would' for offers and suggestions

Shall I...? — offer. · Shall I book a taxi for you?

Would you like...? — offer / suggestion. · Would you like me to walk you there?

3. 'Might' and 'could' for possibility

For things that are not certain. · The office might be closed by then. · You could try the tram — it's usually quicker.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — Complete with a polite modal

Use *could*, *would*, *shall* or *might*. More than one answer may be possible.

1. ___ you tell me the fastest way to Central Station, please?

2. The metro ___ be closed after midnight — better check before.

3. ___ I call you a taxi, or do you prefer to walk?

4. ___ you like me to pick you up at the hotel tomorrow?

5. You ___ try the number 3 tram — it goes straight to the office.

6. ___ you mind waiting five minutes? I need to finish this email.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise B — Rewrite as a polite version

Reformulate each direct sentence into something you'd actually say to a visiting colleague.

1. Tell me how to go to the office.

2. Wait five minutes.

3. I want you to book a taxi.

4. Don't take the metro after 11.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise C — Form the question

Write a natural polite question using a modal.

1. (you / recommend / a restaurant / near the hotel)

2. (I / share / a taxi with you / to the airport)

3. (you / write down / the address / for me)

4. (I / help / you with / your luggage)

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise D — Discursive writing (60–80 words)

A junior colleague is visiting your city for the first time next week. Write a short paragraph of practical advice using at least **THREE** different polite modals (could / would / shall / might).

1. Your paragraph:

Describe the picture



Look at the picture. Imagine a colleague has just arrived from abroad and is standing here. Write 5–6 sentences using polite modals: give directions, offer help and mention one possibility.

Target language: Could you...? / Would you...? · Shall I...? · You might want to... · It could be quicker to...
· Would you like me to...?

Listening · A local colleague briefs a visitor

10 min

Karim (visitor, Voice A) has just arrived at the office in Barcelona. Elena (local colleague, Voice B) gives him a five-minute practical briefing before their first meeting.

Before you listen

- What logistical information does a visitor usually need on day one?
- What advice would you give a colleague visiting YOUR city for the first time?

Gist

1. What is the general purpose of Elena's conversation with Karim?

2. How would you describe her tone?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Detail

1. What TWO transport options does Elena recommend to get back to the hotel?

2. What does Elena warn Karim about specifically?

3. What does she offer to do for him on Thursday evening?

Listen and complete

Complete each gap with ONE or TWO words.

1. Elena recommends the number ___ tram for going back to the hotel.

2. Line 3 of the metro is currently under ___.

3. After 9pm, she suggests using the ___ Now app for taxis.

4. For Thursday, she offers to book a ___ near the office.

Useful phrases for briefing a visitor

Match each phrase to its function.

Term	Meaning
Just a quick heads-up...	flag important information early
Would you like me to...?	offer a small favour
You might want to avoid...	give a soft warning
If you'd rather, we could...	propose an alternative
Let me know how you'd like to play it.	leave the final decision to the other person

Speaking · Welcome, guide, recommend

10 min

Prepare a short 60-second talk, then run a live role-play.

Writing · Welcome message for a visiting colleague (90-110 words)

10 min (or homework)

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

A colleague from another office is visiting your city for three days next week. Write a short welcome message that (a) greets them warmly, (b) gives ONE practical transport tip, (c) makes ONE polite offer, and (d) proposes ONE concrete meeting time. Use at least three different polite modals from this unit.

Workbook · A2·5B

Navigating a new city as a business traveller — Workbook

1. Vocabulary in context

Complete each sentence with ONE word or phrase from the box. Two items are extra.

1. The office is in ___ from the hotel — you don't need transport.
2. Try to avoid the metro during ___ — it's really packed.
3. Quick ___: the tram is much faster than the bus after 5pm.
4. This restaurant is completely ___ — no tourists at all.
5. It's late — let's just ___ back to the hotel.
6. Use the cathedral as a ___ — it's visible from everywhere.

2. Polite modals · could, would, shall, might

Rewrite each direct sentence in a polite, professional way.

1. Tell me how to go to the office.
2. Wait five minutes.
3. I want you to book a taxi.
4. Don't take the metro after 11.
5. Give me the address in writing.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

6. I help you with your luggage.

3. Which sentence is more natural for a visiting colleague?

Choose the more professional / natural option.

1. You want to warn a visitor about a closed metro line.
 - ☐ A. Metro line 3 is under maintenance right now — you might want to use line 1 instead.
 - ☐ B. Line 3 no good, use 1.
 - ☐ C. Don't take line 3.
2. You want to offer to book a restaurant.
 - ☐ A. Shall I book a table near the office for Thursday evening?
 - ☐ B. I book restaurant Thursday.
 - ☐ C. Restaurant Thursday, yes?
3. You want to soften advice about taxis.
 - ☐ A. Honestly, I'd rather grab a taxi at this hour — the metro takes twice as long.
 - ☐ B. You take taxi, metro slow.
 - ☐ C. Taxi better, metro no.
4. You want to check a preference before deciding.
 - ☐ A. Would you rather walk or take the tram?
 - ☐ B. Walk or tram, which?
 - ☐ C. Choose walk or tram.
5. You want to give a friendly warning about an area.
 - ☐ A. Just a quick heads-up — that street is a bit quiet late at night.
 - ☐ B. That street bad night.
 - ☐ C. Don't go there at night.

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. Could you to tell me the way to the station?

2. Would you mind to wait five minutes?

3. Shall I to book a taxi for you?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

4. You might want to avoid line 3.

5. The office is at walking distance.

6. I will grab a taxi, is late.

5. Listening — a local briefs a visitor

Nadia (visitor) has just arrived at the office in Lisbon. Tiago (local colleague) gives her a short practical briefing. Listen (or read the transcript) and answer.

1. What TWO transport tips does Tiago give Nadia?

2. What warning does he give her specifically?

3. What does Tiago offer to arrange for Thursday?

4. How would you describe Tiago's tone?

6. Writing — welcome message for a visiting colleague (90–110 words)

A colleague from another office is visiting your city for three days. Write a short welcome message that (a) greets them warmly, (b) gives ONE practical transport tip, (c) makes ONE polite offer, and (d) proposes ONE concrete meeting time. Use at least three different polite modals from the unit.

7. Reading & discursive reflection

Re-read the classbook article 'Small talk, big shortcuts'. Then answer in 100–130 words.

1. The article says that asking a local for advice is 'a compliment, not a burden'. In your professional culture, is this always true? Give at least ONE example.

UNIT A2-6A

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Setting up a meeting people actually want to attend

Running meetings that get to a decision · A2+/B1 · 60–70 min · Business English



“A meeting without an objective is just an expensive coffee.”

— Common wisdom in busy teams

Objectives

- Schedule and confirm a business meeting using polite modals, softeners and clear time expressions.
- Draft a concise meeting invitation with objective, agenda points and expected outcome.
- Discuss meeting culture in your industry, defending choices with reasons and examples.

Warm-up · Your meeting week

Solo · about you · 4 min

Think for 60 seconds before answering out loud.

- How many meetings did you have last week — and how many were genuinely necessary?
- Which meeting in your week has the clearest agenda? Which has the weakest?
- If you could cancel ONE recurring meeting tomorrow, which would it be and why?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Lead-in · Where does your team stand?

Poll · pick the closest answer · 6 min

For each statement, choose the option that best describes your team today.

Follow-up: Compare your answers with a partner. Where is the biggest gap between what you do and what you should do?

Reading · The 20-minute invitation rule

10 min

There is a simple rule that has quietly reshaped how good teams work: if you can't describe the purpose of a meeting in twenty seconds, don't send the invitation yet. The rule sounds harsh, but the logic is straightforward — every invitation you send is a claim on other people's most limited resource, their attention.

In practice, a well-formed invitation does four things at once. It states an objective in one sentence: not 'catch up on the project', but 'agree on the launch date for phase two'. It lists two or three agenda points with a rough time allocation. It names the decision that will be taken by the end. And it makes clear who really needs to be in the room and who can simply read the notes.

The interesting side effect is not efficiency — it is honesty. Once you force yourself to write the decision line, you often realise there isn't one. In that case, the meeting is really a broadcast, and a short written update is faster and clearer for everyone. Teams that adopt this habit rarely have fewer conversations; they just move most of them out of the calendar and into the tools where they belong.

Comprehension check

1. The main argument of the text is that...

- ☐ A. meetings should always be shorter than 20 minutes.
- ☐ B. a good invitation clarifies both the meeting and, sometimes, its very existence.
- ☐ C. email is always better than a meeting.
- ☐ D. only managers should send meeting invitations.

2. According to the text, a proper objective sounds like...

- ☐ A. 'Catch up on things.'
- ☐ B. 'Talk about the project.'
- ☐ C. 'Agree on the launch date for phase two.'
- ☐ D. 'General discussion.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

3. The 'interesting side effect' the author mentions is...
- ☐ A. saved calendar space.
 - ☐ B. realising some meetings don't actually need to exist.
 - ☐ C. shorter emails.
 - ☐ D. fewer participants.
4. The tone of the text is best described as...
- ☐ A. academic and neutral.
 - ☐ B. critical and slightly ironic, but constructive.
 - ☐ C. aggressive.
 - ☐ D. purely descriptive.

Reading reflection · discursive writing (100-130 words)

Write 100-130 words responding to the prompt. Use at least ONE example from your own workplace.

1. The article claims that many meetings are really 'broadcasts in disguise' that should be a short written update instead. Do you agree? What would happen in your team if you applied the 20-second rule strictly for one month?

Vocabulary · Scheduling & inviting

10 min

Roles

Term	Meaning
circulate an agenda	send the agenda to everyone in advance
block time	reserve a slot in your calendar
recurring meeting	a meeting that repeats every week/month
hard stop	a fixed end-time you cannot move
optional attendee	someone invited but not required
reschedule	move a meeting to a different time

Smalltalk

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Term	Meaning
Would Thursday work for you?	polite scheduling question
I'm afraid I have a clash	polite way to say there's a conflict
Could we push it to...?	polite request to move a meeting later
Let me get back to you on that	buy time before confirming
Pencil me in	tentatively add me to the invite
I have a hard stop at 4	I must end at exactly 4pm

Practice

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

1. Could you ___ the agenda by Wednesday evening, please?
2. I'd love to join, but I'm afraid I have a ___ at 3pm.
3. I have a ___ at 5 — can we plan to finish by then?
4. This is a ___ meeting; it happens every Monday at 10.
5. You don't need to attend the whole call — you're an ___.
6. Something urgent came up — could we ___ to Friday?

Collocations · sound more natural

Match each verb with the most natural completion.

Term	Meaning
chair	a meeting
circulate	an agenda
block off	an hour
double-book	a slot
join	by video
wrap up	on time

Odd one out · which register doesn't fit?

One option is too informal or unnatural for a business email.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. Would you be available on Thursday? / Are you free Thursday? / Wanna meet Thursday? / Could we meet on Thursday?

- ☐ **A.** Would you be available on Thursday?
- ☐ **B.** Are you free Thursday?
- ☐ **C.** Wanna meet Thursday?
- ☐ **D.** Could we meet on Thursday?

2. I'm afraid I have a clash. / Sorry, can't. / I'm not available at that time. / Unfortunately, I have a conflict.

- ☐ **A.** I'm afraid I have a clash.
- ☐ **B.** Sorry, can't.
- ☐ **C.** I'm not available at that time.
- ☐ **D.** Unfortunately, I have a conflict.

3. Could we push it to 4? / Reschedule pls. / Would it be possible to move it to 4? / Any chance we could shift it to 4?

- ☐ **A.** Could we push it to 4?
- ☐ **B.** Reschedule pls.
- ☐ **C.** Would it be possible to move it to 4?
- ☐ **D.** Any chance we could shift it to 4?

Grammar · Polite modals & time prepositions in context

14 min

1. Politeness ladder

Can you...? (neutral) → Could you...? (polite) → Would you mind + -ing...? (very polite) → I was wondering if you could... (formal, indirect).

2. Time prepositions in scheduling

at + clock time (at 3pm) · on + day/date (on Thursday, on 12 May) · in + month/season/part of day (in June, in the afternoon) · by + deadline (by Friday) · until + continuous time up to a point (until 5pm).

3. Softening bad news

I'm afraid... · Unfortunately... · Would it be possible to...? · Any chance we could...? — these turn a refusal or a request into something acceptable in writing.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — Choose the right preposition

Complete with *at / on / in / by / until*.

1. The client call is ___ 3pm ___ Thursday.

2. Please send the deck ___ end of day.

3. Our budget review is ___ September.

4. I'll be in the office ___ 6pm today.

5. The workshop is scheduled ___ the morning ___ 12 June.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise B — Rewrite in a more polite register

Same message, better tone. Use modals and softeners from the unit.

1. Send me the agenda.

2. Move the meeting to Friday.

3. I can't come.

4. I want you to join the call.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise C — Fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. The meeting is in Thursday at 10.

2. Could you to send the invite, please?

3. Would you mind to reschedule the call?

4. Please send the deck until Friday.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise D — Discursive writing (80-100 words)

Write a short paragraph using at least **THREE** structures from the unit.

1. Your manager has asked you to organise a 45-minute strategy meeting with two internal stakeholders and one external partner. Describe how you would set it up — timing, participants, agenda circulation, and the polite phrasing you would use.

Describe the picture



Look at the picture. Write 4-5 sentences describing what is happening **AND** what the person is probably thinking. Use at least **TWO** polite modals and **TWO** time prepositions from the unit.

Target language: Could / Would you...? · at + time / on + day / in + month · I was wondering if... · by + deadline · I'm afraid...

Listening · Rescheduling with a client

10 min

Marta (account manager) calls Bruno (client) to move a meeting scheduled for tomorrow. Listen for the reason, the new proposal and Bruno's condition.

Gist

1. Why does Marta call Bruno?

2. Does Bruno agree to reschedule?

Detail

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. What is Marta's reason for rescheduling?

2. What new time does Marta propose?

3. What condition does Bruno set?

4. How does Marta close the call?

Listen and complete

Fill in ONE or TWO words.

1. I was ___ if we could move tomorrow's call.

2. Would ___ work for you on Friday at 10?

3. I have a hard ___ at 11.

4. Could you ___ the agenda 24 hours in advance?

Speaking · Set it up, defend it, close it

10 min

Work in pairs. Do all three tasks below.

Writing · A meeting invitation email (90-110 words)

8 min (or homework)

Write a meeting invitation to a colleague AND an external client. Include: a clear one-sentence objective, three agenda points with rough timings, a proposed time using correct prepositions, and one polite modal request (e.g., 'Would it be possible to...'). End with a soft deadline for confirmation.

Workbook · A2·6A

Setting up a meeting people want to attend — Workbook

1. Vocabulary in context

Complete each sentence with ONE word or phrase from the box. Two items are extra.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

-
1. Could you ___ the agenda by Wednesday evening?
 2. I'd love to join, but I'm afraid I have a ___ at 3pm.
 3. I have a ___ at 5 — can we plan to finish by then?
 4. It's a ___ meeting: every Monday at 10.
 5. You don't need to attend the whole call — you're an ___.
 6. Something urgent came up — could we ___ to Friday?
-

2. Polite modals & time prepositions

Rewrite each sentence in a more polite, professional register.

1. Send me the agenda.
 2. Move the meeting to Friday.
 3. I can't come.
 4. The meeting is in Thursday at 10.
 5. Please send the deck until Friday.
 6. Would you mind to reschedule the call?
-

3. Which sentence is more natural in a business context?

Choose the more professional option.

1. You want to propose Thursday politely.
 - ☐ A. Wanna meet Thursday?
 - ☐ B. Would Thursday work for you?
 - ☐ C. Meet Thursday, ok?
2. You want to signal you must end at 4pm.
 - ☐ A. I stop at 4.
 - ☐ B. I have a hard stop at 4.
 - ☐ C. At 4 I go, sorry.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

3. You want to invite someone as non-essential.

- ☐ **A.** Come if you want.
- ☐ **B.** I've marked you as an optional attendee.
- ☐ **C.** You are optional, maybe come.

4. You want to buy time before confirming.

- ☐ **A.** Let me get back to you on that.
- ☐ **B.** Wait, later I say.
- ☐ **C.** Ask me in one hour.

5. You want to postpone a meeting politely.

- ☐ **A.** We push, ok?
- ☐ **B.** Any chance we could shift it to next week?
- ☐ **C.** Move it next week.

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. Could you to send the invite, please?

2. The workshop is on the morning.

3. Would you mind to circulate the agenda?

4. Please send the deck until end of day.

5. I was wondering if you can join the call.

6. We meet at Monday at 10.

5. Listening — rescheduling with a client

Marta (account manager) calls Bruno (client) to move a meeting. Listen (or read the transcript) and answer.

1. Why does Marta call Bruno?

2. What new time does she propose, and what is Bruno's constraint?

3. What condition does Bruno set for agreeing?

4. What TWO things does Marta commit to at the end?

6. Writing — meeting invitation email (100-120 words)

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Write a meeting invitation to a colleague AND an external client. Include: a one-sentence objective, three agenda points with rough timings, a proposed time using correct prepositions (at/on/in/by), and one polite modal ('Would it be possible to...' / 'Could you...'). End with a soft deadline for confirmation.

7. Reading & discursive reflection

Re-read the classbook article 'The 20-minute invitation rule'. Then answer in 100–130 words.

1. The text argues that if you can't state a meeting's decision in 20 seconds, it probably shouldn't happen. Is this realistic in your team? What would you keep, and what would you have to adapt?

UNIT A2-6B

In the meeting: chairing, contributing, closing

Running meetings that get to a decision · A2+/B1 · 60–70 min · Business English



“If you don't have an agenda, you are the agenda.”

— Rule of the busy team

Objectives

- Chair a short meeting: open, manage turn-taking, redirect politely, close with clear actions.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

-
- Contribute effectively: interrupt, agree, disagree and paraphrase in professional register.
 - Write a decision-oriented meeting summary with owners and deadlines.

Warm-up · Meeting behaviours

Solo · about you · 4 min

Think for 60 seconds before answering.

- In your last meeting, who talked the most? Was that the right person?
 - When was the last time you interrupted politely? What phrase did you use?
 - What's the most common way meetings end badly in your team?
-

Lead-in · Sort the behaviours

Sort · into two boxes · 6 min

Place each behaviour in the box where it belongs. Then compare with a partner.

Follow-up: Which 'red' behaviour is most common in your team? What could a chair do to prevent it?

Reading · Chairing is a skill, not a title

10 min

In most companies, whoever books the meeting ends up chairing it — often without training and often without meaning to. The result is predictable: the loudest people speak, the quietest disengage, and the meeting ends with a vague 'let's regroup next week', which is corporate code for 'nothing was decided'.

Good chairing is not about personality; it is about three small habits repeated with discipline. First, the chair opens with the objective and the hard stop, so everyone knows what success looks like and when it must arrive. Second, the chair actively manages turn-taking, using phrases like 'I'd like to hear from Ana on this' or 'let's park that and come back to it if we have time'. Third, the chair closes with a decision, an owner and a deadline — even if the decision is 'we will decide by Friday'.

None of this requires charisma. What it does require is a small psychological shift: seeing the meeting as a shared piece of work that the chair is temporarily responsible for, rather than a stage where the most senior person performs. Companies that promote this shift tend to have shorter meetings, quieter but more useful ones, and a surprising side effect: junior people start speaking more, because they can see that turn-taking is being managed fairly.

Comprehension check

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. The main claim of the article is that...

- ☐ A. only senior managers should chair meetings.
- ☐ B. chairing well depends on personality.
- ☐ C. chairing well depends on three learnable habits.
- ☐ D. meetings should be abolished.

2. According to the text, 'let's regroup next week' usually means...

- ☐ A. a firm decision was reached.
- ☐ B. no decision was reached.
- ☐ C. the meeting was a success.
- ☐ D. someone will send a summary.

3. The 'surprising side effect' of better chairing is that...

- ☐ A. senior managers talk more.
- ☐ B. meetings become longer.
- ☐ C. junior colleagues contribute more.
- ☐ D. meetings are cancelled.

