



APEX ENGLISH

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B2 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 2 · B2A

Running a meeting

Theme · Meetings & Decisions

Unit 2 · B2A

Running a meeting

Theme: Meetings & Decisions



Learning objectives

- Open, chair and close a short update meeting.
- Use present tenses accurately for status updates and standing agendas.
- Assign clear action items with owner + deadline.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · Meeting audit

Look at yesterday's / last week's calendar. For each recurring meeting, answer in one word.

Purpose: DECIDE / INFORM / DISCUSS / SOCIAL — which was it, really?

Value: KEEP / SHORTEN / MERGE / KILL — what would you do to it?

Chair: STRONG / OK / MISSING — how well was it led?

You: NEEDED / NICE-TO-HAVE / NOT-NEEDED — should you even have been in it?

Lead-in: meeting sins

Match each behaviour to its label.

1. No agenda, just 'let's sync'

2. One person talks for 40 of 45 minutes

3. It ends and nobody knows who does what

followUp: Which sin is most common in your workplace?

Reading: What good chairs actually do

Most people think chairing a meeting is about talking. It isn't — it's about pacing. A good chair does three things almost invisibly: they open by naming the goal, they steer the middle by asking short questions, and they close by reading back who owns what by when. That's roughly it.

The opening line is the most under-used weapon. Compare 'So... shall we start?' with 'We've got 30 minutes and one decision to make: which vendor we're using for the launch.' The second sentence tells the room the time budget and the outcome, and it takes four seconds. It also gives the chair permission, later, to cut off a tangent with a polite 'let's park that — we've got 12 minutes to decide.'

The closing is where meetings quietly fail. If the chair ends with 'Great chat, thanks everyone,' half the room will leave with a different version of what was agreed. A good close is boring: 'So — Aditi is drafting the RFP by Thursday, Marcus is talking to Legal by Monday, and we regroup next Friday at 10.' Boring, specific, and unmistakable.

1. According to the text, a good chair is mainly good at...

- (A) Talking a lot
- (B) Pacing — open, steer, close
- (C) Being funny

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2. What does the opening line 'We've got 30 minutes and one decision to make...' achieve?
 - (A) It's polite
 - (B) It sets time budget AND outcome in 4 seconds
 - (C) It replaces the agenda
3. The phrase 'let's park that' means...
 - (A) Stop the meeting
 - (B) Set the topic aside for later without dismissing it
 - (C) Take a break
4. Why is 'Great chat, thanks everyone' a bad closing?
 - (A) It's rude
 - (B) People leave with different versions of what was agreed
 - (C) It's too short

Vocabulary in context

Match the phrase to its meaning.

pacing — controlling the speed and flow of something

steer — guide the direction of a conversation

time budget — how much time you have allocated

tangent — a side-topic that pulls the conversation away

park — set aside a topic to return to it later

regroup — meet again after doing separate work

Vocabulary: chairing language & action items

Let's convene. — start the meeting

Quick round of updates? — each person shares briefly

Let's shelve that. — postpone this topic

Let's take that offline. — discuss outside this meeting

Time-check — 10 minutes left. — flag remaining time

Just to make sure we're aligned... — check shared understanding

action item / deliverable — a task assigned in the meeting

owner — the one person accountable

deadline / due date / by EOD / EOW — when it must be done

blocker / bottleneck — what is stopping progress

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follow-up — further work after the meeting

minutes / notes — written record of what was decided

practice

Complete each sentence with ONE phrase/word.

1. Let's ____, everyone — we've got 25 minutes and three decisions to make.

2. Great idea, but let's __ — we can discuss it after the meeting.

3. Marcus is the __ for the vendor comparison; deadline is Thursday.

4. The main __ right now is that Legal hasn't reviewed the terms.

5. __ — we've got 10 minutes left and haven't touched the budget.

6. I'll send the __ tonight so everyone has the decisions in writing.

Practice 2 — collocations & rewrite

Rewrite each sentence replacing the underlined phrase with ONE word/expression from this lesson's vocabulary. Keep the meaning identical.

