



APEX ENGLISH · A2 BUSINESS

Unit A2-2A

What we make — the story behind the product

My company & products

Student Edition · Classbook + Workbook

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.
- 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.

Class Book

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].

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

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- 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.'
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- Now write yours in the same shape.
-
- Say it out loud once — does it still sound natural, or a bit corporate?
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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

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.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

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

React to the text (discursive)

Answer in 2-3 full sentences each.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

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.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Before you listen

- 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

What we make — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

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

1. Our main ___ produces 25,000 pairs a year for markets across Europe.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

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2. The Lisbon ___ opened last year — only six people, but it covers the entire southern region.
 3. All finished stock is stored in a ___ near the airport before shipping.
 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.
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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

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

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2. 'Do you actually ship to smaller retailers, or only chains?' is a ____ sentence.
- ☐ A. question
 - ☐ B. positive
 - ☐ C. negative
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

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

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?

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?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class