4. The tone of the article is...

- ☐ A. hostile.
- ☐ B. pragmatic and slightly critical.
- ☐ C. purely academic.
- ☐ D. sales-oriented.

Reading reflection · discursive writing (100-130 words)

Write 100-130 words responding to the prompt below. Use at least ONE example from your workplace.

1. The author argues that 'whoever books the meeting ends up chairing it' is a bad default. In your organisation, how is the chair decided — by seniority, by ownership of the topic, or by habit? What would you change and why?

Vocabulary · Chairing & contributing

10 min

Roles

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Term	Meaning
chair the meeting	lead and manage the meeting
keep on track	stop the discussion from drifting
park a topic	postpone a topic to discuss later
wrap up	bring the meeting to a close
action items	tasks agreed during the meeting with owners
next steps	what happens after the meeting

Smalltalk

Term	Meaning
Can I come in here?	polite interruption
Just to build on that...	add to someone's point
I see it slightly differently	polite disagreement
So, if I understand correctly...	paraphrase to confirm
Let's park that for now	postpone a topic
To sum up, we've agreed that...	close with a decision

Practice

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

1. Sorry to interrupt — can I ___ here?
2. Interesting point. Just to ___ on that, we could also try...
3. I ___ it slightly differently — I think the risk is bigger.
4. So, ___ I understand correctly, you're saying we should delay by a week?
5. Let's ___ that for now and come back to it at the end.
6. OK, to ___ up, we've agreed to launch on the 15th.

Collocations · meeting language that sounds right

Match each verb with the most natural completion.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Term	Meaning
chair	the meeting
raise	a point
reach	a decision
take	the minutes
table	a proposal
wrap up	with action items

Odd one out · register

One option is too aggressive or informal for a professional meeting.

1. I see it slightly differently. / I disagree, but I see your point. / You're wrong. / I'm not sure I fully agree with that.

- ☐ **A.** I see it slightly differently.
- ☐ **B.** I disagree, but I see your point.
- ☐ **C.** You're wrong.
- ☐ **D.** I'm not sure I fully agree with that.

2. Could I come in here? / Sorry to interrupt — a quick point. / Shut up a second. / If I may add something...

- ☐ **A.** Could I come in here?
- ☐ **B.** Sorry to interrupt — a quick point.
- ☐ **C.** Shut up a second.
- ☐ **D.** If I may add something...

3. Let's park that for now. / We'll come back to that later. / Whatever, move on. / Let's put a pin in that.

- ☐ **A.** Let's park that for now.
- ☐ **B.** We'll come back to that later.
- ☐ **C.** Whatever, move on.
- ☐ **D.** Let's put a pin in that.

Grammar · Interruption, agreement, disagreement

14 min

1. Polite interruption structures

Can I come in here? · If I may... · Sorry to jump in, but... · Just a quick point on that. — All soften what is essentially a boundary-crossing move.

2. Agreement / partial agreement

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Full: I completely agree · That's exactly it. Partial: I see your point, but... · I agree in principle, however... · That's fair, though we should also consider...

3. Diplomatic disagreement

Neutralise 'no' with softeners: I'm not entirely sure about that. · I see it slightly differently. · I'd push back a little on that. · Have we considered...? — always attack the idea, never the person.

4. Paraphrasing to confirm

So, if I understand correctly, you're saying... · Just to check I've got this right... · What I'm hearing is... — these give you a second to think and prevent misunderstandings.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — Choose the register

Choose the option most appropriate for a formal client meeting.

1. (interrupting) 'Wait — let me finish.' / 'Sorry to jump in, but could I clarify one point?'
 2. (disagreeing) 'You're wrong.' / 'I'm not entirely sure I'd frame it that way.'
 3. (closing) 'OK, done.' / 'To wrap up, we've agreed on three action items.'
-

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise B — Rewrite diplomatically

Same meaning, professional register.

1. That's a bad idea.

2. You didn't understand me.

3. We need to stop talking about this.

4. Nobody agrees with you.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise C — Fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. Can I to add something?

2. I am agree with you.

3. Let's to wrap up.

4. If I understanding correctly, you want to delay.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise D — Discursive writing (80-100 words)

Write a short paragraph using at least **THREE** of the structures above.

1. You are chairing a meeting where two colleagues strongly disagree about a launch date. Describe how you would manage the moment — how you would interrupt, paraphrase both sides, and move the group towards a decision.

Describe the picture



Look at the picture. Write 4-5 sentences describing what is probably happening **AND** what the chair should do next. Use at least **TWO** structures from this unit (interruption, paraphrase, disagreement, closing).

Target language: Can I come in here? · Just to build on that... · I see it slightly differently... · So, if I understand correctly... · To wrap up, we've agreed...

Listening · A three-person meeting that almost derails

10 min

Ana (chair), Bruno and Carla discuss whether to launch a product feature on the original date or delay. Notice how Ana keeps the meeting on track.

Gist

1. What is the core disagreement between Bruno and Carla?

2. What is Ana's role in the conversation?

Detail

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. What phrase does Ana use to paraphrase both sides?

2. What compromise does Ana propose?

3. What is the final decision and who owns it?

4. How does Ana handle the moment when Bruno tries to interrupt Carla?

Listen and complete

Fill in ONE or TWO words.

1. Just to ___ I've got this right, Carla thinks we should delay.

2. Bruno, let's let Carla ___ and then come to you.

3. I see both points, and I'd ___ back a little on framing it as either/or.

4. To ___ up: soft launch on the original date, full launch two weeks later.

Speaking · Chair, contribute, close

10 min

Work in groups of three. Rotate roles across the tasks.

Writing · Meeting summary email (90-110 words)

8 min (or homework)

Write the follow-up email for the meeting in the listening (soft launch vs full launch). Include: a one-sentence recap of the decision, action items with owners and deadlines, an invitation to flag anything missing, and a next check-in date. Use at least ONE paraphrase structure ('To confirm...') and ONE polite reminder ('Could you send...').

Workbook · A2·6B

In the meeting: chairing, contributing, closing — Workbook

1. Vocabulary in context

Complete each sentence with ONE word or phrase from the box. Two items are extra.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

-
1. Sorry to interrupt — can I ___ here?
 2. Interesting point. Just to ___ that, we could also try...
 3. Let's ___ that for now and revisit it at the end.
 4. OK, let's ___ up: what are our action items?
 5. Ana will ___ today's meeting since it's her project.
 6. We finished with three clear ___ and owners for each.
-

2. Diplomatic reformulation

Rewrite each sentence in a more diplomatic, professional register.

1. That's a bad idea.

2. You didn't understand me.

3. We need to stop talking about this.

4. You're wrong.

5. Nobody agrees with you.

6. Shut up, let her finish.

3. Which sentence is more natural in a professional meeting?

Choose the more professional option.

1. You want to interrupt politely.
 - ☐ A. Wait, listen.
 - ☐ B. Sorry to jump in, but could I clarify one point?
 - ☐ C. Stop, my turn.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. You want to paraphrase before disagreeing.

- ☐ **A.** You said wrong.
- ☐ **B.** Just to check I've got this right, you're saying...
- ☐ **C.** Repeat, please.

3. You want to close with clear ownership.

- ☐ **A.** OK, done.
- ☐ **B.** To wrap up, Bruno owns the soft launch, Carla the full launch.
- ☐ **C.** Everyone knows what to do, ok?

4. You want to disagree with your boss diplomatically.

- ☐ **A.** Absolutely not.
- ☐ **B.** I see your point, but I'd push back a little on that.
- ☐ **C.** That's incorrect.

5. You want to postpone a topic.

- ☐ **A.** Not now.
- ☐ **B.** Let's park that and come back to it if we have time.
- ☐ **C.** Later, ok.

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. Can I to add something?

2. I am agree with you.

3. Let's to wrap up.

4. If I understanding correctly, you want to delay.

5. She chair the meeting every Monday.

6. We must to reach a decision today.

5. Listening — a three-person meeting that almost derails

Ana (chair), Bruno and Carla discuss whether to launch a product feature on the original date or delay. Listen (or read the transcript) and answer.

1. What is the core disagreement between Bruno and Carla?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. How does Ana react when Bruno tries to interrupt Carla?

3. What compromise does Ana propose, and why does it work?

4. What are the final action items and owners?

6. Writing — meeting summary email (100-120 words)

Write the follow-up email for the meeting above. Include: a one-sentence recap of the decision, action items with owners and deadlines, an invitation to flag anything missing, and a next check-in date. Use at least ONE paraphrase structure ('To confirm...') and ONE polite reminder ('Could you send...').

7. Reading & discursive reflection

Re-read the classbook article 'Chairing is a skill, not a title'. Then answer in 100–130 words.

1. The article argues that the person who books the meeting should not automatically chair it — the owner of the topic should. Do you agree? What could go wrong if this rule were applied strictly in your organisation?

UNIT A2·7A

First contact: how to open a customer call well

The customer conversation · A2+/B1 · 60–70 min · Business English

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



"The first 30 seconds decide the next 30 minutes."

— Customer service rule

Objectives

- Open a customer conversation professionally: greet, identify the need, set expectations.
- Use present continuous vs present simple to describe what your company usually does versus what's happening this quarter.
- Discuss customer-service culture, defending choices with reasons and examples.

Warm-up · Your last customer call

Solo · about you · 4 min

Think for 60 seconds before answering out loud.

- What did you say in the first 10 seconds of your last customer call?
- Was the customer more relaxed or more tense at the end than at the start?
- If you could redo that opening, what would you change?

Lead-in · Put the first minute in order

Ordering · put the steps in a sensible order · 6 min

These six moves usually happen in the first minute of a good customer call. Put them in the order YOU think works best. Then compare with a partner.

Follow-up: Which step do you always skip in your own calls? What does it cost you when you skip it?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Reading · The first 30 seconds

10 min

There is a small piece of research most customer-service leaders quietly agree with: in almost every call, the tone for the entire conversation is set in the first thirty seconds. Not by the customer — by the agent. The words are almost incidental; what matters is whether the customer, in those first seconds, feels seen or feels processed.

The mechanics of a good opening are unglamorous. You greet the person by name — using their surname unless they've told you otherwise. You state your own name and role clearly, so they know exactly who they are speaking to. You confirm you have the right person, which is both a compliance step and a subtle signal of care. And then, crucially, you don't rush. You ask an open question — 'How can I help today?' — and you listen to the whole answer before you speak, even if you already know what the problem is.

The reason this is harder than it sounds is that agents under pressure tend to compress the opening to save time. They cut the greeting, skip the introduction, and jump straight to the solution. It feels efficient. It isn't. Customers who feel processed rather than heard raise more complaints, extend the call with clarifying questions, and are far more likely to escalate. The paradox of customer service is that the fastest calls are usually the ones that started slowly, on purpose.

Comprehension check

1. The main argument of the text is that...

- ☐ A. long calls are always better than short ones.
- ☐ B. the quality of the first 30 seconds shapes the whole call.
- ☐ C. customers care most about a friendly voice.
- ☐ D. compliance is more important than empathy.

2. According to the text, why do agents compress the opening?

- ☐ A. Because they don't know what to say.
- ☐ B. Because they're trying to save time under pressure.
- ☐ C. Because managers tell them to.
- ☐ D. Because customers ask them to.

3. The 'paradox' mentioned in the last paragraph is that...

- ☐ A. polite calls are shorter than rude ones.
- ☐ B. the fastest calls tend to start with a deliberately slow opening.
- ☐ C. agents talk more than customers.
- ☐ D. customers prefer being processed.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

4. The tone of the text is best described as...

- ☐ A. hostile and critical.
- ☐ B. purely descriptive.
- ☐ C. analytical with practical advice.
- ☐ D. sales-oriented.

Reading reflection · discursive writing (100–130 words)

Write 100–130 words responding to the prompt. Use at least ONE example from your own workplace.

1. The article claims that 'the fastest calls are usually the ones that started slowly, on purpose.' In your industry, is this realistic, or do KPIs force agents to compress the opening? What could you keep or change?

Vocabulary · Opening & signposting

10 min

Roles

Term	Meaning
How can I help today?	standard open question
May I ask who I'm speaking to?	polite way to confirm the caller
Bear with me for a moment	ask the customer to wait briefly
signpost	tell the customer what will happen next
on hold	waiting with the line still connected
walk you through	explain step by step

Smalltalk

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Term	Meaning
Just to confirm...	check you understood correctly
If I've understood correctly...	paraphrase before acting
Let me check that for you	buy time to look something up
I'll follow up in writing	send a written recap after the call
Is there anything else I can help you with?	close-the-call question
in the meantime	while something else happens

Practice

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

1. Good morning — thank you for calling Solari. How can I ___ today?
2. I'll put you on ___ for about a minute while I check that.
3. Just to ___, you want us to reissue the invoice with the new VAT number, correct?
4. I'll ___ you through the process step by step.
5. Bear with me for a ___ — I'm looking at your account now.
6. Is there ___ else I can help you with today?

Collocations · sound more natural

Match each verb with the most natural completion.

Term	Meaning
handle	a call
put someone	on hold
walk through	the details
raise	a ticket
escalate	a case
follow up	in writing

Odd one out · register

One option is too informal or too abrupt for a professional call.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. 'How can I help you today?' / 'What do you want?' / 'How may I assist you?' / 'Tell me what's the matter.'

- ☐ **A.** 'How can I help you today?'
- ☐ **B.** 'What do you want?'
- ☐ **C.** 'How may I assist you?'
- ☐ **D.** 'Tell me what's the matter.'

2. 'Bear with me one moment.' / 'Just to check something.' / 'Wait.' / 'Let me check that for you.'

- ☐ **A.** 'Bear with me one moment.'
- ☐ **B.** 'Just to check something.'
- ☐ **C.** 'Wait.'
- ☐ **D.** 'Let me check that for you.'

3. 'I'll follow up in writing.' / 'I'll send email.' / 'I'll drop you a quick email to confirm.' / 'I'll follow up by email today.'

- ☐ **A.** 'I'll follow up in writing.'
- ☐ **B.** 'I'll send email.'
- ☐ **C.** 'I'll drop you a quick email to confirm.'
- ☐ **D.** 'I'll follow up by email today.'

Grammar · Present simple vs present continuous in customer talk

14 min

1. Present simple — permanent / routine / policy

We offer 24-hour support. · Our customer team handles all technical issues. · Refunds usually take 5 working days. Use this for what your company always does or how things normally work.

2. Present continuous — right now / this period / temporary

I'm looking at your account now. · We're currently running a campaign for new users. · This month we're piloting a new callback system. Use this for what's happening at this moment, or a temporary situation.

3. Common mix in one sentence

'Normally we ship in 48 hours, but this week we're experiencing delays because of the strike.' — one general fact + one temporary situation, joined with 'but'.

4. Stative verbs stay simple

Verbs of state (know, understand, mean, need, have = possess) usually stay in the simple form even 'right now': 'I understand your frustration' — NOT 'I am understanding'.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — Choose the right form

Present simple or present continuous?

1. Normally we ___ (reply) within one working day.

2. I'm sorry — we ___ (currently experience) higher call volumes than usual.

3. I ___ (understand) exactly what you mean, and I ___ (look) at it right now.

4. Our team ___ (handle) about 200 tickets a day.

5. This week we ___ (pilot) a new callback system, so wait times may be shorter than usual.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise B — Rewrite for a customer

Same message, appropriate register.

1. We are always shipping in 48 hours.

2. I am understanding your problem.

3. Right now I look at your account.

4. This month we run a promotion on new subscriptions.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise C — Fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. I am agreeing with you completely.

2. We currently offering a 20% discount this week.

3. Normally the invoice arrives at Friday.

4. Right now I check with the warehouse.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise D — Discursive writing (80-100 words)

Write a short paragraph using **AT LEAST 3** present-simple verbs (routine) and 3 present-continuous verbs (this week / right now).

1. Describe how customer service normally works in your company AND one thing that is different this week or this month (a campaign, a delay, a pilot, a peak season).

Describe the picture



Look at the picture. Write 4-5 sentences describing what the agent probably does normally AND what is happening right now. Use present simple and present continuous side by side.

Target language: Normally / usually + present simple · Right now / at the moment + present continuous · ...but this week we're... · I understand / I know / I mean (stative — simple) · Just to confirm...

Listening · The first two minutes of a customer call

10 min

Rita, a support agent, opens a call with Miguel, an SME customer whose invoice arrived with the wrong VAT number. Notice how she structures the opening.

Gist

1. Why is Miguel calling?

2. How does Rita structure the opening of the call?

Detail

1. What is the first thing Rita says after 'good morning'?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. What open question does she use to invite Miguel to explain?

3. How does she paraphrase Miguel's problem?

4. How does she signpost the length of the call?

Listen and complete

Fill in ONE or TWO words.

1. Thank you for calling Solari — this ___ Rita from the SME team.

2. Am I ___ with Miguel Costa?

3. How can I ___ today?

4. Just to ___, the invoice has the wrong VAT number.

5. Bear with me for a ___ while I pull up your account.

Speaking · Open a call three different ways

10 min

Work in pairs. Rotate roles across the tasks.

Writing · Follow-up email after a first call (90-110 words)

8 min (or homework)

Write the follow-up email Rita sends Miguel after the call in the listening. Include: a one-sentence recap ('Just to confirm...'), the corrected VAT number, a signpost of what happens next and when, and an invitation to reply. Use at least ONE present simple (routine) and ONE present continuous (right now / this week).

Workbook · A2·7A

First contact: opening a customer call well — Workbook

1. Vocabulary in context

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Complete each sentence with **ONE** word or phrase from the box. Two items are extra.

1. ___ for a moment while I pull up your account.
 2. I'll ___ the whole process step by step so there are no surprises.
 3. I'll put you ___ for about a minute while I check that with the warehouse.
 4. ___, you want us to reissue the invoice with the new VAT number, correct?
 5. I'll ___ in writing today with a summary of what we agreed.
 6. Before we act, let me quickly ___ what will happen next.
-

2. Present simple vs present continuous

Write the correct form of the verb.

1. Normally we ___ (reply) within one working day.
 2. We ___ (currently experience) higher call volumes than usual.
 3. I ___ (understand) your frustration, and I ___ (look) at it right now.
 4. This month we ___ (pilot) a new callback system.
 5. Our team ___ (handle) about 200 tickets a day.
 6. Right now the warehouse team ___ (prepare) your replacement.
-

3. Which sentence is more natural in a customer call?

Choose the more professional option.

1. You want to open the call.
 - ☐ A. What do you want?
 - ☐ B. How can I help you today?
 - ☐ C. Tell me the matter.
2. You want to buy time to check something.
 - ☐ A. Wait.
 - ☐ B. Bear with me for a moment while I check that.
 - ☐ C. One second, later I check.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

3. You want to paraphrase before acting.

- ☐ **A.** OK, I do it.
- ☐ **B.** Just to confirm, you'd like us to reissue the invoice — correct?
- ☐ **C.** Repeat, please.

4. You want to signpost the length of the call.

- ☐ **A.** This will be quick, maybe.
- ☐ **B.** This should take us no more than 5 minutes.
- ☐ **C.** I hope not long.

5. You want to close the call politely.

- ☐ **A.** Bye.
- ☐ **B.** Is there anything else I can help you with today?
- ☐ **C.** OK, we finish.

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. I am understanding your problem completely.

2. We currently offering a 20% discount this week.

3. Normally the invoice arrives at Friday.

4. Bear me for a moment, please.

5. I follow up you in writing this afternoon.

6. Just to confirming, you want a refund?

5. Listening — the first two minutes of a customer call

Rita opens a call with Miguel about an incorrect VAT number on an invoice. Listen (or read the transcript) and answer.

1. How does Rita structure the first 30 seconds of the call?

2. How does she paraphrase Miguel's problem before acting?

3. How does she signpost what will happen next?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

4. Why does she narrate what she's typing?

6. Writing — follow-up email after a first call (100-120 words)

Write the follow-up email Rita sends Miguel. Include: a one-sentence recap ('Just to confirm...'), the corrected VAT number, a signpost of what happens next and when, and an invitation to reply if anything is missing. Use at least ONE present simple (routine) and ONE present continuous (this week / right now).