1. Let's <u>start the meeting</u>, everyone — we've got 25 minutes and three decisions to make.

2. Great idea, but let's <u>discuss it outside this meeting</u> — we can chat afterwards.

3. Marcus is the <u>person accountable</u> for the vendor comparison; deadline is Thursday.

4. The main <u>thing stopping progress</u> right now is that Legal hasn't reviewed the terms.

5. I'll send the <u>written record of what was decided</u> tonight so everyone has the decisions in writing.

Practice 3 — discursive writing (business memo)

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prompt: Write a memo to your department head recommending a 'meeting audit' to fix the current culture of monologues and vacuums.

Use at least FOUR of the target expressions from this unit.

Adopt a professional register: concise, structured, executive-friendly.

Include a clear recommendation or takeaway in the final sentence.

sample: Subject: Recommendation — Internal Meeting Audit. Following several recent syncs that ended in a decision vacuum, I recommend we conduct a brief audit of our recurring meetings. Too many of our sessions currently lack a clear time budget, leading to monologues that prevent us from reaching a real decision. My proposal is that every chair must open by naming the specific outcome needed and use 'let's park that' or 'take that offline' for any tangent that threatens the pacing. We should also ensure every meeting ends with a clear action item and a named owner to avoid the current bottlenecks. If we can't identify a clear blocker or a reason to regroup weekly, we should consider shelving the meeting entirely. I've drafted some minutes from our last 'wander' to show how much time we could save. Let's ensure we're aligned on this before the next quarter kicks off.



Grammar focus: Present simple vs. present continuous for updates

1. Present simple — routines, standing facts, permanent responsibilities — For things that are always / usually true: • We meet every Monday at 10. • I own the retention metric. • The team ships on Wednesdays.

2. Present continuous — right now, this week / quarter, temporary — For work in progress: • I'm working on the Q4 pitch this week. • We're currently talking to three vendors. • She's covering for Marcus while he's on leave.

3. Common trap — 'stative' verbs stay simple — Some verbs describe states, not actions, and stay in the simple form even for 'right now': • I know / need / want / understand / own — never I'm knowing / I'm owning. • **WRONG:** I'm knowing the client well. → I know the client well.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Exercise A — Simple or continuous?

Complete each update with the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. This week I ____ (finalise) the vendor shortlist.

2. We ____ (release) a new version every second Thursday.

3. Marcus ____ (be) on leave, so I ____ (cover) his accounts.

4. I ____ (own) the retention KPI on my team.

5. Sorry, could you repeat that? I ____ (not / follow) you.

6. The engineering team ____ (currently / rebuild) the checkout flow.

Exercise B — Fix the mistake

Each meeting update has **ONE** mistake. Rewrite it.

1. I'm owning the retention metric on this team.

2. We meet with the client on Thursday this week, just this once.

3. I don't understanding what the blocker is.

4. Currently, we talk to three vendors before choosing.

Exercise C — 60-second status update

Write a 3-sentence status update using **ONE** present-simple line (permanent responsibility), **ONE** present-continuous line (this week), and **ONE** stative verb.

1. Role: you own onboarding. This week you're rebuilding the welcome email. You think the current copy is too long. →

2. Role: you run the Monday sync. This week you're covering for Karim. You need a decision on the launch date. →

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Listening: A 15-minute weekly sync

It's Monday morning. Priya is chairing the marketing team's weekly sync. On the call are Diego (content) and Nour (paid ads).

pre

What do you think Priya will say in her opening line?

How many action items do you expect by the end?

gist

1. What ONE decision does Priya say the meeting needs to reach?

2. What is Diego's main blocker?

3. How does the meeting end?

detail

1. Which topic does Priya 'park' for later?

2. Why does Nour want to pause the paid campaign?

3. What is Priya's final action item for herself?

Third listen — chair-craft

Focus on HOW Priya chairs. Answer from what she does, not just what she says.

1. What THREE chair moves does Priya use to keep the meeting on time?

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2. Priya doesn't ask 'Any questions?' at the end — why is that a good choice here?

3. Fill in the action-item grid: who / what / by when?

Language from the audio — chair phrases

Find each phrase in the transcript and match it to its function.