7. Reading & discursive reflection

Re-read the classbook article 'The first 30 seconds'. Then answer in 100-130 words.

1. The article claims that KPIs like average handling time push agents to compress the opening of a call, which paradoxically makes calls longer. In your industry, is this true? What single metric would you add to rebalance it?

UNIT A2·7B

When something goes wrong: handling complaints professionally

The customer conversation · A2+/B1 · 60–70 min · Business English

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



“A complaint handled well can keep a customer for ten years. Handled badly, it loses ten customers in a week.”

— Service-recovery rule of thumb

Objectives

- Handle a customer complaint end-to-end: acknowledge, investigate, propose, confirm.
- Use past simple vs present perfect to describe what has and hasn't been done, and what happened when.
- Estimate the real cost of a poor complaint experience and defend a recovery plan.

Warm-up · The last complaint you handled

Solo · about you · 4 min

Think for 60 seconds before answering out loud.

- What was the last complaint you handled — from a customer, a colleague, or a supplier?
- How did you feel in the first 30 seconds?
- What phrase did you use to acknowledge the problem before proposing a fix?

Lead-in · Guess the cost

Price guess · pick the most likely number · 6 min

For each statement, pick the option you think is closest to reality. Then compare with the answers — some will surprise you.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Follow-up: Given these numbers, is spending an extra 10 minutes on a complaint worth it? Justify your answer in one sentence.

Reading · Why sorry isn't enough

10 min

For most of the twentieth century, the standard corporate response to a complaint was a formal apology, a small compensation, and a hope that the customer would go away quietly. It worked, at least statistically, because unhappy customers had limited reach: they could complain to a friend, maybe a local newspaper, and that was roughly it. In 2026, that model has broken. A single well-written negative review on the wrong platform can outperform an entire quarter of marketing spend, in reverse.

What's replaced 'apologise and move on' is a discipline sometimes called service recovery. The logic is counter-intuitive: a customer whose serious complaint has been handled quickly and generously ends up more loyal than a customer who never had a problem in the first place. The reason is human — trust is not built in easy moments, it's built in difficult ones. When a company demonstrates, under pressure, that it has taken your side, you remember it. You tell people about it.

The mechanics of service recovery are unglamorous but rigorous. Acknowledge the problem in the customer's own words before proposing anything. Investigate before promising. Offer more than the minimum, on purpose, because the marginal cost is almost always tiny compared to the marginal value of a retained customer. And follow up in writing, so the customer has a record. Companies that treat complaints as an information source, not a nuisance, quietly turn their unhappiest week into their most profitable one.

Comprehension check

1. The main argument of the text is that...

- ☐ A. complaints should be minimised at all costs.
- ☐ B. a well-handled complaint can build more loyalty than a smooth experience.
- ☐ C. written apologies are the best form of response.
- ☐ D. compensation is the most important element of recovery.

2. The 'counter-intuitive' finding mentioned is that...

- ☐ A. complaints are always financially negative.
- ☐ B. customers who never complain are the most loyal.
- ☐ C. customers whose complaints are handled well end up more loyal than those without problems.
- ☐ D. compensation destroys loyalty.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

3. According to the text, why does the old 'apologise and move on' model no longer work?

- ☐ A. Because customers now have wide, digital reach.
- ☐ B. Because companies stopped apologising.
- ☐ C. Because compensation became more expensive.
- ☐ D. Because customers are less patient.

4. The tone of the article is best described as...

- ☐ A. sales-oriented.
- ☐ B. sceptical about complaint handling.
- ☐ C. analytical with practical recommendations.
- ☐ D. purely descriptive.

Reading reflection · discursive writing (100–130 words)

Write 100–130 words responding to the prompt. Use at least ONE example from your own workplace.

1. The article claims that a well-handled complaint can produce MORE loyalty than a smooth first experience. Does this match your reality as a customer AND as a professional? Where does the argument stop being true?

Vocabulary · Complaint-handling language

10 min

Roles

Term	Meaning
acknowledge	confirm you have heard and taken the complaint seriously
investigate	look into what actually happened
root cause	the underlying reason for the problem
goodwill gesture	a small extra offered beyond what is strictly required
resolution	the agreed solution
escalate	pass the case to someone with more authority

Smalltalk

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Term	Meaning
I completely understand your frustration	empathy statement
That's absolutely not the experience we want you to have	acknowledge without over-apologising
Let me look into this and get back to you	buy time to investigate properly
By way of apology, we'd like to offer...	introducing a goodwill gesture
I'd like to make this right for you	commit to resolution
Just to confirm what we've agreed...	close with a recap

Practice

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

1. First of all, I completely ___ your frustration — I'd feel the same.
2. Let me ___ this and get back to you before end of day.
3. By way of ___, we'd like to offer you a 20% credit on your next invoice.
4. Once we identify the ___ cause, we can prevent this from happening again.
5. If we can't resolve it at my level, I'll ___ to my manager.
6. Just to ___ what we've agreed: reissue the invoice today and a 15% credit on the next one.

Collocations · complaint-handling language

Match each verb with the most natural completion.

Term	Meaning
handle	a complaint
acknowledge	the issue
investigate	the root cause
offer	a goodwill gesture
reach	a resolution
escalate	to a manager

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Odd one out · register

One option is too defensive, too casual, or over-apologetic for a professional context.

1. 'I completely understand your frustration.' / 'Calm down, please.' / 'That's absolutely not the experience we want you to have.' / 'I can see why that's frustrating.'

- ☐ **A.** 'I completely understand your frustration.'
- ☐ **B.** 'Calm down, please.'
- ☐ **C.** 'That's absolutely not the experience we want you to have.'
- ☐ **D.** 'I can see why that's frustrating.'

2. 'Let me look into this.' / 'I'll investigate and revert.' / 'Not my problem, honestly.' / 'Give me an hour and I'll come back to you with an answer.'

- ☐ **A.** 'Let me look into this.'
- ☐ **B.** 'I'll investigate and revert.'
- ☐ **C.** 'Not my problem, honestly.'
- ☐ **D.** 'Give me an hour and I'll come back to you with an answer.'

3. 'I'm so, so, so sorry, this is terrible, please forgive us.' / 'I apologise for the inconvenience.' / 'That's clearly not acceptable, and I'll make it right.' / 'I'm sorry this happened — let's fix it now.'

- ☐ **A.** 'I'm so, so, so sorry, this is terrible, please forgive us.'
- ☐ **B.** 'I apologise for the inconvenience.'
- ☐ **C.** 'That's clearly not acceptable, and I'll make it right.'
- ☐ **D.** 'I'm sorry this happened — let's fix it now.'

Grammar · Past simple vs present perfect in complaint handling

14 min

1. Past simple — a specific, finished moment

The parcel arrived yesterday. · You called us last Tuesday. · We shipped the invoice on 12 May. Use with clear past markers: yesterday, last week, on Tuesday, ago.

2. Present perfect — connection with now

We have already refunded the payment. · I haven't received your email yet. · This is the third time this has happened. Use for actions relevant now, with markers like already, yet, just, since, for, this week/month, so far.

3. The typical complaint pattern

'The invoice arrived last week (past simple), but I still haven't been able to process it (present perfect).' — one finished action + one situation still open.

4. Emphasising recent action / responsibility

'I've just spoken to our warehouse.' · 'I've already raised a ticket on your behalf.' — the customer feels the action is happening now, even though it's technically finished.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — Past simple or present perfect?

Choose the correct form.

1. Your invoice ___ (arrive) last Thursday, but our accountant ___ (not manage / yet) to process it.
 2. I ___ (just / speak) to the warehouse — they ___ (dispatch) the replacement this morning.
 3. We ___ (be) a customer of yours since 2019, and this is the third time this ___ (happen).
 4. I'm sorry — I ___ (not receive / yet) the confirmation email you mentioned.
 5. Yesterday morning I ___ (send) the corrected invoice, and I ___ (just / check) that it landed in your inbox.
-

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise B — Rewrite in a professional register

Same meaning, more professional wording, and correct tense.

1. Yesterday I not receive your email.

2. I already sent the refund this morning.

3. We are having this problem three times this month.

4. Since last week I trying to reach your team.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise C — Fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. I have called you yesterday.

2. We didn't received the invoice yet.

3. This has happened three times last month.

4. I have just to speak to the warehouse.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise D — Discursive writing (80-100 words)

Write a short paragraph using **AT LEAST 3 present-perfect verbs** and **2 past-simple verbs**.

1. Describe a real (or realistic) recurring complaint from your workplace: what happened, what you've already done about it, and what still hasn't been resolved.

Describe the picture



Look at the picture. Write 4-5 sentences describing what has probably happened before the call **AND** what the agent is doing right now to fix it. Use past simple and present perfect together.

Target language: ...last week / yesterday (past simple) · ...has already... / hasn't ... yet (present perfect)
· This is the third time this has happened. · I've just spoken to... · Just to confirm what we've agreed...

Listening · A recurring delivery complaint

10 min

Sofia (procurement) calls Tiago (account manager) about a supplier delivery that is late — for the third time this quarter. Notice how Tiago handles the recovery.

Gist

1. What is Sofia's core complaint?

2. How does Tiago structure his response?

Detail

1. What phrase does Tiago use to acknowledge the problem?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. What TWO concrete actions does he commit to during the call?

3. What does he promise to send in writing after the call?

4. What condition does Sofia set for continuing the relationship?

Listen and complete

Fill in ONE or TWO words.

1. That's absolutely not the ___ we want you to have.

2. Let me ___ into this and get back to you within the hour.

3. By way of ___, we'd like to offer a 15% credit on the next invoice.

4. Just to ___ what we've agreed...

5. I've ___ raised the case with our logistics director.

Speaking · Acknowledge, investigate, propose, confirm

10 min

Work in pairs. Rotate roles across the tasks.

Writing · Written complaint response (100-120 words)

8 min (or homework)

Write the written follow-up email Tiago sends Sofia after the call. Include: a one-sentence acknowledgement, a summary of the actions already taken (present perfect) and last week's penalty (past simple), the goodwill gesture, the written action-plan commitment with a deadline, and an invitation to reply. Use at least ONE 'Just to confirm...' recap.

Workbook · A2·7B

When something goes wrong: handling complaints — Workbook

1. Vocabulary in context

Complete each sentence with ONE word or phrase from the box. Two items are extra.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

-
1. First, I need to __ that this isn't the experience you should have had.
 2. Let me __ this and get back to you within the hour.
 3. By way of a __, we'd like to offer you a 15% credit on your next invoice.
 4. Once we identify the __, we can prevent this from happening again.
 5. If I can't resolve this at my level, I'll __ to my manager.
 6. Within 48 hours you'll receive a written __ with specific commitments.
-

2. Past simple vs present perfect

Write the correct form of the verb.

1. The invoice __ (arrive) last Thursday, but we __ (not manage / yet) to process it.
 2. I __ (just / speak) to the warehouse — they __ (dispatch) the replacement this morning.
 3. We __ (be) a customer of yours since 2019, and this __ (happen) three times in the last twelve weeks.
 4. Yesterday morning I __ (send) the corrected invoice, and I __ (just / check) that it landed.
 5. I'm sorry — I __ (not receive / yet) your email.
 6. Last Friday your late delivery __ (cost) us a contractual penalty.
-

3. Which sentence is more appropriate for a complaint call?

Choose the more professional option.

1. You want to acknowledge the problem.
 - ☐ A. Calm down, please.
 - ☐ B. I completely understand your frustration.
 - ☐ C. OK, whatever.
2. You want to buy time to investigate properly.
 - ☐ A. Wait a lot.
 - ☐ B. Let me look into this and get back to you within the hour.
 - ☐ C. Not now.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

3. You want to introduce a goodwill gesture.

- ☐ **A.** Take this money.
- ☐ **B.** By way of apology, we'd like to offer a 15% credit on your next invoice.
- ☐ **C.** We give you discount, ok?

4. You want to commit in writing.

- ☐ **A.** I write email later.
- ☐ **B.** I'll follow up in writing within 48 hours with a full action plan.
- ☐ **C.** You'll get something soon.

5. You want to close with a recap.

- ☐ **A.** Bye, thanks.
- ☐ **B.** Just to confirm what we've agreed — a 15% credit and a written plan within 48 hours.
- ☐ **C.** So, ok, bye.

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. I have called you yesterday.

2. We didn't received the invoice yet.

3. This has happened three times last month.

4. I have just to speak to the warehouse.

5. We are a customer since 2019.

6. By way of apologise, we offer a credit.

5. Listening — a recurring delivery complaint

Sofia (procurement) calls Tiago (account manager) about a late delivery — for the third time this quarter. Listen (or read the transcript) and answer.

1. How does Tiago acknowledge the complaint?

2. What TWO concrete actions does Tiago commit to during the call?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

3. What does he promise to send in writing after the call, and by when?

4. What is Sofia's condition for continuing the relationship?

6. Writing — written complaint response (100-120 words)

Write the written follow-up email Tiago sends Sofia after the call. Include: a one-sentence acknowledgement, a summary of the actions already taken (present perfect) and last week's penalty (past simple), the goodwill gesture, the written action-plan commitment with a deadline, and an invitation to reply. Use at least ONE 'Just to confirm...' recap.

7. Reading & discursive reflection

Re-read the classbook article 'Why sorry isn't enough'. Then answer in 100-130 words.

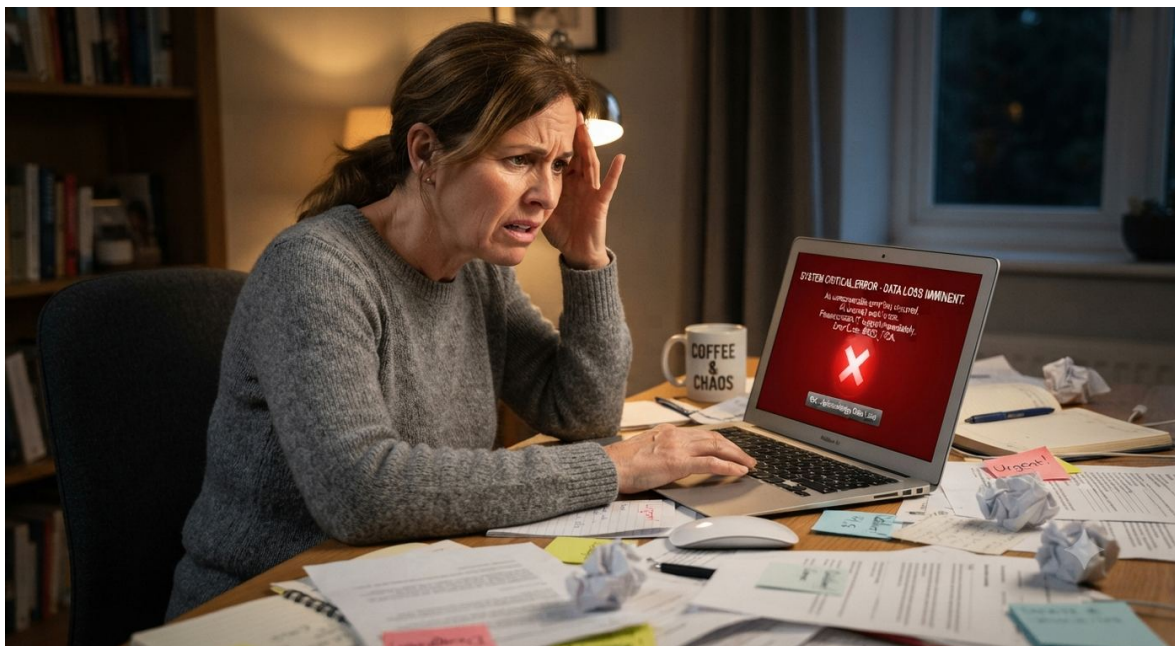
1. The article claims that a well-handled complaint can build MORE loyalty than a smooth first experience — but that this stops being true from the second recurrence of the same problem. In your workplace, does the second complaint on the same topic reach the people who could actually fix the root cause? What would you change?

UNIT A2·8A

Something went wrong

Problems at work — owning what went wrong · A2+ · 55-65 min · Business English

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



"A problem is a bad hour. A hidden problem is a bad quarter."

— Rule of the honest team

Objectives

- Use past simple contrasted with past continuous to narrate an incident with a clear timeline.
- Write a concise, professional incident update email that acknowledges, informs, and commits.
- Speak for 60–90 seconds explaining what went wrong, what you did, and what changes.
- Distinguish between apologising for the impact and admitting legal liability.

Warm-up · Quick starter

Solo · about you · 4 min

Think through these three questions before we start. No writing needed.

- Recall the last incident at work that had a real business impact. What broke, and for how long?
- When something goes wrong, who do you tell first — and why in that order?
- What's the difference for you between 'I'm sorry this happened' and 'It was our fault'?

Lead-in · The Monday-morning inbox

Mailbox · triage & draft · 8 min

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

You arrive at 08:45 and open three unread messages. Read each one and note (a) how urgent it is (High / Medium / Low), (b) who you would loop in, and (c) a first-line reply.

Follow-up: Notice the pattern in all three: acknowledge, inform, commit — in that order.

Reading · The delivery that never arrived

10 min

Last Tuesday, one of our biggest clients called at 14:07. Their production line had been idle since eight in the morning — because a pallet of parts we had promised them for Friday still hadn't arrived. On our system, the delivery was marked as 'completed'. On their loading bay, it wasn't.

We pulled the timeline. The truck left Lisbon at 06:00, exactly as planned. Around 09:30, the driver stopped in Coimbra because a warning light came on. He fixed the issue in about forty minutes — but he didn't call anybody, because he thought he was still 'on time'. Between his arrival window and our automated tracker, three hours quietly disappeared.

At 14:15 we phoned the client back. We didn't invent excuses; we told them exactly what we knew, exactly what we didn't know yet, and gave them a specific commitment: a replacement pallet on the road within ninety minutes and a written incident note by 18:00. They weren't happy — but they weren't shouting either. They understood that we were being straight with them.

The next day we sent a small goodwill gesture: a case of local wine and a handwritten card from the operations manager. The client emailed back the same afternoon: 'Thank you for being honest — most of your competitors would have blamed the driver and disappeared.' Two weeks later they renewed the annual contract early.

The lesson? A late delivery is a bad hour. A late delivery you try to hide is a lost customer. Since that Tuesday, every driver is required to call in every two hours, regardless of whether things are on track. It costs us nothing. It probably saved us a quarter of a million euros a year.

Comprehension check

1. What was 'quietly' wrong for three hours?

- ☐ A. The client's factory had stopped working
- ☐ B. The driver's location vs. the tracker vs. our promise no longer matched
- ☐ C. The truck had broken down and could not be repaired

2. Why was the client 'not happy but not shouting'?

- ☐ A. Because they were used to late deliveries
- ☐ B. Because the company was straight with them and made a concrete commitment
- ☐ C. Because they had received a discount already

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3. The main argument of the last paragraph is that...

- ☐ A. Drivers are unreliable and should be replaced
- ☐ B. A hidden problem is more expensive than the problem itself
- ☐ C. Goodwill gestures always solve customer complaints

True, False or Not Given?

Choose based on the text only.

1. The company blamed the driver publicly.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

2. The replacement pallet arrived within ninety minutes of the phone call.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

3. Since the incident, drivers must check in every two hours even when everything is fine.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

About the text — think and write

Answer briefly, then write the discursive task in full paragraph form.

1. The text says the driver 'thought he was still on time'. Why is this a systems problem, not a driver problem?

2. In your own workplace, where would a 'quiet three hours' most likely appear? What would the equivalent of the two-hour check-in look like?

3. ****Discursive task (100–130 words).**** In your own words, explain why, according to the text, 'a hidden problem is more expensive than the problem itself'. Give one example from your own professional experience, describe how it was (or wasn't) surfaced, and finish with one process rule you would recommend to prevent a repeat.