"Right — let's kick off." — opens the meeting cleanly, no small talk drift

"one real decision to make" — sets the outcome BEFORE the discussion starts

"Quick round of updates first." — structures the middle so no one dominates

"let's park that" — sets a topic aside without dismissing it

"Time-check —" — protects the ending without needing to interrupt

"Anything I'm missing?" — closed final check — invites gaps, not new topics

Voice A (Priya): Right — let's kick off. We've got 15 minutes and one real decision to make: whether we push the launch by a week. Quick round of updates first. Diego?

Voice B (Diego): Content's about 80% ready. My blocker is Legal — I'm still waiting on final copy approval. If it doesn't land by Wednesday, we can't hit Friday.

Voice C (Nour): On paid — I'm actually going to suggest we pause the campaign for two days. CPC has doubled since last Wednesday. Something's off in the audience targeting.

Voice A: Okay. And the landing-page rebrand — how's that going?

Voice B: That's more of a Q1 thing, honestly.

Voice A: Fine, let's park that — separate conversation. Time-check: we've got 8 minutes. So on the launch date: Diego, if Legal doesn't reply by end of Wednesday, we push. Nour, pause paid tomorrow morning, investigate, and update me by Thursday lunch. I'll talk to the CEO by Wednesday about the potential push. Anything I'm missing?

Voice C: Nope, that's clear.

Voice A: Great. I'll send the minutes in 20 minutes. Same time next Monday.

Speaking: solo role-play — chair a 5-minute sync

Solo task. Pick ONE scenario below. Record yourself (voice note, 3–4 min) as the chair running the meeting — imagine the other voices in the room. You MUST use at least ONE opening line, ONE 'park' or 'take offline' move, ONE time-check, and close with named action items (owner + deadline). Play back and self-score against the checklist.

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**Scene:** Product team, Monday sync

A: You chair — decision needed: ship a buggy feature this week or delay two weeks.

B: Imagined voices: one blocked by QA, one throwing in a wild off-topic idea.

Scene: Client kick-off

A: You chair (agency side) — need to agree scope + weekly cadence.

B: Imagined voices: a very talkative client CTO and one silent stakeholder.

Scene: Freelance status update

A: You chair (the freelancer).

B: Imagined voices: two client stakeholders with conflicting priorities.

Extra speaking task — 60-second stand-up

Now record a *60-second* solo stand-up as if you're opening TOMORROW's real meeting from your own week. Three sentences: (1) what we're deciding, (2) what's blocking, (3) the time budget. Land at least TWO chairing phrases from today's lesson.

Writing mini-task

Write the meeting minutes for the Priya/Diego/Nour sync above in 60–90 words. Include: date, attendees, ONE decision, THREE action items (owner + deadline each).

Wrap-up

One chairing phrase you'll steal for your next meeting.

One thing you'll STOP doing in meetings.

One decision from your calendar this week that deserves its own 15-min meeting.

Quiz

1. Which is the strongest OPENING line for a 30-minute sync?

(A) "So... shall we start?"

(B) "We've got 30 minutes and one decision to make."

(C) "Hi everyone, how was your weekend?"

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2. 'Let's park that' means...
 - (A) Stop the meeting
 - (B) Set the topic aside for later
 - (C) Take a break
3. Choose the correct sentence.
 - (A) I'm owning the retention metric.
 - (B) I own the retention metric.
 - (C) I owning the retention metric.
4. Which is the BEST closing move?
 - (A) "Great chat, thanks!"
 - (B) Read back action items with owners and deadlines.
 - (C) Ask if anyone has more to add.
5. 'CPC has doubled since last Wednesday.' The best tense for THIS WEEK's temporary action is...
 - (A) Present simple: I pause the campaign.
 - (B) Present continuous: I'm pausing the campaign tomorrow.
 - (C) Past simple: I paused the campaign.

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Workbook — home practice



Exercise 1 — Chairing phrases

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

Word bank: Let's convene · take that offline · Time-check · shelve that · deliverable · minutes

1. ____, everyone — we've got 20 minutes and two decisions to make.

2. Great idea, but let's ____ — separate conversation.

3. Interesting, but let's ____; I'll ping you after.

4. ____: we've got 5 minutes left and haven't covered budget.