Vocabulary · Incident communication

10 min

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Roles

Term	Meaning
downtime	period when a service, machine or person is not working
root cause	the underlying reason, not just the symptom
workaround	a temporary fix that keeps things running while you fix the real thing
goodwill gesture	a small compensation offered to preserve the relationship, not because you have to
post-mortem	an honest, blame-free review of what went wrong and why
escalate	to hand a problem up to someone with more authority

Smalltalk

Term	Meaning
own it	take responsibility publicly and act
loop in	add the right people to the conversation early
circle back	come back to a topic once you have more information
hold the line	keep things stable while a fix is being deployed
put out fires	spend the day reacting to urgent problems
no blame, just fix	principle: solve first, review the process, don't shame the person

Practice

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

1. We had 47 minutes of ___ this morning, but customer impact was minimal because Support had a script ready.
2. Let's not just patch the symptom — I want us to find the ___ before we close the ticket.
3. Manual invoicing is a ___ for now; we'll rebuild the integration next sprint.
4. I'd like to ___ your account manager on this so they hear the update from us first.
5. We're not going to blame anyone in this meeting — this is a ___, not a court case.
6. This is above my authority. I'm going to ___ to my director.

Collocations · verb + noun

Match each verb with the correct noun / phrase.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Term	Meaning
own	the mistake
issue	a status update
contain	the impact
restore	service
log	a formal complaint
waive	a fee (as a goodwill gesture)

Odd one out — which register is different?

One option is far too casual for a written client update.

1. Which of these belongs in an email to a key account?

- ☐ A. We are actively investigating the issue.
- ☐ B. We're on it — will revert shortly.
- ☐ C. The situation is under control and being handled by our team.
- ☐ D. Yeah so basically everything's gone a bit mental over here.

2. Which is NOT a real apology?

- ☐ A. I'm sorry this happened.
- ☐ B. I take responsibility for this.
- ☐ C. Mistakes were made.
- ☐ D. That was on us — here's what we're doing.

Grammar · past simple vs. past continuous (setting the scene)

14 min

1. Past simple — the events, in order

Use for a completed action at a defined moment in the past.

- The system crashed at 09:12.
- We called the client at 14:15.
- She sent the corrected file straight away.

2. Past continuous — the background / what was already happening

Use for an action in progress around a past moment; often paired with past simple.

- At 09:00, the team was running the morning stand-up when the alert came in.
- The driver was fixing a warning light while our tracker was still saying 'on time'.
- Form: was/were + verb-ing.

3. Signal words

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while / as → past continuous (background).

when / at 09:12 / suddenly → past simple (event that interrupts).

- While the driver was stopping in Coimbra, three hours quietly disappeared.

4. Negatives & questions

- She wasn't calling the client — she was checking the tracker.
- What were you doing when the alert came in?
- Did anyone escalate it before 10am?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — Choose past simple or past continuous

Complete with the correct form.

1. At 09:30, the driver ___ (fix) the warning light when he ___ (get) the missed-call notification.
 2. While we ___ (write) the incident note, the client ___ (renew) the contract early.
 3. I ___ (not / hide) the problem — I ___ (still / gather) the facts.
 4. What ___ Marta ___ (do) when the pallet ___ (fail) to arrive?
 5. The gateway ___ (recover) at 06:55, but 40 orders ___ (already / bounce).
-

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise B — Rewrite so both tenses appear

Combine each pair into ONE sentence using past continuous + past simple.

1. The team was running the stand-up. + The alert came in.

2. I was drafting the reply. + My manager called me.

3. We were checking the tracker. + The client phoned.

4. Ana was uploading the correct file. + I was writing to the client.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise C — Discursive: narrate an incident (80–100 words)

Write a short internal note about a real or realistic incident, using **AT LEAST 3 past continuous + 3 past simple verbs**. Include one 'while' and one 'when' clause. Underline (in your head) which is background and which is event.

1. Your note starts with: 'At [time] on [day], while we were _____, _____.'

Describe the picture



Look at the picture. In 5–6 sentences, narrate what is happening **AND** reconstruct what was probably happening 30 minutes earlier. Use past simple for the events on screen and past continuous for what led up to them.

Target language: At [time], she was ... · When the alert came in, she was already ... · Meanwhile, her colleague was ... · She didn't panic — she ... · By [time], the situation was ...

Listening · Operations manager gives a 90-second incident briefing

10 min

An operations manager gives a short, structured briefing to the leadership team at the start of the day. One voice (male).

Before you listen

- In a professional briefing, in what order do you expect: facts, impact, cause, next steps, ask?
- Which of those does an inexperienced speaker usually skip — and why?

Gist

1. Who is the audience of this briefing?

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2. What is the speaker's overall stance?

Detail

1. What was happening on our side when the incident was first noticed?

2. What specific commitment does the speaker make to the client?

3. What process change is being introduced from today?

Listen and complete

Complete with the exact words the speaker uses.

1. 'At 09:12, while the team __ __ __ __, the alert came in.'

2. 'I've committed to Marta that we'll be back with a written note by __.'

3. 'From today, every driver __ __ __ two hours — full stop.'

Useful incident-briefing phrases

Match each phrase to its function.

Term	Meaning
Here's what we know so far...	state the facts you have
The impact on the customer is...	quantify the damage
The root cause appears to be...	give a hypothesis, not a final verdict
Our next three actions are...	commit to concrete next steps
What I need from you is...	ask for a decision or support

Speaking · Own the incident

10 min

Use the language of this unit — past simple / past continuous, incident vocabulary, structured briefing phrases — to run these three tasks with a partner.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Writing · Incident update email (120-150 words)

12 min (or homework)

Write a professional incident update email to a key client (Marta at Nordwerk). Include: (a) a one-line acknowledgement of impact, (b) the facts you have and the facts you don't, (c) a specific commitment with a time, (d) one goodwill gesture, (e) a proactive next step (the two-hour check-in). Use at least **THREE** past simple / past continuous verbs. Avoid the phrase 'mistakes were made'.

Workbook · A2·8A

Something went wrong — Workbook

1. Vocabulary in context

Complete each sentence with **ONE** word or phrase from the box. Two items are extra.

1. The payment gateway had 47 minutes of ___ this morning, but only 12 checkouts actually failed.
2. Manual invoicing is a ___ for now — the real integration will be rebuilt next sprint.
3. Let's not just patch the symptom. I want the ___ before we close this ticket.
4. We're going to ___ the account manager on this so the client hears the update from us first.
5. By way of a ___, we'll waive the delivery fee on your next three orders.
6. I don't have the authority to approve this refund — I'll ___ to my director.
7. Only Ricardo knows the deploy password. That's a textbook ___ _ _ _.
8. Tomorrow morning we'll run a 30-minute blame-free ___ on this incident.

2. Past simple vs. past continuous

Write the correct form(s) of the verb(s) in brackets.

1. At 09:12, while the team ___ (run) the morning stand-up, the alert ___ (come) in.
2. The driver ___ (fix) a warning light in Coimbra when our tracker still ___ (say) 'on time'.
3. I ___ (draft) the reply to Marta when my manager ___ (call) me from the airport.
4. We ___ (not hide) the problem — we ___ (still gather) the facts.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

5. What ___ (you / do) at 06:55 when the gateway ___ (recover)?

6. The Ops team ___ (write) the incident note while Sales ___ (already speak) to the client.

7. Between 09:30 and 12:30, three hours ___ (quietly / disappear) — and nobody ___ (notice).

3. Communication register

Choose the option that would be appropriate in a professional client update.

1. First line of an incident email to a key account:

- ☐ A. Hi — small hiccup our end, sorry!
- ☐ B. I'm writing to let you know we've identified an issue affecting your service and to share what we're doing about it.
- ☐ C. Yeah so basically everything's a mess but we're on it.

2. Which is a real apology?

- ☐ A. Mistakes were made.
- ☐ B. We'd like to apologise for the impact this had on your team, and I take responsibility for how it was handled.
- ☐ C. Sorry if you feel that way.

3. Which sentence commits you the LEAST — and is therefore the least reassuring?

- ☐ A. We'll circle back within the hour with a specific timeline.
- ☐ B. We'll do our best to look into it as soon as possible.
- ☐ C. By 18:00 today you'll have a written incident note in your inbox.

4. Which belongs in a blame-free internal review?

- ☐ A. Ana approved it too quickly.
- ☐ B. The process didn't require a second signature — that's the fix.
- ☐ C. Let's just make sure it doesn't happen again.

5. 'The root cause appears to be...' is stronger than 'The root cause is...' because:

- ☐ A. It sounds more polite.
- ☐ B. It signals a hypothesis to be verified, not a final verdict — which is honest.
- ☐ C. It is more formal.

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE grammar or register mistake typical of A2+/B1 professionals. Rewrite it correctly.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. While the alert was come in, the team run their stand-up.

2. I was writing the reply when suddenly my manager was calling me.

3. Sorry if you feel we let you down.

4. The driver didn't called because he thought he was on time.

5. Mistakes were made yesterday and we all learned a lot.

6. The system was crash at 10am while I have my coffee.

5. Reading & discursive response

Read the short case, then answer.

1. Case: Late on Friday, a member of your ops team notices that a batch of 200 outgoing invoices contains a €50 rounding error each. The client hasn't complained yet. The team lead says: 'It's Friday evening — let's just fix it Monday morning and quietly reissue.' In 100–130 words, argue for OR against that approach, using this unit's language (past simple / past continuous, incident vocabulary, 'own it', 'root cause', etc.).

6. Listening — incident-response voicemail

A team lead leaves a 60-second voicemail for a colleague who is off sick. Listen (or read the transcript) and answer.

1. What is the caller's overall tone — and why is that a good choice?

2. What specifically had ALREADY been done before the caller left the message?

3. What does the caller explicitly tell the colleague NOT to do?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

4. Name the ONE corrective action mentioned.

7. Writing — Incident update email (120–150 words)

You are the account manager. Write a 120–150 word email to a key client (Marta at Nordwerk) about yesterday's missing pallet. Include: (1) a one-line acknowledgement of impact, (2) the facts you have + the facts you don't, (3) a specific commitment with a time, (4) a goodwill gesture, (5) a proactive process change. Use AT LEAST three past-simple and two past-continuous verbs. Do NOT use 'mistakes were made', 'we'll do our best', or 'sorry if'.

8. Case study preview

Look at this unit's Case Study. Answer briefly.

1. What is the main challenge in the case for Unit 8, and which stakeholder is under the most pressure?

2. If you were chairing the post-mortem for this case, what would be your ONE corrective action — and who would own it by when?

UNIT A2·8B

What happened yesterday

Problems at work — the after-action conversation · A2+ · 55–65 min · Business English

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



"Yesterday's mistake is tomorrow's checklist — if you write it down."

— Rule of the learning company

Objectives

- Run a short, blame-free after-action review using past simple and past perfect.
- Distinguish what happened, what caused it, and what we'll change — as three separate conversations.
- Write a 120–150 word 'lessons learned' note that a real team would actually read.
- Push back politely when someone tries to close an incident before its root cause is understood.

Warm-up · Quick starter

Solo · about you · 4 min

Think through these three questions before we start.

- When did you last hold a proper 'what happened yesterday' conversation at work? How long did it last?
- In your team, is it easier to admit a mistake to your boss or to your peers? Why?
- One phrase you often hear that quietly kills honest after-action reviews (e.g. 'mistakes were made', 'we all learned a lot').

Lead-in · The 15-minute post-mortem

Role cards · four voices in the room · 8 min

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Yesterday, a client-facing report went out with the wrong quarterly figures. This morning, four people are sitting around a table for a 15-minute post-mortem. Pick a card and prepare TWO sentences that role would open with — using past simple and past perfect. Then compare in pairs.

Follow-up: Notice how the four openings differ. Same incident, four legitimate angles.

Reading · A hard day for Sofia

10 min

Sofia had been working from home for almost two years when yesterday happened. On paper, it was a normal Wednesday. In practice, it was the kind of day that ends with a walk around the block and a very early bedtime.

At 08:55, five minutes before her first meeting, her laptop refused to boot. She had already prepared a slide deck, rehearsed her opening, and made coffee — and now she was staring at a dead screen. She called IT. They took three hours. Meanwhile, she joined the meeting from her phone and did what she could.

At 13:00 she had a video call with a prospective client she had been chasing for six weeks. Camera off — because it wasn't working. She apologised, made a small joke, and led the call on voice alone. It went better than she had feared. The client even said, at the end: 'You clearly know your subject — the camera didn't matter.'

At 17:00, the internet stopped for thirty-two minutes. She had already sent the most urgent messages, so she pulled out a paper notebook and wrote her to-do list for tomorrow the old-fashioned way. It felt strangely calming.

At 18:15, she closed the laptop. Nothing had gone catastrophically wrong. Everything had gone slightly wrong. And that, she realised, was the interesting story: how a chain of small, unrelated failures had turned into a hard day — and why she was, on balance, actually quite proud of how she'd handled each one.

Comprehension check

1. What is the writer's main point about Sofia's day?

- ☐ A. Working from home is inherently unreliable
- ☐ B. Small, unrelated failures added up — but her responses were consistently good
- ☐ C. IT departments are always slow

2. Why did the video call 'go better than she had feared'?

- ☐ A. Because the camera fixed itself
- ☐ B. Because content and presence mattered more than the visual
- ☐ C. Because the client was easy-going

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

3. The paper notebook detail is included to show that...

- ☐ A. Old methods are always better
- ☐ B. Losing a tool didn't destroy her productivity — she adapted
- ☐ C. The internet is not reliable

True, False or Not Given?

Choose based on the text only.

1. Sofia had prepared her opening before her laptop failed.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

2. The client signed the contract at the end of the video call.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

3. The internet outage lasted more than half an hour.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

About the text — think and write

Answer briefly, then complete the discursive task.

1. Why does the writer use past perfect ('she had already prepared... she had been chasing...') rather than only past simple?

2. Which of Sofia's three responses is the most transferable to your job — and why?

3. ****Discursive task (100–130 words).**** The last paragraph claims that the interesting story is not the failures but the responses. Do you agree? Write a short reflection on a day of your own — real or realistic — where 'everything went slightly wrong'. Describe the chain, describe your responses, and finish with what you would keep doing next time.

Vocabulary · After-action review

10 min

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Roles

Term	Meaning
hindsight	understanding of a situation only after it has happened
contributing factor	one of several causes — not the single cause
systemic	built into the process, not caused by an individual
corrective action	a specific change made to prevent a repeat
near-miss	something that almost went wrong — worth reviewing even without damage
single point of failure	one person, tool or step whose failure breaks the whole chain

Smalltalk

Term	Meaning
with the benefit of hindsight	looking back with what we know now
at first glance	when we first looked at it
in the heat of the moment	while it was happening, under pressure
on reflection	after thinking calmly about it
as it turned out	in the end, the reality was
in fairness to X	polite way to defend someone before critiquing the situation

Practice

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

1. This wasn't a one-off — it's a ___ issue with how we hand over between shifts.
2. The tired analyst was a ___, but the real cause is that only one person can approve the file.
3. Only one person knew the password — that's a textbook ___ _ _ _.
4. ___ _ _ _ _ , we should have double-checked the totals before sending.
5. Yesterday's incident is a ___ — the client didn't notice, but it easily could have gone public.
6. ___ _ _ , the manager was already juggling three deliverables when he approved the file.

Collocations · review-meeting phrases

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Match each verb with the correct noun / phrase.

Term	Meaning
draw	a lesson
identify	a contributing factor
circulate	the post-mortem notes
assign	a corrective action
close	the loop with the client
prevent	a repeat

Odd one out — which is NOT blame-free?

Choose the phrase that quietly shifts blame onto a person.

1. In a healthy post-mortem, which phrase would you challenge?

- ☐ A. The process didn't force a second check.
- ☐ B. Ana approved it too quickly.
- ☐ C. There was no automated validation step.
- ☐ D. The handover time was too tight.

2. Which is a real learning statement?

- ☐ A. We learned a lot.
- ☐ B. Going forward, we'll do better.
- ☐ C. From next week, no client file goes out without a second signature.
- ☐ D. It won't happen again.

Grammar · past simple vs. past perfect (before yesterday)

14 min

1. Past simple — yesterday's events, in order

- At 08:55, her laptop refused to boot.
- She called IT.
- She joined the meeting from her phone.

2. Past perfect — what had already happened BEFORE that

had + past participle. Use to show that one action was already complete before another past action.

- She had already prepared the deck (before the laptop died).
- She had been chasing that client for six weeks (before the video call).

3. Why it matters in an after-action review

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Past perfect lets you separate the preparation from the failure. It signals: 'this wasn't caused by lack of readiness'. Managers who never use past perfect sound like they're accusing.

· Compare: 'She sent the wrong file.' vs. 'She had reviewed the file twice before she sent it.'

4. Signal words

already · just · by the time · before · until then → often trigger past perfect.

· By the time the client called, we had already spotted the error.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — Choose past simple or past perfect

Complete with the correct form.

1. By the time IT ___ (call) back, Sofia ___ (already / run) the meeting from her phone.

2. She ___ (send) the deck the night before, so when the laptop ___ (die), the client still ___ (have) the material.

3. Until yesterday, we ___ (never / lose) a file this way — the incident ___ (expose) a real gap.

4. The manager ___ (approve) the numbers at 18:40, but he ___ (not / open) the appendix.

5. By 17:32 the internet ___ (be back), and Sofia ___ (already / rewrite) her to-do list on paper.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise B — Rewrite so past perfect appears

Combine each pair into ONE sentence using past perfect + past simple, showing the earlier action first with past perfect.

1. She prepared the deck. + Then the laptop died.

2. He skimmed the file. + Then he approved it.

3. The team missed the error. + Then the client called.

4. We tested the workaround. + Then we deployed it.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise C — Discursive: after-action note (80-100 words)

Write a short 'what happened yesterday' note about a real or realistic incident. Use AT LEAST 3 past perfect verbs and 3 past simple verbs. Show clearly what was ALREADY in place before things went wrong.

1. Start with: 'Yesterday afternoon, by the time we noticed the issue, we had already _____, but we hadn't _____.'

Describe the picture



Look at the picture. In 5-6 sentences, describe (a) what she is doing NOW, (b) what she had already done earlier that day, and (c) what she probably hasn't done yet. Use past simple, past perfect and one 'by the time...' clause.

Target language: By the time [event], she had already ... · Earlier in the day, she ... · She hadn't yet ... · Now she is ... · Tomorrow she'll probably ...

Listening · A blame-free 15-minute post-mortem (chair's summary)

10 min

The head of department gives a 90-second wrap-up at the end of a 15-minute post-mortem meeting. One voice (female).

Before you listen

- What ratio of 'what happened' / 'why' / 'what we'll change' would you expect in a good wrap-up?
- Which sentence would you personally find hardest to say out loud in front of your team?

Gist

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. What kind of meeting is this and who is speaking?

2. What is the chair's overall attitude?

Detail

1. What ALREADY existed before the incident that turned out not to be enough?

2. What is the ONE corrective action agreed?

3. What does the chair explicitly refuse to do?

Listen and complete

Complete with the exact words the speaker uses.

1. 'By the time the client called, we ____ the error ourselves — that matters.'

2. 'This isn't about one person; it's about a ____ that only asked for one signature.'

3. 'From ____, no client file with figures leaves this team with fewer than two named approvers.'

Post-mortem phrases

Match each phrase to its function.

Term	Meaning
Let me play back what I've heard...	summarise before deciding
With the benefit of hindsight...	signal that you know it's easy to say now
This isn't about one person...	reframe from blame to system
The one thing we'll change is...	commit to a single, concrete action
Who owns this by when?	assign accountability with a date

Speaking · Run the review

10 min

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Use the target grammar and the post-mortem phrases to run these three tasks with a partner.

Writing · Lessons-learned note (120-150 words)

12 min (or homework)

Write a short 'lessons learned' note that would be sent to your team the morning after the incident. Include: (a) a one-paragraph timeline using past simple + past perfect, (b) one systemic 'why' (not a person), (c) ONE corrective action with a named owner and a date, (d) one honest sentence about what you would say to the client. Do NOT use the phrases 'mistakes were made', 'lessons learned' (in the body — the title is fine), or 'we'll do better'.