5. That's a ____ for Marcus, due end of Wednesday.

6. I'll circulate the ____ tonight so nobody forgets what was agreed.

1b. Vocabulary — discursive writing

Write a 150-word memo to your management team analyzing the current 'meeting culture' in your department. Discuss how you intend to use better 'chairing' techniques to improve efficiency, mentioning specific strategies like 'time-checks' and 'taking things offline'.

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id: vocab-discursive

type: writing

Use at least 5 target vocabulary items.

Demonstrate authoritative leadership register.

Focus on specific outcomes and deliverables.

Structure with clear headings or bullet points.

model: To: Leadership Team From: Operations Director Subject: Improving Meeting Efficiency and Culture Recent data suggests that we are losing significant productivity to 'the drift' in our weekly syncs. From next week, I will be implementing a stricter chairing protocol. To start, I will use 'Let's convene' exactly on the hour, regardless of attendance. We will implement a strict time-check every 15 minutes to ensure we remain on track for our primary objective. To prevent the 'wander', I will request that we take any non-essential technical discussions offline for separate follow-up. If a topic requires more data, we will shelve that until the following week rather than speculating. Each meeting must end with at least one clear deliverable with a named owner and deadline. Finally, I will personally circulate the minutes within two hours to ensure immediate accountability. These changes are designed to respect everyone's time and focus our collective energy on execution. I appreciate your support in enforcing these new standards.

Exercise 2 — Present simple or continuous?

Choose the correct form for each meeting update.

1. This week I ____ (interview) the final three vendor candidates.

2. We ____ (release) a patch every second Tuesday.

3. Sofia ____ (cover) Ben's accounts while he ____ (be) on paternity leave.

4. I ____ (own) the churn metric on this team.

5. Currently we ____ (evaluate) three CRMs before we commit.

6. Sorry — I ____ (not / understand) what you mean by 'blocker' in this context.

Exercise 3 — Diagnose the meeting sin

Which meeting sin does each situation show?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. 45-minute meeting; one person speaks for 40 minutes.
 - (A) the drift
 - (B) the wander
 - (C) the monologue
 - (D) the vacuum
2. Team leaves; nobody knows who does what by when.
 - (A) the drift
 - (B) the wander
 - (C) the monologue
 - (D) the vacuum
3. Meeting starts 12 minutes late every single week.
 - (A) the drift
 - (B) the wander
 - (C) the monologue
 - (D) the vacuum
4. No agenda; a 'quick sync' becomes a 55-minute chat.
 - (A) the drift
 - (B) the wander
 - (C) the monologue
 - (D) the vacuum

Exercise 4 — Fix the update

Each meeting update has ONE mistake. Rewrite it.

1. I'm owning the retention KPI on this team.

2. We meet the CFO this Thursday, just this once.

3. I don't understanding what the blocker is.

4. Currently, we talk to three vendors before choosing one.

Exercise 5 — Three chair openings

You'll hear three different chairs opening the same 30-minute Monday sync.

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1. Which opening sets a time budget AND an outcome?

2. Which opening is the vaguest?

3. Which chair parks a topic within the first minute?

Voice A: Opening 1: So... shall we start? What's on people's minds this week?

Voice B: Opening 2: Right, let's kick off. We've got 30 minutes and one decision to make: whether to ship on Friday. Quick round of updates first, then we decide.

Voice C: Opening 3: Morning everyone. Great — before Diego jumps in, let's park the rebrand for later and stay on the launch. Nour, kick us off.

Exercise 6 — Write the minutes

Write 60–80 words of meeting minutes for a real meeting you attended this week. Include: date, one decision, three action items (owner + deadline each).

Exercise 7 — Case study reflection

Think about the Karib Logistics 'weekly-that-should-be-monthly'. Answer the questions.