Workbook · A2·8B

What happened yesterday — Workbook

1. Vocabulary in context

Complete each sentence with ONE word or phrase from the box. Two items are extra.

1. This wasn't one person's bad day — it's a ___ issue with how we hand over between shifts.
2. The tired analyst was a ___, but the real cause is that only one person can approve the file.
3. Only Ricardo knows the deploy password. That's a textbook ____.
4. With the benefit of ___, we should have double-checked the totals before sending.
5. Yesterday's incident was a ___ — the client didn't notice, but it easily could have gone public.
6. ___ Miguel, he was already juggling three deliverables when he approved the file.
7. ___, I overreacted — I've since apologised to Ana in the team channel.
8. The one ___ we agreed: a second named approver on any client file with figures.

2. Past simple vs. past perfect

Write the correct form(s) of the verb(s) in brackets.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

-
1. By the time IT ___ (call) back, Sofia ___ (already / run) the meeting from her phone.
-
2. She ___ (send) the deck the night before, so when the laptop ___ (die) the client still ___ (have) the material.
-
3. Until yesterday, we ___ (never / lose) a file this way — the incident ___ (expose) a real gap.
-
4. The manager ___ (approve) the numbers at 18:40, but he ___ (not / open) the appendix.
-
5. By 17:32 the internet ___ (be) back, and Sofia ___ (already / rewrite) her to-do list on paper.
-
6. By the time the client ___ (phone) at 16:20, Ana ___ (already / flag) the error in the team channel.
-
7. In fairness to Miguel, he ___ (not / see) the appendix — nobody ___ (ever / tell) him it existed.
-

3. Post-mortem hygiene

Choose the option that belongs in a blame-free, effective after-action review.

1. Best chair opening for a 15-minute post-mortem:
- ☐ A. OK, so who's to blame here?
 - ☐ B. Let me play back what I've heard, and then we agree ONE change. Just one.
 - ☐ C. This is not a witch hunt but...
2. Which framing is systemic (not personal)?
- ☐ A. Ana approved it too quickly.
 - ☐ B. The process didn't require a second signature on figures.
 - ☐ C. Miguel should have checked the appendix.
3. The strongest corrective action is:
- ☐ A. We'll all be more careful.
 - ☐ B. Going forward we'll aim to do better.
 - ☐ C. From next Monday, no client file with figures leaves without two named approvers — Ana drafts the checklist by Friday.
4. 'This will happen again in a different form' is a healthy thing to say because...
- ☐ A. It lowers expectations.
 - ☐ B. It's honest — the real question is not 'never again' but 'how fast will we notice next time?'.
 - ☐ C. It shifts the blame to the future.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

5. Which sentence should NOT appear in the post-mortem note?

- ☐ A. The one thing we'll change is...
- ☐ B. Owner: Ana. Deadline: Monday 09:00.
- ☐ C. Mistakes were made and we all learned a lot.

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE grammar or register mistake typical of A2+/B1 professionals. Rewrite it correctly.

1. By the time the client called we already spot the error.

2. She had prepared the deck when the laptop died at 08:55.

3. Until yesterday we never had lost a file this way.

4. Ana approved it too quickly, that's the root cause.

5. Going forward we'll aim to do better on these things.

6. In fairness of Miguel, he was very busy.

5. Reading & discursive response

Read the short case, then write your answer in 100–130 words.

1. Case: Your team has a strong culture of post-mortems for big incidents. However, near-misses — problems the client never noticed — are almost never reviewed, because 'nothing actually happened'. A colleague argues: 'We already have too many meetings; we can't post-mortem every close call.' In 100–130 words, argue for or against reviewing near-misses, using this unit's language (past perfect / past simple, systemic framing, single point of failure, contributing factor, etc.). Give ONE concrete near-miss from your own work.

6. Listening — chair's 90-second wrap-up

The head of department wraps up a 15-minute post-mortem meeting. Listen (or read the transcript) and answer.

1. What structure does the chair use — and why does it work?

2. What had ALREADY been done before the client called at 16:20?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

3. How does the chair protect Ana specifically? Give TWO examples.

4. Why is the chair's line 'this will happen again in a different form' more useful than 'this won't happen again'?

7. Writing — Lessons-learned note (120-150 words)

Write a 'lessons learned' note to your team the morning after a real or realistic incident. Include: (1) a one-paragraph timeline using past simple + past perfect (show what had ALREADY been done before the failure), (2) one systemic 'why' (a process, not a person), (3) ONE corrective action with a named owner and a date, (4) one honest sentence to the team about what you'll say to the affected stakeholder. Do NOT use: 'mistakes were made', 'we'll do better', 'we all learned a lot'.

8. Case study preview

Look at this unit's Case Study. Answer briefly.

1. Reframe the case for Unit 8 as a systemic issue rather than a personal one. In one sentence: what is the real single point of failure?

2. If you were chairing the 15-minute post-mortem for this case, what would be your ONE corrective action, with a named owner and a date?

UNIT A2·9A

My first job

My work story — the CV behind the CV · A2+ · 55-65 min · Business English

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



"Your first job doesn't define you — but the story you tell about it does."

— Rule of the working memory

Objectives

- Talk about your early career with a clear timeline: past simple + accurate time markers (ago, in, when, while).
- Turn a job memory into a professional narrative — not just a list of dates.
- Handle past-tense questions in an interview: 'How long did you stay?', 'Why did you leave?', 'What did you learn?'
- Extract a transferable lesson from an early job and connect it to what you do today.

Warm-up · Career-story reflex

Solo · about you · 4 min

Think through these three questions in your head — no writing needed. We'll use your answers throughout the lesson.

- In an interview tomorrow, someone asks: 'Tell me about your very first job.' What are the FIRST five words you'd say?
- Which one thing from your earliest working years still shows up in how you do your job today?
- 'Ten years ago I was...' — finish the sentence with something specific (a place, a role, a fear, a habit).

Lead-in · The first-job quiz

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Six quick questions about how people's first jobs actually work in Europe. Guess, then reveal — most people get 3 out of 6.

Follow-up: Notice the pattern: the strongest answers turn a small early job into a transferable lesson. That's the move we're rehearsing today.

Reading · The hotel receptionist who learned to say no

10 min

My very first job was at the reception of a small hotel in Faro, the summer I turned eighteen. I earned five hundred euros a month, which felt like a fortune at the time, and I worked six nights a week from six in the evening until two in the morning. On paper the job was answering the phone, handing out room keys and taking payments. In reality it was mostly about staying calm.

During the first two weeks I said 'yes' to absolutely everything. When a guest asked me for a taxi at three in the morning, I called four different companies until I found one. When another guest complained that the wifi was slow, I stayed up trying to reset the router even though nobody had trained me on it. When my manager asked me to cover an extra shift on my one day off, I said yes and cried in the staff bathroom.

The turning point came in week three. A regular guest — a businessman who came every Tuesday — asked me to iron his shirt at midnight. I remember standing there with the shirt in my hand, realising two things at the same time. First, that ironing his shirt was not, and had never been, part of my job. Second, that saying 'yes' to everything was not making me a better employee; it was making me an exhausted one who couldn't do the actual job well.

I looked him in the eye and said, very politely: 'I'm afraid ironing isn't a service we offer at reception, but I can arrange for the laundry service in the morning at seven.' He blinked, said 'fair enough', and went to bed. Nothing bad happened. My manager didn't shout at me. The guest still came every Tuesday. Nobody complained.

I stayed at that hotel for exactly three months. I left with two things: a small amount of savings, and a professional skill that no university course teaches. I learned that 'no, but here's what I can do' is one of the most useful sentences in any career. Fifteen years later, in every job I've had since, that summer shift still pays my salary.

Comprehension check

1. During the first two weeks, the narrator's approach to work was best described as...

- ☐ A. Confident and organised
- ☐ B. Saying yes to everything to prove she was useful
- ☐ C. Distant and uninterested

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. The 'turning point' was primarily about learning to...

- ☐ A. Iron shirts more efficiently
- ☐ B. Recognise that saying yes to everything was making her worse at her actual job
- ☐ C. Complain to her manager

3. The main argument of the last paragraph is that...

- ☐ A. The pay was more valuable than the lesson
- ☐ B. A specific communication skill learned in a first job still matters years later
- ☐ C. First jobs are always in hotels

4. The businessman's reaction to being told 'no' was...

- ☐ A. Angry — he complained to the manager
- ☐ B. Calm — he simply accepted it and went to bed
- ☐ C. Confused — he didn't understand

True, False or Not Given?

Choose based on the text only.

1. The narrator was punished by her manager for refusing the shirt.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

2. The narrator still uses a skill from that summer in her current job.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

3. The businessman stopped visiting the hotel after this incident.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

About the text — think and write

Answer briefly. The final item is a discursive task — write it out in full paragraph form.

1. The narrator says: 'saying yes to everything was not making me a better employee; it was making me an exhausted one who couldn't do the actual job well.' Why is this counter-intuitive for a new employee?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. The polite refusal formula in the text is: 'no, but here's what I can do.' Rewrite it for YOUR job — a specific request you'd politely decline and the alternative you'd offer instead.

3. ****Discursive task (100–130 words).**** Think of one early job you had — paid or unpaid, part-time or full-time. In your own words, describe (a) what you thought the job was on your first day, (b) what it actually turned out to be, and (c) one skill or habit from that job that still shows up in the way you work today. Use past simple + at least two time markers ('ago', 'when I was...', 'at that time', 'in [year]').

Vocabulary · Career-story language

10 min

Roles

Term	Meaning
entry-level role	the first professional job in a career — expects to learn, not to lead
steep learning curve	a lot to learn in a short time; often used positively about a first job
stepping stone	a job you take on the way to something bigger — its main value is what comes next
under my belt	already achieved / already experienced — 'with two years under my belt I moved on'
hands-on experience	practical work, not just theory — the thing recruiters care about most
career pivot	a deliberate change of direction between industries or roles

Smalltalk

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Term	Meaning
straight out of university	immediately after graduating, with no gap year
back in the day	in that earlier period — slightly nostalgic
looking back on it now	with the perspective of today
at the time I didn't realise...	used to introduce a lesson learned later
what really stuck with me was...	the thing I still remember most
on paper vs in reality	the official job description vs what the job actually was

Practice

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

1. It was an ____ — I wasn't managing anyone, I was learning how to be managed.
2. For the first three months it was a ____ — I'd never used the software before in my life.
3. That job was just a _____. I stayed nine months, then moved to what I really wanted.
4. _____, that role was the best training I ever had — I just didn't see it at the time.
5. _____ the job was 'assistant editor'; _____ I was making the tea and rewriting other people's paragraphs.
6. I started _____ university and I've been in the same industry ever since.

Collocations · verb + noun (career story)

Match each verb with the correct noun / phrase.

Term	Meaning
land	your first job
build	a professional network
climb	the career ladder
outgrow	a role
hand in	your notice / your resignation
make	a career pivot

Odd one out — which register is different?

One option is far too casual (or wrong) for a professional interview answer.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. 'Tell me about your first job.' — Which answer is professional?

- ☐ A. 'Honestly, it was a bit of a disaster.'
- ☐ B. 'It was an entry-level role that gave me my first real hands-on experience with clients.'
- ☐ C. 'I only did it for the money.'
- ☐ D. 'I don't really remember much about it.'

2. 'Why did you leave?' — Which is the strongest answer?

- ☐ A. 'My boss was a nightmare.'
- ☐ B. 'I'd outgrown the role and was ready for something with more responsibility.'
- ☐ C. 'I was bored.'

Grammar · past simple + time markers (interview-ready)

14 min

1. Past simple — the workhorse tense of a career story

Use for a completed action at a defined moment in the past.

- I worked at the hotel for three months.
- She left the company in 2019.
- Questions: did + subject + base verb — 'Where did you work?', 'How long did you stay?', 'Why did you leave?'
- Yes/No: 'Did you enjoy it?' — 'Yes, I did. / No, I didn't, but I learned a lot.'

2. Time markers — the coordinates of your story

ago → 'I started three years ago.' (never with 'in')

in + year / month → 'in 2019', 'in September'

when + past clause → 'when I was 18', 'when I finished university'

at + clock time → 'at 6pm', 'at midnight'

on + day / date → 'on Monday', 'on my second day'

straight after / right after → 'straight after school', 'right after graduating'

3. Past simple vs used to — routine in the past

Both describe past events, but 'used to' emphasises a routine that no longer happens.

- past simple: 'I worked six nights a week' (a fact, one period).
- used to: 'I used to work six nights a week' (a habit that ended). □ 'I used to walk to work.' □ 'I used to walk to work yesterday.' (used to ≠ single event)

4. Common irregular past forms recruiters hear a lot

get → got · leave → left · take → took · make → made · give → gave · begin → began · win → won · buy → bought · spend → spent · think → thought · become → became · deal → dealt · learn → learnt/learned · teach → taught · quit → quit.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — Complete with the correct past form + time marker

Use the correct verb form. Choose the correct time marker in brackets.

1. I ____ (land) my first job three years ____ (ago / in / at).
 2. She ____ (hand in) her notice ____ (in / on / at) a Friday afternoon.
 3. How long ____ you ____ (work) there before you ____ (become) team leader?
 4. ____ (in / on / at) 2018 I ____ (make) a career pivot from teaching to marketing.
 5. He ____ (leave) the company ____ (straight after / ago / when) his second promotion.
-

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise B — Turn a statement into an interview question

Write the past-simple question that would produce each answer.

1. 'I worked there for two years.' → ____

2. 'I left because I wanted more responsibility.' → ____

3. 'I learned to run a small team.' → ____

4. 'My starting salary was €22,000.' → ____

5. 'It was a stepping stone into marketing.' → ____

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise C — 'past simple' vs 'used to' — choose the more precise option

Only ONE option is fully correct for A2+/B1 register.

1. 'When I was 19, I ___ six nights a week at a hotel.' (a one-summer job — completed once)
 2. 'Before smartphones, I ___ every meeting on paper.' (a habit that no longer happens)
 3. 'Yesterday I ___ my resignation letter at 4pm.' (single event, one moment)
-

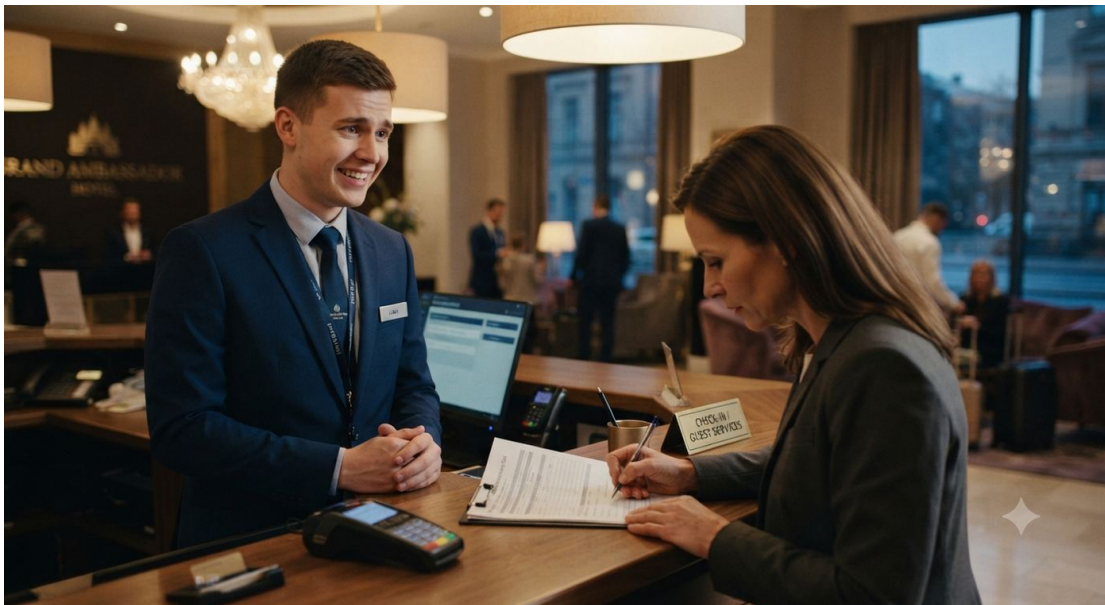
Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise D — Discursive: a 90-word career-story paragraph

Write a short paragraph (about 90 words) about your very first job. Use **AT LEAST** four past-simple verbs and **THREE** different time markers. Include one 'on paper vs in reality' sentence.

1. Your paragraph starts with: 'My very first job was...'

Describe the picture



Look at the picture. In 5–6 sentences, tell the story of what is happening **AND** reconstruct what was probably happening ten minutes earlier. Use past simple for the events on screen and 'when / while / ago' for the timeline.

Target language: Ten minutes ago, the receptionist was still... · Then the phone rang and he ... · When the guest arrived, she was already ... · She asked him for ... and he ... · By 21:15, the check-in ...

Listening · A career coach interviews a former teacher who pivoted into product

10 min

A career coach (Voice A, female) interviews a former secondary-school teacher (Voice B, male) who has pivoted into product management. Two voices.

Before you listen

- In a good career-story interview, in what order do you expect: what the job was, why you took it, what you learned, why you left, what came next?
- Which of those does an inexperienced storyteller usually skip — and why?

Gist

1. Who are the two voices and what is the format?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. What is Voice B's overall attitude towards his first career?

Detail

1. How long did Voice B teach before pivoting?

2. What was the specific moment he decided to make the career pivot?

3. What did his teaching experience give him that pure product-management training wouldn't?

Listen and complete

Complete with the exact words the speaker uses.

1. 'I started out ____ in a state school in Lisbon...'

2. 'The turning point was a Sunday afternoon in November, when I was ____ ...'

3. 'What that job really taught me was how to ____ simply.'

Useful career-story phrases

Match each phrase to its function.

Term	Meaning
I started out in...	open a career story with your first field
What that job really taught me was...	state the transferable lesson clearly
Looking back on it now...	add the adult perspective on an old decision
The turning point was...	signal the specific moment of change
That's what led me to...	connect the past directly to the present role

Speaking · Own your career story

10 min

Use the language of this unit — past simple + time markers, career-story vocabulary, structured storytelling — to run these three tasks with a partner.

Writing · Career-summary paragraph for LinkedIn 'About' section (120-150 words)

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Write the opening paragraph of your LinkedIn 'About' section (120–150 words) that starts with your very first job and lands, by the end, on what you do today. Include: (a) where you started, in what year, (b) one specific detail from that first role that still shapes you, (c) one clear career pivot or step-up, (d) a one-sentence framing of your current work. Use AT LEAST four past-simple verbs and three different time markers. Avoid: 'passionate', 'motivated', 'team player'.

Workbook · A2·9A

My first job — Workbook

1. Vocabulary in context

Complete each sentence with ONE word or phrase from the box. Two items are extra.

1. It was an ____ — I wasn't managing anyone, I was learning how to be managed.
2. The first three months were a ____ — I'd never touched the software before in my life.
3. That job was really just a ____ into consulting; I stayed nine months and then moved on.
4. With two years of client work ____, I felt ready to lead my own account.
5. Recruiters didn't care about my grades — they wanted ____.
6. In 2019 I made a ____ from journalism into product management.
7. I joined straight ____ and I've been in the same industry ever since.
8. I ____ my notice on a Friday afternoon and I've never regretted it.

2. Past simple + time markers

Write the correct verb form and, where marked, the correct time marker.

1. I ____ (land) my first job three years ____ (ago / in / at).
2. She ____ (hand in) her notice ____ (in / on / at) a Friday afternoon.
3. How long ____ you ____ (work) there before you ____ (become) team leader?
4. ____ (In / On / At) 2018 he ____ (make) a career pivot from teaching into product.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

5. 'I ___ (walk) to work every day for three years' — a habit that ended, so also possible: 'I used to ___'.

6. ___ you ___ (enjoy) your very first job? — 'Yes, I ___, but I ___ (outgrow) it quickly.'

7. She ___ (leave) the company ___ (straight after / ago / when) her second promotion.

3. Interview register

Choose the option that sounds professional in a real job interview.

1. 'Tell me about your first job.'

- ☐ A. 'Honestly, it was a bit of a disaster.'
- ☐ B. 'It was an entry-level role that gave me my first real hands-on experience with clients — it taught me how to explain a product in one sentence.'
- ☐ C. 'I only did it for the money, to be honest.'

2. 'Why did you leave?'

- ☐ A. 'My boss was a nightmare.'
- ☐ B. 'I'd outgrown the role and I wanted more responsibility than that job could offer.'
- ☐ C. 'I got bored, basically.'

3. 'What did you learn there?'

- ☐ A. 'A lot of things, you know.'
- ☐ B. 'One specific thing — how to say no politely to a request that isn't part of my job, and always offer an alternative.'
- ☐ C. 'I don't really remember.'

4. Which sentence is the strongest bullet on a CV?

- ☐ A. 'Was responsible for various tasks.'
- ☐ B. 'Handled reception for a 40-room hotel, six nights a week, for three months.'
- ☐ C. 'Did a bit of everything really.'

5. 'I used to work six nights a week' vs 'I worked six nights a week' — which is more accurate for ONE specific summer?

- ☐ A. 'used to work' — it emphasises the habit
- ☐ B. 'worked' — it's a completed period with a defined start and end
- ☐ C. Both are identical in meaning.

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE grammar or register mistake typical of A2+/B1 professionals. Rewrite it correctly.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

-
1. Ago three years I landed my first job in Lisbon.
 2. I used to hand in my resignation letter yesterday at 4pm.
 3. In two years ago I made a career pivot from teaching to product.
 4. I didn't enjoyed my first job but I learned a lot.
 5. 'My boss was a nightmare' — that's why I leave.
 6. I was work in a hotel when I had 18 years.
-

5. Reading & discursive response

Read the short case, then answer.

1. Case: A candidate has three months of work on her CV in a small hotel reception at age 18. She's now interviewing for an office role and is embarrassed to mention it — she thinks it's 'not a real job'. In 100–130 words, argue for OR against her instinct, using this unit's language (past simple + time markers, career-story vocabulary, on-paper-vs-in-reality). Give her one specific way to reframe the summer job in the interview.

6. Listening — 60-second career-story voicemail

A former colleague leaves a 60-second voicemail preparing you for an interview panel where you'll be the candidate. Listen (or read the transcript) and answer.

1. What is the caller's overall goal in leaving this voicemail?

2. Which SPECIFIC detail does the caller tell the candidate to keep in the story?

3. What does the caller explicitly tell the candidate NOT to say?

4. Name the ONE closing tip the caller gives.

7. Writing — LinkedIn 'About' opening paragraph (120–150 words)

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Write the opening paragraph of your LinkedIn 'About' section (120–150 words) that starts with your very first job and lands, by the end, on what you do today. Include: (1) where you started, in what year, (2) one specific detail from that first role that still shapes you, (3) one clear career pivot or step-up, (4) a one-sentence framing of your current work. Use AT LEAST four past-simple verbs and three different time markers. Do NOT use: 'passionate', 'motivated', 'team player', 'results-driven'.

8. Case study preview

Look at this unit's Case Study. Answer briefly.

1. What is the main challenge in the case for Unit 9, and which stakeholder is under the most pressure?

2. If you were coaching that stakeholder, what is the ONE reframing sentence you would give them for their next conversation — the equivalent of 'no, but here's what I can do'?

UNIT A2-9B

A big project

My work story — the project you can point at · A2+ · 55–65 min · Business English



“A project isn't done when it ships. It's done when someone else can point at what changed.”

— Rule of the finished thing

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Objectives

- Describe a completed project with a professional structure: scope → team → timeline → outcome → lesson.
- Use past simple accurately with time markers (ago, in, on, at, from...to, by) to give a project a clean shape.
- Distinguish between what the project delivered (output) and what it changed (outcome / impact).
- Handle the follow-up question every interviewer asks: 'And what would you do differently now?'

Warm-up · The project reflex

Solo · about you · 4 min

Think through these three questions in your head. No writing needed.

- Name the last work project you finished. Don't describe it yet — just name it in five words or fewer.
 - How would you know, from the outside, that the project actually worked? What would be different?
 - 'The hardest thing about that project was...' — finish the sentence. Be honest.
-

Lead-in · The retrospective board

Brainstorm · post-project reflection · 8 min

Imagine your last completed project is on a whiteboard, split into four columns: Went well · Went wrong · Learned · Try next time. For each of the prompts below, jot down ONE specific answer for a project you actually worked on. Aim for concrete facts — a number, a name, a moment — not adjectives like 'good' or 'difficult'.

Follow-up: Notice the pattern: a professional project story lives in concrete details — one decision, one number, one stakeholder — not in adjectives.

Reading · The Barcelona office that almost didn't open

10 min

In February last year, my company decided to open its first office abroad — a small satellite in Barcelona. On paper, the project was simple: rent 180 square metres of workspace, hire four local staff, connect the systems, run a launch event, and be operational by the first Monday of September. Seven months, a team of eight people, and a budget of forty thousand euros. On a spreadsheet, it looked almost boring.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

The first four months went smoothly. We signed the lease in March, ran the recruitment in April, and by the end of May we had our four local colleagues on payroll and our IT systems talking to Lisbon. We celebrated our first milestone with a small dinner. We were, on paper, ahead of schedule.

In June, the problem we hadn't planned for arrived. Two of our new hires resigned within eight days of each other — one because his partner got a job in Madrid, one because he found a better offer at a Barcelona start-up. Suddenly we were four weeks from launch, missing half our local team, and watching the recruitment market close for the summer holidays. Our project plan didn't have a page for that.

What saved us was not a heroic rescue. It was the decision, quite early in July, to stop pretending the launch date was fixed. We told our CEO, we told our future clients, and we told the two remaining local staff. We moved the launch by five weeks — from the first Monday of September to the second Monday of October. We spent an extra six thousand euros on recruitment and a small welcome bonus for the two who stayed. We didn't spin it. We said, in plain language: we underestimated the local market and we adjusted.

The office opened on 12 October with a full team of four. Two years later, it's still open, still profitable, and still staffed by three of the four people we hired. The project delivered on paper: a working office, in budget give or take fifteen percent, only five weeks late. What it delivered in reality was more useful. It taught us that a professional project isn't the one that hits the original date — it's the one that adjusts the date honestly, in public, before the wheels come off.

Comprehension check

1. The main challenge of the project was...

- ☐ A. The lease was too expensive
- ☐ B. Two new hires resigned four weeks before launch and the summer recruitment market was closing
- ☐ C. The IT systems didn't connect to Lisbon

2. The 'rescue' of the project was best described as...

- ☐ A. A heroic, last-minute effort
- ☐ B. The early decision to publicly move the launch date and adjust the plan
- ☐ C. Hiring the two staff back at a higher salary

3. The narrator's main argument in the last paragraph is that...

- ☐ A. Projects that finish on the original date are always the best
- ☐ B. A good project is one that adjusts its plan honestly and in public when reality changes
- ☐ C. Barcelona is a difficult city to hire in

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

4. The 'output' of the project (what was delivered) is...

- ☐ A. A working Barcelona office, roughly on budget, five weeks late
- ☐ B. A better recruitment strategy
- ☐ C. A closer relationship with the CEO

True, False or Not Given?

Choose based on the text only.

1. The project came in under budget.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

2. Three of the four originally hired staff are still with the company two years later.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

3. The CEO tried to prevent the launch from being delayed.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

About the text — think and write

Answer briefly. The final item is a discursive task — write it out in full paragraph form.

1. The text says: 'a professional project isn't the one that hits the original date — it's the one that adjusts the date honestly, in public, before the wheels come off.' What's the difference between adjusting a date and 'spinning' it?

2. In your own workplace, which is harder — moving a deadline publicly, or quietly missing it? Why?

3. ****Discursive task (100–130 words).**** Think of one project you were involved in that did NOT hit its original deadline. In your own words, describe (a) the original plan and the moment reality diverged from it, (b) what your team actually did about the divergence, and (c) whether, looking back, you would call that project a success or a failure — and why. Use past simple + at least three time markers ('in [month]', 'by [date]', 'X weeks later', 'from...to').

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Vocabulary · Project language that survives an interview

10 min

Roles

Term	Meaning
scope	what is (and isn't) included in the project — the boundary
milestone	a named checkpoint with a date attached; not just 'progress' in general
deliverable	the concrete thing you hand over — a document, a launch, a feature
stakeholder	anyone whose life or work is affected by the project's outcome
on-time / on-budget / in-scope	the three classic dimensions of project success — usually you get two out of three
outcome vs output	output = what you built; outcome = what changed because of it

Smalltalk

Term	Meaning
kick off	start a project formally with a first meeting
wrap up	close a project — final deliverables, handover, retrospective
hit a milestone	reach a named checkpoint on the plan
slip a deadline	miss a date — polite phrasing for late
run over budget	spend more than planned
in the end / at the end of the day	used to introduce the honest final assessment

Practice

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

1. The ___ was clear from day one: launch a satellite office in Barcelona, no additional markets.
2. Our first ___ was signing the lease in March — that's when the project became real.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

3. The final ___ was a working office with four staff on payroll and IT integrated with Lisbon.

4. The two most important ___ were the CEO and the future local team — everybody else could wait.

5. We were ___ but not ___, and definitely not ___ — five weeks late.

6. The ___ was a physical office. The ___ was that Iberia went from one country to two on our client map.

Collocations · verb + noun (project life)

Match each verb with the correct noun / phrase.

Term	Meaning
kick off	the project
scope	the work / a piece of work
hit	a milestone
slip	a deadline
run	over budget
wrap up	the retrospective / the project

Odd one out — which register is different?

One option is far too casual (or vague) for a project stakeholder update.

1. Which sentence belongs in a written status update to a senior stakeholder?

- ☐ A. 'Yeah so basically the launch is going to slide a bit.'
- ☐ B. 'We're formally moving the launch from 4 September to 12 October; the reason and the new plan are below.'
- ☐ C. 'Fingers crossed we'll be roughly on track by autumn.'

2. Which is the strongest way to describe project success in an interview?

- ☐ A. 'It went really well, everyone was happy.'
- ☐ B. 'We delivered the office in-scope and only five weeks late; two years on, it's still profitable and staffed by three of the four original hires.'
- ☐ C. 'It was fine.'

Grammar · past simple + time markers for project timelines

14 min

1. Past simple — the tense that gives a project its shape

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Use for a completed action at a defined moment in the past.

- We kicked off the project in February.
- The office opened on 12 October.
- Questions: 'How long did the project take?', 'When did you kick off?', 'Did you hit every milestone?'

2. Time markers — the coordinates of a project timeline

in + month / year → 'in February', 'in 2023'

on + date / day → 'on 12 October', 'on Monday'

at + clock time → 'at 09:00'

ago (after the amount) → 'two years ago'

from ... to ... → 'from February to September'

by + deadline → 'by the end of June'

within + duration → 'within three weeks' (limit)

after + duration → 'after seven months' (elapsed)

3. Past simple vs past continuous — event vs background

Past simple = the events on the timeline. Past continuous = what was happening in the background around a specific moment.

- When two of our new hires resigned, we were already running the launch checklist. (event + background)
- While we were finalising the lease, HR was still interviewing candidates. (two backgrounds in parallel)

4. 'Ago' vs 'in' vs 'for' — the three most-mistaken time markers in project stories

ago = 'X time before now' (counted back from today). □ 'two years ago' □ 'ago two years'

in + year/month = a fixed point on the calendar. □ 'in 2023' □ 'in two years ago'

for = duration. □ 'The project lasted for seven months.' □ 'The project lasted during seven months.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — Complete with the correct time marker

Choose from: *in · on · at · ago · from...to · by · within · after · for.*

1. We kicked off the project ___ February and closed it ___ September ___ the same year.

2. The launch event was ___ 12 October ___ 19:00 sharp.

3. Two of our new hires resigned ___ eight days of each other.

4. We opened the office ___ five weeks late — but ___ seven months from the original kick-off.

5. The lease was signed two years ___ tomorrow — the anniversary is this week.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise B — Rewrite so the two tenses tell the timeline properly

Combine each pair into ONE sentence using past simple + past continuous (or two past continuous). Keep the timeline clear.

1. The two hires resigned. + We were running the launch checklist.

2. We were finalising the lease. + HR was interviewing candidates.

3. The CEO called. + I was writing the revised project plan.

4. We announced the new launch date. + The client was on holiday.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise C — Turn a project bullet into an interview answer

Rewrite each dry bullet as a 1–2 sentence spoken answer using past simple + one clear time marker + one specific number.

1. Bullet: 'Opened Barcelona office, 5 weeks late, on-scope, +15% over budget.' → Spoken:

2. Bullet: 'Led 8-person cross-border team, Feb-Sep, €40k budget.' → Spoken:

3. Bullet: 'Retrospective: introduced 2-hour check-in rule.' → Spoken:

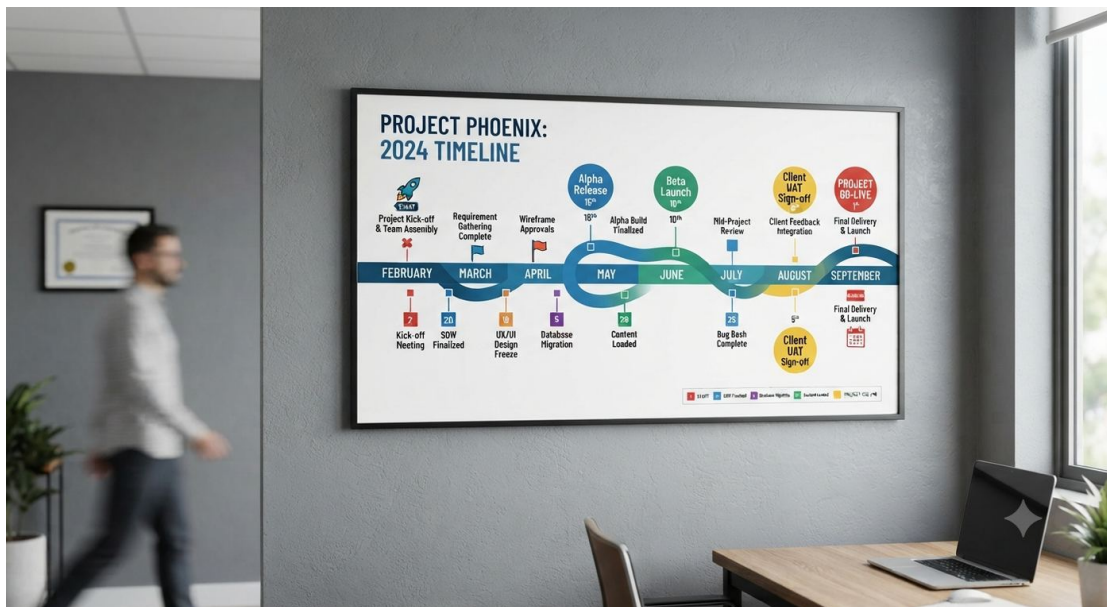
Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise D — Discursive: a 100-word project retrospective paragraph

Write a short retrospective paragraph (about 100 words) about one project you worked on. Use AT LEAST four past-simple verbs, THREE different time markers, and the phrases 'in-scope', 'on-budget' and 'outcome'.

1. Your paragraph starts with: 'We kicked off the project in...'

Describe the picture



Look at the timeline. In 6–8 sentences, tell the story of the project. Use past simple for events on the timeline, past continuous for what was happening 'around' those events, and AT LEAST three of these time markers: from...to, on, in, by, ago, after, within.

Target language: The project kicked off in... · By [month] we had already... · While the design team was ..., engineering was ... · On [date] we hit ... · The project ran from ... to ... · After [duration] we finally ...

Listening · A project manager gives a 90-second wrap-up to the leadership team

10 min

A project manager (Voice A, female) gives the wrap-up briefing to the leadership team the week after go-live. One voice — this is a solo briefing, not a Q&A.

Before you listen

- In a good project wrap-up, in what order do you expect: scope, timeline, budget, biggest surprise, outcome, one thing to do differently next time?
- Which of those does an inexperienced project manager usually skip — and why?

Gist

1. Who is the audience of this briefing?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. What is the speaker's overall stance?

Detail

1. How long did the project run and how many people were in the team?

2. By what percentage did the project run over budget, and what was the main reason?

3. What is the one specific process change she's proposing coming out of the retrospective?

Listen and complete

Complete with the exact words the speaker uses.

1. 'The project ran ____ this year, seven months in total.'

2. 'On-budget we came in at ____ over — mostly because we had to rerun recruitment in June.'

3. 'The proposed process change from this retrospective is a ____ rule for every cross-border project going forward.'

Useful wrap-up phrases

Match each phrase to its function.

Term	Meaning
Headline first, detail after...	signal the structure of the briefing
In-scope, we delivered...	state what actually shipped
On-budget we came in at...	give the honest financial number
The one thing we didn't see coming was...	name the biggest surprise without spinning it
The proposed process change from this retrospective is...	convert the lesson into a concrete institutional rule

Speaking · Own the project

10 min

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Use the language of this unit — past simple + time markers, project vocabulary, structured wrap-up — to run these three tasks with a partner.

Writing · Post-project stakeholder note (120-150 words)

12 min (or homework)

Write a 120-150 word wrap-up note to a senior internal stakeholder about a real (or realistic) project you've completed. Include: (a) a one-sentence headline naming date, scope and budget honestly, (b) the timeline with at least two specific time markers, (c) the one thing you didn't see coming, (d) the outcome (not just the output), (e) one concrete process change you're proposing. Use AT LEAST four past-simple verbs and THREE different time markers. Avoid: 'everything went well', 'the team did an amazing job', 'lessons were learned'.

Workbook · A2·9B

A big project — Workbook

1. Vocabulary in context

Complete each sentence with ONE word or phrase from the box. Two items are extra.

1. The ___ was clear from day one: launch a satellite office in Barcelona, no additional markets.
2. Our first ___ was signing the lease in March — that's when the project became real on the ground.
3. The final ___ was a working office with four staff on payroll and IT integrated with Lisbon.
4. The two most important ___ were the CEO and the future local team — everybody else could wait a week.
5. We were fully ___ but not ___, and definitely not ___ — we slipped by five weeks.
6. The ___ was a physical office. The ___ was that Iberia went from one country to two on our client map.
7. We ___ the project formally in early February with an in-person kick-off meeting.
8. The launch date ___ from 4 September to 12 October — we announced the new date publicly, on the same day we decided.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. Past simple + time markers

Write the correct verb form and, where marked, the correct time marker.

1. The project ran ___ February ___ September — seven months in total.
 2. We ___ (open) the office ___ 12 October ___ 19:00 sharp.
 3. Two of our new hires ___ (resign) ___ eight days of each other.
 4. The lease ___ (be) signed two years ___ tomorrow — the anniversary is this week.
 5. ___ the end of May we ___ (already / integrate) IT with Lisbon.
 6. How long ___ the project ___ (take) in total? — ___ (about / seven months).
 7. 'The project lasted ___ seven months' — NOT 'during seven months'.
-

3. Stakeholder-update register

Choose the option that belongs in a written project update to a senior stakeholder.