1. Rewrite the founder's opening line for the new MONTHLY all-hands (max 25 words).

2. What ONE metric would prove your new operating model is working after 3 months?

3. What would you tell a manager who kept scheduling a 60-minute call for a 15-minute topic?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Class Book

Lead-in: meeting sins

1. the wander
2. the monologue
3. the vacuum

Reading: What good chairs actually do

1. (B) Pacing — open, steer, close
2. (B) It sets time budget AND outcome in 4 seconds
3. (B) Set the topic aside for later without dismissing it
4. (B) People leave with different versions of what was agreed

Vocabulary: chairing language & action items

1. convene
 2. take that offline
 3. owner
 4. blocker
 5. Time-check
 6. minutes
1. Let's convene, everyone — we've got 25 minutes and three decisions to make.
 2. Great idea, but let's take that offline — we can chat afterwards.
 3. Marcus is the owner for the vendor comparison; deadline is Thursday.
 4. The main blocker right now is that Legal hasn't reviewed the terms.
 5. I'll send the minutes tonight so everyone has the decisions in writing.

Grammar focus: Present simple vs. present continuous for updates

1. am finalising / 'm finalising
 2. release
 3. is; am covering / 'm covering
 4. own
 5. don't follow
 6. is currently rebuilding / 's currently rebuilding
1. I own the retention metric on this team. ('own' is stative)
 2. We're meeting with the client on Thursday this week, just this once. (one-off → continuous)
 3. I don't understand what the blocker is.
 4. Currently, we're talking to three vendors before choosing.
1. Model: 'I own the onboarding flow. This week I'm rebuilding the welcome email based on last month's data. I think the current copy is too long — three CTAs is two too many.'
 2. Model: 'I run the Monday sync. This week I'm also covering Karim's accounts while he's on leave. I need a decision on the launch date by Wednesday.'

Listening: A 15-minute weekly sync

1. Whether to push the launch date by a week.
 2. He's waiting on final copy approval from Legal.
 3. Priya reads back three action items with owners and deadlines.
1. The rebrand of the landing page.
 2. Cost per click has doubled in the last five days.
 3. Talk to the CEO by Wednesday about the launch date.
1. (1) An opening that names time budget + one decision, (2) 'let's park that' on the rebrand tangent, (3) a mid-meeting time-check ('we've got 8 minutes').
 2. She replaces an open prompt with a closed one: 'Anything I'm missing?' — invites a specific gap, not a new discussion.
 3. Diego — chase Legal, push if no reply by end of Wed. Nour — pause paid tomorrow AM, investigate, update Priya by Thu lunch. Priya — speak to CEO by Wed re: launch date. All three: owner + verb + deadline.

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Quiz

1. (B) "We've got 30 minutes and one decision to make."
2. (B) Set the topic aside for later
3. (B) I own the retention metric.
4. (B) Read back action items with owners and deadlines.
5. (B) Present continuous: I'm pausing the campaign tomorrow.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Workbook

Exercise 1 — Chairing phrases

1. Let's convene
2. shelve that
3. take that offline
4. Time-check
5. deliverable
6. minutes

Exercise 2 — Present simple or continuous?

1. am interviewing / 'm interviewing
2. release
3. is covering / 's covering; is
4. own
5. are evaluating / 're evaluating
6. don't understand

Exercise 3 — Diagnose the meeting sin

1. (C) the monologue
2. (D) the vacuum
3. (A) the drift
4. (B) the wander

Exercise 4 — Fix the update

1. I own the retention KPI on this team.
2. We're meeting the CFO this Thursday, just this once.
3. I don't understand what the blocker is.
4. Currently, we're talking to three vendors before choosing one.

Exercise 5 — Three chair openings

1. Opening 2 — 'We've got 30 minutes and one decision to make: whether to ship on Friday.'
2. Opening 1 — 'So... shall we start? What's on people's minds?'
3. Opening 3 — 'Great — before Diego jumps in, let's park the rebrand for later and stay on the launch.'

Exercise 7 — Case study reflection

1. Model: 'Thirty minutes, three things: one number I care about, one win from the field, one story from Casablanca.'
2. Model: hours spent in company-wide meetings dropped by >70% AND engagement-survey 'Monday sync' score improved by ≥ 20 points.
3. Model: 'Time-check culture — every meeting starts with time budget + outcome. Anything under 30 minutes is a standup, not a meeting.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class