1. First line of an announcement that the launch date has moved:
 - ☐ A. 'Yeah so basically the launch is going to slide a bit.'
 - ☐ B. 'We are formally moving the launch from 4 September to 12 October; the reason and the new plan are below.'
 - ☐ C. 'Fingers crossed we can pull it back by autumn.'
2. Which sentence best describes project success in an executive summary?
 - ☐ A. 'It went really well, everyone was happy.'
 - ☐ B. 'We delivered fully in-scope and only five weeks late; two years on, the office is still profitable and staffed by three of the four original hires.'
 - ☐ C. 'It was fine, considering.'
3. Which sentence commits you the LEAST — and is therefore the weakest in a status update?
 - ☐ A. 'By 18:00 Friday you'll have the revised plan in your inbox.'
 - ☐ B. 'We'll do our best to update you as soon as we have something concrete.'
 - ☐ C. 'The next milestone is 4 October — I'll flag any risk to it by end of week.'
4. Which framing is honest, not spin?
 - ☐ A. 'We are pushing back slightly to make sure everything is perfect for our clients.'
 - ☐ B. 'We underestimated the local recruitment market in June and are moving the launch by five weeks; the new date is 12 October.'
 - ☐ C. 'There have been some challenges around timing.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

5. 'The outcome' is different from 'the output' because:

- ☐ A. 'Outcome' sounds more formal, but they mean the same thing.
- ☐ B. 'Output' is what you built (the office). 'Outcome' is what changed because of it (client map, conversion rate).
- ☐ C. 'Outcome' is only used in financial reports.

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE grammar or register mistake typical of A2+/B1 professionals. Rewrite it correctly.

1. The project lasted during seven months.
2. Ago two years we opened the Barcelona office.
3. In 12 October we launched at 19:00 pm.
4. We didn't hit the milestone but we learn a lot.
5. The launch was slide from September to October.
6. In two years ago the office is still profitable.

5. Reading & discursive response

Read the short case, then answer.

1. Case: A project manager knows on 15 May that the July launch is unrealistic. Her instinct is to 'keep pushing' quietly for two more weeks in the hope that things recover, and only tell the CEO on 1 June if they haven't. In 100–130 words, argue for OR against that instinct, using this unit's language (past simple + time markers, project vocabulary, output vs outcome, in-scope / on-budget / on-time). Give her one concrete alternative course of action.

6. Listening — mid-project 'we're moving the date' voicemail

A project manager leaves a 60-second voicemail for the CEO. She has decided to move the launch date and wants him to hear it from her first. Listen (or read the transcript) and answer.

1. What is the caller's overall tone — and why is that a good choice?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. By WHAT DATE has the caller decided to speak, relative to the original launch?

3. What SPECIFIC three pieces of information does she give in the voicemail?

4. What is her explicit ask of the CEO?

7. Writing — Post-project wrap-up email (120-150 words)

Write a 120–150 word wrap-up email to a senior internal stakeholder about a real (or realistic) project you've completed. Include: (1) a one-sentence headline naming date, scope and budget honestly, (2) the timeline with at least two specific time markers, (3) the one thing you didn't see coming, (4) the outcome (not just the output), (5) one concrete process change you're proposing. Use AT LEAST four past-simple verbs and THREE different time markers. Do NOT use: 'everything went well', 'the team did an amazing job', 'lessons were learned'.

8. Case study preview

Look at this unit's Case Study. Answer briefly.

1. What is the main challenge in the case for Unit 9, and which stakeholder would you brief first?

2. If you were the project lead, what is the ONE process change you would carry forward from this case — the equivalent of the two-hour check-in? Name it, own it, date it.

UNIT A2·10A

Plans for next month

Plans & next steps — from wish-list to roadmap · A2+ · 55–65 min · Business English

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



“A plan on paper is 50% of the work. The other 50% is deciding what NOT to do this month.”

— Rule of the small team

Objectives

- Turn a vague 'we should try this' into a concrete 30-day plan with an owner, a date and a first step.
- Use 'going to' vs 'will' vs present continuous for future — pick the right one for plans, decisions and diary items.
- Push back politely on unrealistic plans without killing the idea ('love the direction — the piece I'd rethink is...').
- Present three-month priorities in 60 seconds without waffle.

Warm-up · Roadmap reflex

Solo · about you · 4 min

Think through these three questions in your head. We'll use your answers throughout the lesson.

- Name ONE thing you're going to do at work next month — with a date, not just 'soon'.
- Name ONE thing you keep saying you'll do 'next month' and never actually do. What's really blocking it?
- If your manager asked 'what are your top 3 priorities for the next 30 days?', what are the FIRST five words you'd say?

Lead-in · Advice clinic

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Five colleagues describe a real 'next-month' problem. For each, decide the ONE sentence of advice you'd give — then reveal a model reply.

Follow-up: Notice the pattern in the strongest replies: they name the constraint (money, time, ownership) out loud AND offer a concrete next step. That's the exact move we're rehearsing today.

Reading · The month we finally learned to say 'not this month'

10 min

Last September our small marketing team had eleven active initiatives, three of them 'top priority'. Nothing was finishing. Everyone was busy. Morale was quietly falling. In our end-of-month review, my colleague Sara said one sentence that changed how we plan: 'We don't have a priority problem — we have a not-this-month problem.'

The following Monday we ran a ninety-minute session with one rule: for each of the eleven initiatives, we had to choose one of three labels — This Month, Next Month, or Later. Nothing was allowed to sit outside those three boxes. 'Someday' was banned. 'Ongoing' was banned. If nobody was willing to put their name against a date, the item went straight to Later.

Two things happened. First, seven of the eleven initiatives ended up in Later — and the world did not end. Second, the four items in This Month suddenly had a clear owner, a clear first step, and a clear date. We stopped opening every meeting with the words 'we should also...' and started opening them with 'this month we're doing these four things, and here's where each one is.'

The hardest part was not choosing what to do. The hardest part was telling three internal stakeholders that their pet project was in the Later column. What worked, in every case, was the same sentence: 'We're going to do this properly, but not this month — here's the month we're planning to start, and here's what we'd need from you to be ready.' Nobody argued. Nobody escalated. Two of them actually said 'thank you for being honest'.

Three months later, we're still using the three-column board. It has not made us less ambitious. It has made us finish things. And it turns out that a team that finishes four things a month is trusted with much bigger decisions than a team that starts eleven and finishes none.

Comprehension check

1. The central diagnosis in the text is that the team's real problem was...

- ☐ A. Not working hard enough
- ☐ B. Refusing to say 'not this month' to anything
- ☐ C. A shortage of budget

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. The three-column board forced the team to...

- ☐ A. Add more people to each project
- ☐ B. Attach an owner and a date to anything they wanted to keep alive, or push it to Later
- ☐ C. Cancel projects permanently

3. The strongest lesson of paragraph 4 is that stakeholders accept 'not this month' when...

- ☐ A. You avoid mentioning their project at all
- ☐ B. You commit to a specific future month and name what you'd need from them
- ☐ C. You escalate the decision to a senior manager

4. The final paragraph argues that finishing four things a month is more valuable than starting eleven because...

- ☐ A. It looks better on a slide
- ☐ B. It builds the trust needed for bigger decisions later
- ☐ C. Finishing is easier than starting

True, False or Not Given?

Choose based on the text only.

1. The team was allowed to leave initiatives in an 'Ongoing' column.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

2. Every stakeholder pushed back when their project was moved to Later.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

3. The team is still using the three-column board three months later.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

About the text — think and write

Answer briefly. The final item is a discursive task — write it out in full paragraph form.

1. The text says: 'we don't have a priority problem — we have a not-this-month problem.' Why is that reframing more useful than 'let's prioritise better'?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. The polite deferral formula in the text is: 'we're going to do this properly, but not this month — here's the month, here's what we'd need from you.' Rewrite it for a real request YOU'd have to defer at work next month.

3. ****Discursive task (100–130 words).**** Sketch your OWN 'next month' plan for work. In your own words: (a) list two things you're firmly going to do next month, with a first step, (b) name one thing you're deliberately pushing to Later — and how you'll tell the person who wants it, (c) name one risk you're going to watch for and one signal that would make you replan. Use 'going to' and 'will' precisely (going to for plans; will for reactions/promises).

Vocabulary · Planning-language toolkit

10 min

Roles

Term	Meaning
roadmap	a visual plan showing WHEN things will happen — not just WHAT
milestone	a specific checkpoint on the way to the goal — usually dated
deliverable	a concrete output that can be handed over — a report, a website, a signed contract
backlog	the list of things you'd like to do but haven't started — the 'Later' column
quick win	a small, cheap, fast action that produces a visible result — good for morale and trust
scope	what IS and what is NOT included in a plan — the boundary

Smalltalk

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Term	Meaning
let's park it for now	polite defer — 'good idea, not this month'
circle back to that	come back to the topic later, on purpose
in the pipeline	already planned, moving through
on the back burner	deprioritised for now, not cancelled
further down the line	later, no exact date
it's on my radar	I'm aware, I'm tracking it, but not acting yet

Practice

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

1. We've got a clean ___ for Q4 — six items, with owners and dates on each.
2. The first ___ is the pricing decision by day 10. If we miss that, everything downstream slips.
3. The only ___ this month is the signed vendor contract — everything else is preparation.
4. Let's put the newsletter redesign in the ___ for now and pick it up in November.
5. Fixing the checkout typo isn't strategic, but it's a ___ — one hour of work, visible to every customer.
6. Before we start, we need to agree on the ___ — what's in and what's explicitly out.
7. Great idea, but let's ___ and re-open it in the November planning session.
8. The Berlin office project is still ___ — just not this quarter.

Collocations · verb + noun (planning)

Match each verb with the correct noun / phrase.

Term	Meaning
set	a milestone
sign off on	the scope
clear	the backlog
ship	a deliverable
stay within	budget
push back	a deadline

Odd one out — register check

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

One option is far too casual (or wrong) for a professional planning meeting.

1. Deferring a stakeholder's idea — which is professional?

- ☐ **A.** 'Yeah, we'll get to it, whenever.'
- ☐ **B.** 'Let's park that for now and pick it up in the November planning session.'
- ☐ **C.** 'That's not happening.'

2. Announcing next month's focus — which is strongest?

- ☐ **A.** 'We've got loads of stuff planned.'
- ☐ **B.** 'Next month we're shipping three things — pricing, the pop-up, and the new hire — with a clear owner on each.'
- ☐ **C.** 'We'll see what happens.'

Grammar · future forms — going to · will · present continuous

14 min

1. Going to — plans and intentions already decided

am / is / are + going to + base verb. Used for decisions made BEFORE the moment of speaking.

- 'We're going to open a pop-up in Porto next month.' (already decided)
- 'She's going to lead the pricing review.' (owner already agreed)
- Questions: 'Are you going to hire this quarter?' 'What are you going to do about it?'

2. Will — decisions made AT the moment of speaking, promises, predictions

'll + base verb.

- Instant decision: 'OK — I'll take that action.' (decided just now, in the room)
- Promise: 'I'll send it by Friday.'
- Prediction / opinion about the future: 'I think the market will slow down in Q4.'
- ❑ Not for pre-agreed plans: ❑ 'We will open a pop-up next month' (if it's already planned) → ❑ 'We're going to open a pop-up next month.'

3. Present continuous — for diary items (arrangements with a fixed time)

am / is / are + verb-ing. Used when the future event is fixed in the diary — a meeting scheduled, a flight booked.

- 'I'm meeting the supplier on Tuesday at 3.' (in the calendar)
- 'We're launching on the 20th.' (date fixed)
- Native-speaker feel: this often sounds MORE concrete than 'going to' for scheduled events.

4. Time markers for future work planning

next week / month / quarter · in June · on the 20th · at 3pm · by Friday (= not later than) · within two weeks · from October · this coming Tuesday · a week on Monday (= Monday of next week) · in the near future (vague) · further down the line (very vague).

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — Choose the most natural future form

Only ONE option is fully natural for A2+/B1 professional register.

1. In a planning meeting last week we agreed: 'We ___ open a pop-up in Porto next month.' (already decided together)
 2. Your boss asks 'Who wants to own the pricing review?' You raise your hand in the meeting: 'I ___ own it.'
 3. You're checking your calendar: 'I ___ (meet) the Barcelona supplier at 3pm on Tuesday.' (date fixed in the diary)
 4. A colleague asks 'do you think the market will slow down?' — 'Honestly, yes, I ___ it slows down in Q4.' (personal prediction, not a plan)
 5. Promising a deadline in an email: 'I ___ send you the draft by Friday.' (promise made in the message)
-

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise B — Rewrite in a more professional register

Rewrite each sentence so it fits a planning meeting. Add a specific date OR a specific owner.

1. 'We'll probably do something with the website soon.'

2. 'Someone should look at pricing.'

3. 'Maybe we'll hire.'

4. 'We'll get to that whenever.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise C — Diary vs plan vs promise

Choose the form that best fits the *FUNCTION* in brackets.

1. 'I ___ (fly) to Madrid on Thursday at 07:20.' [fixed flight, in the diary]

2. 'Don't worry — I ___ (send) you the slides tonight.' [promise made in the moment]

3. 'Next quarter we ___ (launch) three new SKUs — the plan is signed off.' [pre-agreed plan]

4. 'What time ___ you ___ (see) the client tomorrow?' [asking about a diary item]

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise D — Discursive: 90-word 30-day plan

Write a short paragraph (about 90 words) presenting YOUR real 30-day plan for next month. Use AT LEAST two 'going to' forms, one 'will' promise, and one present continuous with a fixed date. Include one item you're explicitly deferring.

1. Start with: 'Next month I'm going to focus on three things.'

Describe the picture



Look at the picture. In 5–6 sentences, describe what the team is doing NOW and what they are going to do next. Use present continuous for the moment, 'going to' for the plans, and one 'will' for a decision the woman with the marker is about to make.

Target language: In the picture, the team is standing... · They are sorting their initiatives into... · Four items are already in 'This month' — each one is going to... · The woman with the marker is deciding whether... · In a moment, she'll probably... · The 'Later' column is going to stay untouched until...

Listening · Two team leads run a 30-day planning check-in

10 min

Two team leads (Voice A, female — Ana, marketing lead; Voice B, male — Tomás, operations lead) run their monthly planning check-in. They have to agree what's IN for next month and what's deferred. Two voices.

Before you listen

- In a healthy monthly planning meeting, in what order do you expect: review of last month, this month's priorities, decisions being deferred, risks, decisions requiring senior sign-off?
- Which of those does an inexperienced lead usually skip — and why does it matter?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Gist

1. What is the format of the conversation and how does it end?

2. What is the tone between the two leads?

Detail

1. Which two initiatives are confirmed for October?

2. What is being deferred, to when, and why?

3. What does Tomás promise to do BEFORE end of day?

Listen and complete

Complete with the exact words the speakers use.

1. Ana: 'For October, I'm going to own the pricing review, sign-off by the ____.'

2. Tomás: 'I ____ post the ad on the third — that's a promise.'

3. Ana: 'The Porto pop-up we're ____ ____ November — the supplier contract won't be in time.'

Useful planning-check-in phrases

Match each phrase to its function.

Term	Meaning
Where are we with...	open a check-in item without judgement
Let's timebox this to two minutes	cap discussion of a single point
Can we agree that...	test alignment out loud before writing anything down
Let's park that for November	polite formal deferral, with a named target month
Before we close, three things going in the notes...	recap the decisions at the end

Speaking · Own your 30-day plan

10 min

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Use the language of this unit — going to / will / present continuous, planning vocabulary, polite deferral — to run these three tasks with a partner.

Writing · Monthly planning email to the team (120-150 words)

12 min (or homework)

Write the monthly planning email you'd actually send to your team (120-150 words).

Structure: (1) one-sentence theme for the month, (2) the three priorities with owner + first step + date, (3) what's being deferred and to when, (4) one risk you're watching for, (5) how you'll signal to them if the plan needs to change. Use AT LEAST two 'going to' forms, one 'will' promise, and one present continuous with a fixed date. Do NOT use: 'exciting', 'lots going on', 'as always', 'stay tuned'.

Workbook · A2·10A

Plans for next month — Workbook

1. Vocabulary in context

Complete each sentence with ONE word or phrase from the box. Two items are extra.

1. We've got a clean ___ for Q4 — six items, with owners and dates on each.
2. The first ___ is the pricing decision by day 10 — if we miss it, everything downstream slips.
3. The only ___ this month is the signed vendor contract — everything else is just preparation.
4. Let's put the newsletter redesign in the ___ for now and pick it up in November.
5. Fixing the checkout typo isn't strategic, but it's a ___ — one hour of work, visible to every customer.
6. Before we start, we have to agree on the ___ — what's in and what's explicitly out of the project.
7. Great idea, but let's ___ and re-open the conversation in November planning.
8. We might have to ___ by two weeks if the finance sign-off doesn't come through.

2. Future forms — going to · will · present continuous

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Write the correct future form for the **FUNCTION** in brackets.

1. 'In our planning meeting last week we agreed: we ___ (open) a pop-up in Porto next month.' [pre-agreed plan]
 2. 'Your boss asks who'll own the pricing review. You raise your hand: I ___ own it.' [decision made just now]
 3. 'Checking your calendar: I ___ (meet) the Barcelona supplier at 3pm on Tuesday.' [fixed diary item]
 4. 'Personal prediction, not a plan: honestly, I think the market ___ (slow down) in Q4.'
 5. 'Promising a deadline in an email: I ___ (send) you the draft by Friday.'
 6. 'Recap of a signed-off plan: next quarter we ___ (launch) three new SKUs.'
 7. 'What time ___ you ___ (see) the client tomorrow?' [asking about a diary item]
-

3. Planning-meeting register

Choose the option that sounds professional in a real monthly planning meeting.

1. Deferring a stakeholder's pet project — which is professional?
 - ☐ A. 'Yeah, we'll get to it, whenever.'
 - ☐ B. 'Let's park it for now and re-open the conversation in the November planning session.'
 - ☐ C. 'That's not happening.'
2. Announcing next month's focus — which is strongest?
 - ☐ A. 'We've got loads of stuff planned.'
 - ☐ B. 'Next month we're shipping three things — pricing, the pop-up, and the new hire — with a clear owner on each.'
 - ☐ C. 'We'll see what happens.'
3. Committing to a deadline in the meeting — which is strongest?
 - ☐ A. 'I'll try to get it done by Friday probably.'
 - ☐ B. 'I'll send the draft by end of day Friday.'
 - ☐ C. 'Soon.'
4. 'Someone should look at pricing.' — which rewrite is strongest?
 - ☐ A. 'Someone will get to that eventually.'
 - ☐ B. 'I'm going to lead the pricing review this quarter. First step this week: pull the last twelve months of margin data.'
 - ☐ C. 'Pricing? Yeah, on the list.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

5. Pushing back on an unrealistic ask — which is professional?

- ☐ **A.** 'That's not going to happen.'
- ☐ **B.** 'I hear the urgency. October isn't realistic because the supplier contract won't be signed in time. Would November work — I'd have a clean plan by day one?'
- ☐ **C.** 'Fine, we'll try.' (when you already know you can't)

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE grammar or register mistake typical of A2+/B1 professionals. Rewrite it correctly.

1. 'We will open a pop-up in Porto next month' — said in the recap of a plan agreed three weeks ago.

2. 'I'm going to send you the file, don't worry.' — said as a promise the moment your colleague asks for it.

3. 'What time are you going to see the client tomorrow?' [asking about a fixed diary item]

4. 'We're going to have opened the shop by December.' — talking about a planned deadline.

5. 'Yeah, someone should do that eventually.'

6. 'The Berlin project is on the back burner, but we're going to definitely maybe start it in Q4 probably.'

5. Reading & discursive response

Read the short case, then answer.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. Case: A team lead is running her first monthly planning meeting. She's inherited eleven active initiatives and a stakeholder culture where 'no' is very rare and 'let's do everything' is very common. In 100–130 words, argue for a concrete process she should use to structure the meeting AND handle the deferral conversations with the three most-affected stakeholders. Use this unit's language (going to · will · present continuous · milestone · scope · park it for now · quick win). She should walk out of the meeting with (a) a clear top-three, (b) explicit deferrals, and (c) a plan for the stakeholder messages.

6. Listening — 60-second planning voicemail

A senior colleague leaves a 60-second voicemail to help a new team lead prepare for her first monthly planning meeting. Listen (or read the transcript) and answer.

1. What is the caller's overall goal in leaving this voicemail?

2. What specific tool does the caller recommend and why?

3. What does the caller explicitly tell her NOT to do in the meeting?

4. Name the ONE closing tip the caller gives.

7. Writing — monthly planning email to the team (120–150 words)

Write the monthly planning email you'd actually send to your team (120–150 words).

Structure: (1) one-sentence theme for the month, (2) the three priorities with owner + first step + date, (3) what's being deferred and to when, (4) one risk you're watching for, (5) how you'll signal to them if the plan needs to change. Use AT LEAST two 'going to' forms, one 'will' promise, and one present continuous with a fixed date. Do NOT use: 'exciting', 'lots going on', 'as always', 'stay tuned'.

8. Case study preview

Look at this unit's Case Study. Answer briefly.

1. What is the main planning challenge in the case for Unit 10, and which stakeholder is under the most pressure?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. If you were coaching that stakeholder, what is the ONE deferral sentence you would give them to say out loud — the equivalent of 'we're going to do this properly, but not this month'?

UNIT A2·10B

What I would like to do next

Plans & next steps — from wish-list to roadmap · A2+ · 55-65 min · Business English



"'I'd like to' is a wish. 'I'm going to' is a plan. The most useful career conversations are the ones that turn the first into the second."

— Rule of the honest one-to-one

Objectives

- Talk about medium-term career wishes precisely — separating 'I'd like to' (aspiration) from 'I'm going to' (committed plan).
- Use 'would like to', 'I'd rather', 'I'm hoping to', 'I'm considering' with the correct register for a boss vs a peer vs a recruiter.
- Make a polite request or proposal without over-hedging ('would it be possible to...?', 'I'd appreciate it if...').
- Turn a vague career wish into a 12-month plan with two concrete first steps.

Warm-up · Wish-to-plan reflex

Solo · about you · 4 min

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Think through these three questions in your head. We'll use your answers throughout the lesson.

- In the next twelve months at work, what would you LIKE to do that you're NOT currently doing?
- Which of your career wishes have you kept re-saying for three years without actually starting on? What's the first concrete step you'd need to take?
- 'I'd rather' vs 'I'd like to' — which one do you actually mean when you say each of them at work?

Lead-in · Real career-conversation scenarios

Scenarios · pick the best move · 8 min

Four real career moments. For each, pick the strongest professional move — then check what makes the strongest option strong.

Follow-up: Notice the pattern: the strongest replies name the WISH out loud AND propose a concrete next step. That's the exact move we're rehearsing today.

Reading · Diego's twelve-month plan and the conversation that made it real

10 min

Diego is twenty-four. He's been an intern at a mid-sized consultancy in Lisbon for nine months — long enough to know he'd like to stay, and long enough to know he needs to say so out loud. His annual conversation is on Friday. He's been rehearsing it in his head for three weeks.

On paper, his wishes are simple. In the next six months, he'd like to move from intern to junior consultant on a full contract. In the next two years, he'd like a rotation through the Madrid office — not for the salary, for the exposure. In the next five years, he'd like to be leading small client projects of his own. It looks tidy on the notebook page. It is much less tidy in his head.

What he learned from a friend who works in HR is that the phrase 'I'd like to' is not, on its own, a career plan. It's a wish. What matters in the actual conversation is what comes after: 'I'd like to move to Madrid — and I'm hoping to have the client-relationship skills ready by the end of Q3. What would need to be true for me to be considered for that rotation?' The wish stays the same. The frame turns it into something his manager can actually help him build.

The other thing his friend told him — and this was harder to hear — is that his manager cannot read his mind. Three years of quietly hoping to be offered the Madrid rotation is three years of nobody upstairs knowing he wants it. If he doesn't say the sentence out loud on Friday, the sentence will not be said. The rotation will go to whoever DID say it

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

out loud, in a room, in a conversation, on a date.

So on Friday, Diego is going to say the sentence. He's not going to demand anything. He's not going to apologise for having ambition. He's simply going to say: 'In the next twelve months, I'd like to be a junior consultant with a full contract, and I'd like to start the conversation about a Madrid rotation for the year after that. What would need to be true for that path to happen — and what would you need from me to help make it real?' And then, crucially, he's going to stop talking, and let his manager answer.

Comprehension check

1. The central point of paragraph 3 is that 'I'd like to' becomes a career plan only when...

- ☐ A. It is repeated more loudly
- ☐ B. It is followed by a specific timeline and a question the manager can answer
- ☐ C. It is written down in a notebook

2. The 'harder to hear' lesson in paragraph 4 is that...

- ☐ A. Managers do not care about their team's ambitions
- ☐ B. Career wishes not said out loud effectively don't exist for the manager
- ☐ C. Three years is too long to wait

3. What Diego is going to do differently on Friday, compared to his previous check-ins, is...

- ☐ A. Ask for more money
- ☐ B. State a specific twelve-month ambition and ask what would need to be true for it
- ☐ C. Complain about being an intern for too long

4. The final sentence — 'he's going to stop talking, and let his manager answer' — matters because...

- ☐ A. Silence is polite
- ☐ B. Under-hedging his ambition would undo the sentence he just delivered
- ☐ C. Letting the manager reply is what turns a wish into a shared plan

True, False or Not Given?

Choose based on the text only.

1. Diego has already been offered the Madrid rotation.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. His friend works in Human Resources.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

3. Diego is planning to ask for a salary increase on Friday.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

About the text — think and write

Answer briefly. The final item is a discursive task — write it out in full paragraph form.

1. The text says 'the sentence will not be said' if Diego doesn't say it. Why is this counter-intuitive for a young professional?

2. The polite career-wish formula in the text is: 'I'd like to [X]. What would need to be true for [X] to happen, and what would you need from me to help make it real?' Rewrite it for a real career wish YOU'd bring into a one-to-one.

3. ****Discursive task (100–130 words).**** Write the FIRST five minutes of a career conversation you'd like to have — with your manager, a mentor, or a recruiter — in the next six months. In your own words: (a) state one specific twelve-month wish using 'I'd like to' or 'I'm hoping to', (b) attach it to one concrete first step you'd commit to before the next review, (c) ask ONE question the other person can actually answer. Aim for a professional, non-apologetic register. Avoid 'sorry to bother you' and 'no pressure'.

Vocabulary · Career-wish language

10 min

Roles

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Term	Meaning
aspiration	a big, long-term wish — where you're aiming
next step	the specific move that comes right after this one — not the finish line
sideways move	a role change at the same seniority — usually to build a new skill
step up	a move into more responsibility — often with a new title
career trajectory	the overall direction of a career over years — the shape, not one job
sponsor	a senior person who actively opens doors for you — stronger than a mentor

Smalltalk

Term	Meaning
I'm hoping to...	softer than 'I'd like to' — used for wishes with some uncertainty
I'm considering...	you're actively thinking about it, not yet decided
I'd rather (not)...	polite preference / polite refusal
I'd appreciate it if...	formal polite request
Would it be possible to...?	very polite proposal — good for boss-level asks
It would make a real difference to me if...	makes the ask personal without begging

Practice

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

1. My long-term ___ is to run a small consultancy of my own by the age of forty.
2. My immediate ___ is to move from analyst to team lead within the next twelve months.
3. I'm not chasing a promotion — I'm considering a ___ into product, to build a completely new skill set.
4. In the review I'm going to ask about the ___ into senior manager next year.
5. Marta was my ___ at that company — she actively put my name in rooms I wasn't in.
6. ___ transfer to the Madrid office for the second half of next year?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

7. _____ I could shadow one of your client meetings before our next review.

8. I'm _____ change functions next year — not decided yet.

Collocations · verb + noun (career wishes)

Match each verb with the correct noun / phrase.

Term	Meaning
shape	your career trajectory
make	a sideways move
take	the next step
raise	an aspiration
find	a sponsor
put in	a formal request

Odd one out — register check

One option is far too casual (or wrong) for a professional career conversation.

1. Asking your manager for a training budget — which is professional?

- ☐ A. 'Give me €1,500 for that course.'
- ☐ B. 'Would it be possible to allocate around €1,500 for the [course] this year? I'd cover it in my own time and share the takeaways with the team.'
- ☐ C. 'I really need training — everyone else has done it.'

2. Turning down a project you don't want to lead — which is professional?

- ☐ A. 'Not doing it.'
- ☐ B. 'Thank you for thinking of me. Honestly, I'd rather focus this quarter on [X] — could we look at who else on the team might grow from that project? I'll actively support them.'
- ☐ C. 'Ugh, please no.'

Grammar · would like · would rather · polite request forms

14 min

1. Would like — polite wish or desire

would + like + noun / to + verb. Contracts to 'd like.

- 'I'd like a coffee.' (noun)
- 'I'd like to move to Madrid next year.' (to + verb)
- Question: 'Would you like to lead the project?'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

-
- Negative: 'I wouldn't like to commit to that today.'
 - ⚠ 'I'd like to' ≠ 'I like'. 'I like coffee' is a habit; 'I'd like a coffee' is a specific request.

2. Would rather — polite preference between options

would + rather + BASE verb (no 'to').

- 'I'd rather start next quarter.' □ ('I'd rather to start' □)
- Comparing two options: 'I'd rather stay for another year THAN take that external role.'
- Polite refusal: 'I'd rather not commit to that today, if that's OK.'
- With someone else's action: 'I'd rather she took the lead on that.' (past form even though it's about the future — this is normal.)

3. Polite request / proposal forms — increasing formality

Direct → very formal:

- 'Can you...?' (peer, informal)
- 'Could you...?' (neutral polite)
- 'Would you mind + -ing?' — 'Would you mind sending me the file?' (very polite)
- 'Would it be possible to...?' — 'Would it be possible to move the meeting to 3?' (proposal register, works with boss)
- 'I'd appreciate it if you could...' (formal, written register)

4. Softening + hedging — used carefully, not sprinkled everywhere

Useful hedges: 'I was wondering whether...', 'I'm hoping to...', 'I'm considering...', 'If it's not too much trouble...', 'When you have a moment...'

⚠ Over-hedging kills authority: 'I was just wondering if maybe, if it's not too much trouble, would it possibly be OK if perhaps...' → the listener stops taking you seriously.
ONE hedge per sentence, maximum.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — Choose the more natural / more polite option

Only ONE option is fully natural for A2+/B1 professional register.

1. In your annual review with your manager: 'I ___ start managing a small team in the next twelve months.'
 2. Choosing between two projects your boss offers: 'Honestly, I ___ start with the pricing review before the pop-up.'
 3. Asking a colleague to move a meeting: 'Hi Marta — ___ ___ ___ move our 2pm to 3pm?'
 4. Formal email to a senior stakeholder: '___ ___ ___ you could share the draft by Wednesday.'
 5. Turning down a project offer without saying 'no': 'I ___ not commit to that today, if that's OK — could we revisit next week?'
-

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise B — Rewrite in a more professional register

Rewrite each request or wish for a real professional context. Fix over-hedging OR under-hedging.

1. 'Give me a promotion this year.'

2. 'I was sort of wondering if maybe, if it's not too much trouble, would it possibly be OK if you could perhaps send me the file when you have a moment, no rush at all.'

3. 'I don't want to do that project.'

4. 'I want €1,500 for a course.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise C — Would like vs would rather vs will vs going to

Choose the form that best fits the *FUNCTION* in brackets.

1. 'I ___ move into people management next year.' [current wish, not yet decided or committed]

2. 'It's decided — I ___ move into people management in January.' [signed off, committed]

3. 'Between the two roles, I ___ take the internal one — better long-term shape.' [preference]

4. 'Don't worry — I ___ send you the updated CV tonight.' [promise made just now]

5. '___ ___ join us for the client dinner on Thursday?' [polite invitation]

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise D — Discursive: 90-word one-to-one script

Write a short paragraph (about 90 words) that you would **ACTUALLY** say in your next one-to-one — opening a career conversation. Use **AT LEAST** one 'I'd like to', one 'I'd rather' or 'I'm hoping to', one polite request form ('Would it be possible to...?' / 'I'd appreciate it if...'), and one question your manager can answer.

1. Start with: 'Ana, thanks for the time today — I'd like to use twenty minutes to talk about the next twelve months.'

Describe the picture



Look at the picture. In 5–6 sentences, describe what the person is doing **AND** what they are probably going to say in their next career conversation. Use 'would like to', 'would rather' and one polite request form.

Target language: In the picture, the person is... · In the next six months, they'd like to... · In two years' time, they're hoping to... · In a career conversation with their manager, they'd probably say... · They'd rather NOT open with... · Would it be possible to...?

Listening · A career conversation between a junior consultant and her manager

10 min

A one-to-one conversation between Sara (Voice A, female — junior consultant, two years in) and her line manager Rui (Voice B, male). Sara has come with a specific twelve-month ask. Rui is a good listener who pushes back exactly once. Two voices.

Before you listen

- In a healthy career conversation, in what order do you expect: the wish, the reason, the first step already taken, the ask, the question back to the manager?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

-
- Which of those does an inexperienced professional usually skip — and why does it weaken the whole conversation?
-

Gist

1. What is Sara's overall goal in this conversation and how does it end?

2. What is Rui's overall attitude?

Detail

1. What is the SPECIFIC ambition Sara puts on the table?

2. What does Rui push back on, and what does he propose instead?

3. What are the two concrete first steps Sara and Rui agree on in the meeting?

Listen and complete

Complete with the exact words the speakers use.

1. Sara: 'In the next twelve months I ____ ____ move from senior analyst into a project-lead role...'

2. Rui: 'Honest answer? Q2 is aggressive. I ____ ____ aim for Q3 with two rehearsal steps in the meantime.'

3. Sara: '____ ____ ____ co-facilitate one internal workshop this quarter so you can see me in the lead seat?'

Useful career-conversation phrases

Match each phrase to its function.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Term	Meaning
I'd like to use this time to talk about...	open the conversation with a clear agenda
In the next twelve months I'd like to...	name a specific, dated ambition
What would need to be true for...?	convert a wish into a joint plan the manager can help shape
I'd appreciate honest feedback on...	invite the hard version of the answer
What would you need from me to...?	make the conversation two-way

Speaking · Own your next-twelve-months conversation

10 min

Use the language of this unit — *would like to / would rather / polite request forms* — to run these three tasks with a partner.

Writing · Career-conversation opener message (120-150 words)

12 min (or homework)

Write the message you would **ACTUALLY** send to your manager to book your next career conversation (120-150 words). Structure: (1) a one-sentence frame for the conversation, (2) the specific twelve-month wish, (3) one first step you're already taking or willing to commit to, (4) one polite request or proposal ('Would it be possible to...?'), (5) one question your manager can genuinely answer. Use **AT LEAST** one 'I'd like to', one 'I'd rather' OR 'I'm hoping to', and one formal polite request form. Do **NOT** use: 'sorry to bother you', 'no pressure', 'if that's OK', 'just a quick one'.

Workbook · A2-10B

What I would like to do next — Workbook

1. Vocabulary in context

Complete each sentence with **ONE** word or phrase from the box. Two items are extra.

1. My long-term ___ is to run a small consultancy of my own by the age of forty.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. My immediate ____ is to move from analyst to team lead within the next twelve months.

3. I'm not chasing a promotion — I'm considering a ____ into product, to build a completely new skill set.

4. In the review I'm going to ask about the ____ into senior manager next year.

5. Marta was my ____ at that company — she actively put my name in rooms I wasn't even in.

6. I'm ____ change functions next year, but I'm not fully decided yet.

7. Honestly, I ____ start with the pricing review before the pop-up — it's higher-leverage.

8. ____ transfer to the Madrid office for the second half of next year?

2. Would like · would rather · will · going to

Write the correct form for the FUNCTION in brackets.

1. 'I ____ (like) move into people management in the next twelve months.' [current wish, not yet decided]

2. 'It's decided — I ____ (start) managing a small team in January.' [signed off, committed]

3. 'Between the two roles, I ____ (take) the internal one — better long-term shape.' [preference]

4. 'Don't worry — I ____ (send) you the updated CV tonight.' [promise made just now]

5. '____ you ____ (like / join) us for the client dinner on Thursday?' [polite invitation]

6. 'I ____ (rather / not) commit to that today, if that's OK.' [polite refusal]

7. '____ share the draft by Wednesday?' [formal written polite ask]

3. Career-conversation register

Choose the option that sounds professional in a real one-to-one.

1. Opening a career conversation — which is strongest?

- ☐ A. 'Uh, so, I've been thinking about a few things maybe.'
- ☐ B. 'I'd like to use twenty minutes today to talk about the next twelve months.'
- ☐ C. 'Where do you see me next year, basically?'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. Asking for a training budget — which is strongest?

- ☐ **A.** 'Can I have €1,500 for a course?'
- ☐ **B.** 'Would it be possible to allocate around €1,500 for [course name] this year? It maps to the [specific skill] we've said is missing on the team, and I'd cover it in my own time.'
- ☐ **C.** 'I really need training — everyone else has done it.'

3. Turning down a project you don't want to lead — which is professional?

- ☐ **A.** 'Not doing it.'
- ☐ **B.** 'Thank you for thinking of me. Honestly, I'd rather focus this quarter on [X] — could we look at who else on the team might grow from leading that project? I'll actively support them.'
- ☐ **C.** 'Ugh, please no.'

4. 'Sorry to bother you but I was just wondering if maybe, if you have a moment, would it possibly be OK if perhaps we could talk about my career sometime.' — what's wrong?

- ☐ **A.** It's polite and correct.
- ☐ **B.** Over-hedging: six softeners undo each other. Rewrite: 'Could we book twenty minutes in the next two weeks to talk about my next twelve months?'
- ☐ **C.** Too formal.

5. Converting a wish into a plan — which sentence does that best?

- ☐ **A.** 'I'd love to lead a team one day.'
- ☐ **B.** 'In the next twelve months I'd like to lead a small team. What would need to be true for that conversation to be realistic at our March review?'
- ☐ **C.** 'People say I'd be good at management.'

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE grammar or register mistake typical of A2+/B1 professionals. Rewrite it correctly.

1. 'I would like coffee.' — offered to you by a colleague.

2. 'I'd rather to start with the pricing review.'

3. 'I like to move into product management next year.'

4. 'Would you like join us for the client dinner?'

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5. 'I was sort of wondering if maybe you could perhaps, if it's not too much trouble, send me the file when you have a moment, no rush at all.'

6. 'I want promotion this year.'

5. Reading & discursive response

Read the short case, then answer.

1. Case: A junior colleague has been quietly hoping to be offered a rotation to the Madrid office for three years. She's never said it out loud to her manager because 'she thought it would be pushy'. She's now watching a peer with less experience get the rotation instead — because the peer named the wish out loud. In 100–130 words, coach her on the exact conversation she should book with her manager THIS week. Use this unit's language (would like to · would rather · Would it be possible to · What would need to be true for...?). Include: (a) the frame, (b) the specific wish with a timeline, (c) one first step she'll commit to, (d) the two-part question back to her manager.

6. Listening — 60-second one-to-one prep voicemail

A more senior colleague leaves a 60-second voicemail to help a junior professional prepare for her first properly ambitious one-to-one. Listen (or read the transcript) and answer.

1. What is the caller's overall goal in leaving this voicemail?

2. What is the SPECIFIC opening sentence the caller tells her to use?

3. What does the caller explicitly tell her NOT to say?

4. Name the ONE closing tip the caller gives.

7. Writing — career-conversation opener message (120–150 words)

Write the message you would ACTUALLY send to your manager to book your next career conversation (120–150 words). Structure: (1) a one-sentence frame for the conversation, (2)

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the specific twelve-month wish, (3) one first step you're already taking or willing to commit to, (4) one polite request or proposal ('Would it be possible to...?'), (5) one question your manager can genuinely answer. Use AT LEAST one 'I'd like to', one 'I'd rather' OR 'I'm hoping to', and one formal polite request form. Do NOT use: 'sorry to bother you', 'no pressure', 'if that's OK', 'just a quick one'.

8. Case study preview

Look at this unit's Case Study. Answer briefly.

1. What is the main career-conversation challenge in the case for Unit 10, and which stakeholder is under the most pressure?

2. If you were coaching that stakeholder, what is the ONE career-wish sentence you would give them to say out loud in their next one-to-one — the equivalent of 'in the next twelve months I'd like to...'?

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